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## On the Westernness of Deliberation Research

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# On the Westernness of Deliberation Research

## **Abstract**

This essay suggests that the issue of culture is vital to advance deliberation theories and practices. After discussing whether deliberative democracy is a Western-specific or universal concept, it argues that current deliberation research is heavily immersed in Western cultural and methodological standards. An empirical portion also suggests that the positive effects of deliberation were greater for Western participants as opposed to non-Western participants. It argues that deliberation theories and research should be expanded so that they can include more cultural sensibilities.

## **Keywords**

deliberation, culture, research, Deliberative Polling

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## Introduction

Although the theories and empirical investigation of deliberative democracy have produced a wealth of studies in recent years, the question of “culture” remains at the margin. Only a handful of scholars (e.g., Sanders, 1997; Young, 2000) have offered a critique involving cultural issues saying, for example, that deliberation is entrenched in the elitist white-masculine culture in which deliberation must be calm and rational. Now, as the idea of deliberation and deliberative democracy becomes increasingly popular in this globalized world, the issue of culture becomes even more important. It is in this context that some scholars call for the analysis of deliberative cultures in different places of the world (Sass & Dryzek, 2014).

Mainstream deliberation research, however, has been conducted in predominantly “Western” cultural contexts. With its philosophical canons deeply rooted in the Western Enlightenment and modernization ideals of reasoning, equality, and publicity, deliberation research can be most easily found in Western liberal democracies, with James Fishkin’s *Deliberative Polling* as its most popular example. Granted, there have been notable deliberation experiments outside the Western hemisphere in recent years, including a couple of *Deliberative Polling* initiatives in some East Asian countries (Fishkin et al., 2006). But the vast majority of deliberation research remains confined to North America and Western Europe. More importantly, it appears that those few deliberation experiments conducted in non-Western countries did not take account the role of local culture in deliberation and just adopted the Western-developed deliberative venture as a standard practice to follow.

While all people around the world should have basic deliberative and reasoning capacities as the result of human evolution, their manifestation can become somewhat different depending on cultural contexts (Mercier, 2011). How people deliberate cannot be understood separately from the culture in which they are part of. For example, in some Confucian societies of East Asia where there exists a high degree of social hierarchy and people value social harmony to the extent that they are reluctant to publicly display disagreement, actual processes of deliberation may look different from what Western deliberation theorists have expected (Min, 2009). Also, in many Muslim countries men and women are required to deliberate separately, and this would create different deliberation dynamics.

In this essay, I will offer a critique of current deliberation research as being Western-centric. I will also include some empirical insights from my own deliberation experiment, which suggests that the way people deliberate is related to their cultural orientations.

## **Deliberation: Western Specific vs. Universal**

Is deliberative democracy workable for every culture? This simple, dichotomizing question will not reveal much about the cultural intricacies of deliberation today, but it would provide a starting point for discussion. Quite a few scholars believe that deliberation will not work well outside the Western world. Gambetta (1998), for example, divided the world into two cultures – analytic knowledge vs. indexical knowledge, and argued that deliberation is the product of the Anglo-Saxon, analytic knowledge culture, which is based on good reasoning and empirical verification. In the indexical knowledge culture where knowledge is holistic, deliberation is tough to conduct because people generally do not like publicly voicing their opinions and that they often get aggressive or emotional. Hence, Gambetta quoted Tolstoy saying, “Among coachmen, as among us all, whoever starts shouting at others with the greatest self-assurance, and shouts first, is right.” Gunaratne (2006) also argues that the Habermasian public sphere and deliberation theory are rooted in the Western liberal democracies and presume Western-style modernization as a prerequisite. In Gunaratne’s view, Habermas’s speech acts, consisting of truth, rightfulness and truthfulness – key ingredients to successful deliberation, may be Western-culture specific.

