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**CAPTURING THE NATURE OF ISSUE PUBLICS:
SELECTIVITY, DELIBERATION, AND ACTIVENESS IN THE NEW
MEDIA ENVIRONMENT**

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SELECTIVITY, DELIBERATION, AND ACTIVENESS IN THE NEW
MEDIA ENVIRONMENT**

by

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Dedication

To my parents

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**Capturing the Nature of Issue Publics:
Selectivity, Deliberation, and Activeness in the New Media Environment**

Hsuan-Ting Chen, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

Supervisors: Renita Coleman, and Natalie J. Stroud

This dissertation seeks to understand how issue publics contribute to citizen competence and the functioning of democracy. In the first part of the dissertation, a new measurement was constructed by theoretically and empirically analyzing the attributes of issue public members. Through the hypotheses testing, the new measure was more reliable in identifying issue public members compared to previous measurement strategies.

Employing the new measure, results show that issue public members with concern about a specific issue, exercised their issue-specificity in seeking information (i.e., issue-based selectivity) with exposure to both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives. Issue public membership also had significant effects on issue-specific knowledge, and generating rationales for their own and other's oppositional viewpoints. These direct effects were mediated by issue-based selectivity. The relationships highlight the importance of issue publics in contributing to the deliberative democracy. In addition, issue publics play a significant role in contributing to the participatory democracy in that issue public members have greater intentions to participate in issue-related activities than nonmembers. However, while issue publics come close to solve the deliberative-participatory paradox, it was found that their information selectivity and argument

generation were unbalanced in a way of favoring pro-attitudinal perspectives over counter-attitudinal perspectives.

The second part of the dissertation examined conditional factors—accuracy and directional goals in affecting information selectivity and processing. The findings show that directional goals influenced participants to apply either the strategies of selective approach or selective avoidance to seek information depending on the issue. Accuracy goals exerted a main effect on the issue that is relatively less controversial and less obtrusive. They also interacted with issue public membership in influencing the less controversial and less obtrusive issue. Argument generation was not affected by accuracy or directional goals.

Overall, through conceptualizing citizens as members of different issue publics, individuals are more competent than we thought. Their intrinsic interest in an issue serves as a strong factor affecting their information selectivity, information processing, and political actions. Despite finding an optimistic role for issue publics in the democratic process, their limitations also should be recognized. The implications for the deliberative and participatory democracy are discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is well documented that the majority of American citizens are apathetic about politics and lack political knowledge (e.g., Berelson, 1952; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Erskine, 1963; Neuman, 1986). Many do not have crystallized attitudes about politics and may not make rational political decisions. As a result, individuals are easily influenced by elite cues and do not hold consistent and stable positions toward most issues (Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Downs, 1957; Zaller, 1992). These results hardly live up to the informed and engaged citizens thought to make up a public capable of sustaining democracy. Rather, the “public” may be more of a mass. The concept of the “mass” indicates an aggregation of individuals who are undistinguishable, dispersed geographically, separate, and detached (Price, 1992). These individuals act in response to their own needs without collective will, and they only bind together when they have a common focus of interest and attention (Price, 1992). With these less than optimistic facts regarding citizen competence, a debate has arisen about how democratic society sustains nonetheless.

This dissertation adopts the concept of issue publics, one school of thought that emerged from this debate. This concept reconceptualizes citizens in the democratic process by highlighting the fact that even though politics may not matter equally for everyone, individuals’ are involved in specific political issues. In the following paragraphs, I discuss different schools of thought in the debate, including first, the view that a small number of sophisticated citizens facilitate the functioning of democracy; second, the idea that the public, in the aggregate, functions smoothly; and third, the notion that individuals’ use of heuristic cues helps political decision making. Then, I emphasize the focus of this dissertation—the concept of issue publics. This school of

thought has received increasing attention recently based on the emergence of new media technologies that provide users with greater control and selectivity.

