

Political Disagreement in Contentious Politics

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Extended abstract

Disagreement is a central component of politics, for it extends and persists across all ideological stances and all issues of policy. Challenging opposing views and defending personal perspectives, both in electoral contexts and in contentious politics, greatly determine how we experience politics daily. Consequently, negotiating disagreement is an underlying requisite for a normative aspect of how we tend to conceive democracy: considerate decision-making.

This dissertation focuses on an attitudinal dimension of disagreement that involves cognitive processes that, in turn, can help people to better understand others and actively acknowledge differences: *perspective taking*. This dissertation addresses previous research on political disagreement by considering perspective taking as a relevant subject of study and, in doing so, shifting from general attitudes, such as tolerance and empathy, to particular attitude objects, such as opposing stances and political adversaries. This dissertation chiefly proposes to address potential attitudinal and behavioral consequences of disagreement in particular circumstances and to explore perceptions of blame attribution in highly divisive issues. Its design is grounded in the context of protest politics in order to leverage cases in which both public opinion is clearly divided and disagreement between positions is highly evident.

This dissertation is composed of three papers. Paper 1 focuses on issue publics in their actual interactions with organizations by analyzing the informational environment of their specific issues. More specifically, it assesses individuals' exposure to political disagreement in protest mobilization by questioning the role of organizations in linking opposing stances in such mobilization. As a result, it finds positive relationships between exposure to disagreement and perspective taking in the context of such mobilization, particularly in cases of demonstrations for Catalan independence and abortion in Spain.

Paper 2 provides a unique measure of perspective taking built on direct mentions to political adversaries in order to gauge the extent to which mentioning adversaries relates to individuals' motivations to demonstrate and turnout for a referendum on Catalan independence. The study draws upon data from a cross-sectional survey in Catalonia in order to confirm a demobilizing effect of exposure to political disagreement. In contrast to previous studies of voting behavior, the potential effect in this study depends upon group status. In particular, though defenders of the status quo become less resolved to demonstrate or to turn out, challengers do not when considering opposing viewpoints. This effect is mediated by group identity, which confirms the importance of the issue context in the *cross-pressures hypothesis*.

Paper 3 investigates political disagreement by identifying individual, organizational, and contextual factors that explain differences between blame attributions in position issues. Data from protest surveys of demonstrators who participated in large-scale events in eight European cities between 2009 and 2011 reveal differences among perceptions regarding political adversaries, how demonstrators perceive disagreement, and how these perceptions vary among issues, organizational involvement, and contexts.

As a result, the dissertation as a whole advances the research of attitudinal components of exposure, potential behavioral consequences, and perceptions of disagreement. Focusing on attitudes toward disagreement or political adversaries in the context of protest politics and highly divisive issues provides new insight into core questions of the literature addressing political disagreement. The dissertation's findings can also broaden our understanding of contentious politics and everyday disagreement that might not be captured by electoral dynamics. The findings regarding the role of politically motivated organizations also pose practical implications in light of their roles in providing meaning to political conflict and mediating political adversaries. Establishing the potential influence of these roles on individual attitudes is relevant not only for academic research; it can also guide policy in order to promote civility.

Keywords: Political disagreement, perspective taking, protest, political behavior, attitudes

Resumen

El desacuerdo es un componente central de la política en cuanto se extiende y persiste a través de todas las posturas ideológicas y los asuntos de política pública. Desafiar puntos de vista opuestos y defender posturas personales, tanto en contextos electorales como en la política contenciosa, determina en gran medida la forma en que experimentamos la política diariamente. En consecuencia, la aceptación del desacuerdo es un requisito fundamental para un aspecto normativo de cómo se concibe la democracia: la toma de decisiones que considera posiciones contrapuestas.

Esta tesis se centra en una dimensión actitudinal del desacuerdo político que involucra procesos cognitivos que pueden ayudar a entender mejor a los demás y a reconocer activamente las diferencias: la toma de perspectiva. Esta tesis aborda la investigación previa sobre el desacuerdo político considerando la toma de perspectiva como un tema relevante de estudio, y de esta manera contrapone actitudes generales tales como la tolerancia y la empatía, con objetos de actitud específicos, tales como posiciones contrarias y adversarios políticos. Esta tesis propone principalmente estudiar las consecuencias potenciales del desacuerdo en circunstancias particulares y explorar las percepciones de atribución culpa en asuntos que dividen la opinión pública. El diseño de investigación se basa en el contexto de la protesta política con el fin de aprovechar los casos en los que la opinión pública está claramente dividida y donde el desacuerdo entre las posiciones es evidente.

Esta tesis se compone de tres artículos. El primer artículo se centra en *issue publics* y sus interacciones con las organizaciones mediante el análisis del entorno informacional de asuntos específicos. Más concretamente, se evalúa la exposición de las personas al desacuerdo político en la movilización a la protesta investigando el rol de las organizaciones en la vinculación de posiciones opuestas. Se encuentra una relación positiva entre la exposición al desacuerdo y la toma de perspectiva en el contexto de la movilización en los casos de las manifestaciones por la independencia catalana y el aborto en España.

El segundo artículo proporciona una medición única de la toma de perspectiva basada en una mención directa de los adversarios políticos con el fin de estudiar en qué grado se relacionan la disposición a tomar la perspectiva de los adversarios con las motivaciones para protestar y para participar en un referéndum sobre la independencia catalana. El estudio se basa en datos de una encuesta transversal en Cataluña con el fin de confirmar el potencial efecto desmovilizador de la exposición al desacuerdo político. En contraste con estudios anteriores de comportamiento electoral, el efecto potencial en este estudio depende del estatus del grupo. En particular, aunque los defensores del status quo están menos dispuestos a manifestarse o a participar en el referendo, los retadores no tienen una menor disposición cuando consideran puntos de vista opuestos al suyo. Este efecto es mediado por la identidad de grupo, lo cual confirma la importancia del contexto particular en la *hipótesis de presiones cruzadas*.

El tercer artículo investiga el desacuerdo político mediante la identificación de los factores individuales, organizacionales y contextuales que explican las diferencias entre las atribuciones de culpa en asuntos de posición. Los datos de encuestas a manifestantes que participaron en eventos de protesta a gran escala en ocho ciudades europeas entre 2009 y 2011 revelan diferencias entre las percepciones con respecto a los adversarios políticos, en la percepción de los manifestantes sobre el desacuerdo, y sobre la manera en que estas percepciones varían de acuerdo con el asunto, con los diferentes niveles de vinculación con las organizaciones, y de acuerdo con cada contexto.

La tesis avanza la investigación sobre los componentes actitudinales de la exposición, las posibles consecuencias sobre el comportamiento y las percepciones del desacuerdo político. Centrarse en las actitudes hacia el desacuerdo y hacia los adversarios políticos en el contexto de la protesta en asuntos altamente divisivos ofrece una nueva perspectiva para las preguntas centrales de la literatura sobre el desacuerdo político. Las conclusiones de la tesis también pueden ampliar nuestra comprensión de la política contenciosa y del desacuerdo cotidiano, la cual no es evidente al estudiar las dinámicas electorales. Las conclusiones sobre el rol de las organizaciones políticas también plantean implicaciones prácticas a la luz de su papel de significación del conflicto político y de mediación entre adversarios políticos. Establecer el potencial de influencia estos roles sobre las actitudes individuales es relevante no sólo para la investigación académica, sino que también puede guiar políticas que busquen promover el civismo.

Palabras clave: desacuerdo político, toma de perspectiva, protesta, comportamiento político, actitudes

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Introduction

Disagreement is a central component of politics, for it extends and persists across all ideological stances and issues of policy. Challenging opposing views and defending personal perspectives, both in electoral contexts and in contentious politics, greatly determine how we experience politics daily. Consequently, negotiating disagreement is an underlying requisite for a normative aspect of how we tend to conceive democracy—considerate decision-making—which implies the demand to acknowledge opposing perspectives as a behavior expected of political life and civility in democratic exchanges. This dissertation addresses the challenges posed by disagreement and its potential implications by considering the problems and opportunities of online politics, the role of organizations, and the particular understanding of disagreement and conflict in multiple contexts.

Disagreement is most evident in protest politics, in which contending positions and adversarial identities encounter the need to establish boundaries, or ideally, to reach some kind of understanding and/or agreement. Both in the liberal paradigm in which dissent occurs between competitors (Habermas, 1984), as well as in more radical perspectives of democracy (Fraser, 1990; Laclau, 2001) in which counter-discourses challenge the political spaces, disagreement is a pillar of contentious politics.

The changes in protest politics during the past decade due to changes in communications environments have received unprecedented prominence for politically motivated organizations in configuring issue spaces and establishing ground for controversies. Internet use has raised expectations, especially given its possibilities for opening new spaces of discursive exchange, while exposure to political diversity may have also resulted in the fragmentation and isolation of issue publics. Furthermore, Internet-mediated communication has also transformed organizational involvement and augmented the possibilities for close interaction, as well as consequently deepened the influence of organizational leadership. These trends and their dynamics pose implications for mobilization processes in terms of shared constructions of meaning, as well as for the potential for political socialization.

A considerable amount of literature has emerged that addresses multiple dimensions of political disagreement. These studies have chiefly focused on disagreement's effects on behavior; among these studies, some have examined attitudes both as mediators of behavioral effects or as relevant research objects in themselves.

Academics have studied disagreement as a factor in explaining the social side of political attitude formation (Huckfeldt, 2009; Zuckerman, 2005). Especially relevant to this dissertation, studies have shown that exposure to cross-cutting perspectives promotes desirable outcomes such as tolerance and less polarized opinions (Binder et al., 2009; Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague, 2004; Mutz, 2002a; Pattie & Johnston, 2008). At the same time, studies have also linked social isolation to attitude extremity (Binder et al., 2009; Warner, 2010) and partisan intolerance (Ulbig, 2013). However, political disagreement in interpersonal communication or in a spatial context also relates to attitudinal ambivalence (Huckfeldt et al., 2004;; Lazarsfeld et al., 1969; Mutz, 2006, pp. 89–124; Parsons, 2010; Visser & Mirabile, 2004), which could imply a disincentive to action.

Though these attitudes can also affect behavior, claims regarding the effects of disagreement are contentious. While some studies find no negative effect on turnout (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Nir, 2005), others find a positive relationship in multiple forms of political engagement (Eveland & Hively, 2009, McClurg, 200; Pattie & Johnston, 2009). Still others establish correlations between cross-cutting exposure and reduced political activity (Mutz, 2002a; Mutz, 2006, Pattie & Johnston, 2009). Another study has tied fragmentation or avoidance of political disagreement to participation in extreme political activities (Wojcieszak, 2009). These undesirable effects seem to derive from a wish to avoid social controversy instead of making informational gains from diverse opinions.

The theoretical puzzles and possibilities for exciting questions in this field of research are immense. This dissertation specifically examines theoretical approaches that complement existing research by focusing on outcomes of disagreement such as *perspective taking*, which is a cognitive process that leads to understanding others and a disposition toward actively acknowledging disagreement. Perspective taking is a concept adopted from studies of intergroup interaction that refers to “the cognitive

process of putting oneself in the place of another and understanding how the other thinks about a problem” (Falk & Johnson, 1977, p. 64) or “the cognitive process of understanding how another person thinks and feels about the situation and why they are behaving as they are” (Sessa, 1996, p. 105). Research on political disagreement can benefit by considering perspective taking as a relevant object of study and, in the process, by shifting from general attitudes, such as tolerance or empathy, to particular attitude objects, such as opposing stances and political adversaries. Understanding attitudes can be a step forward in more fully understanding disagreement, for it adopts insights from political psychology regarding the cognitive and emotional processes that entail an active determination for acknowledging differences.

This dissertation focuses primarily on protest politics and issue-specific participation as an approach that can broaden the scope of ideological determinants of disagreement by considering multiple issues and their potential for both signaling salient conflict and highlighting differences that escape the electoral arena. The three papers that form this dissertation stem from cases of position issues in order to scrutinize political disagreement between confrontational positions or adversarial groups. As such, its design points to cases in which public opinion is clearly divided and disagreement between positions is highly evident. It therefore aims to complement a majority of studies that have:

1. Only examined ideological division in the electoral context and thus largely ignored alternative social fractures expressed in non-electoral forms of involvement;
2. Focused on general population surveys and regular elections in which behavioral effects of disagreement can become entangled with issue interests and felt duties to vote.
3. Centered on U.S. politics;
4. Relied on broad outcomes (e.g., tolerance) when considering the effects of political disagreement on the normative principles of democracy;
5. Worked on a very broad definition of political disagreement and multiple sources of exposure and therefore paid scant attention to individual perceptions of disagreement.

The central purpose of this dissertation is to study political disagreement in the context of protest politics in order to address the attitudinal component of exposure, potential behavioral consequences, and perceptions of disagreement. The three papers that constitute this dissertation present particular questions for each of these topics, respectively. In Papers 1 and 2, the concept of perspective taking provides an additional and relevant element to the study of political disagreement, since doing so advances the question of potential effects of exposure by considering the actual empathic acceptance of dissimilar views. Meanwhile, Paper 3 questions how people perceive political disagreement by examining blame attribution regarding highly divisive issues. European protest events on position issues provide cases in which political adversaries unambiguously represent opposing positions. Taken together, these three papers provide innovative approaches to the study of political disagreement and speak to existing literature addressing the attitudinal dimension of political behavior and communications.

In particular, this dissertation examines three main research questions:

1. To what extent do organizations staging protest events expose their publics to disagreement by linking opposing stances in their mobilization processes? Is this kind of exposure related to the demonstrators' disposition to taking the perspective of their political adversaries?

On this point, I expected online mobilization to positively relate to perspective taking for followers of mobilization agents, as well as that potential exposure to disagreement (i.e., higher levels of brokerage between actors with opposite issue positions) would be associated with higher levels of perspective taking. Furthermore, I expected that this relationship would not hold in negative contexts (i.e., high levels of anger and frustration toward the protest issue).

2. To what extent can exposure to and attitudes toward political disagreement affect the intention to participate?

Following previous research on the consequences of being exposed to disagreement on turnout, I hypothesized perspective taking to be negatively related to both intention to

demonstrate and certainty to vote for defenders of the Statu-quo (Those who oppose Catalan independence), but not for the challengers. Secondly, I anticipated that this effect would depend upon the strength of national identity and that it would more strongly affect people with single identities (i.e., either only Spanish or only Catalan) than those with mixed identities (i.e., some combination of Spanish and Catalan).

3. How does blame attribution relate to political attitudes and behaviors such as external efficacy or voting? To what extent are blame attributions related to the demonstrators' involvement in social movement organizations? Under what conditions is the correlation stronger?

I hypothesized that, at the individual level, demonstrators who are more involved in electoral politics would tend to attribute blame as a matter of ideological difference between adversaries, and conversely, those skeptical about parties would not interpret blame as a matter of ideological difference but as a problem of the government's performance. I also expected that people would follow organizational cues in framing their blame attribution within alignment processes that would consequently determine their perception of such blame. These individual attributes and behaviors were also expected to vary according to the issues and countries; in this sense, the degree of the general population's stance on the issue (i.e., issue divisiveness) and its saliency were expected to relate to positional blame, while the government's explicit stance on the issue would diminish the perception of adversarial politics.

Table 1. Schematic view of the three papers.

Paper	Dependent variable	Main independent variables
"Online Mobilization and Perspective Taking in Contentious Politics"	Perspective taking	Brokerage in online mobilization (hyperlink networks from demonstrator's reported sources)
"Perspective Taking as Political Disagreement: Cross-Pressures and Political Behavior in the Catalan Independence Cleavage"	Intention to demonstrate certainty to vote	Perspective taking, individual, and context cross-pressures
"Dealing with Political Adversaries and Disagreement in Contentious Politics"	Adversarial framing	Political attitudes, organizational influence, demonstration, and issue context

Altogether, this dissertation's three papers provide complementary perspectives of the potential effects of disagreement, as well as a deeper understanding of perceptions of disagreement. Each paper views political disagreement differently. Paper 1 focuses on issue publics and their actual interactions with organizations by analyzing the informational environment of the demonstration issue. Specifically, the paper provides an indicator of individual exposure to political disagreement in protest mobilization and analyzes to what extent mobilization experiences relate to an individual's desire to take the perspective of political adversaries.

Paper 2 uses a unique measure of perspective taking built on direct mentions to political adversaries in order to test to what extent individual perceptions of adversaries relate both to intentions to demonstrate and to turnout for a referendum on Catalan independence. Traditional measures of exposure to political disagreement from contextual sources (e.g., issue divisiveness as measured by public opinion barometers and vote records and party and media positions by province) are also integrated to facilitate the study of the combined effect of attitudes toward disagreement and exposure.

Paper 3 investigates political disagreement by identifying individual, organizational, and contextual factors that explain differences between blame attributions in position issues. Differences between perceptions regarding political adversaries reveal how demonstrators perceive disagreement and how these perceptions vary among issues, organizational involvement, and contexts.

Papers 1 and 3 use data on demonstrators who participated in large-scale events in eight European cities between 2009 and 2011. Protest surveys for the project "Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation"¹ were distributed at the event and received by postage-paid mail-back questionnaires. The cases were limited to position issues (i.e., Spanish politics for Paper 1 and on eight position issues for eight countries in Paper 3). The protest survey procedure has proven to have negligible biases due to self-selection involved in survey response (Walgrave, Wouters, & Ketelaars, 2012).

¹ www.protestsurvey.eu.

Paper 2 uses data from a cross-section survey distributed in Catalonia in May 2012, the questions were mostly intended to study attitudes regarding Catalan independence. The survey was distributed online by a commercial provider to a representative sample of the Catalan population in the language chosen by the respondents (i.e., either Catalan or Spanish). Self-selection was limited since access was restricted to people registered by invitation only.

In sum, the three papers provide evidence that can be interpreted as part of a larger question regarding the attitudinal dimensions of political disagreement. The main findings can be summarized in three general points:

1. Organizations play a central role as mediators in political conflict, since they provide bridges across lines of political difference. This type of exposure to disagreement is positively related to perspective taking.
2. Evidence supports a demobilizing effect of exposure regarding political disagreement. However, by contrast to previous studies on voting behavior, the potential effect depends upon group status. Though defenders of the status quo become less resolved to demonstrate or to turn out, challengers do not when considering opposing viewpoints. This effect is mediated by group identity, which confirms the importance of issue context in the cross-pressures hypothesis.
3. Perceptions of disagreement as adversarial conceptions of politics are positively related to cognitive processes, such as framing, and to a large extent to contextual factors, such as the divisiveness of public opinion on the issue.

The main contribution of the dissertation is its study of political disagreement in the context of protest politics and its focus on highly divisive issues. This approach provides a unique opportunity for understanding attitudes toward political adversaries and to move beyond electoral politics in order to explore disagreement in innovative ways. By probing issue publics and politically sophisticated demonstrators who have high levels of involvement with social movement organizations and multiple media sources, this dissertation also makes an important contribution by testing existing theories regarding particular publics. Since politically aware individuals are the least likely to be influenced or to accept contending messages due to mechanisms of high

resistance and (Zaller, 1992), these implies a harder test than those used to examine the general population.

This dissertation adds to important but nevertheless scarce research on the meaning of political disagreement. Most research on the topic has investigated attitude change (e.g., deliberation and campaigning) by focusing on issue attitudes or attitudes toward politics, but has overlooked the study of attitudes toward disagreement or political adversaries. Using blame attribution as a relevant indicator of individual perceptions toward contending issues provides a relevant understanding of the importance of the issue context, as well as the intermediate level of organizations and elites in the study of political disagreement.

Some practical implications also emerge from the findings regarding the role of organizations and their potential influence. Organizations' functions in interpreting conflict through framing processes and in avoiding fragmentation by providing references to political adversaries are crucial when reflecting upon the questions of polarization and civility. Recognizing the importance of politically motivated organizations both in terms of their potential influence on individual attitudes and the implications of their role in configuring issue spaces online is relevant both for academic research and for ascertaining policy implications.

Previous conference presentations of the papers

Several people have contributed to this work with comments on earlier versions of the papers in multiple conferences and informal meetings. The first version of Paper 1 was presented at a workshop addressing the Internet and politics at the Oxford Internet Institute in September 2010; a revised version was presented twice, first at a Symposium of the World Association of Public Opinion Research and the Annenberg School of Communication held in Segovia at IE University in March 2011 and later at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology in July 2011.

Paper 2 was initially presented at a workshop of the *Democracia Elecciones i Ciutadania* research group on March 2013 and at the General Conference of the European Political Science Association on June 2013. Paper 3 was mostly developed during my stay at the University of Antwerp; a draft version was presented at Media and Movements, M2P research group meetings. A final version was presented at the Spanish Political Science Association's general conference in September 2013.

1. Online Mobilization and Perspective Taking in Contentious Politics

Abstract

Considering that political disagreement is at the heart of contentious politics, and that the will to recognize conflicting perspectives and acknowledge political adversaries is a central premise for civil conceptions of democracy, this paper addresses political disagreement by focusing on political demonstrators' disposition to take the perspectives of political adversaries on highly divisive issues. In so doing, it questions the role of movement organizations in mobilizing protests through online channels and their potential to provide exposure to disagreement as references to opposing stances. In this study, three protest events for Catalan self-determination and pro-life issues in Spain were studied collecting data via surveys taken by demonstrators ($N = 888$) and by hyperlink network analysis in order to correlate individual attitudes with structural heterogeneity in online issue networks. Results showed that demonstrators mobilized by social movement organizations through online channels more often agreed with the importance of taking opposing perspectives on issues than demonstrators mobilized by other channels, and this relation was stronger when organizations acted as brokers between opposing political stances. These findings speak to the significance of trusted mediators in negotiating political difference and to the positive side of dealing with disagreement with an empathic attitude. It also highlights both the importance of mediated encounters in addressing controversial issues and the relevance of online channels as potential sources for facing political disagreement.

Introduction

Political disagreement is a core element in democracy, both from a normative standpoint and in terms of its significance to political behavior. Acknowledging opposing political perspectives implies a need for argumentation and dialogue in order to hold publicly defensible stances, all of which entail not only cognitive effort but also an empathic attitude or social competence (Davis, 1983). In fact, exposure to cross-cutting perspectives has been shown to promote desirable outcomes, tolerance of others' views, for the cultivation of peaceful coexistence (Mutz, 2002a; Pattie & Johnston, 2008). Furthermore, taking the perspective of others—the ability to “empathize with their concerns”—has been consistently identified as a mediator in prejudice reduction (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). In this study, I argue that research on political disagreement can move forward by considering perspective taking as an important subject of study in its own right, as the topic implies an attitude toward opposing stances and respect for political adversaries. As such, perspective taking is a step toward understanding disagreement because it involves cognitive and emotional processes that entail an active determination to acknowledge difference.

Research on political disagreement has addressed its potentially undesirable consequences—namely, ambivalence and reduced participation. In doing so, however, it has focused on electoral contexts and therefore ignored issue politics and non-electoral involvement—Nir (2005) and Pattie and Johnston (2009) are notable exceptions—despite the idea that non-electoral venues facilitate disagreement on opposing stances that is often more obvious and meaningful. The present paper responds to this scholarly oversight by examining protest mobilization processes and the roles that organizations play as mediators in contentious politics, as well as how these organizations can expose their followers to counter-positions and political adversaries. In the context of contentious politics, disagreement is not only a defining element but it also implies a challenge for demonstrators who hold solid convictions and a strong commitment to others in order to succeed in collective action. Differences between demonstrators with varying levels of exposure to disagreement thus offer exciting opportunities to focus on potential attitudinal effects.

Using the Internet for political mobilization has increasingly captured the attention of scholars in multiple disciplines, since many expectations of online media's effects on civic engagement need testing. Generally, Internet-mediated communication has been studied as an opportunity for both intergroup contact (Glaser & Kahn, 2005; Postmes & Baym, 2005; Walther, 2009; Wang et al., 2009) and improving political information dynamics (González-Bailón, 2008). However, despite its potential for civic engagement, Internet use poses a general concern in its possible effects on selective exposure—concern which during the last decade has been raised by scholars who warn against the possibility of increasing polarization and a fragmentation of public discourse that could weaken democracy (Garrett, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Stroud, 2008; Sunstein, 2002).

The central argument in this paper is that protest mobilization can be considered to be a political experience in which members of groups with opposing stances are presented with opportunities to interact in order to face their controversy. This argument implies that such mobilization is expected to provide exposure to political disagreement and thus can affect attitudes. I draw on the principles of intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) and its modern reformulations that focus on media effects and Internet use (Paluck, 2010; Postmes & Baym, 2005), as well as on the literature on political disagreement and tolerance (Mutz, 2002b; Pattie & Johnston, 2008). Altogether, this study seeks to determine the extent to which mobilization is a source of exposure to political disagreement and how such exposure relates to perspective taking.

At the same time, this study does not seek to imply causality between exposure to political disagreement and its potential effects on perspective taking, for cross-sectional surveys do not account for temporal elements that could rule out reciprocal effects or reverse causality between cognitive experiences and attitudes. For instance, people may choose heterogeneous mobilization networks precisely because they appreciate approaching opposing viewpoints. This study's design is limited to conclude about the direction of the possible correlation, if any, between mobilization stimuli and individual attributes. It has nevertheless been acknowledged that conclusive evidence about the direction of causality obtained through meta-analysis of contact studies indicates that the path from contact to reduced prejudice is much stronger than the path from prejudice to reduced contact (Pettigrew, 1997; Powers & Ellison, 1995).

In the first part of this paper, I introduce the theoretical problem of disagreement in the context of contentious politics by reviewing current knowledge on the effects of political disagreement regarding protest mobilization and the role of political intermediaries therein. In the second part, I present research questions and hypotheses, after which I detail the research design and data collection. The third part also includes short descriptions of cases of anti-abortion and Catalan nationalist demonstrations that occurred in Spain in 2010. In the fourth section, I present the study's major findings, and in the last section, I briefly discuss the relevance of the findings and their implications for future research.

Exposure to Political Disagreement and Its Consequences

The study of political disagreement implies considering both the sources of exposure—passive encounters with dissonant views—and the active involvement or interaction with people who disagree. In general, both dimensions have been treated indistinctly and done so by arguing that interaction implies encounters with disagreement. However, while both dimensions aim to explain the social side of political attitudes, the mechanisms of passive exposure differ from those of active involvement and interaction.

