When Citizens met Politicians: The Process and Effects of Mixed Deliberation According to Status and Gender

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COST Action CA17135

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Abstract
With deliberative democracy becoming increasingly incorporated into political institutions and processes, the instances of citizens and politicians meeting in deliberation, so called mixed deliberations, is steadily increasing too. While these are important steps towards more deliberative systems, the mixed deliberation setting nonetheless introduces certain risks regarding equality. This study focuses on a series of mixed deliberations about a proposed municipal merger in Finland in 2018. Using content analysis of speech acts (N=3,404) and pre- and post-deliberation surveys (N=225), we analyze patterns according to participant status and gender regarding dominance, deliberative discussion quality and impact on internal and external efficacy. The findings show that politicians dominated the discussions and achieved a higher deliberative quality than citizens. There are no patterns in gender dominance but women achieved higher deliberative quality in their speech acts. Both men and women slightly increased their feeling of internal and external efficacy during the mixed deliberation.

Keywords
Mixed deliberation; equality, dominance; discussion quality; efficacy; gender; status

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To cite this paper

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Introduction

There has been a steady rise in the use of deliberative methods as a way of improving the democratic quality within decision-making processes (see e.g., Bächtiger, Setälä, and Grönlund 2014; Farrell et al. 2020). One of the key normative requirements for a deliberation setting is equal participation (Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012), and during the deliberations the expectation is that political inequality due to gender and social status should decline (Gutmann and Thompson 2004). Furthermore, it is considered essential that no individual or group dominates for equal participation to occur (Gerber 2015, 112). However, within mixed settings (e.g., groups including participants from various backgrounds) there are always risks that certain individuals will try to dominate the discussion (e.g., Elster 2012, 6). These might be individuals of higher social standing or of higher knowledge about the specific topic being discussed (Flinders et al. 2016) or it might even be gender related (Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012). In these circumstances, the quality of the deliberation might be negatively affected as the equal status of the participants during deliberation is challenged. Thus, instead of contributing to positive effects on the individuals participating, such as higher levels of political efficacy, the experiences derived from these types of events might even contribute to further solidifying negative sentiments towards politics. Deliberative events have occasionally received critique for failing to meet democratic principles such as inclusion and equality (e.g., Gerber, Schaub, and Mueller 2019). Additionally, the policy impact of deliberation has been criticized for being too weak (Fournier et al., 2011). To counter this criticism, deliberative democracy proponents have emphasized measures for safeguarding inclusion (e.g., facilitation) (Curato et al., 2020) and started inviting politicians to participate in deliberative events, often called mixed deliberations (Strandberg and Berg 2019) or mixed-membership deliberation (Farrell et al. 2020), to close the gap between deliberative and representative decision-making processes (e.g., Farrell et al. 2020).

Previous research on the process and effects of deliberation has often concentrated on citizen deliberation (e.g., Elstub and McLaverty 2014; Grönlund, Bächtiger and Setälä 2014) and elite deliberation (e.g., Bächtiger 2014), while mixed deliberation has received far less attention (cf., Farrell et al. 2020; Strandberg and Berg 2019). The risk of including politicians in deliberative event is that they may dominate the discussions. However, involving politicians in deliberation can increase the likelihood for events to be taken more seriously and reduce the distance between citizens and representatives (Setälä 2017; Farrell et al. 2020). Moreover, studies have shown indications of a gender gap in deliberation, adding to worries about deliberation not
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fulfilling ideals of political equality (Mendelberg, Karpowitz, and Oliphant 2014). For example, women are less willing to participate in deliberation (Karjalainen and Rapeli 2015) and when they do, they tend to speak significantly less than men (Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012). Since inclusion and deliberative quality are central ideals in deliberative democracy theory (Young 2000), it is important to assess whether deliberative events live up to these, pay attention to inclusiveness beyond the recruitment procedure, and increase knowledge about the process and effects of mixed deliberation.

The purpose of this study is to assess a series of mixed deliberative discussions (N=225) about a proposed municipal merger in a Finnish municipality. We specifically examine discussion dominance, the deliberative quality of the discussions, and what effects taking part in the events have on the participants. More specifically, the study analyzes differences regarding these aspects according to the participants’ status (citizen/politician) and gender. The deliberative discussions were held on three occasions in winter 2018 and consisted of small-n discussion groups all containing a mix of citizens and politicians. The goal of the deliberative discussions was to discuss which issues participants felt were the most crucial to consider in upcoming merger negotiations with another municipality. In the subsequent sections, we discuss how mixed deliberation relates to dominance, discussion quality and effects on efficacy respectively.

Domination according to status and gender in mixed deliberations

Deliberative democracy regards inter-personal reasoning as the main democratic driver (Parkinson 2003, 180). Moreover, it puts special focus on this communication being of a certain kind (e.g., Parkinson 2003, 181) Ideals such as equality of participants, argumentation, reciprocity, reasoned justifications, reflection, sincerity and respect are often mentioned in the literature on deliberation, albeit sometimes using somewhat different terms (Fung 2003; Gastil 2008; Graham 2009; Kies 2010).