A small number of sophisticated citizens (i.e., the elites and the well-educated) can facilitate the functioning of democratic society. This school of thought argues that these citizens are the attentive public, which is defined as the public that pays continuing attention to a wide range of issues, makes political decision based on their attitudes, and engages in political affairs (Price, 1992; Price & Zaller, 1993; Zaller, 1992). As these sophisticated citizens are highly attentive to politics, they monitor the actions of government and let their judgments be known through their political participation. Therefore, their attention and action can affect policy making and assure a degree of government responsiveness which can help with the development of democracy.

Another school of thought views the public from an aggregate level, and contends that the public, as a collective, holds stable and sensible opinions (Page & Shapiro, 1992). Collective rationality is sustained because public opinion in the aggregate allows errors found in individual-level data to cancel each other out, which, in turn, produces a picture of stable opinion that responds reasonably to changes in the social and political environment (Page & Shapiro, 1992). Thus, a government that acts in accordance with aggregate opinion, which is rational and stable, can contribute to democratic society.

Still other scholars have argued that citizens do not need to learn about politics comprehensively in order to make reasoned choices (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Popkin, 1991). This school of thought assumes that people are limited information processors who use heuristics—cognitive shortcuts—to understand campaign information and to make reasonable decisions (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Popkin, 1991). For example, voters can make voting decisions based on party affiliation and candidates' ideology. In judging candidates or policies, voters also can use endorsements,

public statements, or poll results as cognitive shortcuts (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). Although citizens are not fully informed, they can contribute to democracy through the use of heuristics in order to participate in politics.

In the midst of this debate on how public opinion functions and how citizen competence operates, the concept of issue publics emerged to help with the process of reconsidering how democracy functions (e.g., Converse, 1964). Rather than considering the public as a whole or focusing on the attentive public, the concept of issue publics posits that the citizenry is made up pluralistic groups of individuals with interest and involvement in specific issues (Converse, 1964; Y. M. Kim, 2009; Krosnick, 1990; Krosnick & Telhami, 1995; Price, David, Goldthorpe, Roth, & Cappella, 2006). These groups of citizens are specialists. They are attached to certain issues that are personally valued and with which they are deeply concerned, but they do not necessarily feel the same about other issues outside of their area of interest (e.g., Converse, 1964; Hutchings, 2003; Iyengar, 1990b; Y. M. Kim, 2009; Krosnick, 1990; Krosnick & Telhami, 1995).

To get an understanding of what is meant by issue publics, one can picture the public as a large circle, within which are a series of smaller circles, each representing an issue public. They are groups with partial overlap of the type seen in Venn diagrams (Price, et al., 2006). Members in each issue public deeply care about an issue, and have strong and stable attitudes toward the issue of interest over long periods of time (Y. M. Kim, 2009; Krosnick, 1990). With strong and stable attitudes, issue public members tend to seek issue-related information as they become specialists on their issue of interest. For example, they possess high levels of knowledge and participate in activities related to the issue about which they deeply care (Iyengar, 1990b; Y. M. Kim, 2009; Price, et al., 2006). Issue public members' high domain-specificity allows different issue publics in diverse areas collectively to produce a public good, and maintain democratic

accountability (Dahl, 1961; Hutchings, 2003; Iyengar, 1990b; Price, et al., 2006). In this sense, intense interest in a particular issue by a subset of the population might be able to compensate for a lack of political attentiveness in general public affairs, and facilitate the functioning of democracy.

Although the concept of issue publics was most prominently presented by Converse in 1964, there was not much research in the area until the 1990's, when Krosnick and his colleagues provided support for the existence of issue publics (Krosnick, 1990; Krosnick & Telhami, 1995). Krosnick (1990) argued that American citizens vary a great deal in terms of the issues in which they are interested. He found that nearly half attached great importance to at least one problem, and there were only weak correlations between importance measures across different issues. The results suggested that discrete publics coalesce around different issues (Krosnick, 1990).