Social network interaction with people who hold opposing political stances has been studied in multiple forms, including formal deliberations (Price et al., 2002), political talk within cross-cutting networks (Huckfeldt et al., 2004, Scheufele et al., 2006), meetings and public forums (Wojcieszak, Baek, & Delli Carpini, 2010), and online forums and message boards (González-Bailón et al., 2010; Wojcieszak, 2006; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). Discursive engagements are thought to expose people to dissimilar views by having them face political adversaries directly, for which there is evidence of attitudinal consequences, such as reduced polarization in opinion (Binder et al. 2009; Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2006), increased attitudinal ambivalence (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2006, pp. 89–124; Parsons, 2010; Visser & Mirabile, 2004), and increased individual awareness of oppositional viewpoints and political tolerance (Mutz, 1999).

Meanwhile, passive encounters with dissonant views have been studied in multiple contexts and by considering different sources: as a product of cross-pressures resulting from heterogeneous electoral preferences within social settings (Gimpel et al., 2004), as exposure to mass media (Stroud, 2011), and lately, through Internet use (Kim, 2011). In this study, I address Internet-mediated communication and online issue spaces as sources of exposure to disagreement, since they are central components of mobilization processes.

Mass media has been suggested as an important source for exposure to disagreeing positions, since balance is thought to be a central tenet of journalism (Huckfeldt et al., 2004) and because the impersonal nature of media is thought to discourage selective exposure (Mutz & Martin, 2001). However, in light of the dynamics of social media and Internet communication, mass media has shifted into a high choice environment, which raises strong concerns about how selective exposure risks avoiding disagreement (Stroud, 2008; Sunstein, 2009). At the same time, Internet-mediated communication can also expand the reach of the political communication system (Bimber, 2004), increase the diversity of perspectives on contentious issues (Page, 1996), and provide opportunities for encountering difference (Dahlberg, 2001). Indeed, such is the case for politically motivated actors with restricted access to mainstream media when they challenge the system or represent minority viewpoints.

Furthermore, changes in the communication landscape have reformed the economy of attention and considerably modified the role of media leaders. The role of influencer gains importance within specialized issue networks, especially in the context of social media. Changes in political communication dynamics have partly increased the protagonism of civil society organizations as political intermediaries, especially within specialized networks in which issue expertise is highly regarded. Social movement organizations have occupied central roles in the political landscape online, since they achieved an early presence through online interaction with their publics and through their social networking potential by leveraging Internet-mediated communication for collective action. These organizations have used organizational media to provide a context for collective action by framing particular issues, as well as offered a staging ground where people meet (McAdam et al., 1988). They rely on mediated dialogue as a means to connect individual interests to collective issues, and consequently, they

provide spaces for interaction and exposure to contending claims and adversarial positions. For these organizations, political disagreement is an inherent part of challenging the status quo and thus tends to be a substantial part of movement media.

Social movement organizations constitute a link between the structural political context in the public sphere and individual discussion networks. They transmit reliable information, influence beliefs, and incentivize action by acting as issue experts and as representatives of group interests. Expertise not only makes them highly influential to individual attitudes but may also counteract the negative effects of disagreement on ambivalence (McClurg, 2006).

Research on online exposure to disagreement has found that politically motivated discussions are less likely to contribute to cross-cutting political discussion than non-political discussions (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009), but also that social network sites contribute to exposure to political difference (Kim, 2011). These findings highlight the importance of differences among environments and in the role of agency within networks. The potential role of social movement media for promoting exposure to political disagreement therefore needs to be contextualized in these particular conditions of highly politicized issue publics that follow certain controversies and organizations that are strong media leaders.

Perspective Taking and the Effects of Exposure on Political Disagreement

Tolerance has widely been accepted as a desirable outcome of negotiating disagreement; it has also underscored implications for a normative understanding of democracy. Specifically, tolerating opposing views is part of valuing every political argument equally; a central tenet of democratic decision-making. However, tolerance also implies a negative attitude toward coexistence instead of the active consideration of conflicting perspectives (Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982). On this point, I propose to consider perspective taking as a behavioral intent that reflects attitudes toward political adversaries, given that it more precisely captures the expectations of democratic interaction between disagreeing actors. It implies both a cognitive process that leads to understanding others and a disposition toward actively acknowledging disagreement.

Perspective taking has been studied as the product of deliberative experiences in which exposure to disagreement occurs in face-to-face interactions (Gurin et al., 2002; Gurin et al., 2004; Nagda, 2006; Nagda & Zuniga, 2003) and in contexts in which political talk is motivated by exposure to political content. Perspective taking is akin to deliberative principles, such as the expected conscious effort of political adversaries to consider the various arguments on all sides of a public issue in a fair, egalitarian, and open manner (Gastil, 2000; Habermas, 1989; Rawls, 1996). According to Flavell (1975), perspective taking may also promote the desired outcomes of deliberative experiences, for it develops as individuals become more attentive and move from purely egocentric viewpoints to understanding the views of others (as cited in Thomson, 2007). It also implies the development of cognitive constructs that affect a person's understanding that seeing another's viewpoint is necessary for sustaining social interaction (Hale & Delia, 1976). Considering perspective taking to be a potential outcome of exposure to political disagreement highlights the importance of intermediaries in providing access and sense-making cues that enlarge the capacity to organize complex information with situational elements and contradictory content.

The role of social movement organizations in structuring issue networks is crucial to determining the degree of exposure to disagreement and is thus expected to be related to the demonstrators' disposition to take the perspectives of their political adversaries. In this sense, questioning the extent to which exposure to political disagreement in protest mobilization is related to perspective taking will provide evidence regarding the potential effects of political disagreement in contexts of salient controversy and active engagement.

Mobilization to Protest and Exposure to Political Disagreement

The role of mobilization in protest politics implies a need for public discussion in order to sustain publicly defensible stances. This role denotes interaction processes for collective reasoning that can occur over different time periods and in multiple communication formats. Movement media provide these spaces for impersonal communication with close and explicit adversaries. They work as "media-inspired discussion," a mechanism of social influence that encourages perspective taking as a

form of socially shared cognition (Paluck, 2010). The role of protest mobilization implies communication processes built on a particular type of referential knowledge that taps into one's self-awareness of situations of the protest issue in political contexts and can therefore promote passive interaction that implies considering adversarial viewpoints (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002).

According to communication theories of mobilization frames and alignment processes between organizations and demonstrators (Benford & Snow, 2000), the attitudes of movements themselves and their media structures toward political adversaries are more likely to correspond to the perception that mobilized people have about their political adversaries. According to Hale and Delia (1976), this perception may vary between attributions of others that respond to simple informational cues (such as particular stereotypes) or complex situational attributions in which people are seen in relation to various aspects of a situation (i.e., a comprehensive understanding of political positions) (as cited in Thomson, 2007). In this sense, references to political adversaries in mobilization frames will vary by organizations, their mobilization processes, and their contexts. Interactions with political adversaries tend to provide a constructive exposure to differences in political opinion with a more civil orientation toward conflict and, consequently, to provide bridges across lines of political difference.

People who abide challenging positions are inclined to develop an acceptance for differences between opposing groups for the sake of promoting social harmony (Mutz, 2002a). This finding implies the occurrence of two mechanisms that lead from exposure to political disagreement and, in turn, to political empathy regarding opposing viewpoints; on the one hand, when people face opposing perspectives, an increased awareness of rationales for differing viewpoints can become a process of de-provincialization in which these people become aware that their lifestyles and beliefs are not unique; on the other hand, the second mechanism, which is not based on cognition but on an affective tie, occurs when "individuals recognize that the content and extent of people's political discussions are less important than the quality of the personal relationships that they develop" (Mutz, 2002a, p. 114).

These cognitive and affective mechanisms tend to relate to the function of brokerage between opposing sides in two ways: reference and translation. On the one hand,

reference is the practice of acknowledging otherness through the deliberate introduction of actors involved and the discussion of their arguments with due consideration for contextual features and circumstances. This function plays a significant role in promoting inclusion in decision-making spaces by encouraging comprehension for difference and diversity. On the other hand, translation is the deliberate production of associations between self-positions and the stances of opposing actors through argumentative allusion and assimilation (de Souza Santos, 2003).

Exposure to movement media can occur via diverse channels, for which different levels of brokerage can be identified. In this sense, mobilization processes that address political disagreement are expected to promote a comprehensive perspective of political issues and to be relevant to encouraging the acquisition of issue knowledge and holding publicly defensible political stances. Thus, cross-references introduced during mobilization processes may provide potential participants with a confident introduction into political conflict by intermediaries who supply arguments and issue expertise. However, exposure to political disagreement can vary in terms of channel-specific messages, given the differences in how political adversaries are acknowledged in the construction of movement frames. Internet communication is expected to open spaces for addressing controversies, especially within publics that have developed alternative online media as a way to capture issue attention in new political spaces. The most relevant question is whether the use of Internet-mediated channels for protest mobilization will host media-inspired discussion and consequently be positively related to perspective taking. Considering the role of movement organizations in the reference and translation functions of the mobilization process, this study's first hypothesis can be stated more formally:

Hypothesis 1: Online mobilization is positively related to perspective taking for followers of mobilization agents when compared to people mobilized by other channels.

In addition to those among mobilization channels, differences among movement organizations are crucial. Mobilization agents have the power to build discourse and determine whether that discourse is self-referential or contextualized in a political

controversy in which grievances are exposed. Discourse can be interpreted as a roadmap by which to navigate a complex situation, for it implies the consideration of particular assumptions and judgments and provides worldviews that can, in turn, be shared among different subjects. Furthermore, discourse has the power to promote as well as constrain thought, speech, and action, since it embodies a particular conception of common sense and acceptable interpretation. Most importantly, discourse may embody power itself by validating some interests and repressing others (Dryzek, 2005). This characteristic is especially relevant for reversing the undesirable consequences of information fragmentation—the tendency to select information to reinforce political beliefs (Bimber, 2003; Mutz & Martin, 2001)—which leads to isolated discourses that are disconnected from a pluralistic conception of democracy (Sunstein, 2003). In this way, mobilization agents are expected to promote what Dryzek and Niemeyer (2006) propose to be meta-consensus—an agreement on the legitimacy of certain positions—in which people do not aim for a final agreement but instead acknowledge each other and the legitimacy of opinions that differ. From this perspective, individuals argue as people who accept each other’s colliding positions as legitimate (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008).

Movement organizations treat political adversaries differently depending on the issue, the mobilization context, and the position of the organization. These differences can be reflected in their communication strategies and, therefore, in the extent of exposure to political disagreement. These organizations can present their issue positions and arguments when using online channels for mobilizing action in completely different ways; they can provide references and acknowledge complete and contextualized perspectives of political issues, or they can isolate their followers by ignoring political adversaries and contending arguments. In the first case, they act as brokers between opposing stances and expose demonstrators to disagreement; in the second case, they provide self-referential perspectives without references to adversaries or opposing stances. The relevant direction for research on this approach to exposure to disagreement in protest mobilization is to examine whether higher brokerage between politically opposed groups provides exposure to disagreement and to what extent this exposure is associated with a higher disposition to perspective taking. Thus, a second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: Potential exposure to disagreement (i.e., higher levels of brokerage between actors with opposite issue positions) is associated with higher levels of perspective taking.

Furthermore, references to opposing stances need to be understood in terms of their contexts and purposes, for acknowledging disagreement implies respectful references to adversaries and opposing stances in a civil manner. Since the previous questions have focused on the level of exposure as a function of the structural conditions that determine brokerage, the approach should be complemented by investigating the quality of exposure. To this end, two elements are central: examining link polarity and the general tone of discourse. The first approach seeks to test whether hyperlinks between actors of opposing stances indicate acknowledgment of opposing stances or if they are signs or references with a negative connotation that reinforce one-sided perspectives. Meanwhile, the second approach involves scrutinizing general mobilization discourse for emotional reactions, which can expand the brokerage functions and better determine the quality of intergroup interaction. Content analysis of hyperlinks and protesters' emotions can also provide opportunities to test valence as a condition of the effectiveness of exposure to disagreement. Though a general emotion is not directly related to the mobilization process or the role of organized movements as mobilization agents, in this study it was expected that:

Hypothesis 3: Negative environments in intergroup online interactions are associated with lower levels of perspective taking.

Table 1.1. Summary of hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Online mobilization is positively related to perspective taking for followers of mobilization agents.

Hypothesis 2: Exposure to disagreement through brokerage between positions is positively related to perspective taking.

Hypothesis 3: Negative environments in intergroup interaction online (e.g., involving anger and frustration toward the protest issue) are associated with lower levels of perspective taking.

Methods

Data

Protest surveys were conducted during two major demonstrations in Spain for the project “Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation” through postage-paid mail-back questionnaires.² The cases for this study were limited to three demonstrations on two position issues in Spanish politics: against changes to the abortion legislation España Vida Sí on May 7, 2010, in Madrid (hereafter referred to as ‘pro-life’) and the Catalan self-determination demonstrations on June 12 and July 10 in Barcelona (Autodeterminació es democràcia [AED] and Som una nació [SUN], respectively; for details of the events and the survey, see Appendix Table A1). The three cases involved longstanding position issues in which political disagreement is explicit between opposing stances, which made them a convenient sample.

The protest survey procedure was designed to cultivate probability sampling by assessing the entire demonstration area so that each protester had the same opportunity to be surveyed. Further controls for potential self-selection biases in survey response, were implemented by conducting brief, face-to-face short surveys during the event in order to control for differences among onsite protestors and those who returned their survey by mail.³

Analysis

The proposed approach involved a similar case analysis of three protest events in Spain in order to keep the political context relatively constant. Individual-level protest survey data were combined with data of social network analysis from hyperlink networks in order to assess individual attitudes and behaviors, as well as mobilization practices at the organizational level. With this approach, it was possible to identify the central mobilization actors and explore hyperlinking practices and the contents of their mobilization messages and thereby assess differences in exposure to political disagreement between demonstrators of each organization.

² <http://www.protestsurvey.eu/>.

³ A complete description of the protest survey process is available in Walgrave and Verhulst’s (2009) “Protest Surveying: Testing the Feasibility and Reliability of an Innovative Methodological Approach to Political Protest” at <http://www.protestsurvey.eu/index.php?page=publications&id=1>; a bias analysis of the method appears in Walgrave, Wouters, and Ketelaars (2012).

Perspective taking predictions were estimated by using ordered probit regression models. Considering that respondents who reported being mobilized by the same organization were exposed to similar frames, the observations were not expected to be independent. Robust standard errors clustered by mobilizing organization were used to negotiate group variation and account for its effects. This technique reduced problems concerning heterogeneity and lack of normality, given that demonstrators might have been correlated within organizations though independent between organizations.

Measures

For the dependent variable, perspective taking was gauged by asking respondents to rate their agreement with the statement, “I always try to look at everybody’s side of an argument before I make a decision.” This item was a limited version of the perspective taking battery proposed by Davis’s (1980) seven-item subscale⁴ and constituted part of this study’s survey. Considering that the survey was administered in the context of a particular issue, an implicit priming of issue-specific adversaries and opposing stances was supposed. Low variations among cases in the dependent variable (i.e., perspective taking) could respond to both difficulties involved in measuring attitudes and the use of a single item on the questionnaire. Respondents identified the protest conveners and the mobilization channels via which they received the call to action for each event. In this way, it was determined that the pro-life events involved three organizations (i.e., Hazte Oir, Derecho a Vivir, and Provida) and that Catalan independence demonstrations involved one organization each (i.e., Plataforma pel Dret a Decidir and Òmnium Cultural). A final group of respondents included all those who reported not being mobilized by an organization. Differences on perspective taking among respondents mobilized by each organization are reported in Figure 1.1.

⁴ The seven items proposed by Davis (1980) on a five-point scale anchored by 0 (i.e., “Does not describe me well”) and 4 (i.e., “Describes me very well”) were:

1. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.
2. If I’m sure I’m right about something, I don’t waste much time listening to other people’s arguments. (-)
3. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
4. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
5. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other guy’s” point of view. (-)
6. I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
7. When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to “put myself in his [or her] shoes” for a while.

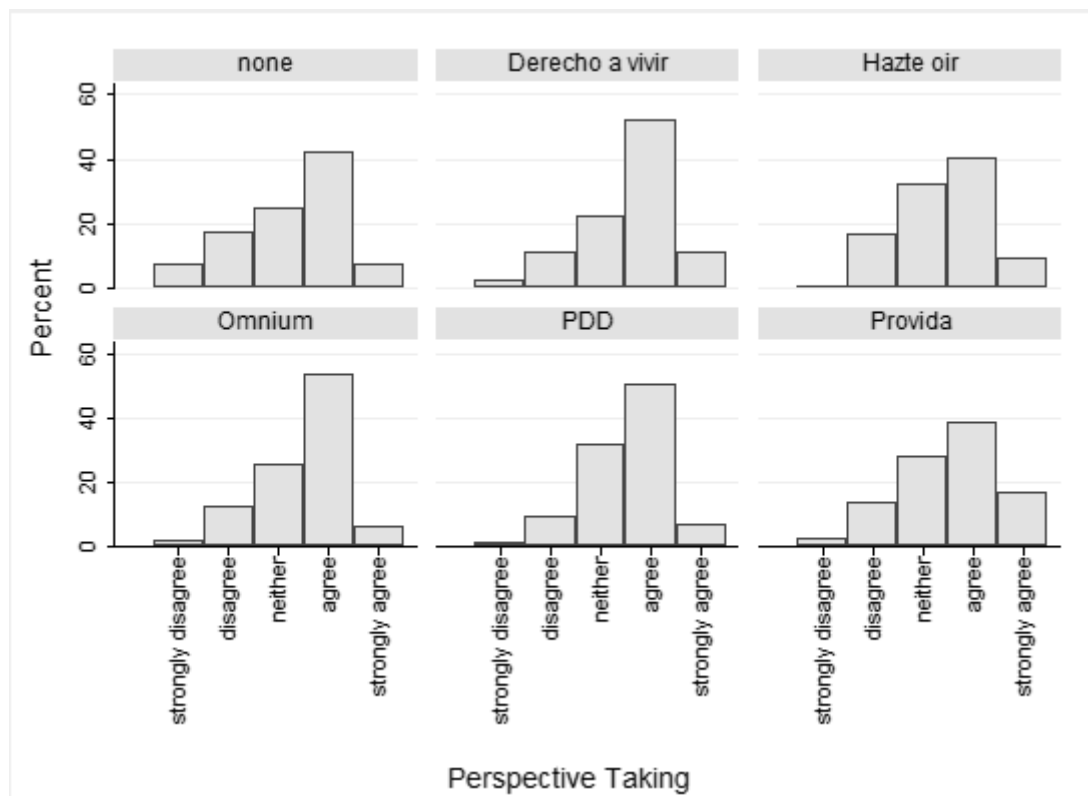


Figure 1.1. Distribution of agreement with each category of perspective taking by mobilization actor.

Online mobilization was measured by considering any of three reported channels for information about the demonstration: organization websites, social networks, and email. A question about frequency of Internet use for political purposes was also used to assess potential exposure to information online if respondents reported online mobilization. Exposure to political disagreement was gauged by conducting a structural analysis of the organizations’ websites within the issue networks online. Respondents were grouped according to which mobilizing agent they attributed to their attendance, while the structure of online mobilization networks was assessed in terms of brokerage between opposed positions. Mobilizing organizations were used to identify issue networks for each protest event (Rogers, 2002)⁵ by taking their sites as seeds in a web crawl. Issue networks resulted in networks broader than those of the mobilization actors, since they were formed by the interlinkings between actors central to the given issue, including other key players in different issue-stances and types of organizations. Two types of analyses were subsequently conducted:

⁵ Hyperlink network analysis was performed by using Issue Crawler by the Digital Methods Initiative.

1. Structural analysis of online networks provided further evidence for references between opposing stances, since linkage between websites indicated how contents were assembled for navigation and how they became indexed as search engine results.⁶ These elements were the devices that permitted adversarial views to come together in online communication experiences in cases when they served as cross-cutting bridges (i.e., brokerage); they could also be used as within-group connections that formed isolated echo-chambers (i.e., self-reference).
2. Contents analysis of websites was conducted in order to establish issue stances and to link polarity.

Controls

To isolate the effects of exposure to disagreement in the mobilization process from other sources, this study controlled for media channels, social networks, and other sources of political information (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Proposed explanatory factors for perspective taking.

Main independent variables	Variables used in empirical analysis
i. Political use of the Internet*	Frequency of Internet use and political use of the Internet
ii. Brokerage scores by mobilization actor network ⁷	Hyperlink network analysis (not in survey), Brokerage levels in hyperlink network, and content analysis of the websites of mobilization actors
iii. Emotions toward protest issue	Assessment of anger and frustration toward the protest issue
Control variables	
i. Political discussion	Frequency of political discussion
ii. Social embeddedness	Membership in associations
iii. Demographics	Gender, age, education, class

⁶ For a more detailed explanation and justification of the structural analysis of online networks approach, see Appendix 1.

⁷ Normalized brokerage scores were calculated for websites acting as contact points or representatives between groups (Gould & Fernandez, 1989).

Other individual traits relevant to attitudes	
i. Issue knowledge	Press, TV, or radio reported as most important mobilization channel
ii. Group identity	Identification with protest organizers and other protesters

* Internet use for the pro-life cases.

Since interactions between opposing stances in online mobilization could represent a very small portion of intergroup contact, analysis had to consider a much wider context of mobilization. Additional sources of intergroup social influence from individual-level networks (e.g., close friends, relatives, and colleagues) have been shown to be critical to determine individual acceptance of opposing issue positions through indirect contact (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004). Political discussion and membership in associations were also controlled for. From the available data, it was impossible to determine whether socialization resulting from membership in associations occurred within homogeneous groups or extended to intergroup interaction.

However, the cognitive value of increased interaction in associational life was considered in the analysis in order to control for possible sources of exposure to political information. Further controls for additional sources of information and knowledge levels were desirable, but the only data available were the identification of the press, radio, or television as mobilization channels. Such data proved beneficial, for the relationship between media information on the protest issue and individual attitudes may have been mediated by cognitive factors. Media consumption has been shown to be positively correlated with higher levels of political sophistication (Guo & Moy, 1998) and can therefore be expected to increase issue knowledge independent of whether information was one-sided, since it provides contextual data such as representations, and problem analyses that were expected to provoke greater self-awareness. Respondents who found out about the demonstration through these channels were assumed to have higher levels of issue knowledge than respondents made aware of the demonstration through face-to-face channels⁸ or advertisements (i.e., flyers and/or posters).

⁸ Partner and/or family, friends and/or acquaintances, people at school or work or (fellow) members of an organization or association.

The context of mobilization and case descriptions

The three cases analyzed in this study occurred during a very brief period from May to July 2010 under similar institutional contexts but with important differences according to contexts of the particular issues. The cases were part of longstanding contentious issues in Spanish politics, and the demonstrations were triggered by policy changes (or demands for such) and staged by organized movements with fairly stable actors. Though all cases were selected for their involvement of position issues, political disagreement was much harder to identify in the Catalan self-determination cases, since organized action for Spanish nationalism tends to be less visible than for the pro-choice movement. Furthermore, the constitutional revision of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia necessitated a very different procedure than the legislative process of the abortion issue in terms of timespan, political responsibility, and the visibility of the implied actors. The Spanish nationalists' lobby was not very active after the emergence of the Partido Popular (PP), and the autonomous regions of Aragon, Balearic Islands, and the Valencian Community contested the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 2007. These circumstances suggested that the Spanish nationalists' discourse tended to be much less organized by group action and much less centralized than that of the pro-choice actors who argued and actively lobbied in favor of policy change. Nevertheless, a counter-demonstration to the SUN event was organized in Madrid on the same day (July 10, 2010) by the Unión Progreso y Democracia (UPyD), a national conservative party with minor parliamentary representation, to demand the government's respect for the decision of the Constitutional Tribunal and to condemn the Catalan government for heading a demonstration that endangered constitutional order.⁹

During the study period, the actors of Spanish nationalism were quite varied, and Catalan parties such as Ciutadans de Catalunya and the Partido Popular de Catalunya (i.e., the regional party of the PP), along with minor parties of the extreme right and some Catalan civil society organizations and opinion leaders, were the most pressing adversaries in the Catalan public sphere. At the national level, the actors who shared the Spanish nationalist side of the cleavage were mostly of the parties on the political right (e.g., PP and UPyD) and extreme right (e.g., Democracia Nacional, Falange, and Fuerza Nueva), as well as sectors of left-wing parties such as the Partido Socialista Obrero

⁹ "Manifiesto en defensa del orden constitucional" at http://www.upyd.es/contenidos/noticias/5/42644-MANIFIESTO_EN_DEFENSA_DEL_ORDEN_CONSTITUCIONAL (accessed February 10, 2011).

Español. Media interventions of political elites and prestigious bloggers during the study period shaped the Spanish nationalist discourse in the public sphere, and the significant presence of extreme right movements was also visible in online issue networks. A substantial proportion of media actors has been classified as having particular stances, for both Catalan media and media with national coverage have explicitly expressed their stances on the issue of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia.¹⁰

Mobilization actors were also quite different between cases due to the movement traditions and organizational traits. The main difference between the two demonstrations on the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia involved the stance of the mobilization groups on Catalan independence. In the AED demo, the Plataforma pel Dret a Decidir (PDD) played a central role with actors in the left–independence movement and the political elite in favor of Catalan independence, while in the SUN demo the PDD was part of the bigger coalition along with other parties and civil society organizations who questioned the independence alternative and promoted the autonomic way for Catalan sovereignty. This implied internal confrontation between the organizers in the SUN demo in order to negotiate opposing stances on independence or greater autonomy statutorily. At the time, the political elite in Spain were positioned along the nationalist cleavage with the Catalan independence parties on one side and the Spanish nationalists on the other (with some autonomist or federalist parties or factions in the center). The most prominent Catalan independence party at the time, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, led the campaign under the slogan “good-bye Spain” and framed the protest issue as a “clash between opposing legitimacies” as they signaled the Constitutional Court as their political adversary and sustained that it had lost its prestige and turned into a battlefield for big national parties. The more moderate autonomist parties (Convergència i Unió [CIU], Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds [ICV]), and the federalist (Catalan Socialists [PSC]) framed their call in defense of national dignity and respect and also blamed the Constitutional Court for adopting an inflexible and closed interpretation of the Constitution at odds with the 1978 Constitution. Both parts finally agreed on the common slogan “We are a nation, we decide” in order to present a single expression in favor of a broad conception of Catalan sovereignty. The decision to appeal to a wide range of actors in the SUN demonstration implied the need to avoid heated encounters

¹⁰ On November 26, 2009, 12 Catalan newspapers published a common editorial titled “La dignitat de Catalunya,” which was also endorsed by other media with local presence.

between the organizers and discerning actors, especially in the case of the regional parties and their national counterparts, which has been reflected in their mobilization discourse.