Some empirical observations support these claims. For example, at least to some observers, the Japanese jury deliberation that the country recently adopted from the American criminal justice system is not functioning ideally: “[For the new jury system] to work, the Japanese must first overcome some deep-rooted cultural obstacles: A reluctance to express opinions in public, to argue with one another and to question authority” (Onishi, 2007). Beyond anecdotal cases, cultural psychologists provide weightier arguments. According to research by psychologists Peng and Nisbett (1999), cognitive reasoning about contradiction is guided by tacit ontologies and epistemologies about the nature of the world and the nature of knowledge, and there are fundamental differences in the ways Chinese and Westerners reason. Their series of experiments suggest that Chinese participants preferred dialectical resolutions to social conflicts and preferred dialectical arguments over the classical Western logical arguments more prevalent among American participants. Other psychologists argue that Westerners and Easterners differ not only in cognitive reasoning but also in moral reasoning (Ma, 1989). Their position suggests that differences in the structure of the social and communicative contexts to which individuals are exposed may produce basic differences in how these individuals reason (Rosenberg, 2006).

To summarize the position that deliberation is a Western-specific idea, it can be argued that deliberation has Western norms and values such as deductive reasoning, equality, and publicity, which have been praised as important virtues in Western civilizations; it can be argued that deliberation is the child of the Enlightenment and modernization in the West, which valued problem-solving, reasoning and strong individualism. The rest of the world followed different

modernization paths, and thus Western-specific history and its deliberation legacy cannot be easily applied to them.

On the other end of the spectrum, Sen (2003) argues that deliberation is a universal practice and deliberative democracy has “global roots.” For Sen, the ability to deliberate, to collaborate with others and to engage in public argumentation is basic human nature. Sen introduces examples of early Buddhists in India and South East Asia who convened public meetings aimed at settling disputes. This is a rich tradition that can still be found in India today, where millions of local deliberative citizen councils operate (Rao & Sanyal, 2010), although some have criticized the discussions taking place in those councils as undemocratic (Kulkarni, 2012). Likewise, He and Warren (2011) note that China is rich in deliberative traditions, as observed in public forums held by Confucian scholars in ancient China and the work of the Bureau of Consultation and Deliberation in modern China. Case studies commissioned by the Kettering Foundation (Marin, 2006) also suggest that deliberative practices can be found in many non-Western societies throughout history. These studies show that from an ethnic people in Cameroon to an artisan society of Colombia to a rural collective decision-making in Russia, history is replete with diverse forms of deliberation. The jury deliberation system, often considered an American democratic invention, can be regarded as a common global practice as well because traditional assemblies existed in many parts of the world serving as jurors and peacemakers. In other words, deliberation is a universal phenomenon and comes with fluid forms and shapes: “Even though people may not have always deliberated by specifically spelling out pros, cons, and tradeoffs of different options, decisions based on alternative courses of action have often been made by communities” (Marin, 2006, 1).

Mercier (2011) rejects the cultural psychologists’ claims described earlier that East Asians have a different way of reasoning and are less likely to engage in argumentation than Westerners. Using the “argumentative theory of reasoning,” he argues that reasoning abilities are the result of evolution and are therefore expected to be universal. First, Mercier cites many historical examples in which the Chinese and Greek logics converge. For example, the Mohist School of ancient China heavily used deductive reasoning and quantification akin to Aristotelian logic. Second, criticizing Peng and Nisbett’s popular research introduced above, he argues that cross-cultural psychologists have over-generalized cultural differences between the East and the West and that much of the supposed differences stemmed from their selective view of empirical data. Mercier suggests that changing the nature and characteristics of discussion topics leads Westerners to behave in a supposedly “Chinese” manner and Chinese participants in a “Western” manner. In other words, the use of reasoning is “much more influenced by the immediate context than by deep seated differences between Easterners and Westerners” (105).

To summarize the position that deliberation has universal norms and values, it can be argued that non-Western societies also have traditions of public reasoning. Their public reasoning may not strictly resemble the modern deliberation espoused by Western deliberation theorists, but rich traditions of deliberation exist in many parts of the world. Furthermore, it can be argued that the popular East-West cultural differences are exaggerated. The images of “quiet,” non-argumentative East Asians are stereotypes more likely to be found in television and movies than in actual deliberative venues. In terms of reasoning, Easterners and Westerners can alternate between analytic and holistic reasoning depending on context. The analytic reasoning used in many modern deliberation forums can be deemed a universal skill, even though its manifestations can become different in various cultural contexts.