The consequences of issue publics, however, have become controversial. Researchers have delved into the cognitive dimension, examining whether issue public members have high issue-specific knowledge (Y. M. Kim, 2009; Price, et al., 2006; Price & Zaller, 1993). While Kim (2009) found a positive relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge, Price and his colleagues (2006) failed to find the relationship. In addition, some scholars argued that people who are well-informed on certain subjects also tend to acquire information and gain knowledge across a variety of different subjects (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Zaller, 1986). This research suggests that someone knowledgeable about the economy also will be well-versed in other political topics. The implication is that members of the public are generalists, as opposed to specialists divided into specific issue publics. Divergent findings also have appeared in studies examining issue public members' political behaviors. Price and his colleagues (2006) found that issue public membership had a positive relationship with health-related

political activities. However, Sides and Karch (2008) had more mixed results. They found that some issue public members, defined as parents of minor children, were mobilized to vote by campaign messages related to education and child care. They did not find a positive relationship between issue-specific campaign messages and voting turnout among senior citizens or veterans, however.

These mixed results raise fundamental questions: What are issue publics? What attributes are required for a citizen to be considered an issue public member? Issue publics have been defined inconsistently, and various measurements have been employed to identify issue public members. These different definitions may account for conflicting findings about the consequences of issue publics. This dissertation aims to clarify the definition of issue publics and to reassess issue publics with a new measure based on how issue public members have been defined theoretically in previous literature. Thus, the dissertation will develop a better understanding of what attributes an issue public member has, and analyze how to distinguish issue public members from nonmembers. Also, this dissertation will explore how issue public members contribute to democratic society by examining their issue-based selectivity, cognitions (i.e., issue-specific knowledge and opinion quality), and behaviors (i.e., issue-related political activities). While examining the relationships among issue public membership, issue-based selectivity, and political outcomes, this dissertation will compare the new measure of issue public membership with those adopted in previous research to validate the new measurement. As a result, the dissertation can provide insight into what issue publics are and how issue publics facilitate the functioning of democracy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

WHY ARE ISSUE PUBLICS IMPORTANT?

Addressing the role of issue publics in contemporary democratic society is important for several reasons. First, plausibly, citizens are not completely ill-informed or apathetic about politics. Rather, they may pay attention and respond to a small number of public issues that trigger their concern and interest. Therefore, citizens' interest and involvement in a small number of issues ensures their ability to contribute to democratic accountability. In addition, aggregate levels of attention across various issue publics can ease concerns about low levels of political knowledge among all citizens.

Second, the changing information environment plays an important role in fostering issue publics. While high-choice media, such as the Internet, raise concerns about audience fragmentation, they provide more diverse content and increase users' abilities to consume media content catering to their individual needs or interests compared to traditional low-choice media, such as television and newspapers (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002; Prior, 2007; Tewksbury, 2003, 2005). Thus, high-choice media facilitate specialization in the public—people can acquire information about a small number of issues that attract them and learn less about other issues. In other words, high-choice media allow for audience selectivity which provides exactly what issue public members want—issue-relevant information (Jang & Park, 2012; Y. M. Kim, 2009).

Lastly, with strong attitudes toward an issue and deep interest in the issue, issue publics may play an influential role in bridging the gap between deliberative and participatory democracy. Deliberative democracy emphasizes the importance of exposure to dissimilar views in encouraging people to take diverse perspectives into consideration. The process of deliberating should reduce biases (e.g., pre-existing stereotypes which are strongly held) and enhance respect for differences of opinion (Fishkin, 1991; Guttman

& Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1989). Participation is another core element of a healthy democracy because citizens' political actions provide a check on government, policies, and other political outcomes (Brady, 1999; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978). However, scholars have documented a deliberative-participatory democracy paradox (Mutz, 2002a, 2002b, 2006). First, citizens tend to eschew conflicting opinions and select like-minded viewpoints, thereby resulting in attitude extremity and political polarization (Festinger, 1957; Stroud, 2010; Sunstein, 2001). In this scenario, citizens participate, but do not deliberate. Second, if citizens do expose themselves to different political views, the ambivalence, confusion, and social accountability resulting from exposure to disagreement was found to discourage political turnout (Mutz, 2002a, 2002b, 2006). Here, citizens deliberate, but do not participate.