Regarding organizational differences, PDD has set up a highly coordinated organization of local campaigns since 2007 in order to carry out independence consultations (e.g., Coordinadora Nacional de Consultes per la Independència) with the assistance of local governments. Òmnium Cultural has been a centrally coordinated entity with 27 local offices in Catalonia that lead the SUN platform along with the local offices of the parties involved in the organization. Survey results showed significant differences between levels of identification with other people present at the demonstration between the SUN and AED demos, as well as identification with any organization staging the demonstration between Òmnium and the PDD. These might have indicated differences in the mobilization processes as well.

For the pro-life event, the differences between mobilizing organizations were also relevant in assessing the type of mobilization discourse. The pro-life movement has hosted an annual demonstration on March 25 for the “Day of Life” or the “Day for the Right to be Born,” though in 2010 the event became a contestation to the government for changes to the law recently established weeks before on March 7. Since 2009, the main actors in the pro-life movement have been divided in their efforts; therefore Provida (i.e., the Spanish federation of pro-life associations) did not participate in organizing the event. Nevertheless, 13% of the survey respondents reported Provida to be their mobilization source. The larger part of the mobilization effort was made by Hazte Oir and Derecho a Vivir. At the time of the study, Hazte Oir was the most active pro-life advocacy organization online and had multiple local offices in Spain in addition to worldwide offices, as well as a vast presence on online social networks. It was the central organizer of the pro-life event and co-director of Derecho a Vivir, which has been a campaign for the right to life since 2008 as a response to the incumbent government’s abortion policies.

Differences in mobilization strategies between cases

Recent research has forecast that alternative online media and email communication

will become central factors for protest mobilization (van Laer, 2010). However, from the three events surveyed in this study and by comparison to similar data from the Spanish context (i.e., CIS 2736 data and of other cases in protest survey research), large differences have existed between mobilization channels depending on the protest event.

The pro-life protest was staged by a longstanding movement and a tight network of conservative media; therefore, mobilization was executed via organizational channels and movement media. The fact that three major mobilization actors were identified responds to the fact that previous demonstrations in the pro-life movement had given different levels of visibility to the actors and that one had differences with the other organizations in the main event platform for the 2010 event.

The AED case was led by a very tight network of organizations involved in the Catalan independence consultation, but it appealed to a wider public not only united around the Catalonian independence stance but also interested in more general claims to self-determination. Unsurprisingly, this protest platform aimed to temporarily unite existing groups, therefore advertising the event was reported to be the more active than other demonstrations, as well as compared to other mobilization actors in the AED demo. This case was quite an internally-focused event, since 70% of respondents reported that they had frequently received information from the event organizers. The AED was also the only case in which online mobilization represented more than 60% of the mobilization channels, since for the pro-life and SUN events the three online channels only represented 35.1% and 15.6% of the mobilization channels identified, respectively (Figure 1.2).

For the SUN case, there were some differences, since the protest event was co-organized by many groups who concentrated their efforts around an existing organization. Though all mobilization efforts were built upon a protest platform, the strength of the trigger for social unrest that signified the Constitutional Court's ruling led to the involvement of a wide range of actors, which privileged the role of the media not only in providing their own positions but also in closely following the formation of the SUN platform.

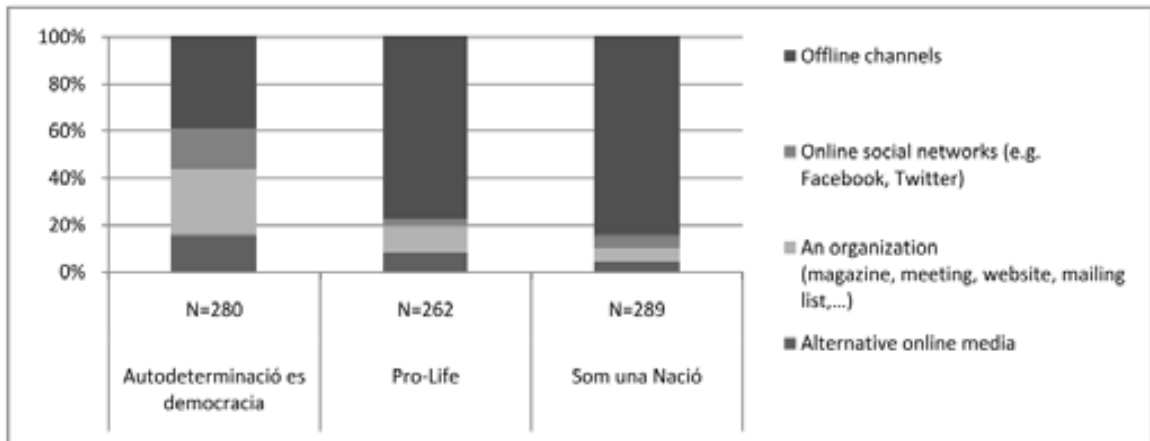


Figure 1.2. Most important mobilization channels reported by event.

Newspapers played a very important role in the SUN case (28.4%), which is reflected in the fact that 16 Catalan papers each published a common editorial on the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia issue. In this study, online and printed press were not differentiated in the survey. Radio and television played the most important roles in mobilization to SUN (49.8%) and pro-life (32.1%) demonstrations. Only the media actors who took an explicit stance on the issue were considered for hyperlink network analysis.

The use of online mobilization channels did not follow the patterns for political use of the Internet ($r = 0.194$). Differences between organizations' publics also indicated potential exposure to the issue networks and thus to political disagreement (Figure 1.3).

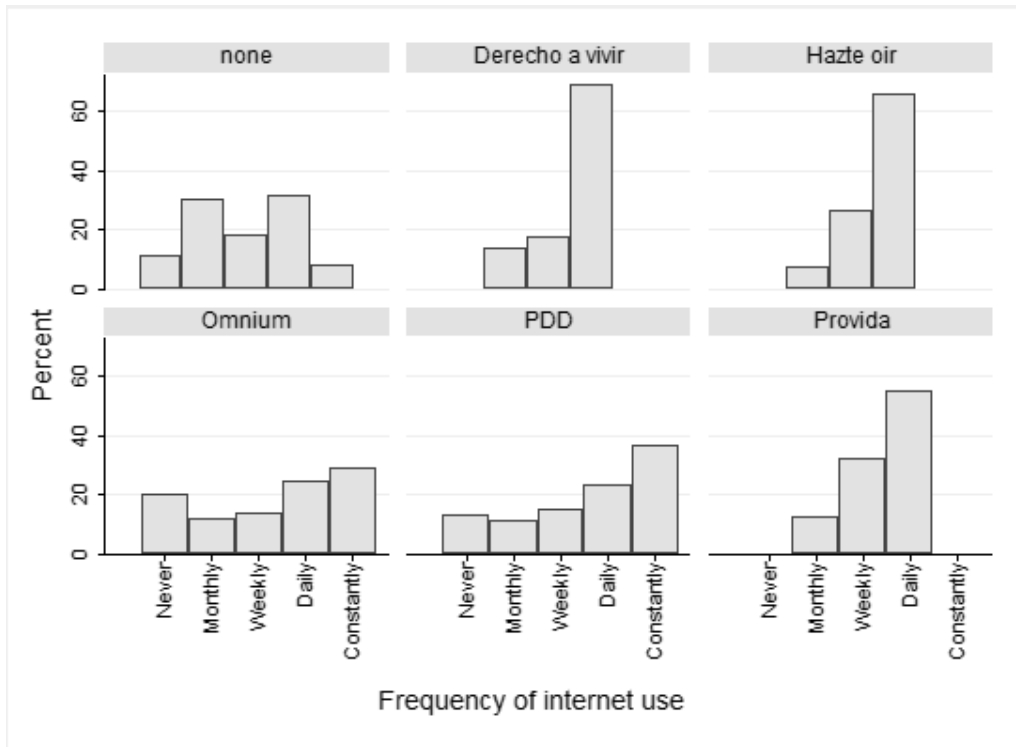


Figure 1.3. Political use of the Internet (individual data by mobilizing organizations).

Brokerage: Political disagreement as hyperlinks between opposing stances

One of the central contributions of this paper is its establishing the existence of bridges between opposing stances in protest mobilization. Structural assessment analysis revealed very low brokerage activity for cross-cleavage communication for the three issue networks. As expected, this result suggests that hyperlinks from mobilizing organizations to the websites of political adversaries (i.e., representative brokerage) constituted a minor part of issue networks, given that they uphold position issues. In both Catalan self-determination cases, a higher proportion of actors were brokers in cross-cleavage discourse than in the pro-life case, but very low levels of direct interlinking between political adversaries was the norm for all three cases (see Figure 1.4 for the main mobilization agents and Figure A1 for all the organizations involved and different types of brokerage).

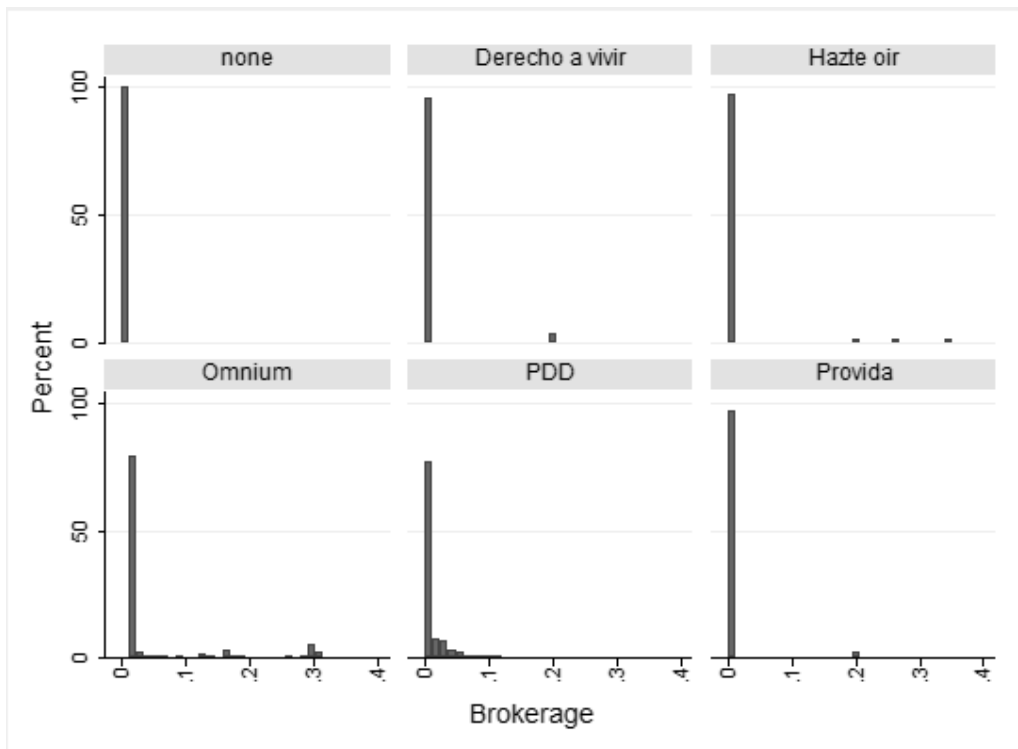


Figure 1.4. Brokerage scores for representatives by organization (i.e., mobilization agent). Multiple values represent respondents who followed multiple organizations.

The fact that organizations provided cross-cutting references even at very low levels is crucial to substantiating the theoretical expectations of exposure to disagreement. Compared to other actors in the issue networks (e.g., media, government, parties, and academic sources), the mobilizing organizations identified by protesters were responsible for more than 45% of the brokerage in the SUN case, 27% in the AED event, and 2.5% in the pro-life case (see Figure A1). This difference can be interpreted by examining the roles played by protest platforms and campaigns in each case. Though both organizations represented highly organized and traditional movements, in the AED case the mobilization effort was widely distributed under the PDD platform, by contrast to the prominent activity of Hazte Oir in the pro-life case.

Moreover, differences between organizations were important, for they reflect communication strategies addressed to particular organizational members, issue publics, and mobilization contexts. Regarding membership, the PDD and Hazte Oir played similar roles in leading two of the events, for which they needed to provide arguments for their causes within their mostly homogeneous respective networks. PDD's Catalan independence stance and Hazte Oir's anti-government discourse regarding abortion policy were sharply focused on particular publics within a singular perspective of their

respective issues and on the protest targets (i.e., the government and the Constitutional Tribunal respectively) instead of on the more general adversarial stances. Conversely, the role of organizations in the Òmniium Cultural mobilization network (and the SUN platform) was less prominent in the call to action and allowed for broader perspectives within discourses about the issues. Since Provida was not involved in the organization of the event, it assumed a less accusatory position that simply defended the pro-life perspective instead of attacking the government or defending an argument regarding particular legislation. Òmniium Cultural cultivated a particular issue context in which an encompassing discourse that brought together all actors involved also allowed a broad discussion of multiple positions on the issue's stances. The traditional media and the heterogeneity of the actors involved in the staging and framing processes also favored a rich discourse that accommodated adversarial positions.

Results

To explain differences among groups, three regression models were used to assess the effect of each of the main explanatory factor. The first model assessed results for mobilization via the Internet, while the second model included brokerage scores for the mobilization agents. The third model assessed the incidence of emotions. All three models take respondents who reported that no particular organization had motivated their attendance at the events as reference groups.

Table 1.3. Ordered probit regression for perspective taking (grouped by staging organizations).

	Online mobilization		Brokerage		Brokerage and emotions	
	Coef.	Robust Std Err	Coef.	Robust Std Err	Coef.	Robust Std Err
INDIVIDUAL TRAITS						
Angry/Frustrated					-0.088*	(0.054)
Internet use	-0.291***	(0.058)	-0.285***	(0.056)	-0.600***	(0.083)
ORGANIZATIONS						
Derecho a Vivir (DAV)	-1.010***	(0.329)	-1.055***	(0.322)	-2.703***	(0.486)
Hazte Oir (HO)	-1.779***	(0.224)	-1.773***	(0.217)	-2.312***	(0.337)
Ominum Cultural (OC)	-0.394***	(0.111)	-0.687***	(0.068)	-1.855***	(0.295)
Plat. Dret a Decidir (PDD)	-0.559**	(0.238)	-0.624***	(0.222)	-1.688***	(0.399)
Pro Vida (PV)	5.249***	(0.199)	5.182***	(0.195)	6.682***	(0.502)
Internet use*DAV	0.634***	(0.124)	0.645***	(0.122)	1.138***	(0.188)
Internet use*HO	0.775***	(0.064)	0.770***	(0.062)	0.899***	(0.083)
Internet use*OC	0.410***	(0.049)	0.406***	(0.048)	0.705***	(0.07)
Internet use*PDD	0.355***	(0.059)	0.353***	(0.057)	0.675***	(0.09)
Internet use*PV	-1.494***	(0.075)	-1.477***	(0.071)	-2.051***	(0.181)
Brokerage			0.306***	(0.114)	0.508***	(0.144)
CONTROL VARIABLES						
Political discussion	0.359***	(0.098)	0.353***	(0.1)	0.311***	(0.084)
Social embeddedness	0.078	(0.062)	0.078	(0.062)	0.076	(0.075)
Issue Knowledge	-0.009	(0.187)	-0.006	(0.181)	-0.048	(0.241)
Group identity	0.450***	(0.158)	0.427***	(0.164)	0.333	(0.299)
Age	0.003	(0.007)	0.003	(0.006)	0.003	(0.009)
Male	0.338*	(0.189)	0.336*	(0.19)	0.28	(0.237)
Education (Primary)	0.069	(0.768)	0.009	(0.746)	0.076	(0.491)
Education (Secondary)	-0.734	(0.497)	-0.79	(0.481)	-0.532**	(0.266)
Education (Tertiary)	-0.73	(0.464)	-0.796*	(0.443)	-0.653**	(0.331)
Class (Lower middle)	0.213	(0.149)	0.226	(0.152)	0.350*	(0.213)
Class (Upper middle)	0.188	(0.195)	0.209	(0.206)	0.203	(0.245)
cut1 Constant	-4.085***	(0.418)	-4.111***	(0.41)	-5.357***	(0.292)
cut2 Constant	-1.918***	(0.459)	-1.944***	(0.445)	-3.274***	(0.319)
cut3 Constant	-0.355	(0.489)	-0.38	(0.475)	-1.667***	(0.323)
cut4 Constant	2.584***	(0.619)	2.564***	(0.606)	1.362***	(0.42)
Observations	612		612		532	
Pseudo R ²	0.03		0.031		0.034	

Robust standard errors in parentheses

Reference categories were “No education,” “Working class,” and “No mobilizing organization.”

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

The first model assessed online mobilization, which was taken as the interaction between Internet use and mobilization by any of the protest conveners. Evidence thus

substantiated the Hypothesis 1, since following mobilization agents online was positively related to perspective taking, while the contrary was true for Internet users who did not report a mobilization agent (Figure 1.5). Since Internet use had a significant and negative effect on perspective taking, mediation was clearly important; it indicated that demonstrators who used the Internet with no reference from the organizations staging the events had either less cross-stance exposure or lacked the enabling conditions for the cognitive and affective mechanisms of taking opposing perspectives. The interactions between organizational mobilization and Internet use revealed a positive and significant value except for Provida followers, which offers additional support for the role of Internet use compared to organizational followers who relied on other information channels.

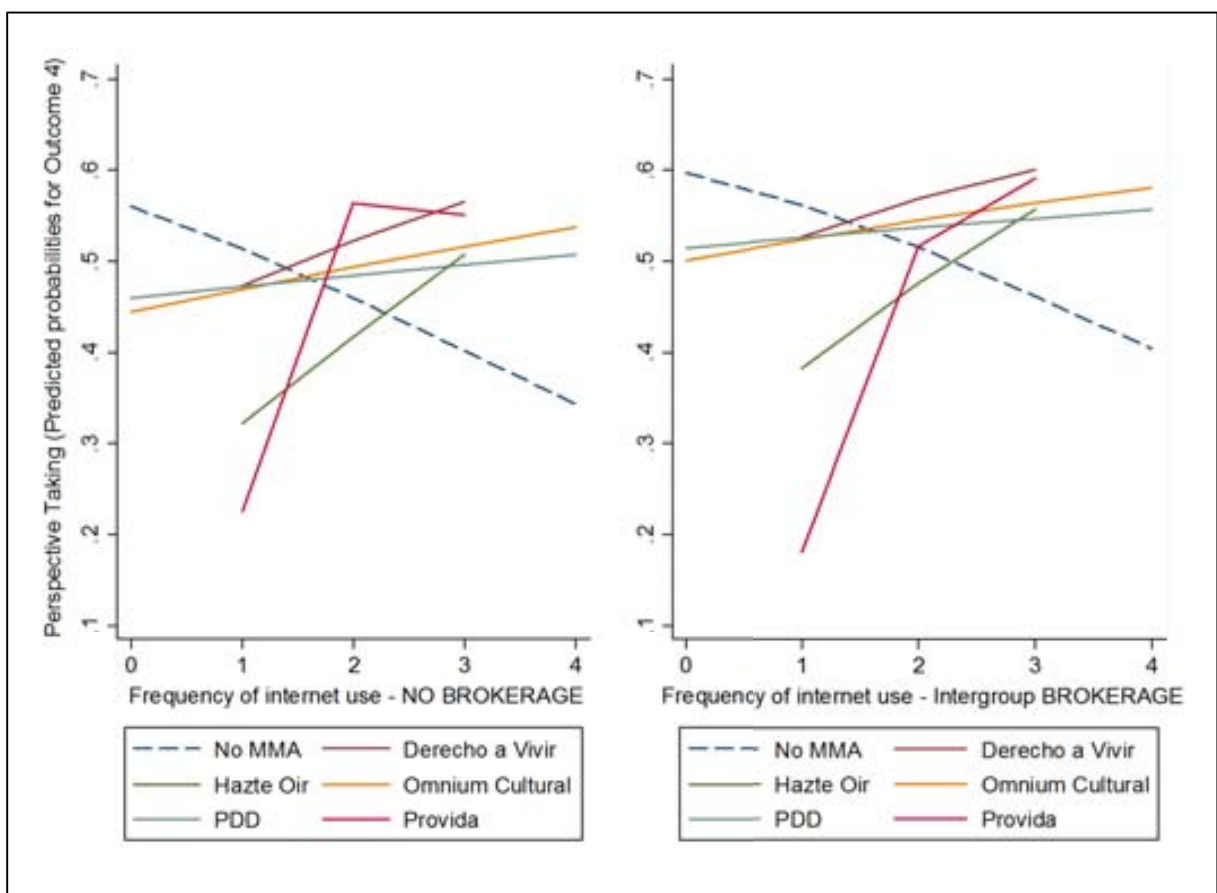


Figure 1.5. Perspective taking by Internet use (predicted probabilities of having high levels).

The second model introduced brokerage in order to determine the extent to which the role of the mobilizing organization in the issue network determined the conditions of exposure to disagreement. Brokerage turned out to be a strong and significant predictor

of perspective taking in the hypothesized direction. As shown in Figure 7, differences between brokerage confirm that the probability of higher perspective taking values augmented when respondents reported online mobilization and, more importantly, that the role of mobilization agents as brokers between lines of political difference matters. Brokerage slightly increased the probability of taking the perspective of political adversaries for all five cases of online mobilization.

Respondents who did not follow any mobilization agent (i.e., the reference case signified by the dashed line) lowered their disposition to take alternative perspectives as they used the Internet more frequently. However, respondents who encountered an online environment in which mobilization agents brokered opposing issue stances were more likely to take alternative perspectives. This result may emerge from the effect of brokerage in determining the shape of issue networks to a greater extent than the direct effect of references in organizational websites.

The third model introduced a variable which offered a combined assessment of individual levels of anger and frustration toward the protest issue. Results showed a significant effect of these emotions in reducing the disposition for perspective taking (Figure 1.6).

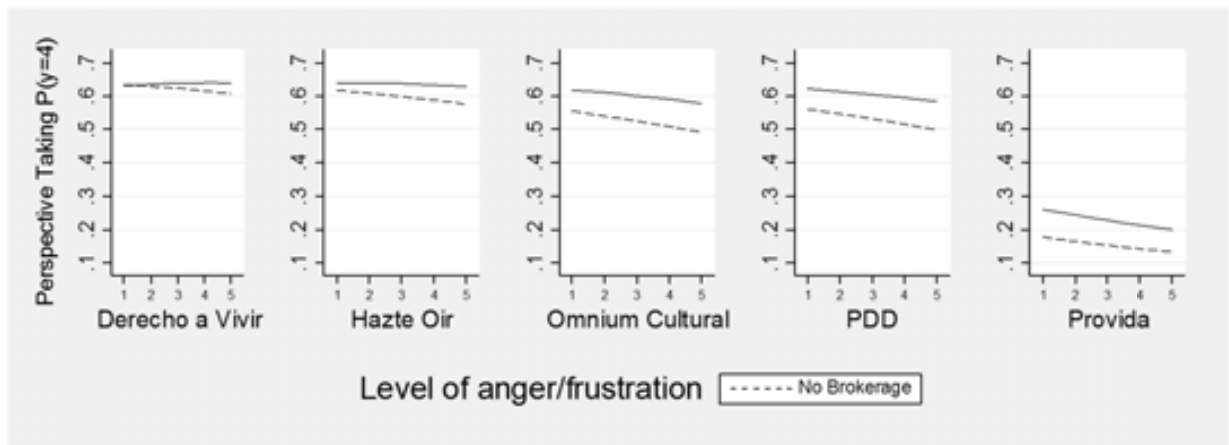


Figure 1.6. The effect of emotions on perspective taking among followers of online mobilization agents.

There was no evidence to explain differences between mobilization agents, though the results for the Provida case could have been produced by its low involvement in the event and its differences with the protest conveners.

Discussion

This paper aimed to examine how online mobilization provides opportunities for exposure to opposing stances. More particularly, it was expected that exposure would be positively related to individual dispositions for taking the perspectives of political adversaries. This expectation implies that mobilizing organizations play a key role as brokers who avoid fragmentation online by providing bridges across lines of political difference. In this sense, brokerage can be related to democratic values and attitudes.

The results obtained from the analyses provide evidence that confirms these assertions. Relying exclusively on survey data (Model 1), evidence shows that the role of online mobilization is positively related to perspective taking. This analysis is relevant to claiming that organizations matter, though an actual mechanism can be established by examining the structure and contents of mobilization messages. When enriching the survey data with hyperlink analysis of the issue networks (Model 2), it is possible to conclude that the relationships between organizational mobilization and perspective taking are stronger when organizations broker opposing stances.

Studying political disagreement via structural network analysis is a novel approach to mediated exposure. Though low levels of intergroup interaction were expected between political adversaries in mobilization processes, the weak involvement of some of the organizations in the particular protest events reveal few possibilities for explaining differences between cases regarding the main independent variable. However, given the existence of bridges between opposing stances through hyperlink network analysis, it is important to recognize the central role of organizations in shaping online content. Moreover, this is especially important given that online issue networks are a prominent entry point into information about both the demonstration and general issue. At the same time, the positive and significant relationship between brokerage and perspective taking for most cases substantiates the second claim regarding the direct relationship between structural linkages as potential sources of exposure to disagreement and perspective taking. As aforementioned, it is impossible to make a causal claim regarding the relationship between exposure to disagreement and perspective taking, since demonstrators with higher regard for considering opposing perspectives could select the organization they follow precisely because it provides reference to adversaries.

Hypothesis 3 extends this study by investigating the conditions of exposure. The references provided by organizations were not only expected to link opposing stances, but also to do so in a civil manner without promoting hate discourse or delegitimizing political adversaries. To inspect the particular issue contexts and the mediational role, a contextual approach was used by considering the emotional setting for each case as an additional factor related to brokerage; this was used as a proxy for evaluating mediation roles and taken to indicate contact valence. Anger and frustration turned out to be negatively related to perspective taking for four of the five cases. However, further research is needed to capture differences at the level of content of the organizational frames and their use of references to political adversaries.