### **The Cultural Bias in Deliberation Research**

Probing whether deliberation is a Western or universal concept would offer a myriad of interesting intellectual questions. But it would not advance actual deliberation practices much. For many deliberation practitioners, whether deliberation is a Western or universal concept would not matter because what is important to them is to use deliberation as a means of enhancing civic life and realizing democratic ideals. My own limited experience with deliberation practitioners suggest that most of them believe in the universality of deliberation. There may also be a basic human desire to participate in public life and to reason with others, although subtle differences may exist depending on cultural contexts. What one can gain from the previous debate on the universality of deliberation is that regardless of whether deliberation is a Western or universal concept, it cannot be denied that deliberation theory and research have predominantly been conducted in Western cultural contexts. Deliberation theory and research are imbued with “Westernness.” Here I will offer some critique of current deliberation research.

In terms of theory, from Mill to Rawls to Habermas, deliberation has been a centerpiece of modern Western political philosophy. Perhaps the theory’s Western-centeredness, whether consciously or not, can be best found in Cooke’s (2000) in-depth article about the benefits of deliberative democracy. In her “five arguments for deliberative democracy,” she argues that deliberative democracy elucidates the ideal of democracy most congruent with “whom we are.” Here, “whom” refers to the “inhabitants of Western modernity” (954). Cooke argues that certain key normative conceptions of knowledge, of the self, and of the good life are central to modern Western history. These conceptions include independent individuals with autonomous reasoning power, unconstrained rational discussion, objectivity of judgment, publicity, and equality. Whether such values can be found in non-Western culture is not the question. What matters here is that a majority of today’s deliberation theorists operates in Western philosophical traditions and thus tend to automatically assign Western-Modernization values to deliberation.

In the empirical research on deliberation, the Western-bias is also very evident. The vast majority of empirical deliberation research has been conducted in American and West-European universities with the so-called WEIRD people (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) as participants. This means that scholars are making generalizations from an atypical population, consisting of only a small segment of the world's population. Beyond the confined university psychological labs, the most-well known deliberation research program to date is Fishkin's Deliberative Polling. With an innovative mechanism, well-laid out structure, excellent funding, and international reach, it has become a "gold standard" of deliberation research (Mansbridge, 2010). However, one can argue that deliberative polling is a somewhat restrictive way of doing deliberation. As Ryfe (2002) points out, in Deliberative Polling participants are told explicitly what is required of them, with rules prescribing which issues are discussed in what manner. Within that rigid structure "are embedded appropriate specific criteria for appropriate ways of behaving" (p. 365). Deliberative Polling also works under heavy social-psychological and behaviorist traditions in that it assumes certain inputs (i.e. deliberative talk) will lead to measurable outputs (i.e. opinion change and quality). As Gleason (2011) sharply notes, Deliberative Polling promotes its product as more considered, representative public opinion, and such an idea represents a rather reductionist conception of deliberation as something that can be commodified and whose results can be unreflectively consumed. Deliberative Polling is influenced by a Western modernity tradition that relates to the sophistication, consistency, and certainty of individual views through speech, and behaviorally, to the individual ability to argue those preferences assertively (Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). In other words, Deliberative Polling represents the Western, more specifically the American behaviorist tradition of public opinion research. This type of research focuses on measures of self-expression and opinion sophistication. It does not measure other important dimensions of deliberation such as listening and mutual understanding. Deliberation also concerns intricate human communication processes and interpersonal relationships. Deliberative Polling is just one tool in the diverse universe of deliberative democracy.

### **The Bias: Some Evidence**

The Deliberative-Polling type of operationalization is the most widely used in research today. In addition to academia, such civic organizations as the National Issues Forums follow the Deliberative-Polling standards: Participants at the forum are given several policy choices and rationales (in the information packet). Under the guidance of trained moderators, they engage in a structured deliberation for a limited time that usually involves answering specific sets of standardized questions and discussing "trade-offs" between different policy choices. Their opinions on the choices are polled before and after the deliberation.