Equality of participants means that all participants in the deliberation should have equal opportunity to make themselves heard in deliberation and that all arguments of deliberators are treated equally, regardless of who is making the argument (Fishkin 2009; Gastil 2008; Gerber 2015). Sometimes, however, citizens of higher social status may dominate the discussions and thus negatively affect the equality in deliberations (Gastil 2009, 283; Poletta and Lee 2006, 701; Sanders 1997, 348). Levine, Fung, and Gastil (2005) argue that such individuals might be even more inclined to leverage their status or skills when the issues of deliberation concern higher stakes to ensure that they get their way. Mixed deliberation can exacerbate these issues since
politicians’ higher status and familiarity with the deliberation issue as well as their debating skills can introduce political inequality in small group discussions with citizens (Moore 2012). Thus, some scholars have found indications of politicians dominating deliberative events (Flinders et al. 2016; Minozzi et al. 2015). Harris et al. (2020) found that politicians, on average, spoke more frequently than citizens in roundtable discussions at the Irish Constitutional Convention. However, this assumption has also become challenged (see Farrell et al., 2020; Suiter, Farrell, and O’Malley 2016) as the dangers of domination are argued to be alleviated with good facilitation (Elstub and McLaverty 2014) or that citizens do not perceive domination as a problem (Harris, Farrell, and Brennan 2020, 14). Nevertheless, we still expect those with higher social status, in this context politicians, to try to dominate the discussions considering the high stakes issue at hand. This leads us to the first hypothesis for our study:

**H1a: Politicians will dominate the discussions.**

Several studies have also discussed a potential gender gap in deliberation (Caluwaerts 2013; Gerber 2015; Beauvais 2020; Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014). For instance, studies indicate that women are less likely to turn up for deliberation events (see Dillard 2011, 58) and that they have less influence during deliberations than men (Himmelroos 2017). Moreover, women have been shown to be disadvantaged in speech participation and to participate proportionally less when they are in a minority position (Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012). Empirical research has shown that men’s poor deliberative behavior (e.g., interrupting, dominating) undermines women’s capacity to be effective deliberators (Afsahi 2020). Men are more likely to interrupt (Mendelberg, Karpowitz, and Oliphant 2014) and women are more likely to be interrupted (Afsahi 2020). Additionally, experimental research suggests that people are more willing to revise their opinions after hearing a man’s counterargument than after hearing a woman’s identical counterargument (Beauvais 2019).

Despite these challenges, some studies suggest that the gender gap in talk distribution can decrease under the right conditions such as facilitated discussion (Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014, 307; Showers, Tindall, and Davies 2015; Harris et al. 2020), in deliberative polls (Siu 2009), or in evidence-driven deliberation (Levy and Sakaï 2020). According to Jacquet (2017), participation in mini publics is rooted in individual perception, and as females has been shown to express lower levels of political self-confidence (Levy 2013), we would thus expect men to be more dominating during the discussions. Hence, we present our second hypothesis:
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H1b: Men will dominate the discussions.

Deliberative quality in mixed deliberation according to status and gender

The communicative process per se – i.e., rational, fact-based argumentation between participants – arguably constitutes the core of deliberative theory. Although well-organized deliberative events may counteract unwanted phenomena such as domination (e.g., Elstub and McLaverty 2014), the deliberative capacity of participants might nevertheless be unevenly distributed (Himmelroos 2011) and have bearing on the discussions. Therefore, mixed deliberation is especially interesting since it induces differences in capacity. Siu (2009) demonstrates that the most informed participants produce higher quality argumentation in deliberation. Bächtiger and Beste (2017) argue that both politicians and citizens have the capacity to deliberate and score high on measures of deliberative quality when the conditions are right. However, deliberation among politicians reached higher levels of justification rationality and lower levels of respect compared to citizen deliberation (Pedrini 2014). Previous research has also found that politicians are better at deliberating than citizens in mixed deliberation (Gerber and Mueller 2018). An argument against this claim is that citizens can produce better deliberation compared to representatives since they are not bound by constituency and party ties, nor do they have a need for strategic communication to get re-elected (Fishkin and Luskin 2005). Rosenberg (2014), on the other hand, questions citizens ability to deliberate and argues that the average citizen is biased in her perceptions, relies on cognitive shortcuts, and uses prejudicial thinking, all of which can contribute flawed conclusions.

Based on their higher levels of deliberative capacity and previous research findings, we expect politicians to express higher quality speech acts than other participants. A third hypothesis can thereby be formulated for our study:

H2: Speech acts by politicians will have higher deliberative quality than those of citizens.