This research contributes largely by identifying the importance of organizations as political mediators that shape issue spaces by establishing connections between lines of political difference. Its findings speak to research on political expertise (McClurg, 2006) by providing further insights into the roles of mediators, as well as into particular contexts that clearly differ in their aspects of protest mobilization. By also focusing on online interaction between opposing issue-stances, this study also provides opportunities to advance the concept of exposure by both exploring hyperlink networks and measuring structural differences among intermediaries.

However, a few caveats should be considered while interpreting this research. First, and as aforementioned, this study was limited by its incapacity to draw conclusions about the direction of the correlation between online mobilization and perspective taking. Nevertheless, meta-analysis of contact studies has provided conclusive evidence on the direction of causality; the path from contact to reduced prejudice is more often taken than the path from prejudice to reduced contact (Pettigrew, 1997; Powers & Ellison, 1995). Since brokerage between opposing sides can act as a contact experience, these studies can better suggest the expected direction.

Second, the generalizability of these results is of course subject to important limitations. The protest survey targeted people who were highly interested in politics and who were involved in political action and issue associations far more than the population mean. Even if protest politics has recently undergone a normalization process in which

demonstrators are less different from people who do not protest (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998; van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001), studying demonstrators can provide conclusions generalizable to people highly interested in other forms of political engagement. It also typically challenges research on disagreement by addressing online publics involved in political and nonpolitical forums.

Third, regarding the measurement of key variables, given the limited space of the mail-back survey and in order to avoid respondent fatigue, the survey contained only one question to assess perspective taking, which was included within the items of the efficacy battery. Including other questions in order to assess the applicability of this concept and making it issue-specific by providing reference to actual adversaries could have increased the reliability of the measure. Moreover, the results regarding political use of the Internet were likely to overestimate the amount of exposure to online political contents in which protest respondents engage. Respondents were left to decide what constituted political, social, and current affairs regarding their following the news and online sources of information; this broad framing was chosen in order to disregard Internet use for information searches on contents including work-related material, leisure, and entertainment, as well as to limit it exclusively to issue-specific content. However, since the study was conducted during a highly intense political moment for the particular issues assessed, political controversy generated high levels of interest and media coverage, which most likely stimulated higher levels of online action by mobilizing groups.

Altogether, further research on the content of mobilization messages instead of the context in which they occur will provide a better understanding of the opportunities for encountering differences via online issue networks. Such research would be especially relevant in the context of online social media, in which the polarity of references and the intentionality behind linkages to opposing perspectives are more evident than in hyperlink networks.

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Appendix

Table A1- Description of the events and the survey

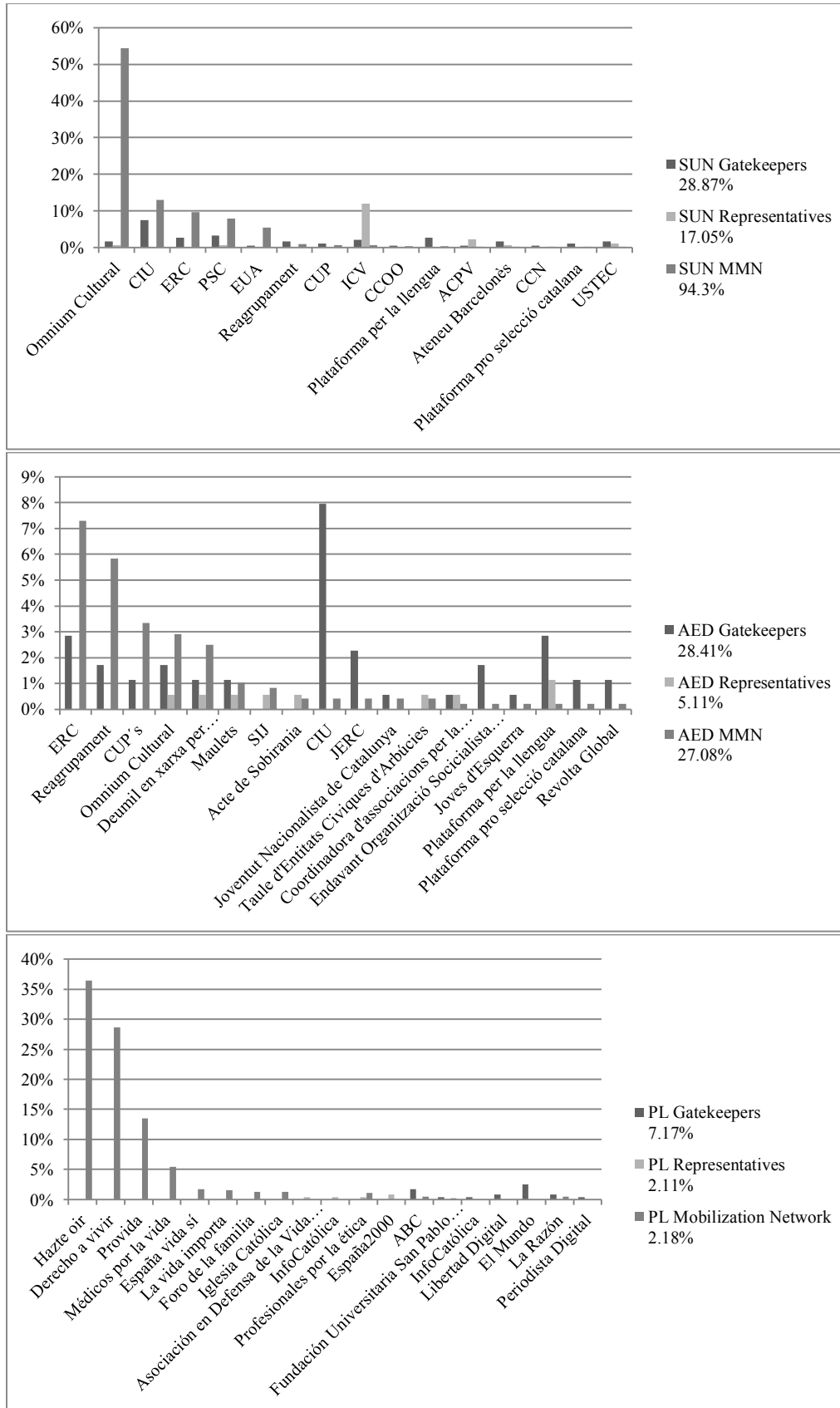
Issue	Prolife Movement	Catalan Nationalism	
Event	España Vida Sí May 7 th 2010	Autodeterminació es Democracia June 12 th 2010	Som Una Nació: Nosaltres decidim July 10 th 2010
Prominent Mobilization agents (cases)	Hazte Oir Derecho a Vivir Pro Vida	PDD	Ominum Cultural
Mobilization Agents (Seeds in Issue network)	Médicos por la vida España vida sí La vida importa Foro de la familia Iglesia Católica Profesionales por la ética Intereconomía Socialistas por la vida Ginecólogos por la vida Plataforma por la vida Cada vida importa Diario ABC Diario La razón Estudiantes por la vida Red Madre Referendum vida sí Árbol de la vida A. de familias numerosas A. padres de la Iglesia Evangélica Cívica Conferencia episcopal F. Medicina CEU-San Pablo Fundación Madrina Manos Limpias Marcha por la vida Nasciturus Pediatras por el derecho a la vida Red Misión The Benenson Society UNICEF Vida y familia	Plataforma Pel Dret a Decidir Coordinadora Nacional Consultes Independència Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya Reagrupament Sobirania i progrès Candidatures d'Unitat Popular Ominum Cultural Deumil en xarxa per l'Autodeterminació Maulets Sobirania i justícia Acte de Sobirania Ateneu Sobiranista Català Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya Convergència i Unió JERC Joventut Nacionalista de Catalunya Plataforma per la llengua Taule d'Entitats Cíviques d'Arbúcies Associació Narcis Roca Farreras Associacions Municipals Coordinadora d'associacions per la llengua Endavant Organització Socialista d'Alliberament Nacional Fundació Randa Independència i Democràcia Joventuts Revolucionàries Catalanes Joves d'Esquerra Plataforma Defensem la Terra Plataforma per Autodeterminació Plataforma pro selecció catalana Revolta Global	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya Convergència i Unió Catalan Socialist Party Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds Comisiones Obreras Unio General de Treballadors Plataforma Pel Dret a Decidir Reagrupament Candidatures d'Unitat Popular Esquerra Unida i Alternativa Plataforma per la llengua Accio Cultural del Pais Valencià Ateneu Barcelonès Casa Amaziga Cercle Català de Negocis Confederación patronal de les micro, petites i mitjanes empreses i els autònoms de Catalunya Coordinadora Nacional Consultes Independència Federació Sardanista Orfeó Català Plataforma Selecció Catalana Sindicat de treballadors de l'ensenyament Sobirania i progrès Taula d'inmigrants
Protesters	278 (Postal survey) Turnout: 10.000 (Police estimate)	301 Individuals (Postal survey) Turnout: 5.000 (Police estimate)	309 (Postal survey) Turnout: 1.100.000 (Police estimate)

Table A2 - Descriptive statistics

	Autodeterminació es democràcia		Pro-Life		Som una Nació	
	# cases	%	# cases	%	# cases	%
Age group						
Less than 18	2	0.67	0	0	3	0.97
18-30	33	11.07	40	14.71	65	21.04
31-45	88	29.53	65	23.9	98	31.72
46-65	140	46.98	120	44.12	125	40.45
65 or more	35	11.74	47	17.28	18	5.83
N	298		272		309	
Gender						
Women	101	34.24	132	48.18	155	50.32
Men	194	65.76	142	51.82	153	49.68
N	295		274		308	
Education						
None, did not complete primary education	3	1.03	0	0	2	0.65
Primary or first stage of basic	23	7.88	15	5.6	8	2.61
Lower secondary or second stage of basic	21	7.19	10	3.73	28	9.15
Upper secondary	53	18.15	36	13.43	53	17.32
Post secondary, non-tertiary	51	17.47	44	16.42	52	16.99
First stage of tertiary	89	30.48	106	39.55	109	35.62
Second stage of tertiary	52	17.81	57	21.27	54	17.65
Post tertiary	0	0	0	0	0	0
N	292		268		306	
Class (Subjective assessment)						
Lower	3	1.07	2	0.8	3	1.01
Working	98	35	56	22.49	85	28.72
Lower middle	124	44.29	69	27.71	123	41.55
Upper middle	55	19.64	117	46.99	83	28.04
Upper	0	0	5	2.01	2	0.68
N	280		249		296	
Perspective taking						
	<i>I consider everybody's side of an argument before making a decision</i>					
Strongly disagree	5	1.69	4	1.49	9	2.93
Disagree	27	9.12	39	14.55	39	12.7
Neither	94	31.76	75	27.99	78	25.41
Agree	148	50	122	45.52	160	52.12
Strongly agree	22	7.43	28	10.45	21	6.84
N	296		268		307	
Frequency of Internet use^o						
Never	38	13.38	0	0	58	21.01
Monthly	34	11.97	36	14.06	35	12.68
Weekly	46	16.2	61	23.83	38	13.77
Daily	64	22.54	159	62.11	67	24.28
Constantly	102	35.92	0	0	78	28.26
N	284		256		276	
Online mobilization						
Offline channels	109	38.93	170	64.89	244	84.43
Any online channel	171	61.07	92	35.11	45	15.57
N	280		262		289	

^oPolitical use of the internet for Autodeterminació es democràcia and Som una Nació cases

Figure A1 – Mobilization actors and brokerage roles in mobilization network
 (Percentages in the categories represent absolute brokerage levels for each role and the proportion of brokers)



2. Perspective Taking as Political Disagreement: Cross-Pressures and Political Behavior in the Catalan Independence Cleavage¹¹

Abstract

This paper presents an innovative approach to the study of cross-pressures and political disagreement as relevant factors in explaining political participation. It examines disagreement between opposing sides of the highly divisive issue of Catalan independence in order to consider the dynamics between challengers and defenders of the status quo. The concept of perspective taking (i.e., a cognitive process that leads to understanding others and a disposition toward actively acknowledging disagreement) was adopted from studies of intergroup interaction and used to investigate political disagreement by considering the cross-pressures of the issue's context and national identity. Using a survey administered in Catalonia in May 2012 ($N = 800$), results show that holding the role of challenger or defender of the status quo has different implications for understanding disagreement. Interestingly, perspective taking made no significant difference regarding either the intention to demonstrate or the certainty of voting in a referendum for supporters of Catalan independence, while opposers significantly reduced their intention when considering opposing claims. These results suggest that the effect of perspective taking acts independently of cross-pressures and is stronger for people who consider themselves to be Spanish only (i.e., not both Spanish and Catalan). These results are relevant to the study of political disagreement and contentious politics; by examining the understudied attitude object of political adversaries, results provide new evidence regarding the relationship between attitudes and political behavior.

¹¹ This research was supported by a doctoral grant from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. I wish to thank UAB's research group Democracy, Elections, and Citizenship and Eulàlia Puig i Abril for their comments on previous drafts.

Introduction

Disagreement is a core element of politics, for it determines political dynamics to a great extent. Challenging opposing views and defending personal perspectives, both within electoral contexts and through other forms of political engagement, greatly determine how we experience politics on a daily basis. Dealing with disagreement is a normative principle of democracy, for by implying the acknowledgment of opposing perspectives and being necessary for political life and civility in democratic exchange, it engenders considerate decision-making.

However, research has shown that being exposed to disagreement can be at odds with an individual's certainty of his or her position and therefore demobilize political action; pioneering media studies have referred to this conflict as the *cross-pressures hypothesis* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968). Although these findings have been challenged by subsequent studies, the tension between the need for understanding opposing stances and the benefits of aligning with a single stance in order to drive action is a longstanding puzzle in political behavior. As such, the topic has been studied from different perspectives and disciplines and with multiple approaches to disagreement, contexts, and forms of political action (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2002a; Mutz, 2006; Mutz & Mondak, 2006).

This study presents an innovative approach to this line of research by examining disagreement between opposing sides in a social cleavage in order to consider the dynamics between challengers and defenders of the status quo in a position issue. It therefore aims to complement research on partisan differences by assessing attitudes toward adversarial others as an alternative way of illuminating disagreement. I adopt the concept of perspective taking from the literature on intergroup conflict in political psychology (Falk & Johnson, 1977; Sessa, 1996) and use it to study the consequences of cross-pressures regarding Catalan independence (CI). Understanding attitudes toward disagreement by using a self-assessment limited to a particular context provides a broader understanding of the question underlying the cross-pressures hypothesis: to what extent can political disagreement affect participation? The proposed attitudinal approach to political disagreement combines three theoretical fields: the study of

attitudes and their influence on participation, intergroup dynamics and identity in the definition of political adversaries as attitude objects, and the study of asymmetrical conflict as a contextual determinant of participation. This approach speaks to the study of disagreement focusing on behavior and information processing (e.g., political discussion, selective exposure, and motivated reasoning) and the cross-pressures of ideological and partisan differences (i.e., exposure and/or interaction in heterogeneous networks). This study also contributes to research on political behavior by moving beyond electoral politics and partisan differences in order to focus on disagreement beyond the right–left cleavage (Dinas, 2012).

The case of Catalan nationalism provides conceptual benefits to the study of disagreement. Nationalism and regional separatism is a social cleavage in Spanish politics and claims to Catalan sovereignty that range from federalism to independence is a long-standing issue anchored in political preferences and history. Opposing stances are well established, and people clearly reveal perceptions of their environment and group boundaries. Though Catalan nationalism is far more complex than the dimension of independence claims, only differences in individual positions toward CI are considered here. This study used a survey ($N = 800$) conducted in May 2012, a lower saliency period than the 2010 protests against the rulings on the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia or the massive demonstrations on the Diada Nacional de Catalunya (i.e., the National Day of Catalonia, hereafter referred to as Diada) on September 11, 2012, that preceded Catalan elections. Nevertheless, the case provides a very good sense of what the disagreement concerns and is suitable for providing an exploratory test of the theoretical propositions.

Altogether, this paper aims to clarify to what extent perspective taking relates to political behavior for groups of different status and with different conceptions of national identity. It questions whether perspective taking can act as a mechanism that links different kinds of cross-pressures with forms of political participation—in this case, demonstrating or voting for a referendum on CI.

Results find support for a negative relation between perspective taking and proxies of issue specific behavior: certainty to vote in a referendum and intention to participate in a demonstration, though this is valid only for defenders of the status quo (i.e., opposing

CI). Results support previous findings on the demobilizing effect of disagreement, though this study contributes chiefly by considering differences among group statuses to provide new insight into the importance of the broader political context and the relevance of issue positions and their determinants. Differences between challengers and defenders of the status quo are critical; perspective taking makes no significant differences on the intention to demonstrate or on the certainty to vote in a referendum for CI among the supporters of CI, while defenders of Spanish unity have a significantly lower intention to demonstrate and lower certainty to vote when considering opposing claims.

The first section introduces the specific questions and expectations of the study, along with the theoretical background on the tension between political disagreement and participation. The second section describes the main variables in the study: the intention to participate in a demonstration to support one's position, the certainty to vote on a referendum, and perspective taking. The third section addresses the empirical analyses, which draw upon a unique dataset including 800 respondents of an online survey based on the Catalan population. The fourth section presents the results; though cross-sectional data make it impossible to determine the direction of causality, the findings nevertheless reveal much on the potential effects of disagreement among different profiles and circumstances. Overall, perspective taking was found to be negatively related to one's intention to demonstrate, but the effect on both groups was not symmetrical; defenders of the status quo were found to be less willing to demonstrate or less certain to vote in a referendum when they considered the side of those supporting CI. Furthermore, the effects were stronger between respondents who held a single Spanish national identity and supported CI. These results are discussed in the sixth section, along with some concluding remarks.

Perspective Taking as Disagreement

Research on political disagreement has focused on individual attributes and social influence in order to question disagreement's effects on political participation (Huckfeldt et al., 2004, Mutz, 2002b; Mutz, 2006) and the personal context in which disagreement occurs (McClurg, 2006; Nir, 2005, Noelle-Neumann, 1993). The context in which people experience disagreement has been studied to a lesser extent; current

research reveals that the broader political environment affects individual behavior and that network disagreement has a demobilizing effect for minorities but not for those in the majority in the neighborhood electoral context (McClurg, 2006). By following this line of research and considering further implications of group dynamics that can affect individual behavior, I question to what extent the relationship between perspective taking and the intention to vote in a referendum and to demonstrate can vary among groups of different statuses in the context of issue politics.

Studying the cross-pressures hypothesis is relevant not only from a normative standpoint but also because of conflicting findings that reach different conclusions about the effects of disagreement. These differences have been partly resolved by reconsidering exposure to disagreement and the multiple ways of operationalizing and measuring cross-pressures (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Klobstad et al., 2013; Nir, 2009; Therriault et al., 2013). I argue that the concept of perspective taking provides an additional and relevant test to the cross-pressures hypothesis by examining political disagreement on a different level. Wojcieszak and Price (2012) question whether influence is a product of individual interpretations of a deliberative experience or the exposure to dissimilar views. Similarly, Klobstad, Sokhey, and McClurg (2013) argue that what people perceive depends on what they consider to constitute disagreement. Perspective taking implies that people have been exposed to disagreement when they are willing to make a cognitive effort to take the perspective of others. In this sense, perspective taking is not only exposure to disagreement but an actual experience with political disagreement, which can be more demanding than contextual cross-pressures, discussion in heterogeneous networks, and actual *dangerous discussion*¹² between opposing stances. It thus provides an understanding of how people approach political disagreement by focusing on attitudes toward actual people who disagree with them. In this sense, perspective taking can be another way to understand how different sources of cross-pressures are perceived as disagreement and how they can affect behavior.

When trying to explain the effects of disagreement on behavior, multiple mechanisms have been proposed. Ambivalence and indifference have been tested as products of

¹² The concept of dangerous discussion (Eveland & Hively 2009) is used here in its connotation of political ideology with a broader extent than the left-right cleavage.

exposure to perspectives and options that conflict with personal positions and attitudes, along with being results of intra-individual contradictions in preferences. Measurement approaches have been revised (Craig et al., 2005; Kimball, 2012; Thornton, 2012) and been shown to act differently on behavior (Yoo, 2010). Ambivalence reveals positive and negative components in attitudes and, as such, refers to the intensity of conflicting thoughts. Ambivalence has been found to affect behavior by multiple ways of managing information and sources, though its final outcome generally reduces certainty (Tetlock, 1986). Though indifference also influences political behavior, it does so via different mechanisms; it is not only directly related to conflicted thoughts but typically involves low levels of interest (Thornton, 2012). Perspective taking is thus a different mechanism, for it influences attitudes toward political adversaries and constitutes a subjective measure of acknowledging conflicting thoughts. I argue that the difference between the individual disposition to assuming conflicting stimuli and the actual conflicted thoughts that an individual experiences are worth exploring in order to advance research on the effects of political disagreement. In this sense, I question whether perspective taking affects behavior and to what extent it depends on the issue context and individual-level attributes.

Considering opposing stances in context

With the exception of Lee (2012), most studies on the cross-pressures hypothesis have focused on an electoral context, relied on partisan disagreement, or been situated in the complexity of issues in electoral campaigns. Disagreement in these contexts may involve multiple issue dimensions, and an individual's perception of contending positions may have different implications than in single issue contexts in which individuals can align with a clear position in a particular issue dimension. This study focuses on a single issue in order to consider the positions of contenders in their issue context. Contending positions in issue politics imply different logics of intergroup interaction and boundary definition. Participating in issue-specific political action is a theoretically relevant case to explore, since disagreement can be more explicit regarding position issues with clear political adversaries and especially regarding social grievances closely linked to national identity.

Previous research on majority and minority statuses has established important implications for how people experience disagreement (Wojcieszak & Price, 2012), how they conform to social dynamics (Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague, 2002; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1988), and how these dynamics affect the incentives for demonstrating (Walgrave & Klandermans, 2010). Characterizations of the issue context in terms of minority and majority statuses have implications on political attitudes and may have concurrent effects. However, group status has two dimensions that do not always match the assumed minority–challenger and majority–defender combination, since this assumption is only valid in particular contexts. The case of Spanish nationalism is an exception; Catalan nationalists can form a majority within Catalonia but a minority in Spain; furthermore, subnational and national contexts are impossible to disentangle, for contending actors interact at both levels simultaneously. However, aligning with a stance that challenges or defends the status quo can be expected to imply similar group dynamics that are highly relevant for understanding disagreement and its possible effects on behavior in contentious politics.

The relevant mechanism of contextual influence for this study is the way in which playing the role of either the challenger or defender implies different individual experiences of disagreement and how these experiences may relate to behavior. Research on political psychology has established that challengers are negatively perceived by others given the effect of a general tendency to prefer the status quo instead of change (Kray & Robinson, 2001; Skitka et al., 2002). This dynamic may lead challengers to be more aware of disagreement and to feel the need to defend and justify their own position more than defenders (Bäck, 2011), which is quite similar to minority status. According to McClurg (2006), people in minority groups will more often find perspectives that contradict their political views and should therefore more accurately recognize disagreement. In this sense, McClurg (2006) further argues that minorities need peer support to resist the negative pressure of the adverse context and finds evidence that political disagreement makes participation less likely among those in the minority, but not among those in the majority. However, differences between having either a majority or minority status and a status of challenger or defender may lie in the mechanisms of accommodating opposing perspectives. Therefore, studying attitudes toward disagreement can provide another way of understanding the problem.

In perspective taking, the cognitive side of understanding opposing arguments and points of view is entangled with affective attitudes toward political opponents and the choice of taking their perspective or being open to learning about their views. Within this line of reasoning about disagreement, a new dimension should be considered; challengers facing adverse contexts need not only peer support but a strong motivation to become active against the status quo. Previous research has found that challengers perceive defenders more negatively and undermine them to a larger extent than defenders do of challengers' positions (Bäck, 2011; de Dreu et al., 2008). Bäck (2011) further argues that the fundamental driving force of negative attitudes toward opponents seems to lie in the challenging position rather than the numerical status. Perhaps the essence of challenging could be considered a more conscious act of choosing a point of view, rather than finding oneself to belong to a minority. To challenge what is generally considered to be good and true demands more from the individual in terms of gearing up for fight and protection against attacks (p. 16). This argument implies that, when negotiating disagreement, the challengers' logic differs from that of the minority–majority context, and thus the expected effects will differ.

To sum up the aforementioned arguments, challengers are more used to facing disagreement and more willing to justify and stand for their claims than defenders of the status quo. Challengers have a drive to push their own claims in order to confront established beliefs; within this logic, challengers are not expected to be demobilized by disagreement in the drive for action, which runs counter to how defenders of the status quo tend to act. More formally,

Hypothesis 1: Perspective taking is negatively related to both the intention to demonstrate and the certainty to vote for defenders of the status quo (i.e., opposing CI), but not for the challengers (i.e., who support CI).

National identity and the strength of issue positions

I argue that dealing with disagreement as an attitude toward political actors and their stances provides opportunities to examine the cross-pressures hypothesis by considering established knowledge in political psychology. Individual-level factors are therefore a relevant subject, for cross-pressures will act differently regarding not only group status

but also individual-level factors that can be related. Group identity regarding positions on CI can be characterized by attributes on this level that can strengthen or weaken an individual's stance on issue positions and could moderate the effects of cross-pressures. To this end, I will focus on national identity since it is a relevant trait of group positions on the issue.

National identity has been identified as a major explanatory factor of CI support (Serrano–Balaguer, 2010) and been studied similarly to partisan identification in order to explain vote choice in nationalist cleavages, which has revealed that national identity may have effects, such as those from political attitudes (Duck, Hogg, & Terry, 1995). Moreover, national identity is a predictor of turnout in Catalan elections (Fernández–i–Marín & López, 2010; Lago et al., 2007; Riba, 2000) and a driver of CI support (Muñoz & Guinjoan, 2013; Muñoz & Tormos, 2012). This study aims to probe the mobilizing potential of national identity and its incidence in CI support by considering how the differences between mixed and single identities play out between contending views.

The potential incidence of national identity on political disagreement can greatly benefit from research on identity in intergroup dynamics. Within social identity theory, identity reflects individual awareness of belonging to a social group and provides a link between an individual's representation of self and the group processes in which he or she is embedded (Brewer, 2001). Group memberships are thus self-images and a reflection of the tendency to build exclusionary social divisions to secure self-definition. In this sense, strong identities can relate to intolerance toward out-groups, though such depends entirely on the context (Hogg, 2003). Moreover, group identities have stronger influence in intergroup relations when the identities are strong and the division between groups is both substantial and relevant (Gibson, 2006). Such is the case for CI, which engenders a social division with long established positions and strong determinants of group identity based on language and cultural traditions.