I also adopted those Deliberative-Polling type standards in my recent deliberation experiment. The experiment was part of a larger study but it provided a unique opportunity to explore the role of culture in deliberation, because about the half of the participants were Americans and the other half were Koreans. A key research question relevant for this essay is how the Western-dominant deliberative practices, represented by Deliberative Polling, may work in non-Western cultural contexts. In other words, the research explored the processes and effects of deliberation such as opinion changes and political efficacy on two distinctive cultural groups of Americans and Koreans. Here I summarize the research findings that illuminate my overall argument that deliberation is entrenched in Westernness.

The deliberation experiment took place in a large university in the American Midwest where campus safety was a hot-button issue. A total of 147 students (of which 70 were American and 77 were Korean) were recruited through class announcements, campus flyers, and emails in late 2008. About 110 American students signed up for a deliberation session, but 70 actually showed up on the day of deliberation. The school's entire Korean student population of around 200 students was contacted via email. About half said they would attend deliberation and eventually 77 showed up. After informed consent, the students were randomly assigned to small deliberation groups consisting of roughly four to seven people ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $Mode = 5$ ). American students were with other American students discussing in English, and Korean students joined their own ethnic group, discussing in Korean. One can argue that Korean students employed in this study were Koreans residing in the United States and were acculturated into the American culture. However, all were native Koreans whose average length of stay in the United States was less than three years. Furthermore, Koreans, even those who were born and raised in the United States, tend to keep their ethnic heritage and distinctive collectivist communication behavior (Gudykunst, 2001). In the present study, the American sample was in fact culturally distinct from the Korean sample: When the popular collectivism-individualism scale of Gudykunst and colleagues (Gudykunst et al., 1996) was administered to the participants, the American sample's individualism score ( $M = 37.10$ ,  $SD = 2.85$ ) was statistically significantly higher than that of the Korean sample's ( $M = 34.81$ ,  $SD = 3.25$ ),  $t(145) = 4.95$ ,  $p < .001$ . The Korean sample scored higher on the collectivism scale ( $M = 31.88$ ,  $SD = 3.26$ ) than the American sample did ( $M = 31.04$ ,  $SD = 3.74$ ),  $t(145) = 1.24$ ,  $p = .10$ , although the difference was only marginally significant.

A total of 28 small deliberation sessions were conducted: 14 (American) and 14 collectivist (Korean) groups. Half of the deliberation sessions were conducted face-to-face (FtF) and the other half were over the Internet (CMC, Computer-Mediated-Communication). Each group spent around one hour in discussing campus safety under the guidance of trained moderators who used standardized procedures and questions similar to Deliberative Polling. In the post-deliberation survey, the participants' level of political efficacy was measured. More



importantly, a “deliberativeness” measure was created. It had three components: discussants’ self-report, third party observers’ ratings, and discussion content analysis. In the self-report, the discussants reported their satisfaction with deliberation. In the observer ratings, two judges rated each discussion by the following criteria: extensiveness of information search; weighing pros and cons of each issue; examination of causes and effects of each issue; civility of discussion; enthusiasm demonstrated during the discussion; provision of new ideas. All deliberation sessions were transcribed, and the two judges who were bilingual in English and Korean carefully examined the transcribed documents and graded them on 7-point scales. In content analysis, a simple analysis identifying arguments was conducted. For each session, “reasoned arguments” were identified and their proportion to total speech was calculated. All deliberation sessions were transcribed and coders were instructed to identify any arguments containing reasons or justifications. They identified any relevant reasons for stated opinions and that portion of the speech was marked as reasoned arguments. The quality of the reasons was not taken into consideration. Separately, equality of participation was measured from the content analysis. For each discussant, the proportion of individual spoken words to his or her group’s total spoken words was measured. Then mean proportions and standard deviations were calculated for each condition. A high standard deviation would mean a high variation in terms of the number of spoken words in that condition, suggesting relatively unequal participation.

In multi-level regression modeling, political efficacy and self-report deliberative assessment were regressed upon independent variables. The independent variables included basic demographics, mode (FtF vs. CMC), shyness, political interest, group-level culture, and individual-level culture. The two culture variables need further explication: The 28 small deliberation groups were dichotomously coded as individualist American (0) vs. collectivist Korean (1), making the group-level culture variable. In addition, all participants’ individual culture (whether they have a collectivist or individualist orientation regardless of nationality) was added as a covariate to investigate the unique effects of group-level culture. The logic here is to test whether a group-level culture (collectivism / individualism) is at work during deliberation regardless of discussants’ individual-level cultural orientation. In other words, the individual-level cultural orientation variable was used as a control. Details of the measurement can be found in the appendix.