Many studies have analyzed the relationship between deliberative and participatory democracy by examining contingent factors, such as types of disagreement, the ideological composition of one's interpersonal network, and forms of political participation. For instance, Nir (2011a) argued that when disagreement is a mix of both supportive and oppositional opinions, exposure to disagreement is positively related to participation. However, exposure to only oppositional views is detrimental to political engagement. Kwak and his colleagues (2005) found that the negative impact of disagreement on participation occurs when people are not paying attention to the discussion. Lee (2011) also argued that disagreement discourages position-taking activities (e.g., petition-signing, voting, and protests), but not non-position-taking activities (e.g., calling into talk radio, and writing letters to newspaper). Although scholars have examined the relationship between deliberative and participatory democracy, the concept of issue publics has yet to be brought into the discussion.

Issue publics may play a significant role in solving the deliberative-participatory democracy paradox. First, it is possible that issue public members are deliberative citizens. Previous research has shown that issue public members are more likely to expose themselves to issue-relevant information and perform exhaustive information-gathering activities in specific subject-matter domains (Boninger, et al., 1995; Iyengar, 1990; Kim, 2007, 2009). Yet, the first question that needs to be answered is whether issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to seek out counter-attitudinal political perspectives. The second question is: To what extent does issue-based selectivity increase political knowledge and foster quality opinion? By answering these two questions, the relationship between issue publics and deliberative democracy can be identified.

It is possible that issue public members who are passionately concerned about an issue and personally invested in the issue may seek diverse perspectives as they make an effort to understand the issue comprehensively. Their exposure to different political views can contribute to a higher quality of public opinion and enhance issue-specific knowledge.

Second, it is possible that even if issue public members look at diverse opinions, they may contribute to participatory democracy because their involvement with an issue may be combined with strong and stable attitudes that may not deter their participation in political activities, but instead serve as a force to facilitate their participation. Therefore, it is also critical to understand how issue public membership facilitates participatory democracy by sorting out the relationship between issue public membership and participation in issue-related activities.

Given that issue public members may play an influential role in sustaining democracy by solving the deliberative-participatory democracy paradox, it is imperative

to examine the relationships among issue public membership, issue-based selectivity (i.e., exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views), political knowledge, opinion quality, and participation.

DEFINING ISSUE PUBLICS AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF ISSUE PUBLIC MEMBERS

The concept of issue publics provides insight into how public opinion forms, and offers a realistic explanation of how citizens respond to public issues in a rational manner. The concept suggests that it is necessary to redefine the citizen “from that of an omniscient individual, interested and informed about all issues, to a more realistic model of overlapping and cross-cutting interest publics” (Neuman, 1986, pp. 31-32). These groups of citizens, passionate about specific issues, can help to explain how citizens satisfy democratic ideals by fostering opinion quality, increasing political knowledge, or enhancing political participation. However, the concept of issue publics has been defined differently in previous literature and the attributes of issue public members seldom have been discussed on the basis of the definition. In the following section of this dissertation, therefore, I first discuss why the idea of issue publics emerged. Second, I examine how scholars have defined issue publics differently. Finally, I evaluate what attributes an issue public member should possess based on the definitions in previous literature.

The idea of issue public membership was formed on the basis of several premises. First, citizens have limited capacity and few resources to devote comprehensive attention to understanding public affairs across various issues since citizen’s lives are not just about politics (Krosnick, 1990; Lippman, 1922, 1925). Second, becoming well-informed about any given issue entails substantial information costs, such as time and cognitive effort; thus, a citizen could only be expected to pay attention to and to form attitudes on a

small handful of issues (Downs, 1957). Lastly, citizens do not need to be well-educated or have a high level of general political knowledge to form an attitude about an issue in which they deeply interested (Krosnick, 1990).

Scholars have strived to define these pluralistic groups of individuals who are interested in and concerned about specific issues. Different terms, such as special publics, attention groups, and issue publics have been adopted (Cobb & Elder, 1972; Converse, 1964; Key, 1961). Although these terms have been defined differently, across all definitions, there is a consistent feature—individuals congregate as a group around an issue in which they are interested and place importance on that issue over other issues.