From these considerations, if single identities are an important driver of taking action, the demobilizing effect of perspective taking can be expected to be stronger on people who hold a single identity. The particular nature of the issue makes national identity a relevant matter for assessing potential moderating effects of perspective taking. The perception of nationality is highly correlated to issue position, and as such, to group

identity. In this sense, if differences between group status play a substantial role, then so will differences in national identity within each group. People who identify as Catalan only and oppose CI, as well those who identify as Spanish only but who support CI, hold minority positions within their groups. As such, they are expected to have within-group cross-pressures and to be differently affected when considering opposing perspectives. Consequently, a second hypothesis can be stated as:

Hypothesis 2: People with single identities (i.e., either only Spanish or only Catalan) will have a stronger negative relation between perspective taking and political action than people with mixed identities (i.e., as Spanish as Catalan, more Spanish than Catalan, and more Catalan than Spanish).

Methods

Data Collection and Study Design

This study used a cross-sectional survey of 800 Catalan respondents of an online commercial panel. The questions mostly intended to gauge attitudes on CI in May 2012, a moment when the issue had not yet reached its highest point of saliency. Though informal consultations regarding independence have been active since 2009, the issue was not a top priority for media as it was during more recent periods, such as the *Convergència i Unió* electoral campaign of fall 2012, which saw the largest demonstration ever on 2012 Diada, or during the massive street demonstrations in response to the Constitutional Court rulings against the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia in June and July of 2010.

The survey was administered by a commercial provider by using a sample representative of the Catalan population drawn from commercial websites in Spain based on age, gender, education, household size, and province quotas in order to ensure a sufficient variety of respondents. The survey was administered online in the language chosen by the respondents (i.e., Catalan or Spanish). Self-selection was avoided by restricting access to registered people by invitation only. The cross-sectional design did not provide conclusive evidence on the direction of causality for the established relationships, yet correlations indicated the likelihood of each proposed mechanism. In

this sense, I assessed potential effects of disagreement on behavior that have a theoretically expected direction but no evidence of causality.

Measures

In this study I used two dependent variables on issue-specific political behavior: the intention to participate in a demonstration and the certainty to vote in a referendum for or against CI. Intention to participate was used as a proxy for behavior, though it represented an attitudinal dimension. For intention to demonstrate, the wording was adapted according to the respondent’s position, which was reported on a previous question regarding support for a referendum on CI; this allowed me to divide the sample (see Appendix 1 for the wording of questions 7, 12A, and 12B). These questions gauged the individual’s level of certainty regarding his or her intention to demonstrate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 signified ‘Completely sure I will not demonstrate and 10 signified ‘Completely sure I will demonstrate (Figure 2.1).

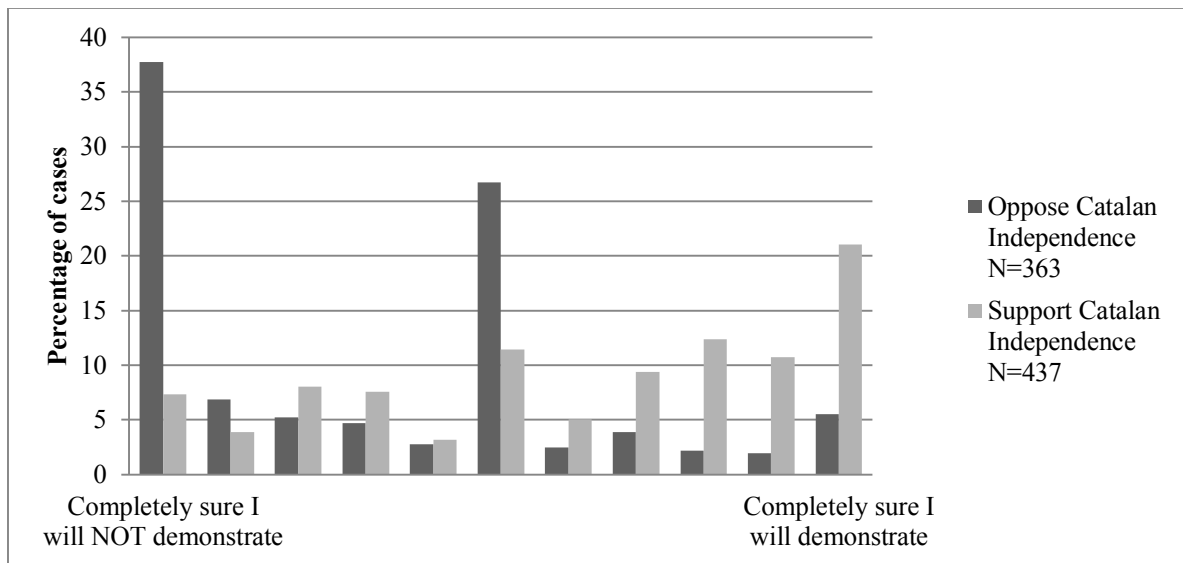


Figure 2.1. Intention to demonstrate in support for Spanish unity and Catalan independence.

The second dependent variable gauged the respondents’ certainty to vote in a referendum (Figure 2.2). This was a single question identical for all respondents, though both anchors on the 1–10 scale measured each respondent’s certainty to vote for his or her position. The certainty variable was constructed by folding the scale whereby the

midpoint (i.e., 5) was an indication of least certainty, while the extremes 1 and 10 indicated the most certainty.

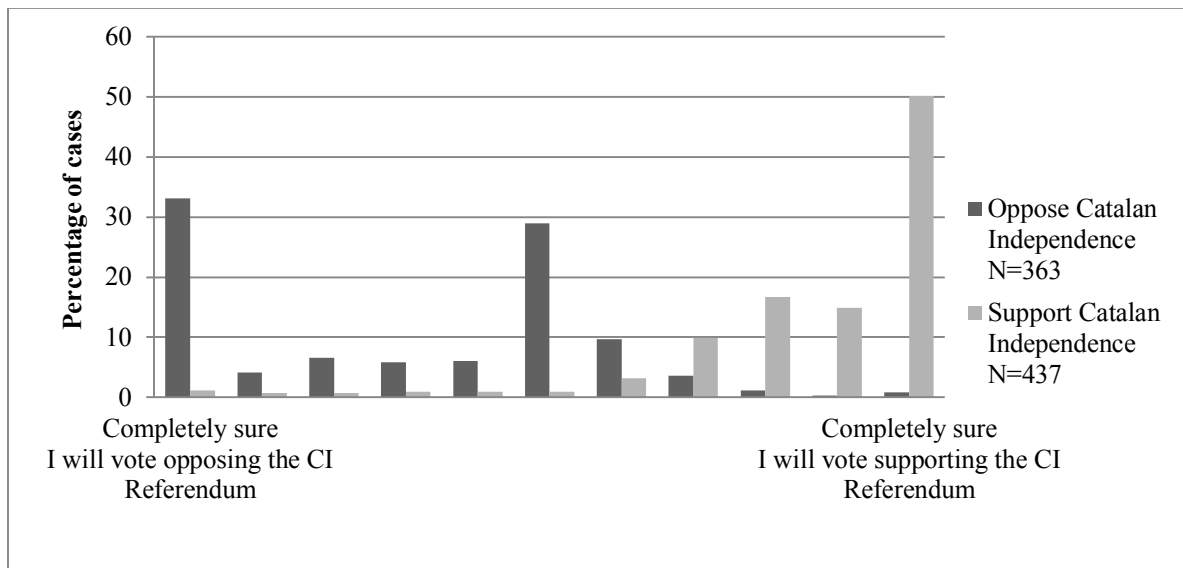


Figure 2.2. Certainty to vote referendum either in favor or against Catalan independence.

Both variables were ordinally continuous; no cardinal meaning could be assigned to the numerical values, which means that a change in values, for instance, from 1 to 2 could be qualitatively different from a change from 6 to 7. Such problems are usually approached by using an ordered probit or logit models, which implicitly cardinalize the dependent variable in the assumption that a normally distributed latent linear index underlies it. However, ordered response models entail computational problems (van Praag & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2006; van Praag & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2008), whereby their marginal effects become cumbersome to calculate and interpret when interaction terms are added (Greene, 2010). Since the chief interest of this study was to test the hypotheses based on the sign of the estimated effects instead of analyze the magnitude of the effects, I used the so-called *probit-adapted OLS method* (POLS) originally proposed by van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell (2006) for the context of satisfaction and happiness studies. The POLS operationalization is a simple OLS model that uses a ‘rough cardinalization’ of the ordinal dependent variable compatible with the ordered probit assumption about the underlying latent variable. This method is equivalent to the ordered model approach and solves computational problems while retaining the OLS estimation method. Van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell (2006; 2008) have provided a

detailed description of the method; I briefly describe the transformation of the dependent variables in Appendix 2.

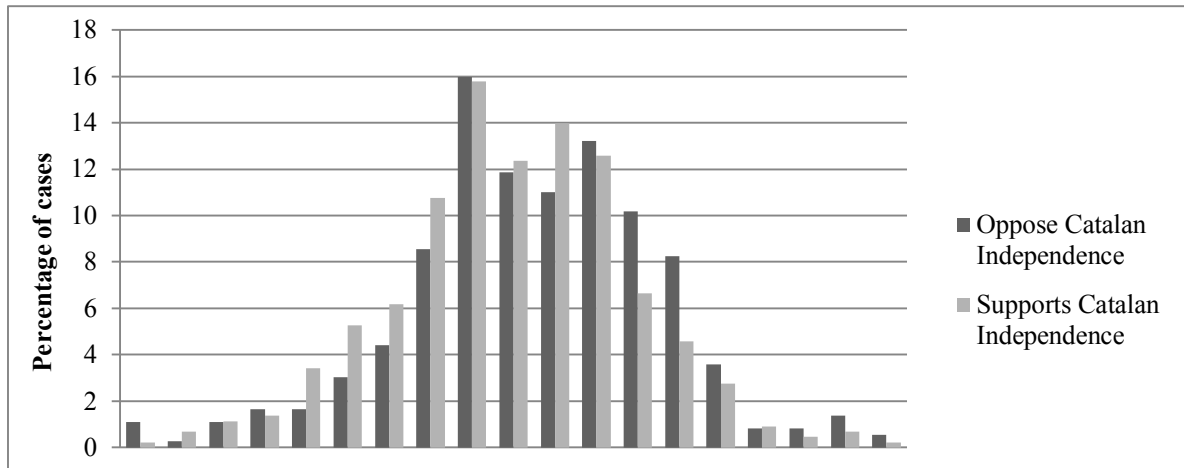
As expected, the intention to demonstrate varied widely between issue positions. Respondents who defended the status quo of Spanish unity were less willing to participate in demonstrations than respondents who support CI. Even if defenders of the status quo perceived a threat to their position, disruptive action such as street demonstrations were considered to be a tactic of challengers. However, 22% of respondents who opposed CI were still willing to demonstrate for Spanish unity. In the last 5 years, small groups have taken to the streets in counter-demonstrations to support the nationalist position and in response to CI demands. The celebration of Hispanic Day in Catalonia (October 12, 2012), for example, attested to this variety of claims. These demonstrations have been staged by minority Spanish parties such as the Unión Progreso y Democracia (UPyD); Catalan parties such as Ciutadans de Catalunya or Partido Popular de Catalunya; and to a lesser degree, radical parties such as Partit per Catalunya and Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista. Consequently, two considerations must be addressed: (1) the survey did not occur at the moment of highest issue saliency, which therefore diminishes the threat effect; and (2) defenders of Spanish unity have historically appealed to electoral forms of participation, since Spanish nationalist parties have regularly succeeded in demanding constitutional revisions that oppose secessionist proposals.

The second dependent variable—certainty to vote in either support or opposition to a CI referendum—had a very different distribution, since uncertain and decided respondents were distributed in similar proportions within the CI opposition. The referendum may have been perceived to be a more formal way of political participation, though an informal referendum had been promoted by the Catalan nationalists to challenge the national government. Studying both the intention to demonstrate and to vote in a referendum provided stronger evidence for understanding the effects of cross-pressures on different forms of participation.

Independent variables

The main independent variable—perspective taking—was measured by five items aggregated in a simple index (Figure 3) adapted from Davis (1980; items 2 and 4 reversed). Content-specific wording was administered according to the respondent’s position on CI; these positions were determined by gauging respondents’ intention to vote in favor or against or to abstain from voting in the referendum on CI. Respondents who intended to vote against and those willing to abstain were grouped together in order to frame the perspective taking questions explicitly by naming the two opposing groups in the issue. CI supporters were asked about the issue actor “Spanish nationalists”¹³ and “those supporting the unity of Spain,” while opponents were asked about “Catalan separatists.” Both groups received references to the issue by using the wording “the question of Catalan independence,” given that the opposing reference (i.e., “Unity of Spain”) includes other nationalisms. Directly mentioning the issue adversary in the question’s wording aimed to clearly identify the attitude object; put another way, I primed the individual’s position in order to augment the effect of neutral wording. In previous research, the issue was referred to as “something,” “things,” “the disagreement,” or “the question,” while the actor holding an opposing position was referred to as “somebody,” “other people,” “my friend,” “the other guy,” or “everybody” (Davis, 1980).” By focusing the attention on a particular attitude object, I expected to enhance the precision of the measurement; however, the susceptibility to biases such as social desirability (Duan, 2000) and the difference between the individual’s self-perceived ability to understand others versus his or her actual ability to do so (Marangoni, Garcia, Ickes, & Teng, 1995) is still a problem. Differences between opposing groups showed that respondents opposing CI (i.e., defenders of the status quo) slightly but significantly more often considered their adversaries’ perspective than challengers.

¹³ The term used in Catalan is *Espanyolistes*, and in Spanish, *Españolistas*, both of which have a negative connotation and are not as neutral as ‘Spanish nationalist.’



Scale reliability coefficient: 0.769 for 'oppose CI' and 0.660 for 'support CI' (Cronbach's alpha).

Figure 2.3. Perspective taking index.

Issue position was gauged by intention to vote in favor or against or to abstain from voting in a referendum on CI. Certainty on the position was a similar construct and therefore based on a question about the certainty of the respondent's referendum voting decision. Respondents selected their certainty level on scale from 0 to 10 where the anchors were "I am completely certain that I would vote on a referendum in favor (against) Catalan independence." The certainty variable was built by folding this scale into three categories (i.e., uncertainty, 4–6; low certainty 2–3 and 7–8; and high certainty 0–1 and 9–10).

National identity was measured as a five-point bidirectional variable in order to gauge the degree of identification in categories of Catalan only, more Catalan than Spanish, as Catalan as Spanish, more Spanish than Catalan, or Spanish only. This has been a standardized measure widely used in Spanish academia for subnational identities called the Moreno question (see Gunther et al., 1986). A three-item categorical variable was composed that grouped together the three categories of mixed identity. In order to illustrate the distribution of propensity to participate between different identity categories, a three-way table describing certainty to vote and intention to demonstrate by the three identity categories considered in analysis is presented in Figure 4.

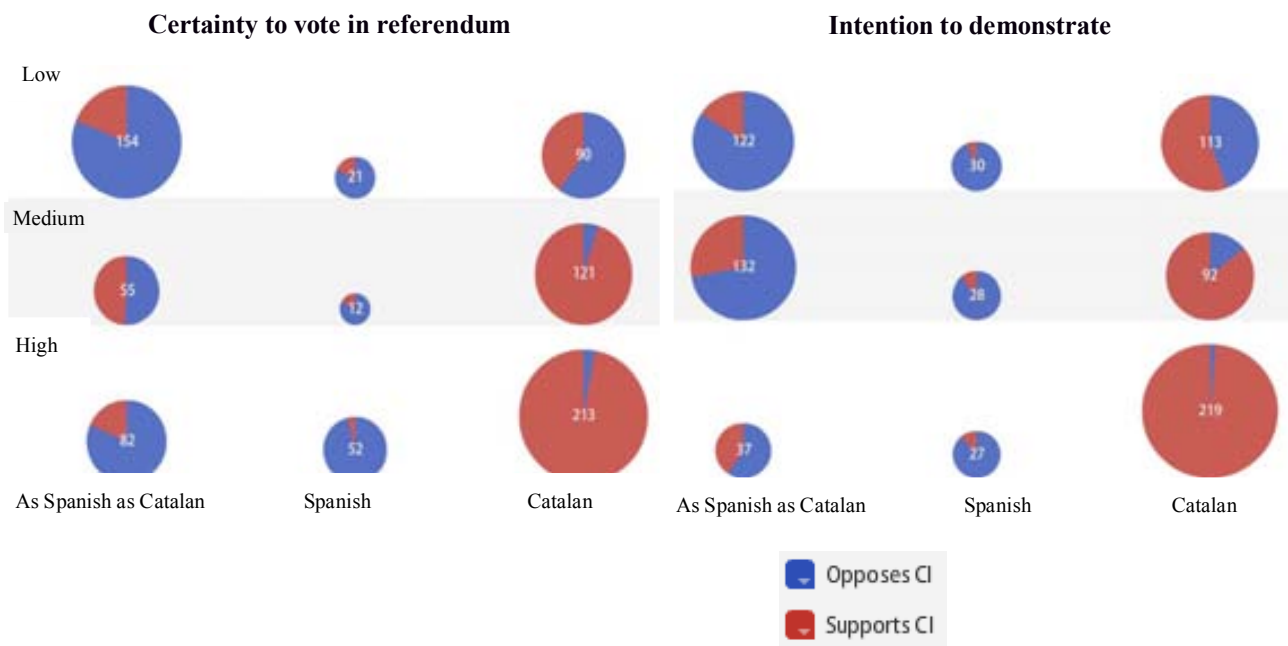


Figure 2.4. Certainty to vote and intention to demonstrate by national identity and issue position; values represent the number of cases in each category.

Cross-pressures were measured at both the individual and issue levels. Individual networks were gauged by a single question in order to assess the respondent's perception of their partner's and best friend's position on CI. Thus, this was a measure of issue disagreement that followed the same logic of partisan disagreement in dyads used in previous studies (see Klofstad et al., 2013). Introducing measures that refer to a partner or best friend limited the number of observations to approximately 600 respondents.

Regarding issue level, I used three data sources:

- Issue divisiveness¹⁴ for 2012 was calculated by using data by province from an annual opinion barometer on Catalonia (Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials);
- Variance of party positions was estimated by using the Regional Party Manifesto (Gómez et al., 2013) and electoral results for vote share by province in the 2010 Catalan elections;

¹⁴ Divisiveness in support for the CI referendum and beliefs on Catalan autonomy (see Appendix 1 for the exact wording). The index means that 50% support signifies complete divisiveness (value of 1), while 100% support signifies no divisiveness (value of 0). $Divisiveness = 1 - |1 - 2x|$, where x is the percentage of issue support.

- Variance of media positions was computed from two sources: data on media positions from MediaCat (Canet, 2011) and audience share from the political opinion barometer (GESOP 2011–2013).

The contextual cross-pressure indicators were restricted to the province level, since this was the only individual-level data available (Figure 2.5). However, it restricted the possibilities for analysis, for the issue cross-pressures were highly correlated. I evaluated both individual and issue context levels side-by-side and introduced the issue level measures one at a time. Controls for ideological position (i.e., self-placement in a left–right ideological scale) and demographics were included for all analyses.

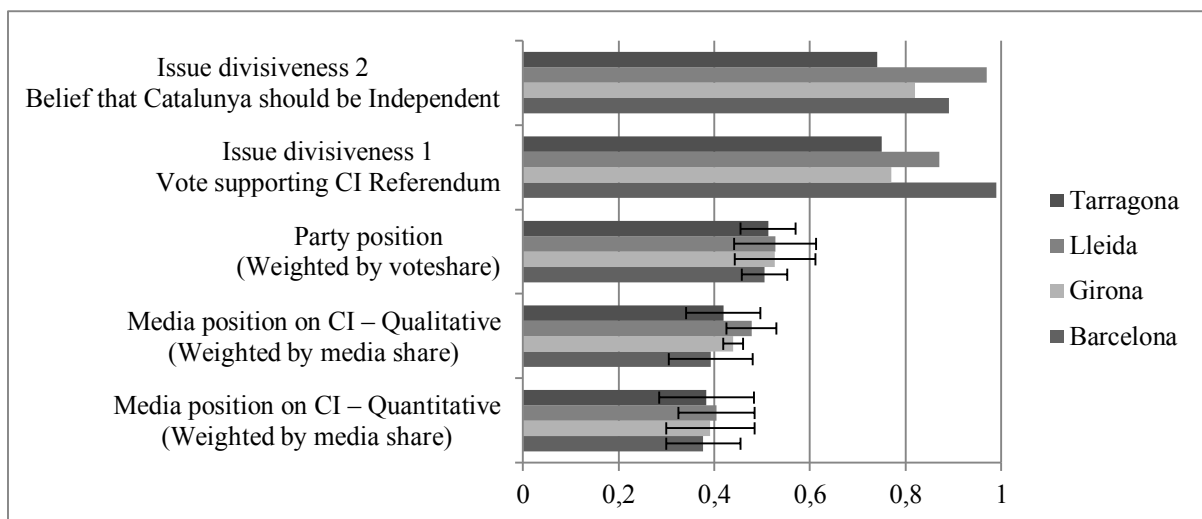


Figure 2.5. Issue divisiveness, party, and media cross-pressures (normalized scales where 0 = oppose CI and 1 = support CI).

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analyses and differences between groups on each side of the CI issue are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Descriptive values and mean differences.

	Mean	SD	N	Opposes CI		Supports CI		Mean Diff
				Mean 1	N1	Mean 2	N2	
Intention to demonstrate (0/1)	0.46	0.32	800	0.31	363	0.59	437	-0.28***
Certainty to vote Referendum	0.64	0.36	800	0.49	363	0.76	437	-0.27***
Perspective taking (5-25)	16.14	3.05	800	16.43	363	15.89	437	0.54**
As Spanish as Catalan	0.36	0.48	800	0.61	363	0.16	437	0.44***
Only Spanish	0.04	0.20	800	0.08	363	0.00	437	0.08***
More Spanish than Catalan	0.07	0.25	800	0.13	363	0.01	437	0.12***
More Catalan than Spanish	0.32	0.47	800	0.16	363	0.45	437	-0.28***
Only Catalan	0.21	0.41	800	0.02	363	0.37	437	-0.35***
Gender (woman) (0/1)	0.51	0.50	800	0.56	363	0.47	437	0.08**
Age (18-83)	39.88	13.62	800	39.20	363	40.45	437	-1.24
Education (1-6)	4.97	1.01	800	4.83	363	5.09	437	-0.26***
Income (1-10)	3.99	2.07	800	3.87	363	4.09	437	-0.22
Cat language (0/1)	0.60	0.49	800	0.34	363	0.81	437	-0.47***
Ideology (0-10)	3.88	1.88	800	4.35	363	3.49	437	0.86***
News, radio, or TV (1-5)	4.49	0.94	800	4.37	363	4.58	437	-0.22***
Newspaper (1-5)	3.77	1.32	800	3.56	363	3.95	437	-0.39***
Political Internet (1-5)	3.08	1.50	800	2.87	363	3.25	437	-0.38***
Talk about politics (1-5)	3.37	1.26	800	3.09	363	3.59	437	-0.50***
Best friend disagrees (0/1)	0.29	0.45	627	0.43	258	0.19	369	0.24***
Partner disagrees (0/1)	0.22	0.42	596	0.27	263	0.18	333	0.09***

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Results

The analyses for the two hypotheses were based on the POLS method to explain respondents' certainty of voting and intention to demonstrate (Table 2.2). Some differences between demographic profiles and provinces were significant in explaining these measures. Women were found to be more certain about supporting CI in a referendum, and younger respondents were more willing to demonstrate. Respondents with less income and who more strongly identified a right ideology showed a greater intention to demonstrate against CI, while those who aligned with a leftist ideology were more willing to demonstrate for CI. A portion of the differences between provinces was captured by the cross-pressures index of issue divisiveness, though there was a significant difference in certainty to support a referendum between respondents from Lleida and Barcelona. The latter result could reflect differences not captured by the cross-pressures indexes; it is likely that the intensity of previous campaigns

promoting independence via referendum or beliefs about the efficacy of a referendum acted as an appropriate mechanism.

Table 2.2. OLS regression for certainty to vote and intention to demonstrate (POLS values)¹⁵

	Certainty to vote against CI		Certainty to vote for CI		Intention to demonstrate against CI		Intention to demonstrate for CI	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Attitudes and Identity (Reference category = Mixed identity)								
Perspective taking	-0.046***	(0.011)	-0.015	(0.014)	-0.025***	(0.008)	0.019	(0.019)
Only Spanish	-0.246	(0.282)	0.531	(0.502)	0.02	(0.207)	1.407**	(0.647)
Only Catalan	-0.765*	(0.449)	0.166	(0.271)	-0.339	(0.330)	0.548	(0.349)
PT*Only Spanish	0.028	(0.017)	-0.042	(0.033)	0.003	(0.013)	-0.084**	(0.043)
PT*Only Catalan	0.038	(0.025)	0.003	(0.016)	0.013	(0.018)	-0.023	(0.020)
Contextual cross-pressures indicators								
Issue divisiveness ¹⁶	-0.03	(0.021)	0.014	(0.017)	-0.026*	(0.015)	0.036	(0.022)
Media (frequency)	-0.55	(0.432)	0.223	(0.348)	-0.530*	(0.317)	0.836*	(0.449)
Issue div* Media	0.007	(0.005)	-0.003	(0.004)	0.006	(0.004)	-0.009*	(0.005)
Individual sources of exposure								
Talk about politics	-0.069*	(0.039)	0.0	(0.032)	0.035	(0.029)	-0.013	(0.041)
B/friend disagrees	0.161	(0.158)	-0.002	(0.136)	0.122	(0.116)	-0.171	(0.175)
B/friend *Talk pol	-0.076*	(0.046)	-0.016	(0.033)	0.035	(0.033)	-0.049	(0.043)
Partner disagrees	-0.178***	(0.066)	-0.117***	(0.039)	-0.021	(0.048)	-0.091*	(0.050)
Control variables (reference group = Barcelona; Tarragona was omitted due to collinearity.)								
Gender (woman)	0.025	(0.055)	-0.087***	(0.029)	0.026	(0.041)	0.017	(0.038)
Age	0.001	(0.002)	0	(0.001)	0.004**	(0.002)	0.003**	(0.002)
Income	0.007	(0.016)	-0.004	(0.007)	-0.028**	(0.012)	-0.014	(0.010)
Ideology (right)	0.017	(0.015)	-0.009	(0.008)	0.036***	(0.011)	-0.026***	(0.010)
Girona	-0.045	(0.120)	-0.034	(0.052)	-0.02	(0.088)	-0.078	(0.067)
Lleida	0.208	(0.131)	-0.150**	(0.062)	-0.082	(0.097)	0.05	(0.080)
Constant	3.691**	(1.790)	-0.346	(1.516)	2.669**	(1.315)	-3.068	(1.953)
Observations	197		288		197		288	
R-squared	0.351		0.273		0.334		0.155	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; standard errors in parentheses.