When the groups’ self-assessed mean deliberativeness scores were calculated using descriptive statistics, American participants who deliberated in the FtF condition scored highest ( $M = 39.97$ ,  $SD = 2.34$ ), followed by American participants in the CMC condition ( $M = 38.91$ ,  $SD = 3.22$ ), Korean participants in the FtF condition ( $M = 37.76$ ,  $SD = 2.92$ ), and Korean participants in the CMC condition ( $M = 37.63$ ,  $SD = 3.34$ ). When the regression model was fit (Table 1), the coefficients for group-level culture were statistically significant. This means that as group culture changes from individualism (0) to collectivism (1), the level

of self-assessment of deliberation decreased. In other words, the Korean participants assessed deliberation less favorably than the American participants.

**Table 1.** Coefficient Estimates of Independent Variables for Self-Assessment of Deliberation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	38.55***	39.74***	39.92***	40.20***
Sex		.09	.13	.16
Rank		-.45	-.45	-.46*
Interest		-.08	-.08	-.07
Shyness		-.24**	-.24**	-.23**
Individual Culture			.02	.02
Group Culture		-1.88**	-1.94**	-2.41**
Mode		-.53	-.53	-1.00
Group Culture * Mode				.91
$\hat{\tau}_{00}$	1.41**	.63	.62	.55
$\hat{\sigma}^2$	8.25	7.50	7.49	7.51
Deviances (-2LL)	744.63	722.53	722.90	722.68

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Shyness was statistically significant in every model above. Individual level culture did not, however, become significant when shyness was removed.

In the content analysis of the deliberation, the judges rated the American deliberation sessions higher in almost every dimension (Table 2). When the proportion of reasoned arguments to total speech in number of words was calculated, the American groups featured more reasoned arguments than the Korean groups. The analysis also measured equality of participation. Every discussant's number of spoken words was counted for all sessions. Then the proportion of individual spoken words to the group's total spoken words was measured. The Korean groups' average standard deviation is larger than that of the American groups', demonstrating more variation in participation (Table 3).

**Table 2.** Judges' Evaluation of Deliberation by Culture and Mode

	Comparison by Culture		Comparison by Mode	
	Korean (n = 14)	American (n = 14)	FtF (n = 14)	CMC (n = 14)
Extensive information	4.39 (.17)	5.04* (.24)	4.58 (.29)	4.78 (.15)
Examined causes	4.10 (.15)	4.66* (.17)	4.16 (.23)	4.53 (.12)
Examined effects	4.50 (.18)	5.33** (.16)	4.79 (.24)	4.96 (.19)
Weighed the positives	4.39 (.17)	5.29** (.20)	4.70 (.25)	4.89 (.20)
Weighed the negatives	4.64 (.20)	5.58** (.22)	4.91 (.29)	5.21 (.27)
Respected differences	4.17 (.16)	5.66** (.22)	4.70 (.29)	5.00 (.27)
Demonstrated enthusiasm	4.50 (.13)	5.29* (.27)	4.70 (.27)	5.00 (.20)
Provided new ideas	4.78 (.14)	5.41 (.31)	5.08 (.30)	5.07 (.20)

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Standard errors are reported in parenthesis.

**Table 3.** Average Proportion of Reasoned Arguments, Average Proportion of Individual Spoken Words, Average Standard Deviation by Culture and Mode

	Comparison by Culture		Comparison by Mode	
	Korean (n = 14)	American (n = 14)	FtF (n = 14)	CMC (n = 14)
Average Proportion of Reasoned Arguments	.44 (.11)	.50* (.14)	.49 (.13)	.45 (.12)
Average Proportion of Individual Spoken Words	.18	.23	.19	.23
Average Standard Deviation	.11***	.08	.14***	.05

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Standard errors are reported in parenthesis.

Deliberation significantly increased the discussants' political efficacy regardless of condition. All groups reported a statistically significant increase in efficacy. However, the amount of efficacy increase was higher for the American groups. A regression model showed that cultural group was a statistically significant factor ( $\beta = -1.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with the Americans experiencing a higher effect of deliberation on political efficacy.