Turning to potential differences in deliberative discussion quality according to gender, previous findings are rather mixed. Several studies find no gender gap in terms of deliberative quality (Klinger and Russmann 2015; Grünenfelder and Bächtiger 2007; Himmelroos 2017; Gerber et al. 2018). Nevertheless, a study by Afsahi (2020) indicates that women can display a higher capacity to engage in deliberative behavior compared to men. Likewise, women have been found to score
higher on measures of deliberative quality compared to men (Lundell 2014; Jennståhl 2019). On the other hand, though, some studies found that men had better deliberative skills compared to women (Caluwaerts 2014; Han, Schenck-Hamlin, and Schenck-Hamlin 2015; Ugarriza and Nussio 2016). Hence, instead of another hypothesis we have decided to formulate a research question regarding gender and deliberative quality:

*RQ1:* What is the difference in deliberative quality in speech acts by men and women?

**The effects of mixed deliberation on political efficacy according to status and gender**

The effects of deliberation cited in the literature can broadly be divided into macro-level effects and micro-level effects. The former of these refer to the notion of how a democratic system based on deliberation would serve to increase the functioning and legitimacy of the political system (e.g., Dahl 1989, 133–135). The latter effects, i.e. micro-level effects of deliberation, are the effects that deliberation is perceived—and often empirically demonstrated—to have on individuals taking part in deliberative discussions. Deliberation is thus often seen as ‘empowering citizens’ (Fishkin 2009, 23–26) and enhancing their competence for democratic participation (Fung 2003) by increasing their levels of social trust, trust for political institutions, political knowledge, as well as feelings of internal and external political efficacy (see e.g., Fung 2003, 349–352; Fishkin 2009; Strandberg 2015). In this study, we focus on the two latter of these effects: changes in internal and external political efficacy. Internal efficacy is the belief that one is capable of effective political action and self-governance while external efficacy is the belief that governing officials listen to the public and that there are legal ways to influence governing decisions (Niemi, Craig, and Mattei 1991).

Previous findings about the effects of deliberation on participants’ internal and external efficacy are rather inconclusive. Several studies have found deliberation to have positive effects manifested as increased levels of efficacy (Grönlund, Setälä, and Herne 2010; Nabatchi 2010; Ergenc 2014; Boulianne 2019; Knobloch and Gastil 2015; Strandberg and Berg 2019), others have found negative effects (Gastil et al. 2017; Andersen and Hansen 2007). In addition, some scholars report no effects of deliberation on political efficacy (Morrell 2005; O’Flynn et al. 2019).

Grönlund, Setälä, and Herne (2010, 99) note that external efficacy might increase since participants become aware of the complexity of political issues and gain a greater understanding of the actors and procedures of representative democracy. Setälä (2017) also argues that mixed deliberation gives citizens a chance to interact with local politicians which adds weight to the
process and can help to increase their political efficacy (Setälä 2017 see also e.g., Ryan 2014; c.f., Geissel and Hess 2017). Tentatively, this might be due to the simple fact that the politicians can explain things hands on in the deliberations. On the other hand, it is entirely possible that mixed deliberations reveal that politicians do not live up to expectations which, in turn, could result in lower external efficacy. Flinders et al. (2016), for instance, found no effects on efficacy in their study of mixed deliberation. Moreover, internal political efficacy might increase among participants in deliberation as they 'practice' taking part in a political process themselves (Gastil 2000, 358; Grönlund, Setälä, and Herne 2010, 98). This mechanism might also be especially relevant in mixed deliberation since the presence of politicians might make this ‘practice’ even more real and citizens may directly see that they are equal to politicians in the process. However, Mutz (2006, 358), argues that being challenged and confronted with opposing views may cause doubts in one’s position and beliefs. Since politicians in mixed deliberation often have a higher deliberative capacity than citizens (i.e. prior knowledge and experience in argumentation), it is plausible that opposing, well-argued, views from politicians causes citizens to doubt their own capacity even more.

Considering, finally, effects of mixed deliberation on efficacy according to status and gender, previous research is rare. While several studies consider mixed deliberation and efficacy, they seldom specifically compare how efficacy for citizens and politicians respectively are affected by deliberation although an underlying citizens’ perspective is usually discernible. There is also a research gap about differences in deliberation effects due to gender. Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014, 193) suggest that women’s sense of efficacy is more sensitive compared to that of men. However, Himmelroos, Rapeli and Grönlund (2017) found no gender differences in changes in levels of internal efficacy due to deliberation. The rather scarce empirical research and inconclusive evidence gives us reasons to formulate a second research question instead of hypotheses regarding the effects according to status and gender of mixed deliberation on efficacy:

RQ 2: How do the effects of deliberation on internal and external efficacy differ according to gender and status?

Context, design, methods & data

In the fall of 2017 municipality Korsholm in Western Finland decided to start negotiating about a possible municipal merger with the neighboring city of Vasa. The purpose of the negotiations
was to present an agreement for the municipal council to decide on. Korsholm has about 19,000 inhabitants of which a majority have Swedish as their native language (69 percent) and a minority of native Finnish speaking citizens (29 percent). In Vasa, with 68,000 inhabitants, these language relationships are the opposite, as 69 percent are Finnish-speakers and 23 percent Swedish-speakers.