¹⁵ A robustness check using logistic models with a dichotomous transformation by taking responses 1–4 as non-demonstrators and 6–10 as those willing to demonstrate and omitting the undecided on the midpoint of the scale provided similar results.

¹⁶ Two proxies for Issue divisiveness were used with similar results: Support for CI Referendum and beliefs that Catalonia should be an independent State. The second is presented in this table by data according to province from a yearly opinion barometer (ICPS, 2012). Electoral and media cross-pressures have non-significant effects and including them does not change the results.

Issue Context as Group Status

As expected, perspective taking was clearly unrelated to intention to demonstrate and certainty to vote for CI supporters but significantly and negatively related for defenders of Spanish unity. These results provide support for Hypothesis 1, for there were clear differences between group statuses in the effects of perspective taking. Challengers were not demobilized when considering opposing views, neither in terms of demonstrating nor voting in a referendum.

To further illustrate the effects of perspective by group status, the effects of issue position on perspective taking were tested by interacting position and perspective taking. A similar specification of the model without dividing the sample between the two positions was used to calculate the linear prediction of alternative measures of cross-pressures on both dependent variables. Figure 2.6 shows the predictive margins for intention to demonstrate and certainty to vote based on the interaction between issue position and perspective taking.

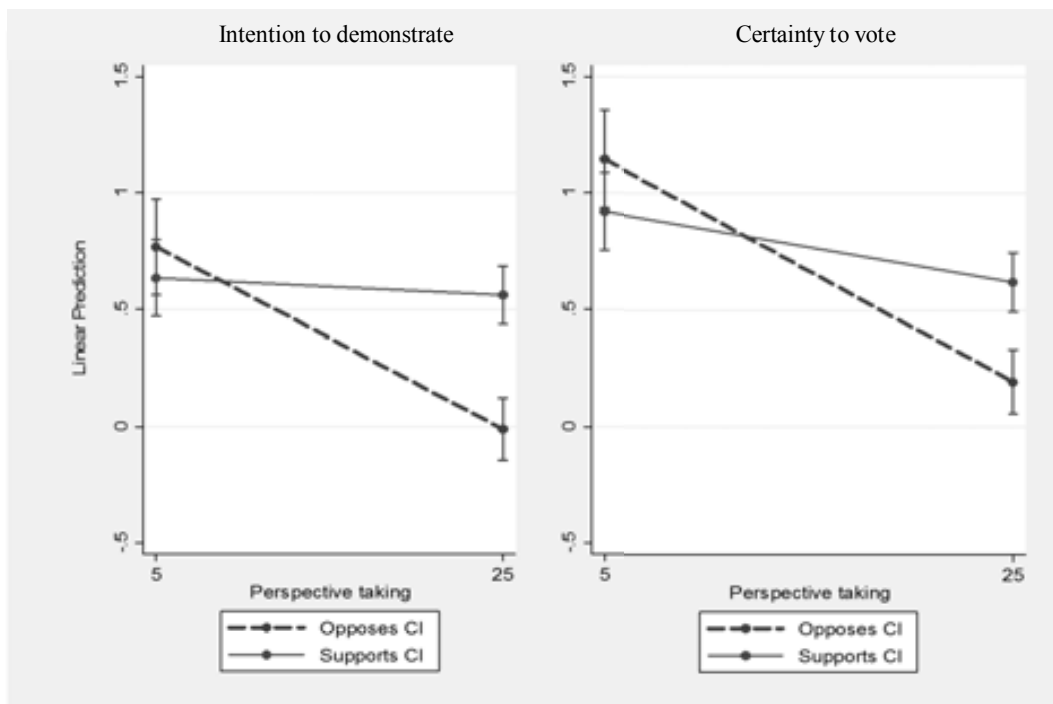


Figure 2.6. Intention to demonstrate and certainty to vote. Predictive margins for the interaction between perspective taking and position on Catalan independence (CI) differentiate respondents who oppose CI (dashed lines) from those who support CI (continuous lines).

Confidence intervals for both categories overlapped at the beginning of the scale, though the results were significant throughout the majority of the perspective taking scale. From the results in the first model in Table 3, it can be concluded that differences in group status were significant and that the potential demobilizing effect of perspective taking affected challengers and defenders of the status quo differently.

National Identity

Holding a single national identity, as opposed to identify equally as Catalan and Spanish, had different effects on both modes of participation between groups based on position and status. Respondents who identified exclusively as Spanish and who support CI showed a significantly greater intention to demonstrate compared to respondents who identified equally as Catalan and Spanish. Most importantly, this latter group's intention decreased when they considered opposing views. The interaction term showing a negative and significant coefficient confirmed a moderating effect of single identity on the demobilizing effect of perspective taking for respondents who identified as Spanish and who support CI (Figure 2.7).

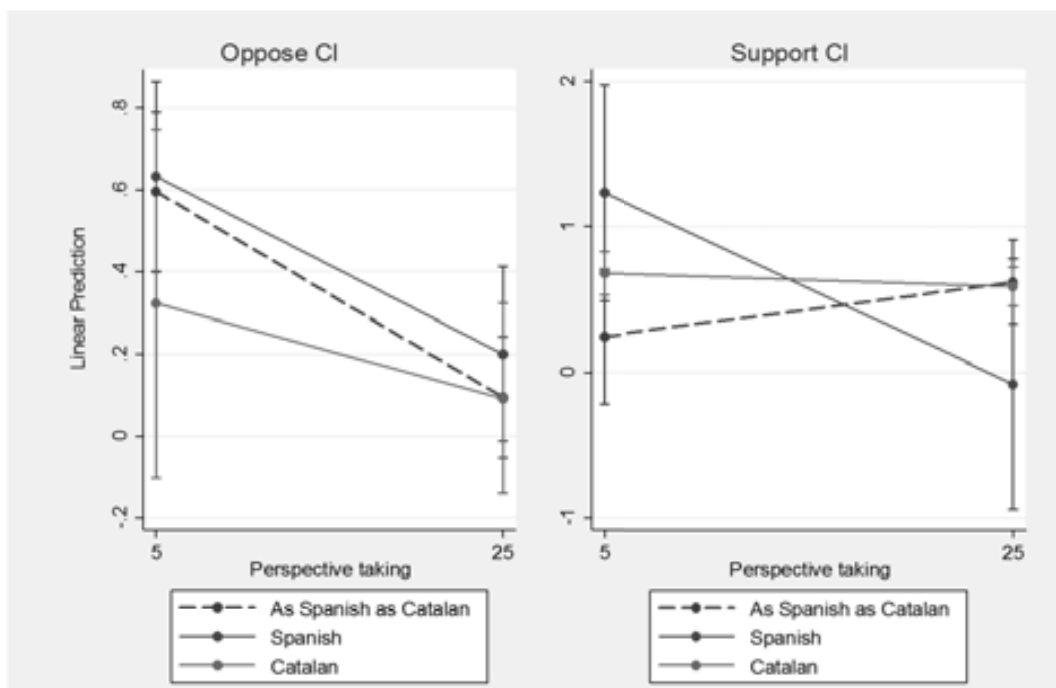


Figure 2.7. Intention to demonstrate. Predictive margins for the interaction between perspective taking and national or single (continuous lines) versus mixed identity (dashed lines).

This result provided partial evidence to validate Hypothesis 2, given that it was only significant for the intention to demonstrate but not for certainty to vote, and it was not valid for respondents who identified as exclusively Catalan.

Discussion

This paper presents an alternative approach to current research on political disagreement and its consequences by focusing on a highly divisive issue and by exploring the intention to demonstrate and certainty to vote in a referendum. It thereby advances knowledge on the topic by considering issue-specific participation modes and by dealing with cross-pressures that are highly salient and easily identifiable. Examining the issue of CI allowed for the consideration of dynamics between challengers and defenders of the status quo and the role of group identity in order to test accepted knowledge on cross-pressures and disagreement that has emerged primarily from the study of electoral politics, partisan preferences, and cross-pressures regarding the left–right cleavage.

The proposed approach adopts the concept of perspective taking from studies in intergroup interaction and leverages it to study political disagreement by considering adversarial positions as a relevant attitude object. This attitude toward opposing perspectives and adversaries is a proxy for the actual disagreement that an individual experiences and his or her disposition to negotiate it. The main contribution of the study lies in offering an innovative approach to investigating differences in how disagreement is perceived and acknowledged by opposing sides of a longstanding social cleavage. As such, it provides an alternative way of understanding individual and contextual effects for the study of the consequences of cross-pressures on behavior.

In this study, perspective taking was tested along with individual, issue context, and electoral cross-pressures in order to explore their relations to the intention to demonstrate and the certainty to vote in a referendum and their stances on CI. I contended that intergroup dynamics would be shaped by the issue context, since challengers and defenders of the status quo have different situations and incentives when facing issue-specific cross-pressures from parties and media positions on the particular issue context. At the individual level, additional cross-pressures can be seen

from the interaction within social networks and individuals' self-identification with Spanish and Catalan identities.

Two factors were expected to shape the relationship between perspective taking and the two modes of participation under study: group status as either a challenger or defender of the status quo; and national identity as either a single or mixed identity. Defenders of the status quo were found to reduce their intention to demonstrate when considering opposing perspectives for both modes of participation, though this effect was not present for challengers. Evidence for significant differences between group statuses confirms the importance of the issue context in the cross-pressures hypothesis. Furthermore, introducing the difference between being a challenger or defender and being in the minority or majority constitutes an important effort in understanding group dynamics in the study of political disagreement and its consequences.

This study also aimed to examine group identity and its importance in issue politics in the context of attitudinal effects. The choice of national identity as a relevant factor for studying effects of perspective taking was based on the possibility of understanding in-group identity within the context of groups determined by issue positions. Doing so provided an opportunity to revisit theories of moderating effects of individual attitudes, such as partisanship, on the demobilizing potential of cross-pressures (Brundidge, 2010). Since national identity has been identified as a strong predictor of political action and support for CI, I expected to find a stronger demobilization effect from perspective taking in the case of people with single identities by contrast to those more accustomed to within-group cross-pressures. However, this held true only for people who identify as exclusively Spanish but who nonetheless support CI, which makes them a minority since they oppose the typical group position. In the other case, identifying as exclusively Catalan and opposing CI did not have the expected demobilizing effect of perspective taking. This difference confirms the need to distinguish dimensions of group status, for being a minority and a defender of the status quo has a different effect than being a challenger from within a minority group.

This finding may have resulted from underlying attitudes that were not controlled for, such as between-group prejudices or individual beliefs about other issue dimensions, such as federalism. Future research should investigate additional attitudes and attitudinal

dimensions that could enlighten analysis and with additional sources of cross-pressures that may confound them. Issue importance, salience, and party closeness will provide better evidence for probing in-group identity, while family background, membership in associations, and vote choice can reveal additional sources of cross-pressures. This comprehensive evaluation of sources for issue-specific political disagreement can furthermore illuminate new ways to extend mainstream research on the cross-pressures hypothesis.

While interpreting these findings, some caveats should be acknowledged, for neither the research design nor data are without limitations. I use the term *demobilizing effects* to refer to the relation between perspective taking and behavior; however, as stated when addressing the research design, this term should be taken in the sense of potential effects in order to recognize the data and the analyses' incapacity to make conclusions regarding the direction of causality. Additionally, the measurement of the key variables may show bias due to social desirability both for perspective taking and for intention to demonstrate.

This study has implications for research on political behavior, but it also provides evidence for the importance of disagreement in the study of stable attitudes, such as stances on CI, and of dynamics of national identity. Furthermore, it speaks to studies of intergroup behavior by highlighting the importance of perspective taking—not only as a core value in the paradigm of civility in democracy but also as a useful tool in studying attitudes toward divisive issues and adversary out-groups.

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Appendix 1 - Question wording¹⁷

P1 ; How often:

- a. ... do you listen or see the news on radio or television?
- b. ... do you read the daily paper or online (excluding sports press)?
- c. ... do you use the Internet for information on politics?
- d. ... do you talk about politics with friends or family?
 - Every day or almost every day
 - 3 or 4 days per week
 - 1 or 2 days per week
 - less frequently
 - never

P2. With which of the following statements do you feel most identified? I feel ...

- Only Spanish
- More Spanish than Catalan
- As Spanish as Catalan
- More Catalan than Spanish
- Only Catalan

P7. If tomorrow a referendum to decide the independence of Catalonia was held, what would you do?

- I would vote for independence
- I would vote against independence
- I would abstain / would not vote

P8. And on this scale, where you place yourself?

1. "Completely sure I would vote against the independence of Catalonia"
10. "Completely sure I would vote in favor of the independence of Catalonia"

P11A/B. Perspective taking - Reduced scale with 5 items from Davis's (1980) 7-item subscale Respondents indicated for each question how well the item described them on a five-point scale anchored by 0 (Completely disagree) and 4 (Completely agree).

<p>Now, please tell us to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Before criticizing the <i>espanyolistes</i>, I try to imagine how I would feel in their placeb. If I'm sure about the independence of Catalonia, I do not lose a lot of time listening to the arguments of othersc. I think there are two sides on the	<p>Now, please tell us to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Before criticizing the <i>independentistes catalans</i>, I try to imagine how I would feel in their placeb. If I'm sure about the unity of Spain, I do not lose a lot of time listening to the arguments of othersc. I think there are two sides on the
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¹⁷ Original wording in Spanish and Catalan available from author

<p>question on the independence of Catalonia, and I try to see both of them</p> <p>d. Sometimes I find it difficult to see things from the point of view of those who support the unity of Spain</p> <p>e. When I am discussing the independence of Catalonia, I usually try for a moment to put myself in the shoes of those who think differently from me</p>	<p>question on the independence of Catalonia, and I try to see both of them</p> <p>d. Sometimes I find it difficult to see things from the point of view of those who support the independence of Catalonia</p> <p>e. When I am discussing the independence of Catalonia, I usually try for a moment to put myself in the shoes of those who think differently from me</p>
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P12A/B. If a major demonstration in favor of the *independence of Catalonia / Unity of Spain* was held in your city, would you demonstrate? In this scale, where would you place yourself?

1. "Completely sure I would demonstrate
10. "Completely sure I would not demonstrate

P.13 Think about your best friend. Does he/she share the same position as you regarding the independence of Catalonia?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

P14. And what about your couple? Does he/she share the same position as you regarding the independence of Catalonia?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. I do not have a couple / NA

Appendix 2 – Transformation of the Dependent Variables - Probit-adapted OLS method by Van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell (2006)

Let the individual's response to the question about his intention to demonstrate be y_i , and the possible response categories of this question be denoted by $j = 0, \dots, 10$. Defining for each response category j its corresponding sample share p_j (i.e. response frequencies), the quantiles of the standard normal distribution for the sample cumulative relative frequencies of the eleven response categories μ_j are defined as:

$$\begin{aligned}\mu_0 &= -\infty \\ \mu_1 &= \Phi^{-1}(p_1) \\ \mu_2 &= \Phi^{-1}(p_2) \\ &\dots \\ \mu_{10} &= \infty\end{aligned}$$

Where Φ^{-1} denotes the inverse of the cumulative standard normal distribution. Using these μ values, respondent's answer can be replaced by its conditional expectation¹⁸:

$$\begin{aligned}&\mu \\ &\mu \\ &\mu \\ &\mu \\ &\frac{\Phi(j) - \Phi(j-1)}{\phi(j-1) - \phi(j)} \\ \tilde{y}_i &= E(y_i \mid \mu_{j-1} \leq y_i < \mu_j) =\end{aligned}$$

Where \tilde{y} is the new dependent "cardinalized" variable for the respondent i , Φ denotes the cumulative standard normal distribution and ϕ stands for the standard normal density.

In sum, the new dependent variable takes the conditional mean (given the original ordinal rating) of a standardized normally-distributed continuous variable, calculated based on the frequencies of the ordinal categories in the sample. The approach has the main advantage that once the transformation has been carried out, responses are normally distributed bounded and simple linear models can be employed. All regressions are then run on the transformed values. This means that all the results can be interpreted in terms of standard deviation units of the intention to demonstrate measures.

¹⁸ Under the condition that the value of the "cardinalised" dependent variable is in the interval between those two values that correspond to the class of the value of the original variable. The expression comes from Van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell (2006, 9), according to the formula in Maddala (1983, 366).

3. Dealing with Political Adversaries and Disagreement in Contentious Politics¹⁹

Abstract

Blame attribution for outcomes of public interest is central to understanding politics, for it reflects perceptions of political disagreement. In protest politics, it is an especially decisive matter since demonstrators point to different kinds of actors in order to express different views of political dissent, particularly when addressing highly divisive issues. Some people blame actors who hold opposing stances that challenge their beliefs (i.e., adversaries), while others blame government competence; still others signal collective responsibility or point to broader socioeconomic outcomes. This paper therefore seeks to examine the extent to which conceiving dissent as adversarial politics is related to political attitudes associated to electoral politics, how those perceptions are related to involvement in social movement organizations, and whether the issue context matters. Research on framing effects has studied frames in thought by focusing on changes in emphasis from a mostly experimental approach with limited external validity. In the present study, by using protest survey data from 47 events on eight position issues occurring in eight European countries from 2009 to 2012, I find evidence for the importance of issue-specific contexts in explaining individual perceptions. As expressed in public opinion, issue divisiveness is the strongest predictor of perceiving disagreement to be adversarial politics. Social movement organizations also play a major role in making sense of protest issues via frame alignment processes. While individual traits more weakly explain perceptions, voting and party identity matter significantly in how individuals attribute blame. Altogether, these findings expand the study of political disagreement and its relationship with influence and mobilization processes.

¹⁹ I acknowledge the financial support of the ESF EUROCORES collaborative research project “Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation (www.protestsurvey.eu), research grant EUI2008-03812 of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

Introduction

Though studies of political disagreement have for some time focused on the sources that expose people to disagreement, only recently have these studies attempted to explain how individual characteristics influence the perception of disagreement (Wojcieszak & Price, 2012). Within this topic, the ways in which individuals attribute blame is central to understanding contentious politics, for it can tell us a great deal of how political disagreement is perceived. When approaching highly contested issues, individuals point to different culpable figures and, in doing so, express different views of political dissent. Some people point to actors who hold opposing stances and who challenge their beliefs; others blame the government for its incompetence; still others signal broad, collective responsibility. Along these lines, the present study investigates the extent to which conceiving dissent as adversarial politics (i.e., blaming adversaries who hold opposing positions) relates to political attitudes, how those perceptions are affected by influence processes (i.e., mobilization and framing by social movement organizations), and under what conditions influence is stronger (i.e., issue context).

The engagement of citizens in politics implies the need to identify agency both as a matter of electoral choice and in terms of ideological differences. In this sense, blame attribution can be seen to indicate political awareness. In public grievances, identifying a dimension of an agency or of a culpable figure is relevant to understanding to what extent individuals perceive disagreement as a matter of ideological differences, not as a matter of government competence or of social outcomes that may be related to politics. Building upon studies that have examined blame attribution as a framing problem, I contribute research on attitudes by focusing on cognitive understandings of a given situation at the individual level; these understandings are known as *frames in thought* (see Goffman 1974; Sweetser & Fauconnier 1996; Tversky & Kahneman 1987). Scholars maintain that a frame in thought is not exclusively a property of communication, but also an individual's representation of a situation, which can therefore reveal what an individual perceives to be relevant to understanding that situation. Previous studies have referred to this distinction by additionally referring to frames that are "embedded in political discourse," those that "are internal structures of the mind" (Kinder & Sanders, 1996), and, more particularly, Scheufele's (1999) concepts of "media frames" and "individual frames." Understanding blame attribution

as frames in thought highlights the importance of the topic by considering evidence that framing influences interpretations of politics (Benford & Snow, 2000), policy views (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley 1997; Nelson & Kinder, 1996), and behavioral intentions (Clawson & Waltenburg, 2008).

In short, I question how blame attribution relates to political attitudes and behaviors such as external efficacy and voting; to what extent are those perceptions related to demonstrators' involvement in social movement organizations (SMOs), and under what conditions is influence stronger?

In this study, I find evidence of the importance of the issue-specific context in explaining individual perceptions. Unsurprisingly, public opinion's approval of demonstration issues, and thus issue-divisiveness, is the strongest predictor of perceiving disagreement as adversarial politics. However, organizations also play a major role in making sense of the protest issues via frame alignment processes. Though individual traits more weakly explain perceptions, voting and party identity matter greatly to how people frame blame attribution.

This paper first situates the research topic in previous literature on framing and mobilization processes in social movement literature to establish some links with research on political disagreement. A second part introduces the research questions and hypotheses, after which I propose a typology of position, valence, and aggregate framing for use as this study's dependent variable. A fourth part briefly describes the cases, data collection, and analytical methods, after which I conclude by discussing the results of the analyses conducted regarding the three proposed levels (i.e., individual, organizational, and contextual) and by discussing their relevance to the research on political disagreement and its relationship to influence and mobilization processes.

Position, Valence, and Aggregate Issue Framing

Attribution framing has been studied from different perspectives at the individual (micro), organizational (meso), and contextual (macro) level by using three approaches that examine one or two of these levels.

In the literature on political behavior and party positions, attribution framing can be explained as a response to public opinion on a given issue; majority consensus on policy choices determine valence issues, and conflicting situations with divided opinions determine position issues (Stokes, 1963). Positions are based on ideological, policy, and/or value-based differences, while valence represents the evaluation of actors in particular dimensions of the issues. Social movement literature has followed this distinction in a similar way; valence movements are characterized by high agreement and a low number of opponents (Kaase, 1990), while, on the contrary, position movements strongly divide public opinion, which results in a high number of opponents (Fuchs & Rucht, 1992).

Research on social movements that stems from political psychology has focused on identity and group processes; in both, blame attribution is either adversarial or aggregate. On the one hand, the objects of adversarial framing are actors who stand in opposition to the movement organizations, their aims, or their ideologies (Hunt et al., 1994). On the other hand, aggregate attributions do not clearly identify an agent but instead propose abstract subjects and general responsibilities. Aggregate frames attribute responsibility to impersonal institutions (e.g., capitalism, neoliberalism, and corporatism) or outcomes (e.g., overpopulation, pollution, war, and poverty) and therefore dilute the blame to a general collective: “we” (Knight & Greenberg, 2011).

However, a third approach to attribution framing involves influence processes, in which frames are considered to be ways of connecting elite messages to cognitive elements such as thoughts, goals, motivations, feelings, and attitudes. Individual frames can be seen as interpretations that convert influential messages into structured and socialized meaning. Though elites and SMOs set frames of reference that people use to interpret and discuss public issues, people’s information processing and interpretation are always influenced by previously held attitudes (Wicks, 2006). Consequently, the mechanisms of framing effects must distinguish influence processes and individual traits, since the latter may affect interpretation directly, along with affecting the selection of sources. Research on framing effects has widely studied individual changes produced as a result of exposure to media framing (See Druckman, 2001; Scheufele, 1999). From this perspective, people who follow elite cues can align themselves to a particular view or, to a different extent, produce their own interpretations. Though a major part of social

psychological research has also used experimental approaches to control for individual differences, the question of how much individual traits affect framing is relevant for understanding the relationship between a particular interpretation of reality and political attitudes.

This study therefore aims to implement a three-stance approach to the individual, organizational, and contextual level factors that determine blame attribution. To do so, it relies on empirical evidence from real-world conflicts at these three levels: survey data from demonstrators regarding multiple issues, interviews with SMOs, and public opinion surveys. This approach is optimal for providing external validity to findings regarding the relationship between framing and attitudes, as well as to disentangle this relationship from the effects of the issue context. The study sample consists of highly engaged issue publics that are not representative of the general population; therefore, the results are not expected to be generalizable. However, they are valid for understanding the dynamics of frames in thought between demonstrators across multiple issues and contexts.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

How do political perceptions of disagreement in contentious politics relate to attitudes? To what extent are those perceptions affected by mobilization processes and the influence of SMOs? Moreover, what conditions in the issue contexts affect blame attribution?

I argue that differences regarding perceptions of disagreement can be found at three distinct levels: a micro level (i.e., of individual characteristics), a meso level (i.e., of movement organizations through identity and mobilization processes), and a macro level (i.e. of demonstration, issue, and country context). The hypotheses summarized in Table 3.1 will be presented in this order.

Table 3.1. Hypotheses for explaining position as compared to valence or aggregate framing.

Micro level: Individual characteristics	Vote	↑
	Party identification	↑
	External efficacy	↓
Meso level: Organizational involvement	Membership in issue association	↑
	Mobilized by an organization	↑
	Frame alignment	↑
Macro level: Issue context	Issue saliency	↑
	Issue divisiveness	↑
	Government opposing the issue	↓

Individual traits

Contentious politics regarding highly divisive issues can call attention to social struggle, especially within issue publics or individuals directly affected by policy outcomes or involved in campaigning for particular stances. Demonstrators are therefore expected to be aware of ideological differences in opposing stances. Previous research has found strong links between frames and ideology and has highlighted the distinction between them: ideology as a broad and stable set of beliefs and values (associated with social structures or not) and frames as amplifications or extensions of existing ideologies (Oliver & Johnston, 2000). In this way, blame attribution to political adversaries is expected to reflect ideological values present in partisan politics. Furthermore, the demonstrations studied here belong to highly divisive issues in which competition is intense. In most cases, issue stances correspond to ideological differences in right–left values (except for the regional/nationalist cases in Spain).