To summarize, although deliberation had some positive effects on both cultural groups, the individualist American groups experienced more positive effects. The American groups generally viewed the deliberation more favorably than the Korean groups. For given deliberation criteria, the judges rated the American deliberation sessions higher than those of Koreans. The Americans' deliberation featured more arguments and they reported a relatively higher increase in political efficacy compared to the Koreans.

These empirical results do not necessarily suggest that deliberation is less likely to be practiced in non-Western cultural groups. Rather, it suggests that current deliberation is immersed in Western standards, which produces more positive results in Western cultural contexts.

### Toward an Extended Theory and Research of Deliberation

The dichotomous framing of deliberation as Western specific vs. universal may be an oversimplification. In reality, it would make more sense to investigate how local cultural contexts influence deliberative practices. Doing so will be a huge

endeavor that will require sophisticated comparative political theories, ethnographic sensibilities, and numerous empirical studies, which are beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, in a preliminary attempt to tackle the question, this essay identified some problems of current deliberation theories and practices.

Researchers and practitioners need to be aware that the deliberation enterprise, as practiced currently, has a Western bias, and if these Western-induced deliberative standards are to be imposed on different cultural contexts, they will have to think twice about those standards. This view has some analogy in traditional political science literature. Many political scientists and theorists have attempted to evaluate the democratic arrangements of non-Western countries in terms of the Anglo-Saxon, liberal conceptualization of democracy, which heavily focuses on democratic institutions such as voting, territorial representation, and separation of church and state. But such a one-size-fits-all perspective ignores the distinctiveness of local cultural systems of a given country. So too the current dominant deliberation model, exemplified by the Deliberative Polling type, does not account for cultural sensibilities of many non-Western countries.

If we are truly to utilize the power of deliberation in this increasingly globalized world, its theory and practice should be expanded. There are several ways to expand deliberation theory. The first, which relates to the critique of Deliberative Polling, is to pay more attention to other dimensions of deliberation. In Western deliberation scholarship, the main focus has been on deliberation's effects on developing individuality, self-efficacy, and opinion sophistication. The listening side of deliberation is relatively downplayed in assessment, although facilitators may stress listening in practice. Scholars of deliberation who use quantitative measures should therefore consider shifting their attention to the acts of listening. In addition, they could profitably direct attention to acts of compromise and harmony. One may call this an "Eastern" perspective. Civility and social harmony have been cherished values in many Confucian societies throughout history. Intercultural communication scholars argue that Easterners, influenced by the social harmony tradition, prefer such communication strategies as compromise and integration when dealing with conflicts whereas Westerners favor such strategies as domination and strong opinion expression (Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, & Yee-Jung, 2001). The Confucian tradition of valuing social harmony and civility may offer some insights to Western deliberation theorists and practitioners, inspiring appreciation of and learning from the cultural values of other societies.

Second, theorists need to acknowledge more varied forms of deliberation. This point was already made by such scholars as Young (2000) and Sanders (1997). By acknowledging diverse forms of deliberation, theorists and practitioners can be better prepared to deal with the cultural issues in deliberation. If deliberation is mainly conceptualized as heavily rule-bound, problem-solving and decision-making talk, then it may discriminate against minorities who lack relevant cultural and discursive resources. It may also intensify conflicts among participants with

varied cultural orientations. By acknowledging a more encompassing, dialogic way of doing deliberation, one can also increase cultural sensibilities that are important in deliberation in the globalized world.