In the fall of 2017, after a heated and polarized debate, the council in Korsholm voted in favor of initiating negotiations with Vasa (26 votes in favor, 17 opposed). The merger issue was especially contested for several reasons. The most crucial issue was that a merger would turn the Swedish-speaking majority in Korsholm into a minority in a new, merged municipality. The merger was thus at the core of the sensitive language debate in bilingual Finland. It was also an issue that directly affected all citizens in the municipality, everyone thus had a personal connection to it. The issue strongly divided both citizens and politicians, which spurred impassioned debates in local and social media. In fact, in the survey commissioned to all citizens in the municipality, which we partially use as data for our main analyses (N=6,686), opinions the merger on a scale between zero and ten were heavily skewed (skewness 0.06 and kurtosis –1.60) so that citizens were either totally against the merger (28 per cent) or totally in favor (23 per cent). For many citizens, the mere decision to start negotiating stirred up emotions. The issue received a lot of media coverage citing the conflict between proponents and opponents of a municipal merger.

**Design**

For the purposes of this study, we conducted a series of three deliberative discussions, with mixed groups containing both citizens and politicians (N=225), together with the municipality. The deliberative discussions were part of the official municipal hearings of citizens prior to negotiations about the merger with Vasa. The details of the deliberative discussions are described next.

**Procedure and participants of the deliberative discussions**

Since the deliberative discussions had an official, and important, status we did not enforce any experimental factorial treatment in the deliberative discussions and all of them were thus conducted in small-n groups with facilitation and discussion rules. We did, however, use a pre-test post-test experimental design in the small-n deliberation groups (see, Gribbons and Herman 1997). Participants thus answered a pre-test questionnaire prior to deliberation (abbreviated to
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T1 henceforth) and immediately after deliberating (T2 henceforth). Besides basic demographics, these surveys contained, of interest for this study, items on, internal and external efficacy (see Appendix for details). By studying pre-test to post-test changes regarding efficacy, we can answer RQ2 regarding how mixed deliberation affected efficacy according to status and gender. The T2 survey also contained items on self-reported discussion quality which will be one part, objective measures of discussion quality being the other, of our testing of hypothesis two—i.e. politicians’ speech acts will be of higher deliberative quality—and the second research question on whether there are differences in discussion quality according to gender.

The deliberative discussions were held on three occasions, on January 31st (N=92), February 13th (N=94) and February 20th (N=39) in 2018. Since the municipality is geographically vast, these events were held in different parts of the municipality to give all of the municipality’s citizens a better chance of attending an event. Each event was open to all interested; there were no random samples of invited citizens. This resulted in some overlap between the events so that some citizens attended several events and likewise for the politicians. Table 1 shows basic demographic information on the deliberating citizens compared to the general population of Korsholm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: The participants of the deliberations compared to the general population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (N=6,235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother tongue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinions about merger (0–10)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The N for the deliberating citizens is lower than 225 due to missing data for background variables. The data for the population is from a survey to the adult population in Korsholm.
As to be expected when no random sample was used as basis for inviting participants to deliberate, the sample of citizens deliberating was skewed compared to the population in general. This skewness is important to keep in mind when analyzing the actual deliberations since it sets the premises unequally. Women, for instance, were always in minority within the deliberation groups as were politicians.

The template was the same for each deliberation event: after a brief welcoming speech and information about the process of municipal negotiations of the merger held by the municipality’s chief executive officer, participants at each of these three events were randomly allocated to the small-n groups (8 groups, 10 groups, and 4 groups respectively). We used stratified randomization to ensure that each small-n group contained a mix of politicians and citizens (Suiter, Farrell, and O’Malley 2016; Setälä 2017; Flinders et al. 2016). The typical ratio was ten citizens to three politicians in each discussion group. The gender distribution in the discussion groups was, on average, six men to two women. Each small-n group had an assigned facilitator and participants were initially given time to answer the T1 survey, to read a brief information package about the merger, and to be acquainted with the rules of discussions. Discussions lasted for about two hours after which the groups summarized the most important aspects brought up in discussion regarding the proposed municipal merger and each participant then answered the T2 survey. The rules and tasks for the facilitators were designed, as they usually are in deliberations (e.g., Landwehr 2014), to steer the deliberation processes as close to the normative ideals of deliberation discussion as possible. The rules essentially supported the ideals of reasoned justifications, reflection, sincerity and respect, whereas the facilitator made efforts to ensure reciprocity, inclusion and equality of discussion. The facilitators were graduate political science students who were trained for the task in two sessions. Some of them also had previous experience of facilitating deliberative discussions.