Since ideological differences are also central to electoral preferences, the demonstrators' relation to party politics is expected to be crucial to the conception of political struggle. Parties use position or valence frames strategically in order to highlight or conceal policy positions, competence, and/or responsibility (de Sio, 2010), which can lead to people's perceiving disagreement through a partisan lens. At the same time, it is also plausible to expect that negative attitudes toward the government, politicians, or governmental institutions relate to attributions of responsibility to government performance and, in turn, to valence framing. Demonstrators who feel closely attached to parties are expected to be more conscious of ideological differences, while those who are disenchanted about the role of politicians will hold their elected representatives accountable for their grievances instead of attributing blame to

adversaries. As a result, I expect that party identity and participating in electoral politics play an important role in perceiving dissent as an adversarial matter based on conflicting positions, not government performance. Conversely, negative attitudes toward politicians (i.e., external efficacy) are expected to negatively relate to adversarial framing.

Hypothesis 1.1: Party identity and voting: Demonstrators who are more involved in electoral politics (i.e., who vote and identify with political parties) will tend to frame attribution as a matter of ideological difference between adversaries.

Hypothesis 1.2: External efficacy: Demonstrators who are skeptical about parties (i.e., show cynicism) will not frame attribution as a matter of ideological difference but as a problem of government performance.

Influence of organizations

As framing research has established, SMOs and issue-specific associations can also influence individual perceptions. Such influence can occur by way of everyday interactions in which multiple actors share their perspectives of particular issues or by formal organizational communications, such as those that occur in mobilization processes. Social networks have been shown to affect framing processes as an outcome of negotiating shared meaning (Gamson, 1992). Mobilization processes can partially determine the translation of structural dimensions of the political context into how protesters and demonstrators form their attitudes (Walgrave & Rucht, 2010). Consequently, blame can be attributed to political adversaries as a consequence of mobilization processes, everyday organizational interaction, and more directly, by the adoption of frames provided by mobilization agents.

The most straightforward effect can be expected to occur by way of movement organizations' framing of issues to be used as instruments in mobilization processes and in their trying to establish a particular understanding of an issue. Demonstrators interact with SMOs in different degrees; some are members in the organizations staging the event, while others are part of issue-specific organizations involved to different degrees in particular events; furthermore, their organizational activity may vary. Some regularly

join organized action, support the organizations, and follow them as publics of movement media or issue-specific groups. Organizational influence is expected to relate to blame attribution and to augment according to patterns of interaction and involvement. However, organizational influence becomes definitive when there is frame alignment between the demonstrator's attribution of responsibility and the organization's. Issue publics are expected to follow closely and to acknowledge the expertise and intentions of SMOs when interpreting political conflict. If a central function of a movement is to act as a signifying agent and to engage in the production of meaning (Snow & Benford, 1988), then it is expected that demonstrators rely heavily on the attribution of responsibility made by organizations.

Hypothesis 2.1: Frame alignment: If organizations staging the issue attribute blame as an adversarial matter, demonstrators who align with them will consequently perceive disagreement as an adversarial matter.

Macro-level factors: Demonstration, issue, and country contexts

The demonstrations in the sample were considered to be position issues based on the expectation that they confronted interests that could be theoretically attributed to the actors. However, there are important contextual differences among the types of issues as well as among the demonstrations and their host countries. Consequently, analysis must account for these differences and explore the ways in which they can directly determine individual perceptions or reinforce the effects of individual attributes and/or mobilization processes.

Mobilization processes are expected to depend upon their contexts. Being part of a minority group implies contradicting the mainstream, which means that mobilization agents will have different challenges when motivating participation (Walgrave & Klandermans, 2010). As organizations differ in how they attribute blame, I will investigate between-issue and between-country differences by considering the degree of the general population's agreement on the issue (i.e., issue divisiveness and the presence of counter-movements), the position of the government and oppositional parties on the issues, and issue saliency (i.e., SMO-sector activity and subjective evaluation).

Issue spaces vary between countries, for public opinion's agreement with or support for opposing stances depends on many local circumstances, traditions, and social processes. Stokes (1963) argues that issues that are strongly divisive in one country are less controversial in another and that the extent in which a grievance is a position issue therefore needs to be settled empirically (as cited in de Sio, 2010). Research on this matter has concluded that an issue can be both positional and valence-oriented at the same time (Kitschelt, 1994); therefore, position–valence classification can be seen to occur on a continuous scale. To measure this feature, public opinion surveys can be used to signal the extent of issue divisiveness as a matter of agreement on a given stance. Differences between countries and issues are expected to elucidate how actual political differences relate to individual perceptions; in this sense, I expect highly polarized issues to make adversarial frames more prominent. Although it seems tautological that position issues lead to position framing, there is a complex interaction of government stances, policy cycles, and interest group behavior that can shape the public perception of responsibility more strongly than public opinion.

Hypothesis 3.1: Issue-divisiveness: Higher levels of polarization regarding the issue by public opinion will positively relate to position framing.

In this study, when examining individual attitudes toward electoral politics, the behavior of parties in using responsibility attribution strategically was introduced. The identified mechanism is that, instead of competing by making changes to their policy positions, parties will emphasize or conceal their actions and responsibility according to how the electorate evaluates situations (de Sio, 2010). When parties make explicit statements on their issue-positions, they are expected to influence individual perception. Moreover, the effects of incumbents and challengers can be different; incumbents are expected to oppose issues with low levels of public disagreement in order to blame others and to reinforce their position in an effort to present positive appraisals of their policy outcomes and avoid responsibility. In this case, they are expected to be self-referential or to appeal to an aggregate frame of collective responsibility and influence individual perception in that direction. By contrast, opposition can either blame the government for its poor performance in trying to profit from voter dissatisfaction or try to highlight ideological differences in order to distance themselves from the government or weaken its framing on the issue (Katsanidou & Bloom, 2010). When incumbents take an explicit

oppositional stance on an issue or when they devote attention to that issue, they will highlight their role in the conflict and thereby diminish the perception of adversarial politics.

Hypothesis 3.2: Role of the government: Government involvement in the demonstration issue will negatively relate to demonstrators' holding position frames.

The prominence and activity of counter-movements is also expected to alter the conditions for interpreting an issue. Salient issues or protest events that are uncommon are expected to raise awareness of the conflict and the adversaries involved on both sides. Saliency can also be determined by the way in which other actors respond to the event. In the context of adversarial politics, the size and strength of organized constituencies opposing the issue is expected to have a different effect than the disapproval of the general population, since constituencies can signal asymmetrical confrontation. An unambiguous presence of adversaries can have a considerable effect when such adversaries make themselves visible in order to demonstrate in defense of their stance. Some of the surveyed events faced counter-movements; though their size, importance, and media visibility differ, demonstrators exposed to contending demonstrations are expected to be more aware of ideological differences and the actors opposing their stance.

Hypothesis 3.3: Issue saliency: Demonstrators in events with salient issues are expected to frame blame attribution as a matter of opposing positions.

Methods

Data Collection

In this study, the methodological approach involved a diverse case analysis in which people who attended massive street demonstrations on highly divisive issues were investigated. Individuals were grouped according to the event they attended and the host country in order to examine within- and between-group variance. Differences in blame attribution framing between the demonstrators of each event were explained by investigating individual attitudes, mobilization processes, and the contextual features of each issue.

Protest surveys were administered at 47 major demonstrations in eight European countries during the period from 2009 to 2012 for the project “Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation.”²⁰ The sample for this study consisted of eight issues, and the demonstrations were selected from 80 events in order to limit cases to highly divisive issues in which political disagreement is explicit between opposing stances (N=10,033). Issues such as labor rights (e.g., in Mayday demonstrations) or democracy were not selected in order to maintain a convenience sample for studying the effects of exposure to dissimilar opinions.

The protest survey procedure was designed to generate a probability sample by covering the entire demonstration area in such a way that every protester has the same odds of being surveyed. However, as mail-back questionnaires imply respondent self-selection, face-to-face interviews were held during the events in order to control for differences between protesters onsite and respondents who returned mail-back surveys.²¹

The dependent variable: Adversarial framing

To gauge perceptions of disagreement, individual responses for blame attribution were classified into the categories of position, valence, and aggregate. Blame attributions were coded from the English translation of individual responses to the open-ended question “Who is to blame for [the demonstration issue]?” All agents mentioned were coded to allow multiple responses from each individual. The coding process was a two-step approach involving the manual coding of 2,500 responses, which led to the definition and refinement of categories that were subsequently used in automatic coding with dictionaries and word stemming (Feinerer, 2012). The definition of categories intended to include as many words as possible in order to ensure that the use of multiple concepts in each response allocated to each code was consistent and equivalent. In this way, each code effectively replaced the words recorded for each respondent in order to reduce the original textual data to the code label. In all, 25 categories emerged, each of

²⁰ <http://www.protestsurvey.eu/>

²¹ A complete description of the protest survey process is available in Walgrave and Verhulst’s (2009) “Protest Surveying. Testing the Feasibility and Reliability of an Innovative Methodological Approach to Political Protest” at <http://www.protestsurvey.eu/index.php?page=publications&id=1> and a bias analysis of the method in Walgrave et al. (2012).

which was grouped into one of the three categories of interest: position, valence, or aggregate. A description of blame attribution codes by issue is presented in Figure 3.1, and the contents of coding categories are shown in Appendix 1.

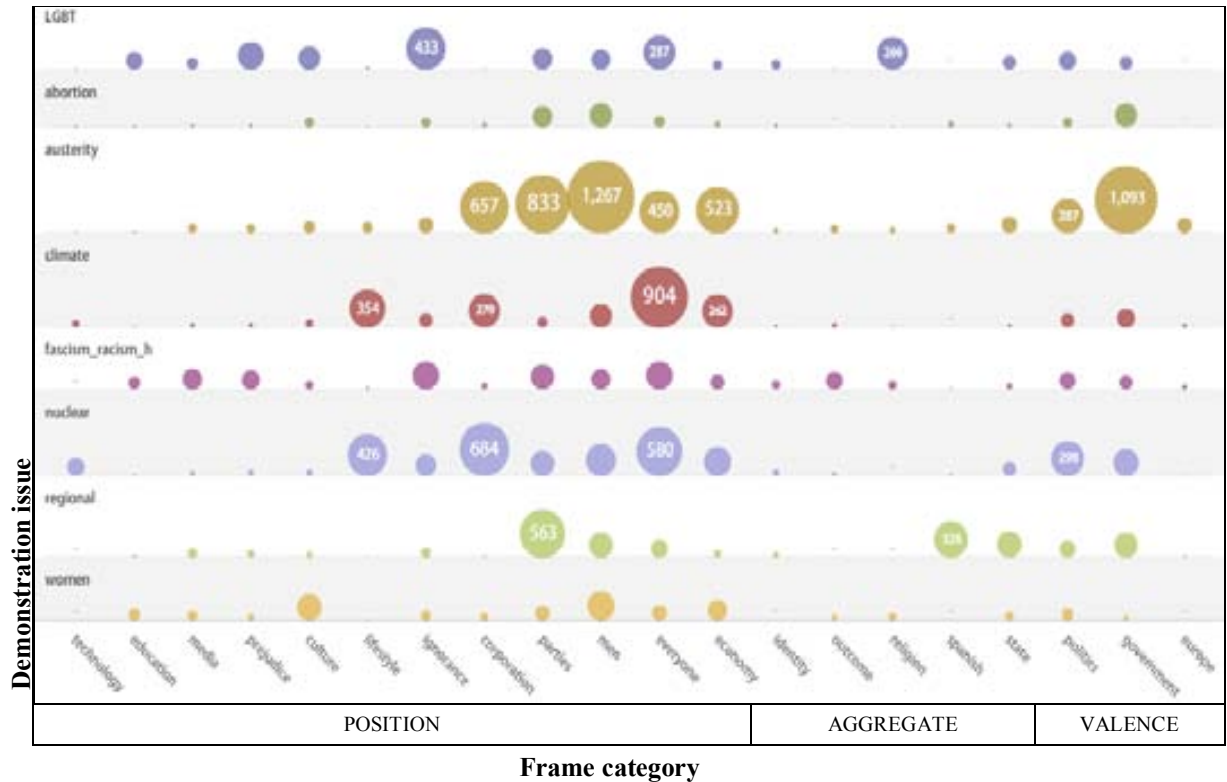


Figure 3.1. Blame attribution by demonstration issue (coding descriptions and procedures described in Appendix 1).

Defining which codes constituted position or valence framing was issue-specific, and classifying actors and institutions as adversaries depended on the nature of the issues as well as on the stage of public policy in each case. Code aggregation into position, valence, or aggregate categories was based on the results of cluster analyses and the particular characteristics of each event.

Coding attributions into position, valence, or aggregate frames was not straightforward, for nearly 25% of respondents did not provide an attribution frame or else considered the question of blame inappropriate or impossible to respond to. An additional 41% of respondents identified one actor or mentioned an aggregate frame with no particular actor (i.e., neither explicitly nor tacitly), and the remaining 59% provided more than one answer. These circumstances complicated the operationalization since some of these respondents framed adversaries, the government, and no particular agents

simultaneously, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Two variables were created in order to conduct analysis. One dummy variable identified every positional frame response (i.e., without considering whether individuals mentioned multiple actors) compared to responses that mentioned only valence or aggregate frames (Figure 3.2a), while another dummy variable identified exclusive position-frame responses compared to responses that mention only valence or aggregate frames (i.e., by dropping every mixed response) (Figure 3.2b).

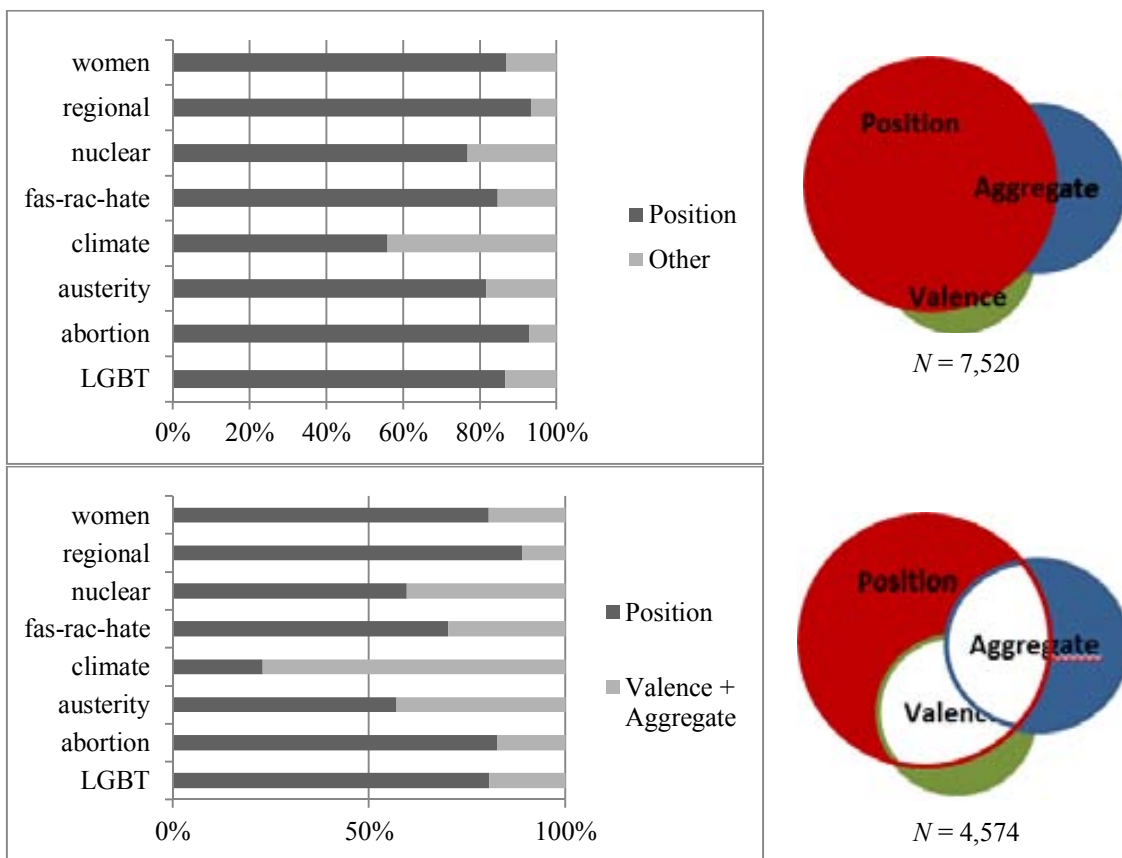


Figure 3.2. Individual framing of blame attribution.

Independent variables

The analysis involved three levels in order to assess individual, organizational, and contextual data. At the individual level, attitudes toward parties and the political system, as well as vote recall, were gathered by the protest survey. The exact wording of the question is presented in Appendix 3.

Table 3.2. Individual traits (micro level).

Issue	Vote			Party identification			External efficacy		
	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N
	1 = Vote 0 = Abstain			1 = Identifies with a party 0 = No identification			Normalized so 1 = max and 0 = min		
GLBTQ	0.757	(0.013)	1,100	0.535	(0.015)	1,154	0.661	(0.007)	1,129
Abortion	0.926	(0.016)	283	0.722	(0.026)	302	0.730	(0.014)	294
Climate	0.919	(0.004)	3,732	0.834	(0.006)	3,876	0.687	(0.004)	3,787
R/F/Hate	0.890	(0.008)	1,423	0.943	(0.006)	1,449	0.577	(0.007)	1,424
Nuclear	0.867	(0.013)	647	0.875	(0.013)	679	0.628	(0.01)	667
Regional	0.897	(0.007)	1,797	0.834	(0.009)	1,848	0.567	(0.005)	1,811
Women	0.896	(0.01)	906	0.758	(0.014)	933	0.696	(0.008)	921

Organizational data emerged from individual responses regarding respondents' interactions with organizations and from interviews with organizations staging the demonstrations. Blame framing from the organizations staging the events was coded manually for 150 organizations surveyed using the same 25 categories, which was also performed for the individual responses of the dependent variable. Frame alignment between organizations and individuals was defined to match blame attribution by considering the three categories of interest (i.e., position, valence, or aggregate).

Table 3.3. Organizational variables (meso-level).

Issue	Mobilized by an organization staging the demonstration?			Membership in issue-specific association?			Frame alignment with a staging organization?		
	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N
	1 = Organization channels 0 = Other			1 = Yes 0 = No			1 = Yes 0 = No		
GLBTQ	0.272	(0.014)	1,012	0.153	(0.011)	1,154	0.328	(0.014)	1,154
Abortion	0.223	(0.025)	287	0.318	(0.027)	302	0.56	(0.029)	302
Climate	0.512	(0.008)	3,479	0.188	(0.006)	3,876	0.363	(0.008)	3,876
R/F/Hate	0.532	(0.014)	1,313	0.157	(0.01)	1,449	0.603	(0.017)	848
Nuclear	0.316	(0.019)	608	0.024	(0.006)	679	0.311	(0.021)	488
Regional	0.323	(0.011)	1,734	0.203	(0.009)	1,848	0.426	(0.016)	916
Women	0.26	(0.015)	885	0		933	0.309	(0.015)	933

To study the issue context, multiple data sources were used to gather public opinion and issue specific conditions (see Table 3.4). Public opinion surveys for each country were used to identify the general population's stance on each issue, and local researchers provided expert opinions on other features of the issue context. The public opinion data comes mainly from the Eurobarometer except for Switzerland, as described in Table A2.2. Issue divisiveness scores were calculated on a continuous scale for each issue by taking the maximum divisiveness case (i.e., 50% oppose and 50% favor) as the

maximum value and complete agreement or complete disagreement as the lowest (issue divisiveness = $1 - 2ABS(0.5 - \text{General population's agreement})$).

Table 3.4. Macro-level contextual features.

Issue	Demonstration	City	Country	Issue divisiveness	Government opposes	Opposition opposes	Counterdemonstration	SMO sector activity	Political attention	Issue saliency	N	%
Austerity	Against Labor Law	Madrid	ES	0.40	0	1	0	-0.5	3	4	308	2.82
R/F/Hate	Against Racist Politics	Stockholm	SE	0.44	0	0		-0.5	2	4	191	1.75
Austerity	Europe of Capital, Crisis, and War	Barcelona	ES	0.40	1	1	0	-0.5	3	3	77	0.71
Nuclear	Anti-nuclear demo	Amsterdam	NL	0.62	1	0	1	-0.5	2	3	448	4.1
Nuclear	Anti-nuclear manifestation	Beznau	CH	0.82	0	0		0	3	3	472	4.32
Nuclear	Anti-nuclear	Muehleberg	CH	0.82	0	0		0	3	3	460	4.21
Nuclear	Anti-nuclear demonstration	Stockholm	SE	0.72	0	1	0	-0.5	2	2	279	2.56
Climate	Climate change	Brussels	BE	0.20	0	0	0	0	1	3	334	3.06
Climate	Climate march	Utrecht	NL	0.28	1	0	0	0	3	4	242	2.49
Climate	Climate demo	Copenhagen ²²	SE	0.38	0	0	1	-0.5	3	4	272	2.22
Austerity	Culture demo Amsterdam	Amsterdam	NL	0.88	0	1	0	0	2	4	176	1.61
Austerity	Culture demo Utrecht	Utrecht	NL	0.88	0	1	0	0	2	4	171	1.57
Abortion	Against abortion	Madrid	ES	0.95	0	1	0	-1	2	3	302	2.77
Regional	Against language decree	Santiago	ES	0.41	1	1	1	0	3	2	323	2.96
Austerity	Against the new labor law	Santiago	ES	0.40	0	1	1	-0.5	3	4	168	1.54
Austerity	Joining forces for another EU	Florence	IT	0.96	0	0	0		2	4	134	1.23
Austerity	Employment, not capital reforms	Vigo	ES	0.40	0	0	0	0	3	4	168	1.54
Nuclear	Fukushima never again	Brussels	BE	0.70	0	1	0	-0.5	1	2	189	1.73
LGBT	Gay pride	Bologna	IT	0.86	1	1	1	0	1	1	216	1.98
LGBT	Gay pride Geneva	Geneva	IT	0.86	1	0	0	0	2	1	197	1.81
Austerity	General strike	Florence	IT	0.96	1	1	0	-0.5	2	4	235	2.15
LGBT	Pride parade	London	UK	0.52	0	0	0	0	3	4	193	1.77
Austerity	March for work	Brussels	BE	0.94	0	0	0	0	3	4	129	1.18
Austerity	Marcia Perugia-Assisi	Assisi	IT	0.96	0	0	1	0	1	3	264	2.42
Austerity	Military demo	The Hague	NL	0.88	1	1	0	0	1	1	204	1.87
Women	Million Women Rise	London	UK	0.30	0	0		-0.5	1	2	178	1.63
Climate	National Climate March	London	UK	0.36	0	0		-0.5	2	4	243	2.23
Climate	National Climate March 2010	London	UK	0.36	0	0		0	2	2	358	3.28
Austerity	No to Austerity	Brussels	BE	0.94	0	0	1	0	3	4	144	1.32
R/F/Hate	No to Hate Crime Vigil	London	UK	0.84	0	0	0	-0.5	2	2	169	1.55
Austerity	Non-Profit Demonstration	Brussels	BE	0.94	0	0	0	0	1	2	197	1.81

²² The international Climate Summit was an international event with a significant participation of Swedish demonstrators on the survey

LGBT	Pink Saturday Parade Survey	Haarlem	NL	0.36	0	0	0	0	1	1	101	0.93
LGBT	Prague Pride	Prague	CZ	0.90	0	0	1	0	3	2	135	1.24
LGBT	Pride demonstration	Zurich	CH	0.30	1	0	0	0	2	1	150	1.37
LGBT	Rainbow Parade	Gothenburg	SE	0.26	0	0	0	0	2	2	162	1.48
Austerity	Retirement demonstration	Rotterdam	NL	0.88	1	1	0	-0.5	3	3	294	2.69
Regional	Self-determination is democracy	Barcelona	ES	0.41	1	1	0		3	4	301	2.76
Austerity	Stop budget cuts	The Hague	NL	0.88	1	0	0	-0.5	3	4	293	2.68
R/F/Hate	Stop racism and exclusion	Amsterdam	NL	0.40	1	0	0	1	1	2	125	1.15
Austerity	Stop the Government	Prague	CZ	0.98	1	0	0	1	2	3	186	1.7
Austerity	Together strong for public work	The Hague	NL	0.88	1	0	0	-0.5	3	4	348	3.19
Austerity	'TUC's March for the Alternative	London	UK	0.78	0	1	0	0.5	2	3	211	1.93
R/F/Hate	Unite Against Fascism	London	UK	0.84	0	1	0	0	2	2	194	1.78
Regional	We are a nation, we decide	Barcelona	ES	0.41	1	1	1	1	3	4	309	2.83
Austerity	We have alternatives	Brussels	BE	0.94	1	1	0	0	3	4	169	1.55
Women	Women demonstration	Geneva	CH	0.92	0	0		0.5	2	2	206	1.89
Women	World March of Women	Bern	CH	0.92	0	0		0.5	2	2	150	1.37

Own elaboration with data from interviews and expert opinion from the CCC project and Eurobarometer surveys (except for Switzerland). Further details regarding sources are available in Appendix 2.

Results

Considering the reduced number of second-level cases for issues and countries, a null two-level random intercept regression with demonstration, issue, and country and fixed effects revealed the importance of each level of analysis (Table 3.5). The first model used the dependent variable that takes the value 1 for all position frames, regardless of how many actors were identified, and 0 for the exclusive responses of only valence or only aggregate framing. In the second model, the dependent variable took the value 1 for exclusive position frames and 0 for the exclusive responses of only valence or only aggregate framing. Individuals who identified more than one frame were dropped from the sample (position \cap valence, position \cap aggregate, and valence \cap aggregate).

Table 3.5. Multilevel analysis with null two-level random intercept models (mixed-effects logistic regression).

	All positions versus others	Exclusive positions versus others	
Second level	variance partition coefficient	variance partition coefficient	Number of cases
Demonstration	17.26 %	28.63%	47
Issue	13.65%	22.45%	8
Country	1.93%	3.23%	8
	<i>N</i> = 9,345	<i>N</i> = 4,570	

Specifications for both versions of the dependent variable showed the relative importance of each level of analysis. The larger part of variation regarding the propensity to attribute blame as an adversarial matter is attributable to characteristics of the demonstration, followed by the issue context and, to a very low extent, the differences between countries (Table 3.5).

A single-level model was used in order to consider all details at the individual, organizational, and contextual levels, with issue- and country-fixed effects. The analysis included demographic controls as well as ideological positions (Table 3.6). The significance and magnitude values were similar to the multilevel model, to a robustness check performed with a three-category variable which included valence and aggregate frames separately, and to an additional model that considered events regarding women issues, which had no organizational framing data (not shown).