The concept of issue publics can be traced to Blumer (1946), who argued that public is “a group of people who are confronted by an issue, divided in their ideas as to how to meet the issue, and engage in discussion over the definition” (p. 189). In this definition, Blumer emphasized the significance of an issue to the formation of a public. Based on Blumer’s (1946) reasoning, when several issues arise and exist in society, the public can be divided into several smaller groups of people—the segmentation of the public—with each focusing on a different issue. After Blumer’s (1946) definition that tied issues to different groups of people in the public, scholars have continued to investigate these specific groups.

Key’s (1961) idea of “special publics” indicated that in addition to those focused on political affairs generally, there are complex populations of special groups “whose attention center[s] more or less continuously on specific governmental agencies or fields of policy” (p. 544). Their concern with specific issues may rest on their “self-interest” related to the issues (Key, 1961). Key’s idea of “specific publics” sheds light on the concept of issue publics by emphasizing the segmentation of the public, and identifying that different groups of people pay attention to specific policies relevant to them.

The term “issue public” was introduced by Converse (1964) when he recognized the instability of public opinion and belief systems; “We have come a step closer to reality when we recognize the fragmentation of the mass public into a plethora of issue publics” (p. 245). He described issue publics with the following statement:

One man takes an interest in policies bearing on the Negro [sic] and its relatively indifferent to or ignorant about controversies in other areas. His neighbor may have few crystallized opinions on the race issue, but he may find the subject of foreign and very important. Such sharp divisions of interest are part of the term ‘issue publics’ is intended to convey. (Converse, 1964, p. 246).

This introduction, however, did not concretely define issue publics, which left lots of room for later research to debate what issue publics are and what attributes are required to be an issue public member. Davis, Hinich and Ordeshook (1970) argued that “individual voters do not perceive, and especially do not have feelings about the entire spectrum of issues. Instead, voters are characterized as being concerned with a narrow subset of issues with the content of the subset varying from voter to voter” (p. 440). Cobb and Elder (1972) described “attention groups,” which are similar to issue publics. Individuals in such groups “are disinterested in most issues, but they are informed about and interested in certain specific issues” (p. 106). More recently, Popkin (1991) defined issue publics as “a subset of the overall public that cares a great deal about a particular issue” (p. 28). These definitions consistently suggest that different problems matter to different individuals, and these different groups of individuals (i.e., issue publics) function as diverse strata in society.

While scholars have employed different definitions of issue publics and how they function in society, it is imperative to understand the attributes of an issue public member. There are two reasons why identifying the attributes of an issue public member is essential when conducting research on issue publics. First, previous studies have used

inconsistent measurement to operationalize issue publics, and found inconsistent results. Second, the attributes can help me to construct a more reliable indicator to identify issue public members, and to examine the consequences of issue publics in society. Building on previous literature, several attributes for an issue public member emerge; each will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Personal issue importance

Krosnick (1990) defined personal *attitude* importance as “the degree to which a person is passionately concerned about and personally invested in an attitude” (p. 60). Personal *issue* importance is a similar concept that puts greater emphasis on the attitude toward a particular issue. Krosnick (1990) considered personal issue importance a proxy for issue public membership because people who consider an issue to be personally important are likely to have greater cognitive and behavioral involvement. For example, individuals who find an issue to be highly personally important tend to think about the issue, elaborate more extensively on issue-relevant information, have a better memory for that information, and organize that information more complexly in memory (Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005; Petty & Krosnick, 1995). In addition, personal issue importance is a powerful guide of attitude-expressive behaviors, such as voting, writing letters to public officials, and making contributions to political organizations (Krosnick, 1988b).

Personal issue importance should be subjectively determined (Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, & Fabrigar, 1995). Personal issue importance is an internal state of concern and passion that an individual attaches to an issue. Boninger and his colleagues (1995) suggested that personal importance is related to, but distinct from, other attitudinal concepts, such as centrality (Converse, 1964; Judd & Krosnick, 1982), personal relevance

(Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), personal involvement (Apsler & Sears, 1968), and salience (Lemon, 1968). These attitudinal concepts are similar to personal importance because they emphasize the significance of an attitude to one's psychological system. Yet personal importance is distinct because it is conceptually defined as the subjective, intrinsic sense of significance and concern that is attached to an attitude. It is also distinguished from an individual's values, needs, goals, or other aspects of the self, which may well be causes of attitude importance. For example, individuals may consider an issue personally important even though the issue does not directly influence their lives. Further, individuals may decide *not* to attach personal importance to an issue that may affect them directly if the cognitive effort seems to be more than they can afford. (Boninger, et al., 1995).