Measures
Since there are several different ways through which the study will test the hypotheses and answer its research questions, we provide a summary of the central elements of the design of the study discussed thus far, and demonstrate how these elements will be measured (Table 2, details in Appendix A):
## Table 2: Hypotheses, research questions with corresponding measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis/Research question</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| H1a: Politicians will dominate the discussions  
H1b: Men will dominate the discussions | Post-test self-reported survey data (n=189); objective measures of speech acts (n= 3,404) in discussions |
| H2: Speech acts by politicians will have higher deliberative quality than those of citizens  
RQ1: What is the difference in deliberative quality in speech acts by men and women? | Post-test self-reported survey data (n=189); objective measures of discussion quality in speech acts (N=3,404) |
| RQ2: How do the effects of deliberation on internal and external efficacy differ according to gender and status? | Pre-test to post-test changes regarding internal- and external efficacy (n=189) |

Most of the measures were straightforward to measure, such as counting the number of speech acts and noting whether the speaker was a citizen, politician, male or female. Discussion quality, on the other hand, was a more challenging aspect to measure. To measure deliberative quality (coding scheme in Appendix A) we relied on an adaptation of well-established measures of discussion quality (see e.g., Jensen 2003; Stromer-Galley 2007; Graham 2009; Steenbergen et al. 2003). In earlier work on discussion quality conducted by us (e.g., Strandberg and Berg 2013, 136; Strandberg and Berg 2015, 172), this scheme has achieved a high inter-coder reliability with .93 in percentage-agreement and Krippendorff’s alpha for sub-measures ranging from 0.7 to 1.0. Internal and external efficacy were measured using standard survey items (see Table 7 for items).

### Findings

We present our findings in the order of the hypotheses and research questions. We thus start with analyzing dominance in the discussions (Hypothesis H1a and H1b). Table 3 presents the share of all speech acts and the share of all words spoken in the deliberations according to gender and status.
Table 1: Share of participants and of speech acts according to gender and status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Speech acts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Average length</td>
<td>Total length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2,362</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>109,563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2,253</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53,428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A speech act is defined as each coherent instance when one participant speaks.

The findings show that politicians are overrepresented, compared to their share of participants in the deliberation, in speech acts and in the share of the amount of words of all speech acts. Conversely, citizens are underrepresented regarding these two aspects. Hypothesis H1a is thus confirmed. It is, however, important to note that one explanation for why politicians dominated was that they were often on the receiving end of questions from the citizens. Turning to gender, there were no major differences regarding dominance, which means hypothesis H1b can be rejected. The self-reported assessments (measured in the post-discussion survey) of equality in the discussions are presented in Table 4. The self-reported experiences of dominance show no significant differences according to gender nor according to status. Hypotheses 1a and 1b are thus not confirmed in light of how participants experienced dominance in the discussions.

Table 4: Self-reported dominance in the deliberations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female (n=53)</th>
<th>Male (n=131)</th>
<th>Citizen (n=111)</th>
<th>Politician (n=111)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone in the discussion had equal opportunity to speak, nobody was left out of the discussion</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One, or a few, participants dominated the discussion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: distributions tested for significant differences using the Fisher’s exact test.

We now turn to analyzing the discussion quality of the deliberative discussions with a focus on whether politicians achieved a better deliberative quality in their speech acts (Hypothesis 2). Additionally, we also explore whether there were any differences in deliberative quality according to gender (RQ1). Deliberative quality is operationalized using both objective measures of discussion quality (Graham 2009; Jensen 2003; Kies 2010; Papacharissi 2004) from content
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analysis of the transcriptions of the deliberations (Table 5) and self-reported assessments by the participants (Table 5).

Table 5: Discussion quality in each speech act in light of objective measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Citizen</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argumentation</strong></td>
<td>*55.3</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal validation</strong></td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>*45.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External validation</strong></td>
<td>*8.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified/sophisticated</td>
<td><strong>13.0</strong></td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td><strong>17.4</strong></td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfying</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No justification</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>*<strong>51.5</strong></td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on debate</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reciprocity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>***31.6</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>*15.5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td><strong>17.5</strong></td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction</td>
<td>***16.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td><strong>13.7</strong></td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>***78.5</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative reaction</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>*<strong>9.6</strong></td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>*7.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>*<strong>6.9</strong></td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incivility</strong></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>*<strong>3.2</strong></td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impoliteness</td>
<td>*7.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td><strong>7.9</strong></td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (chi-squared test and Fisher’s exact test)

The findings largely confirm Hypothesis 2 since there were several statistically significant differences in deliberative discussion quality whereby politicians achieved a higher quality. The largest differences are in external validations and justifications. Turning to exploring the gender differences, we see an overarching pattern that females tend to achieve a higher deliberative quality in their speech acts in the deliberations. The only exception is for the use of justifications where a higher share of males used qualified or sophisticated justifications in their speech acts.
Men also displayed a significantly higher share on negative reactions, negative tone, incivility and impoliteness than women did. We continue by looking at how the participants themselves experienced the discussion quality (Table 6).