Table 3.6. Multivariate analyses for position framing (marginal effects from logistic regression).

	All positions versus others		Exclusive positions versus others	
Individual traits				
Voted in last election	0.037**	(0.017)	0.097***	(0.027)
Party identity	0.043***	(0.016)	0.080***	(0.028)
External efficacy	-0.059***	(0.021)	-0.087**	(0.034)
Organizational variables				
Mobilized by an organization	0.022**	(0.011)	0.015	(0.017)
Member of issue-specific org	-0.001	(0.013)	-0.001	(0.022)
Alignment w/org. framing	0.153***	(0.016)	-0.209***	(0.035)
SMO frames position	0.029*	(0.018)	-0.075***	(0.028)
Alignment*SMO frames position	0.030	(0.022)	0.329***	(0.043)
Macro-level (contextual features)				
Issue divisiveness	0.356***	(0.102)	0.636***	(0.146)
Countermobilization	-0.036**	(0.017)	-0.011	(0.029)
SMO sector activity	-0.106***	(0.024)	-0.097**	(0.038)
Government opposes the issue	0.024	(0.017)	-0.079***	(0.028)
Opposition opposes the issue	-0.002	(0.014)	-0.007	(0.022)
Political attention	-0.136***	(0.021)	-0.131***	(0.033)
Issue saliency	0.078***	(0.013)	0.067***	(0.021)
Control variables				
Woman	0.010	(0.010)	0.010	(0.017)
Age	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.001)
Tertiary education	0.010	(0.011)	0.002	(0.017)
Ideology (right)	0.004	(0.003)	0.007*	(0.004)
Country fixed-effects (reference group = BE)				
Czech Republic	-0.087	(0.073)	-0.254***	(0.078)
Italy	-0.225***	(0.051)	-0.218***	(0.055)
The Netherlands	0.017	(0.025)	0.062*	(0.034)
Spain	0.197***	(0.052)	0.214**	(0.088)
Sweden	0.203***	(0.028)	0.291***	(0.038)
Switzerland	0.232***	(0.044)	0.383***	(0.057)
The U.K.	0.192***	(0.030)	0.172***	(0.052)
Issue fixed-effects (reference group = climate)				
LGBT	0.413***	(0.066)	0.505***	(0.066)
Abortion	-0.101	(0.193)	-0.088	(0.181)
Austerity	0.209**	(0.087)	0.040	(0.095)
Fascism – racism – hate	0.279***	(0.072)	0.284***	(0.086)
Nuclear	0.172**	(0.070)	0.090	(0.077)
Regional	0.420***	(0.075)	0.565***	(0.078)
Observations	5577		2662	
Pseudo <i>r</i> -squared	0.163		0.244	

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Discussion

In analyzing how demonstrators in highly divisive issues frame blame attribution, this study chiefly sought to elucidate the individual, organizational, and contextual factors that explain perceptions of political disagreement. A sample limited to position issues has allowed a better understanding of adversarial politics by contrast with perceptions of political conflict based on government performance or on wider socioeconomic problems. Comparing demonstrators in eight issues across eight countries afforded a strong evaluation in order to conclude micro-, meso-, and macro-level determinants. Findings suggest that contextual factors and organizational framing explain most individual perceptions in general terms but that individual-level attitudes and behaviors also have a significant effect on adversarial blame attribution.

Individual-Level Factors

At the micro level, both attitudes and behaviors related to particular perceptions of politics, and identification with political parties and voting were positively and significantly related to positional framing. Considering that adversaries in a substantial amount of issues were not clearly charged ideologically (e.g., GLBT, climate, women, and fascism/racism/hate issues), this result speaks to the importance of parties in highly divisive issues, even within protest politics. The result for external efficacy also shows the prominence of parties. Cynicism (i.e., the opposite of external efficacy) emerged as the only attitude significantly and negatively related to adversarial attribution. As expected, respondents who believed that politicians did not respond to citizens did not attribute responsibility to adversaries but to government competence.

Organizational-Level Factors

Individual alignment with blame attributions from organizations emerged as a good predictor for adversarial framing. The interaction of an organization's framing position and individual alignment with organizational frames led to individuals' using position frames, which signals the consistent understanding of issues by individuals and organizations, though no causal relation can be implied. Individuals may have followed organizational cues, yet they may have also chosen organizations according to their

understanding of particular issues.

The relationship between alignment and organizational involvement holds exclusively when examining the discursive component of involvement. Being mobilized by an organization that staged the demonstration turned out to have a very weak relation to individual framing, while involvement in issue-specific associations was not a significant factor. These results confirm the power of the sense-making function of social-movement organizations in the context of political conflict.

Context

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that issue-divisiveness is the strongest predictor of adversarial framing. Public opinion divisiveness on all selected issues was positively related to blaming adversaries and turned out to be a stronger relationship than party position or issue salience.

In the same line as organizational-level factors, parties play an important role in context-level factors. An explicit position opposing the issue by the incumbent had a strong negative effect on adversarial framing as well as government attention to the issue. Governments did seem to draw attention to themselves and weaken the role of adversaries when expressing an explicit stance on the issue. By contrast, the role of the opposition was not relevant to explaining individual perceptions.

Though the role of counter-movements was expected to make adversaries salient, it ended up being negatively related to adversarial framing. Few events had counter-demonstrations, and in these cases counter-movements may have had a low profile since they competed for media attention with larger demonstrations. In events with higher levels of polarization (e.g., the anti-abortion demonstration in Spain and the LGBT demonstration in Bologna), counter-movements facilitated more extreme discourses in which adversaries were difficult to be acknowledged by demonstrators as legitimate adversaries. In these cases, highly polarized issues were perceived as adversarial conflicts when considering the support of public opinion but not in the presence of counter-movements. Counter-movements may have been less visible regarding issues with higher levels of SMO activity, such as climate change or austerity policies, in

which adversaries are not as easily identifiable as in more divisive issues.

Results regarding issue salience were not straightforward, given that active SMO should have been salient. Saliency was indeed positively and significantly related to adversarial attribution, but issue activity had a stronger, negative relation, which may indicate that infrequent demonstrations instead of active SMOs raise awareness of the issues and thus of a clear distinction between adversaries on each side. These findings substantiate the expectation of finding correlations between contextual factors and individual perceptions, and issue divisiveness turned out to be the strongest predictor of adversarial blame attribution.

Investigating perceptions of political disagreement can improve the current understanding of individual judgment of contentious issues. Differences between individual perceptions of issues, such as adversarial politics, or as a matter of government performance or socioeconomic outcomes can illuminate the ways in which people experience politics, and as such, examining individual perceptions can advance the understanding of the effects of political disagreement and its significance regarding political attitudes and behaviors. Disagreement has been treated as a closed concept; though its determinants and consequences have been widely analyzed, perceptions of disagreement remain an understudied matter. In response, this study provides support for broadening how we conceive political disagreement by studying determinants of individual perceptions. The findings confirm previous definitions of disagreement as a matter of contextual effects (e.g., exposure to dissonant stances in social environments) and of network influence. It also advances research on the topic by examining particular features of issue-specific contexts and by providing evidence of the mechanisms of organizational involvement and influence, as well as of individual traits.

Perceiving political disagreement as adversarial politics strongly relates to the particular issue context and, to some extent, to electoral politics via both demonstrators' perceptions of parties and voting practices, as well as to party positions and the attention they provide to the issues at stake. Adversarial politics is therefore related to ideological differences and group interests, as stated in party positions and born out in group conflict. Divisive issues, especially when they are highly salient, clearly relate to an awareness of members of oppositional groups and political adversaries. However,

findings in this study also suggest that organizations play an important role in negotiating shared meaning. Framing processes are central to individual perceptions and act independently of group identity or other network effects produced by way of associational life. How individuals and organizations find alignment in their blame attributions reveals the importance of the sense-making function of SMOs beyond the process of mobilization and dynamic of group identity formation.

In this study, individual traits were also expected to explain a great deal of the variance in the perception of disagreement. According to results, however, negative attitudes toward the role of parties (i.e., political cynicism and low external efficacy) and party identity, though relevant, constituted very weak explanatory factors. The fact that differences among demonstrators' political interest, their perceptions of political competence (i.e., internal efficacy), and their involvement in other forms of participation were very small downplays the importance of individual differences. Nevertheless, the fact that demonstrators could be assumed to be highly interested in issue politics and thus quite knowledgeable about the conflict at hand provided a strong test for analysis.

The three levels of analysis presented suggest a stimulating view of political disagreement. However, they need to be better integrated theoretically, and sturdier methodological approaches need to be explored in order to accommodate the richness of the data. Understanding the interactions among individual and organizational features, as well as among these and issue context, can challenge and thus refine the definitions of political disagreement.

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Appendix 1 – Coding aggregation

corporation	industry companies plant corporat business lobbies multinationals profit private money financ
inequality	inequality unemployment overpopulation welfare insecurity segregat immigrat
ignorance	ignorance stupidity fear afraid egoism selfish inform knowledge scapegoating short-sighted aware passiv accept indifferen laz nonsense lack of information
government	government minister president ombudsman polic
media	media press tabloids
education	education School
men	men male

economy	economy capitalism system development western nations market progress rich countries rich
everyone	everyone everybody mankind population people us human ourselve
ideology	parties cleavage left right vote conserv progressive ideolog mentalit liberal socialist PVV CDA VVD pp psoe psc
state	State democracy laws tribunal court constitution
spanish	spanish nationali spain centrali
technology	tech scien
identity	identity group

lifestyle	lifestyle consume fuel emissions gas energ production cheap greed pollut waste planet
culture	culture attitude values tradition moral patriarc respect gender general conviction
prejudice	prejudice difference phobia extrem discriminat intoleran hate hatred anger bigot hypocri fundamentali racis
politics	politics politicians political system
religion	religion church catholi
europe	europe

Appendix 2 - Public opinion data for Issue divisiveness

Table A2.1 -

	GLBTQ	Abortion	Climate	Nuclear	R/F/Hate	Regional	Regional	Women	Women	Austerity
	7-10 Would feel comfortable about having a homosexual in the highest elected political position in COUNTRY	Totally in favor of abortion	Climate change is a serious problem at the moment	The current level of nuclear energy as a proportion of all energy sources should be reduced	There is very widespread discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin in COUNTRY	7-10 Considers themselves Galician Nationalists	The level of autonomy in Catalonia is insufficient	Domestic violence against women is unacceptable and should always be punished	Women do not have equal rights with men in your Country	Personally, would you say that to emerge from the crisis rapidly, EU Member States should...? - First, reduce public Spending (vs. first invest in Measures to boost the economy)
BE			0.9	0.35						0.53
CH	0.85 ^a			0.411					0.46	
CZ	0.55									0.49
DK			0.86							
ES		0.474				0.206	0.618			0.80
IT	0.57									0.48
NL	0.82		0.81	0.31	0.8					0.56
SE	0.87		0.88	0.36	0.78					
UK	0.74		0.82		0.58			0.85		0.61
Eurobarometer	Special Eurobarometer 317 – 06/09 Discrimination in the EU In 2009		Eurobarometer 12/08/2009 - Europeans' attitudes towards climate change	Special Eurobarometer 324 – 10/09 Europeans and Nuclear Safety	Special Eurobarometer 370 – 06/11 Social Climate report				Special Eurobarometer 344 – 03/10 Domestic Violence against Women	Eurobarometer 77.2 03/12 The crisis and the economic governance in Europe
Country-specific studies	Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity 2010	CIS – 2860 – 01/11 PREFERENCIAS SOBRE LOS PROCESOS DE TOMA DE DECISIONES POLÍTICAS		Demoscope - February 2010		Estudio no 2.829. Barómetro autonómico II. Galicia Enero-Marzo 2010	CEO - Baròmetre d'Opinió Política 06/10			Gallup International Association – Voice of the People

^a This value was estimated according to a general description of public perceptions as no empirical data was found

Appendix 3 - Question wording

Dependent variable

Responsibility attribution

4. In your opinion, who or what is to blame for ISSUE?

Open response question coded into 25 options which were grouped in 3 categories - position, valence, aggregate – as explained in the text.

Independent variables – Individual level

Party identification – transformed into dichotomous (any party, none)

25. With which party do you most closely identify right now?

External efficacy

27. Most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Independent variables – Organizational level

Membership in associations

17. If you have been involved in any of the following types of organisations in the past 12 months: please indicate whether you are a passive member or an active member. If you are a member of several organisations of the same type, tick the box for the organisation of that type in which you are most 'active'.

- Church or religious organisation
- Trade union or professional association
- Political party
- Women's organisation
- Sport or cultural organisation
- Environmental organisation
- Lesbian or gay rights organisation
- Community or neighborhood association
- Charity or humanitarian organisation
- Third world, Global Justice or Peace organisation
- Anti-racist or Migrant organisation
- Human or civil rights organisation
- Other

Mobilized by an organization

8. How did you find out about the demonstration? Was it via: (tick as many as apply)

- Radio or television
- Newspaper(s) (print or online)
- Alternative online media
- Advertisements, flyers, and/or posters
- Partner and/or family
- Friends and/or acquaintances
- People at your school or workplace

- (Fellow) members of an organisation or association
- An organization (magazine, meeting, website, mailing list, etc.)
- Online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)

8b. Which of the above information channels was the most important?

Frame alignment with staging organizations – Dummy variable

Indicates if the respondent's attribution of responsibility matches the organisation's response (coded position, valence, aggregate)

Independent variables – Context

Size of the Issue specific SMO-sector	<p>Inter-item correlation of Number of people and Number of organizations</p> <p>1. Is the Issue specific SMO-sector a large sector? With many different organizations? (compared to other SMO-sectors in same country)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very small - Rather small - Quite large - Very large
SMO-sector activity	<p>Inter-item correlation of activity and frequency of protest</p> <p>2. Is the issue-specific SMO-sector an active protest sector? With many protest events that are staged? (compared to other SMO-sectors in same country) [IMC_cont]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not at all - Rather - Quite - Very <p>4. Is the demonstration about an issue that causes on average a lot of protest or not in your country? [IMC_freq]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lot below average - Somewhat below average - About average - Quite above average - A lot above average
Government (Opposition) opposes the issue	<p>8. For each political party (government and opposition), does it have an explicit position on the issue at stake? And, is it in favor, against, neutral or divided towards the demonstration's claims?</p>
Political attention	<p>7. Now before the demonstration, do the major political institutions (government, parliament etc. devote a lot of attention to the issue of the demonstration, or not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None at all - Quite a bit - A lot
Issue saliency	<p>9. To what extent is the demonstration issue a salient issue in the population at large?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not at all salient - Somewhat salient

Conclusions

Altogether, this dissertation has investigated political disagreement by examining its potential attitudinal and behavioral consequences, as well as the potential factors that may determine individual perceptions of dissent. To this general end, Paper 1 focused on attitudes toward political adversaries and the potential effects of exposure to disagreement in protest mobilization. Consequently, it tapped into demonstrators and their actual interactions with the organizations staging the events. These reported interactions enabled the study of the informational environment of each demonstration's issue and provided an indicator of individual exposure to political disagreement in protest mobilization. In this way, it was possible to analyze the extent to which mobilization experiences related to individuals' dispositions to take the perspective of their political adversaries. In some case, small differences provide weak support for positive relations between exposure to disagreement and empathic attitudes toward adversaries, which confirms the importance of political intermediaries in establishing bridges between lines of political difference and their potential for promoting desirable behaviors from a normative conception of democracy.

Subsequently, Paper 2 used explicit mentions of adversarial positions to measure perspective taking and traditional approaches of exposure to political disagreement in order to test whether disagreement relates to intentions to demonstrate and to vote in a referendum on the specific context of Catalan independence. Lastly, Paper 3 delved into political disagreement by identifying individual, organizational, and contextual factors that explain differences between blame attributions regarding position issues. Differences between perceptions regarding political adversaries and those that attribute disagreement to government performance or broad social outcomes reveal how demonstrators perceive disagreement and how these perceptions vary between issues, organizational involvement, and national contexts.

Altogether, this dissertation sought to assess the importance of political disagreement in individual attitudes toward political adversaries and toward participation in events involving highly controversial issues. In so doing, it also aimed to broaden our understanding of the determinants of individual perceptions of disagreement.

Paper 1 aimed to provide evidence for a highly relevant and current question regarding the possible fragmentation of issue publics in an Internet-mediated communicational environment (Sunstein, 2002). This question emerged by way of studies of the cross-pressures hypothesis that have identified increased tolerance as a result of exposure to contending perspectives (Mutz, 2002a; Pattie & Johnston, 2008), and proposed perspective taking as an active determination for acknowledging differences. The approach followed in this study depicted different mobilization environments with varying levels of exposure to political disagreement; it thereby focused on establishing potential effects of exposure to disagreement on perspective taking. It was hypothesized that demonstrators exposed to adversarial positions would exhibit a greater regard for taking the perspective of their opponents.

Paper 2 sought to establish potential effects of political disagreement and attitudes toward adversaries on people's intentions to participate. It merged more traditional measures of electoral and contextual determinants of heterogeneity (i.e., typically based on the right-left ideological cleavage) with attitudinal difference on issue positions toward the issue of Catalan independence. In this way, it considered two additional factors that were expected to shape the relationship among perspective taking, disagreement, intention to demonstrate, and certainty of voting on a referendum: group status (i.e., challenger versus defender of the status quo) and national identity (i.e., single versus mixed). It hypothesized that intergroup dynamics are shaped by the issue context, since challengers and defenders of the status quo encounter different situations and incentives when facing issue-specific cross-pressures from parties and media positions on the particular issue context. It also proposed that this relationship was mediated by both perspective taking and self-placement according to whether people would self-identify as either Spanish or Catalan or as both.

Together, the first two papers build on the concept of perspective taking in order to study political disagreement by considering adversarial positions as an attitude object. Studying attitudes toward opposing perspectives and adversaries allows researchers to consider an individual's experience with disagreement and his or her disposition to deal with it. In this way, focusing on perspective taking aimed to bring together the literature on inter-group attitudes, which is a central concern in the fields of social psychology

and political sociology when dealing with the challenge of peaceful multigroup coexistence in a democratic society (Jackman, 1977).

Subsequently, Paper 3 sought to advance current knowledge on perceptions of disagreement by leveraging blame attribution as a way to distinguish adversarial views of political difference from conceptions of disagreement based on judgments about government performance or policy outcomes. The differences between both conceptions of disagreement were expected to derive from individual differences in ideological positions and attitudes toward electoral politics, to organizational influence through framing and processes, and to contextual factors closely related to these issues.

According to its results, Paper 1 provided support for the hypothesis that positive attitudinal outcomes derive from exposure to disagreement. Though results could be interpreted as a matter of source self-selection by references to opposing stances, previous research on prejudice reduction as the result of contact between groups with opposing stances (Pettigrew, 1997; Powers & Ellison, 1995) provides evidence of the direction of causality. These results also vouch for previous findings on tolerance as an outcome of exposure to political disagreement (Mutz, 1999); these results highlight the role of organizations as mediators in political conflict and the implications they can have in promoting desirable outcomes from a normative perspective of civil discourse between political adversaries. In effect, finding evidence of a positive correlation between organizations' brokering lines of political difference and individuals who take the perspective of their adversaries speaks to the importance of organizations in contentious politics. Given the wide concern of the potential for Internet mediated-communication as a source of fragmentation for political spheres, evidence of organizations as mediators was positive, especially when mediation was positively related to positive dispositions toward conflict and when occurring in long-established, highly divisive issues.

In Paper 2, it was possible to substantiate the expectation that differences between group status explain the negative effects of exposure to disagreement. Unlike their challengers, defenders of the status quo on the issue of Catalan independence (i.e., for Spanish unity) reduced their intention to demonstrate upon considering opposing perspectives. Comparing challengers and defenders constituted an effort to understand group

dynamics in political disagreement and its consequences. In this regard, results highlight the relevance of the issue context in the study of political disagreement; both organizational attributes and public opinion positions significantly determined both individual perceptions and intentions to participate. A similar conclusion can be drawn from Paper 3 regarding the relevance of the issue context; when explaining individual perceptions of disagreement, issue-divisiveness was the strongest predictor of adversarial framing. This finding corroborates expectations that correlations between contextual factors and individual perceptions of disagreement exist. In light of contextual factors and individual traits, adversarial perceptions were found to somewhat relate to electoral politics, for demonstrators' perceptions of parties and voting practices, as well as their party positions and the attention they provide to the issues at stake, were relevant predictors of adversarial framing.

Paper 3 also provides additional evidence of how organizations facilitate shared meaning through framing processes. Results showed that alignment with organizational frames is central to explaining individual perceptions of disagreement and has an effect independent of other organizational or network effects produced through associational life. Taken together, these results suggest that contextual factors and the intermediate level of organizations and elites are central to the study of political disagreement in terms of the potential effects on perceptions, attitudes, and intentions to participate. Moreover, these results confirm the importance of leaders as recognized experts who thereby can exert influence on individual attitudes (McClurg, 2006).

In their individual-level analyses, the three papers each signal to the relevance of identity when studying disagreement between adversarial groups. Party identity has a small but significant effect on perceptions of blame, while national identity relates to participation for minority subgroups; plus, identification with protest organizers and other protesters was a significant factor in determining the extent to which people were inclined to take adversarial perspectives. These findings on national identity are consistent with research on individual attitudes, such as partisanship, which moderate the demobilizing potential of cross-pressures (Brundidge, 2010).

In sum, the findings of this dissertation make several contributions to literature on political disagreement. First, its three papers consider issue-specific participation modes

and cross-pressures that are highly salient and easily identifiable. The selection of position issues makes political disagreement more prominent and provides an alternative evaluation of theories deriving mainly from the study of electoral politics, partisan preferences, and cross-pressures on the left-right ideological cleavage. Papers 1 and 3, which are based on the unique sample of demonstrators, provide significant results that add new dimensions to the study of disagreement. In Paper 1, the selection of only three Spanish cases deepened the understanding of how mobilization space and case variations can cultivate potential exposure to disagreement. Meanwhile, Paper 3 contributes by investigating disagreement as an outcome of political experiences and issue contexts that affect how people attribute blame in political controversy. Moreover, it provides a rich framework of how context matters in the study of disagreement by considering multiple country- and issue-specific indicators. For practical purposes, its results can be applied generally beyond the surveyed demonstrations, given the variety of issues and countries that compose the sample.

The survey conducted in Paper 2 limited respondents to Catalans in order to assess in greater detail the role of perspective taking by making reference to concrete political adversaries in the nationalism/independence cleavage. Selecting the Catalan case allowed a unique opportunity in three ways: (1) by testing the incidence of two sources of cross-pressures (i.e., ideological and nationalistic); (2) by studying the dynamics between challengers and defenders of the status quo; and (3) by leveraging the role of group identity in order to advance knowledge on cross-pressures and disagreement by considering group status on an alternative dimension than minority/majority groups. However, caution must be applied in using these findings, since data gathered by the online survey sample must be weighted according to the expected biases of Internet users so that results are transferable to the entire population.

Apart from this caution, a number of other caveats should also be considered. First, mentions to *potential effects* of disagreement or to *demobilizing effects* when referring to the relation between perspective taking and attitudes recognize the limitations of the cross-sectional data and the analyses used to conclude any direction of causality. This is clearly a limitation of the dissertation that could be overcome with further research on methodologies that use instrumental variables, as well as additional studies with experimental or panel designs.

Cautious interpretation is also suggested regarding the measurement of key variables for two reasons: On the one hand, normatively charged attitudes imply sensitive information and may be prone to biases resulting from social desirability; this effect might be the case for perspective taking, as well as for intention to participate. Future studies could overcome this limitation by using measurement instruments to guide how sensitive questions are loaded (Näher & Krumpal, 2012), as well as guide indirect questioning (Fisher, 1993) or regarding the item-count technique (Droitcour et al., 1991). On the other hand, measuring perspective taking is subject to important limitations regarding contents and scales. In Paper 1, for example, the limitations of the mail-back survey and the need to avoid respondent fatigue prompted me to ask respondents to rate only one item in order to assess perspective taking (i.e., “I consider everybody’s side of an argument before making a decision”) and to place it among other items within the efficacy battery. Including other questions in order to evaluate this concept would have potentially increased the reliability of the measure, while isolating it from the efficacy battery could expand the evaluation of the behavior reported. On a similar note, Paper 2 implemented a five-item scale adapted from the original measurement instrument (Davis, 1980); yet naming political adversaries as concrete attitude objects was not free of biases, since naming groups is ideologically charged. Using different denominations could alter the results, which implies the need for further research on the adequacy of measurement instruments regarding their wording.

In Paper 3, blame attribution was defined in three categories that needed to contain a variety of open-ended responses. Coding responses into these categories reduced the complexity of individual perceptions and could have under-represented expressions of disagreement. Furthermore, since the coding process depended upon an automatic procedure, the classification criteria could have affected the measurements. Further research and manual coding to verify the accuracy of automatic classification could greatly improve the reliability of the proposed measurement.

As aforementioned, selecting highly divisive and long-established issues in studying the determinants of perspective taking and its potential consequences provides advantages for studying disagreement (e.g., for Papers 1 and 2). However, this selection might have also conditioned results. Future research should therefore concentrate on investigating

different types of issues in order to study the implications of contextual effects among issues. Variance in issue saliency, divisiveness, and the consideration of additional sources of cross-pressures, would greatly enrich similar analysis. Furthermore, a comprehensive evaluation of sources for issue-specific political disagreement can illuminate new ways to understand perspective taking and extend mainstream research on the cross-pressures hypothesis.

Regarding how organizations act in the exposure to disagreement, future investigations should focus on collecting data from multiple sources in order to provide a more realistic account of the informational environment of cross-pressures. Though hyperlinks can greatly condition issue spaces online, they are clearly a limited proxy of exposure to contending positions. The brokerage analysis used in Paper 1 is well suited to capturing the influence dynamics of organizations; however, it can provide a more realistic approach if applied to multiple sources of issue-specific information (e.g., media and social media sources and movement media).

The results from Paper 3 send a clear message regarding the importance of context in the study of disagreement. Future work should seek to discern the mechanisms of individual-contextual interactions. Sturdier methodological approaches for multi-level analysis will improve the understanding of individual perceptions and provide better instruments to accommodate the richness of the data. Limitations regarding the number of cases can be overcome by using alternative definitions of issues or by studying a larger number of countries. In this way, it will be possible to accommodate more issue contexts and, in turn, advance the definition of political disagreement.