Third, if rich traditions of public reasoning exist in every culture, as deliberation-universalists argue, then it will be important to revive those traditions. Revitalizing those traditions matters because it would allow easier transitions to deliberative politics in many societies. As the Kettering Foundation President Mathews (2006, 189) convincingly argues, “importing political practices from outside was certain to invite resistance, while building on their own traditions was more likely to be successful.” Mathews’ point rings true for contemporary China. Regardless of the merits of Western-style deliberative politics, China today has a considerable resistance to imitating the West, and the country features a strong desire for democracy with “Chinese characteristics” (Tan, 2011). In other words, for deliberation to be successful in China, the country’s own historical and cultural traditions should be accounted for. It is in this context that He developed the notion of “authoritarian deliberation” (He, 2006; He & Warren, 2011). It denotes the idea that deliberative influence can affect political decision-making even in non-democratic, authoritarian regimes such as China. Authoritarian deliberation can be possible when elites have moral responsibilities to rule in accordance with the common good, as stated in Confucian ethics, and, also have functional needs to make their governance more legitimate: “Theoretically, deliberation can occur under authoritarian conditions when rulers decide to use it as a means to form preferences and policies, but do so without institutionalized distribution of democratic powers to those affected” (He & Warren, 2011, 271-272). He then suggests that empirically, China features many deliberative practices led by the Chinese Communist Party. From this perspective, deliberation does not require democratization as a prerequisite. This is a controversial view, which can be at odds with traditional deliberation theories. In most Western theories of deliberation, state power should not be involved in citizens’ voluntary deliberation; citizens are even encouraged to form associations and confront the state (Dryzek, 1990). It is, however, less important to ask whether or not authoritarian deliberation is a proper way of doing deliberation than to understand that modifications to traditional deliberation theories are inevitable considering the reality of Chinese politics and culture today.

Overall, indigenous efforts to localize deliberation will help in the successful development of deliberation models in non-Western societies. In Western societies, too, it is important to understand and acknowledge the cultures of deliberating sub-groups and communities. Researchers and practitioners of deliberation should thus bring cultural sensibilities to their deliberation efforts. As Sass and Dryzek (2014) suggest, “Rather than take Western practices as a yardstick of democratic performance, we should examine democratic potential wherever it appears” (20).

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## Appendix A. Statistical Model

*Statistical model:* The full multi-level regression model is specified as below, where  $Y_{ij}$  is the dependent variables. “Mode” refers to whether communication took place in CMC or FtF. “Rank” refers to the students’ standing – freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior. The culture variable had two measurements: group level and individual level as described in the main text.

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \text{ Rank} + \beta_{2j} \text{ Sex} + \beta_{3j} \text{ Political Interest} + \beta_{4j} \text{ Shyness} + \beta_{5j} \text{ Individual Culture} + \gamma_{ij}$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \text{ Group Culture} + \gamma_{02} \text{ Mode} + \gamma_{03} \text{ Group Culture} * \text{Mode} + u_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$$

$$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20}$$

$$\beta_{3j} = \gamma_{30}$$

$$\beta_{4j} = \gamma_{40}$$

$$\beta_{5j} = \gamma_{50}$$

## Appendix B. Selected Measurements

All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales.

### Shyness Scale (Cheek, 1983, shortened version)

- “I feel tense when I’m with people I do not know well.”
- “I am socially somewhat awkward.”
- “When I am in a group of people, it is difficult for me to think of the right things to talk about.”

The shyness scale’s reliability was .69 ( $M = 8.60$ ,  $SD = 3.17$  on a composite 21-point index).

### Self-assessment of Deliberation Scale

- “I felt free to express my views during the discussion.”
- “I had plenty of chances to speak during our group discussion.”
- “I understood almost everything that other group members said during our discussion.”
- “I was very mentally alert and involved in our group’s discussion.”
- “I carefully considered what other group members said during our discussion.”
- “The other group members respected my own views on the issue.”
- “The other group members were rude and impolite towards me.”

Reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ ) = .83

### Political Efficacy Scale (Adapted from the American National Election Study)

- “I think that I am better informed about school issues than other students.”
- “I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important issues facing my school.”
- “I consider myself well qualified to participate in school affairs.”

Reliability = .70

### Individualism-Collectivism Self Construal Scale (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996)

- “My personal identity is important to me.”
- “I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others.”
- “I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.”
- “I stick with my group even through difficulties.”
- “I respect decisions made by the group.”
- “I maintain harmony in the groups of which I am a member.”
- “I respect the majority’s wishes in groups of which I am a member.”
- “I take responsibility for my own actions.”
- “It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.”
- “It is important for me to act as an independent person.”
- “I should decide my future on my own.”
- “I enjoy being unique and different from others.”

Reliability for the independent self-construal scale was .65.

Reliability for the interdependent self-construal scale was .67.