Table 6: Discussion quality using self-reported measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasoned justifications / rationality</th>
<th>Citizen</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The views brought up in the discussion were based on facts</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts which I was previously unaware of were brought up during the discussion</td>
<td>*58</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The discussion did not stay on topic all too well</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reciprocity / group dynamics</th>
<th>Citizen</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My views differed from those of several other participants in the discussion</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I generally felt a sense of common purpose with the other participants</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were disagreements during the discussion</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politeness and respect</th>
<th>Citizen</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The relations between the participants remained good during the course of the discussion</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were irrelevant and disrespectful comments made during the discussion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some participants provoked others during the discussion</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings presented in Table 6 show only one significant difference according to status and no significant difference at all according to gender. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is only supported in light of the objective measures of discussion quality but not in light of the self-reported measures. The same assertion can be made regarding differences according to gender, which only manifested themselves in the objective measures of deliberative quality.

We end our presentations of the findings by analyzing the effects of deliberation on the participants’ feelings of internal and external efficacy according to status and gender. Although deliberation has generally been found to increase especially internal efficacy (see overview in Boulianne 2019), we did not formulate any hypotheses regarding whether such effects differ according to either status or gender. Rather, RQ2 concerned exploring whether such differences exist or not. We start, then, by looking at the differences in pre- to post-deliberation feelings of internal- and external efficacy according to status in Table 7:
When Citizens met Politicians

Table 7: Effects of deliberation on internal- and external efficacy according to status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Citizen (N = 89)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Politician (N = 24)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal efficacy (0–3)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know more about politics than most people</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td><strong>-0.16</strong></td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no say on what the municipal council or executive board decide</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td><strong>-0.02</strong></td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes politics seems so complicated that I don’t really understand what is going on</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td><strong>-0.11</strong></td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External efficacy (0–3)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can exert influence through voting</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td><strong>0.14</strong></td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians do not care about the opinions of ordinary citizens</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s opinions are taken into account through the parties’ decision making</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td><strong>-0.07</strong></td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.05 (Paired-samples t-test)

As shown in Table 7, the politicians’ feeling of internal and external efficacy were not significantly affected by deliberating. For citizens, however, two significant changes were observed: firstly, there was a slight decrease in the feeling that oneself knows more about politics than most people. Secondly, there was an increase in feeling that people can exert influence through voting. We now focus, finally, on the same changes according to gender (Table 8):

Table 8: Effects of deliberation on internal- and external efficacy according to gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (N = 120)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female (N = 58)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal efficacy (0–3)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know more about politics than most people</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td><strong>-0.13</strong></td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no say on what the municipal council or executive board decide</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes politics seems so complicated that I don’t really understand what is going on</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>*<strong>-0.25</strong></td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External efficacy (0–3)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can exert influence through voting</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians do not care about the opinions of ordinary citizens</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s opinions are taken into account through the parties’ decision-making</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (Paired-samples t-test)
The findings according to gender show that males agreed significantly less after deliberating with the statement that politics sometimes seems so complicated. There were no other changes for males. There were two significant changes for females: they agreed less with the statement that they have no say on what the municipal council or executive board decide, and they agreed less with the statement that the people’s opinions are taken into account through the parties’ decision making.

Conclusions

In this study, the purpose was to study patterns in deliberative discussions according to status (i.e., citizen or politician) and gender. Dominance and deliberative discussion quality were thus in focus. Furthermore, we studied how the participants’ feelings of internal and external efficacy were affected by deliberating and whether any differences due to status or gender could be observed regarding this. Our context was a series of mixed deliberations about a proposed municipal merger in the Finnish municipality of Korsholm, which arguably was a very a contested issue at the time of data collection in 2018. As shown in Table 1 in the design section, the sample of deliberators was skewed compared to the general population in the municipality in question. Interestingly, the skewed sample provides an interesting setting regarding status and gender, our two focus variables, whereby both politicians and females were in a clear minority in the deliberation groups. Sunstein (2002; see also Farrar et al. 2009; Gastil 2000; Isenberg 1986), for instance, has shown how people who are in the minority tend to alter their behavior according to the group majority. Hence, we will consider this when discussing our main findings next.

When examining dominance in the deliberations, we found clear differences according to status but not according to gender when looking at the objective measures of dominance. We thereby confirmed hypothesis 1a that politicians would dominate but not hypothesis H1b that men would dominate. We already pointed out that politicians often found themselves answering questions from citizens so their dominance should not be regarded as necessarily a negative finding. We also showed that the deliberative quality was higher among politicians’ speech acts, which also sheds positive light on their dominance of the discussion. Thus, our findings partly support earlier findings that politicians dominate in mixed deliberations (e.g., Flinders et al. 2016; Minozzi et al. 2015) while nevertheless indicating that good facilitation can partially overcome negative aspects of domination (c.f., Farrell et al. 2020; Suiter, Farrell, and O’Malley 2016). The fact that men did not dominate is interesting given that they constituted over 70 per cent of the deliberators and earlier research would suggest that men often dominate (e.g., Himmelroos
Since all discussions were set up with moderation and deliberative rules, it seems that these procedural safeguards helped stem dominance to some extent as suggested by other studies as well (e.g., Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014; Showers, Tindall, and Davies 2015). This is also corroborated by the findings on self-reported experiences of dominance regarding which no significant differences were found, neither for status nor for gender.

Our findings regarding objective measures of deliberative discussion quality confirmed hypothesis 2 whereby, as we discussed earlier, politicians achieved higher quality than citizens did. Since politicians have more prior knowledge on the issue and are used to deliberating and justifying their positions in their work in the municipal council (c.f., Gerber and Mueller 2018; Siu 2009), this was hardly surprising. Regarding differences in discussion quality according to gender, we discussed earlier that existing research findings were inconclusive (e.g., Caluwaerts 2012; Himmelroos 2017; Jennståhl 2019; Gerber et al. 2018). In our analyses, the main pattern was that speech acts by women deliberators were of higher quality than those of men. Men, on the other hand, tended to score higher in measures that signal opposition and negativity than women did (c.f., Afsahi 2020). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the overall level of negative elements in the deliberation quality was low suggesting that the deliberative facilitation and rules had worked satisfactory. When judging discussion quality from self-reported measures, there were essentially no differences according to status nor according to gender. Citizens did report having heard about new facts during the discussion to a significantly higher extent than politicians did. Overall, still, the deliberative rules and moderation appeared to have produced a satisfactory discussion quality in terms of how participants experienced discussion quality. Thus, even though it has been argued that high-quality deliberation is only possible about issues which participants do not care strongly about (e.g., Parkinson 2006), the findings of this study show that such issues do not inevitably mean poor deliberative quality either.

Our final empirical focus, regarding internal and external efficacy, generally did not reveal large changes due to deliberation, which is perhaps to be expected given that the deliberations were one-off events lasting two hours. While the differences according to status did show two significant changes for citizens and not politicians, the direction of the changes were somewhat surprising. Firstly, after deliberation, citizens felt even less that they know more about politics than most people do. Potentially, to explain this, a municipal merger issue is so complex that the deliberation on it made citizens realize that their own knowledge of politics is limited. Secondly, in the post-deliberation measure, citizens increasingly agreed that people can exert influence through voting. When analyzing deliberation’s impact on efficacy according to gender, we found
that both males and female increased their internal efficacy. Men agreed less with the statement that politics is sometimes too complicated, and women likewise agreed less with the statement that they have no say on what the municipal council decides. Women also changed their opinion on one item concerning external efficacy whereby they agreed less with the statement that people’s opinions are taking into account in the parties’ decision-making. On balance, thus, our findings hardly serve to provide any clear evidence to the already inconclusive research regarding effects on efficacy in mixed deliberations (c.f., Flinders et al. 2016; Geissel and Hess 2017).

As deliberative discussions are increasingly incorporated into political processes and institutions, the frequency of mixed deliberations is bound to increase. The concept of Citizen’s Assemblies (Farrell et al. 2020; Suiter, Farrell, and O’Malley 2016) is tested in more countries and various other deliberative models are tested globally as well. This development means that it also becomes increasingly important to gain more knowledge about mixed deliberation in order to find optimal ways in conducting mixed deliberation and achieve equality in these deliberations. The present study focused on two aspects of equality in mixed deliberation, status as politician or citizen as well as gender. Our findings regarding dominance, discussion quality and effects on efficacy mainly suggest that mixed deliberation between citizens and politicians is bound to have some differences between citizens and politicians whereas differences due to demographic factors seem to be more easily avoided by facilitation and discussion rules. Deliberative mini-publics, where a representative random sample deliberates, are even likelier to display demographic equality—not only in terms of who takes part, but also in terms of what happens in the deliberations.

We end with a final reflection on the central premise of mixed deliberation, that citizens and politicians mix in deliberative discussion and how that relates to equality in deliberation. We would argue, based on this study, that it is unrealistic to expect perfect equality between citizens and politicians in mixed deliberations. Differences between citizens and politicians are bound to exist due to the premises from which these two groups enter a deliberation. Citizens seldom have previous experience with debates and argumentation, have less knowledge about the issue and feel less confident in themselves whereas politicians are already accustomed to debating and arguing their point, have in-depth knowledge and are much more confident in their own political competence. This, however, is not necessarily a negative thing. One should keep in mind that the mere opportunity for citizens to meet politicians and discuss an issue of relevance has democratic value in itself (Button and Mattson 1999; Strandberg and Berg 2019).
List of References


Mendelberg, T., C.F., Karpowitz, and J.B., Oliphant. 2014. “Gender inequality in deliberation: Unpacking the black box of interaction.” Perspectives on Politics: 18-44.


Appendix A
Coding scheme for evaluation of quality of discussion

Variable: argumentation (Jensen 2003; Kies 2010) Yes/No

Unit of analysis: speech act
Does the participant try to argue his or her points (Ruiz, et al., 2011)? Do not code if variable opinion is coded as “no opinion”. Is there an effort made to support opinions or suggestions (Hagemann 2002)? This measure does not measure the rationality nor the complexity of the justification (cf. variable “level of justification”), it only measures if the participants makes an effort to justify the opinion (cf. Freelon, et al., 2008, 16; Stromer-Galley 2007).

Variable: internal validation (Jensen 2003) Yes/No

Unit of analysis: speech act
Only code if argumentation is coded as yes. Code yes if the debater seeks to validate the argument by own information, opinions and views. Internal validation means that the debater argues based on his/her own viewpoints, stands and values, but these are made explicit in the argumentation.

Variable: external validation (Jensen 2003) Yes/No

Unit of analysis: speech act
Only code for argumentation is coded as yes. Code yes if the debater seeks to validate the argument by external information, sources and arguments. External validation means that the debater uses information from external sources and pursues an argument based on facts and figures, etc.
If a justified opinion does not code for neither internal nor external validation it is counted as an opinion based on allegations only – the debate does not try to validate the opinion. Allegations are considered as bad form and counter-productive for the debate.
Jensen (2003a) is somewhat unclear here; he considers allegations as arguments while at the same time claiming that allegations are “claims without arguments”. He writes (Jensen 2003b): ”Naming an allegation as an argument can be seen as problematic. Here it is placed within the category of argument because it is essentially seen as an anti-argument”.

Variable: internal & external validation
Unit of analysis: speech act

Code yes if there is an internal and external validation present in the speech act.

**Variable: level of justification (Steenbergen, et al., 2003; Spörndli 2003)**

Unit of analysis: speech act

0. No justification: A speaker only says that X should or should not be done, but no reason is given.

1. Inferior justification: Here a reason Y is given as to why X should or should not be done, but no linkage is made between X and Y — the inference is incomplete. This code also applies if a conclusion is merely supported with illustrations.

2. Qualified justification: A linkage is made as to why one should expect that X contributes to or detracts from Y. A single such complete inference already qualifies for code 2.

3. Sophisticated justification: Here at least two complete justifications are given, either two complete justifications for the same demand or complete justifications for two different demands.

It is worth noting that “evaluation of the “level” of rational justification implies a necessarily subjective and contextual appreciation of whether an opinion is sufficiently justified” (Kies 2010, 56).

This coding scheme does not take rational quality of the justifications/the validity of the argumentation into consideration since such a procedure would require expert knowledge of the discussion topic and is thus beyond the scope of this article (cf. Hagemann 2002; Kies 2010). I find it hard to objectively measure the validity of argumentation due to the possible subjective bias when deciding whether an argument is valid or not.

**Variable: relevance/coherence (Jensen 2003a; Graham 2009)**

Unit of analysis: speech act

0. Directly on topic – clearly referring to the issue

1. Indirectly on topic – clarifications, statements that are relevant to the issue

2. Reflecting on the discussion

3. Irrelevant
Variable: type of reciprocity (Jensen 2003)

Unit of analysis: speech act

If all below is coded as “no” there is no reciprocity present in the comment.

- Persuasion – there are explicit signs that a poster feels persuaded by another poster’s argumentation or the posting in general. Yes/No
- Progress – a poster reflects on another posting and answers the poster with new arguments or new information or tries to create a synthesis of other arguments. Yes/No
- Radicalisation – a poster reacts explicitly negatively to another posting, gets personal or offensive and/or radicalises his/her previous viewpoint. Yes/No

Variable: tone of comment (Jensen 2003a)

Unit of analysis: speech act

What kind of tone is used in the speech act?

0. Hate
1. Negative
2. Neutral
3. Factual
4. Respect

This variable has been simplified (recoded):

0. Hate & 1. Negative  = 0. Negative
2. Neutral            = 1. Neutral

Variable: incivility (Papacharissi 2004) Yes/No

Unit of analysis: speech act

The three-item civility index consisted of the following three questions. The response options for these were yes (Y) or no (N). If the answer to at least one of the above questions was affirmative, then the message was labeled uncivil.

(1) Does the discussant verbalize a threat to democracy (e.g. propose to overthrow a democratic government by force)?
(2) Does the discussant assign stereotypes (e.g. associate person with a group by using labels, whether those are mild – ‘liberal’, or more offensive – ‘faggot’)?
(3) Does the discussant threaten other individuals’ rights (e.g. personal freedom, freedom to speak)?
**Variable: impoliteness (Papacharissi 2004) Yes/No**

Unit of analysis: speech act

Politeness was measured in a manner similar to civility, in that an index was used and if a message included at least one instance of impoliteness, it was labeled impolite. If name-calling (e.g. weirdo, traitor, crackpot), aspersions (e.g. reckless, irrational, un-American), synonyms for liar (e.g. hoax, farce), hyperbole (e.g. outrageous, heinous), words that indicated non-cooperation, pejorative speak, or vulgarity occurred, then the message was considered impolite. Also, if other instances of impoliteness occurred that had to do with sarcasm, using all-caps (frequently used online to reflect shouting), and other types of more covert impolite behavior, those were coded as other.