In sum, attaching personal attitude importance to an issue (i.e., personal issue importance) indicates a substantial commitment to and investment in the issue. Thus, one would anticipate that each issue public member idiosyncratically considers a small handful of issues personally important.

Personal issue relevance

Popkin (1991) emphasized the importance of personal issue relevance in issue public membership. He argued that personal issue relevance motivates issue public members to pay attention to and be involved in the specific issue (Popkin, 1991). Personal relevance indicates that individuals believe that an issue holds significant consequences for some aspects of their lives (B. T. Johnson & Eagly, 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Personal relevance has been used interchangeably with "self-interest," which is developed "when an individual perceives that an attitude object is likely to have a clear and direct impact upon his or her rights, privileges, or lifestyle" (Krosnick, 1990,

p. 72). Personally relevant issues are those that cue an individual that it is worth “challenging, protesting, and arguing about, or worth trying to influence or change” the attitudes and actions of others (Rokeach, 1973, p. 13).

Personal issue relevance leads to greater cognitive and behavioral involvement. When individuals consider an issue personally relevant, they are more likely to attend to issue-relevant information than those who lack such a self-interest, and also are more likely to attend to issue-relevant information than they are to attend to other information (Bolsen & Leeper, 2013). When seeking out self-relevant information, individuals have higher levels of encoding, recall, and knowledge accumulation for the information (Dutta & Kanungo, 1975; Kuiper & Rogers, 1979; Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977).

Petty and Cacioppo’s (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) also sheds light on the role of personal relevance in influencing attitude formation and information processing. ELM classifies individuals’ information processing into two different routes—the central and peripheral routes—which differ in the amount of thoughtful information processing demanded of individual subjects (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). When individuals think that an issue is of high personal relevance, they form their attitude via the central route, desire more information regarding the issue, and engage in more effortful information processing than when the issue is perceived to be of little personal relevance (e.g., Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Attitudes formed via central route processing are more elaborated and rehearsed than those formed via peripheral route processing. Additionally, attitudes have a stronger relationship with behaviors when the attitudes are formed under high personal relevance conditions than low personal relevance conditions (Krosnick, 1988; Leippe & Elkin, 1987; McGraw, Lodge, & Stroh., 1990). In short, personal relevance gives individuals’ an impetus to be issue public members and to be involved with a specific issue.

Attitude intensity and attitude stability

Not only do issue public members consider an issue personally important and relevant, but they also hold strong and stable attitudes toward the issue. Attitude intensity frequently has been used as an indicator for the measurement of strong attitudes. Attitude intensity is the strength of the emotional reaction evoked by an attitude object (Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993). Intensive attitudes have four features: (1) they are resistant to change; (2) they are highly stable over time; (3) they have a strong influence on the processing of relevant incoming information; and (4) they have a strong impact in shaping relevant behaviors (Berent & Krosnick, 1995, p. 92). Krosnick and Telhami (1995) focused on a single issue public, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and found that issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to have strong and less neutral attitudes toward the issue of Arab-Israeli conflict. Their strong attitudes were more resistant to change and stable over time (Krosnick, Berent, & Boninger, 1994).

In sum, according to Converse's (1964) proposal about the concept of issue publics, attitude intensity and stability join personal issue importance and personal issue relevance as prerequisite features of being an issue public member.

Issue centrality

In addition to these features, issue public members also are involved in the specific issues about which they are concerned, but indifferent to other issues (Krosnick, 1990). This is the primary argument for the existence of issue publics. Issue public members are different from those who generally are interested in public affairs across various issues. For example, if a person not only cares about the abortion issue, but also is broadly interested in public affairs, one cannot say that the person is a member of the abortion issue public. Although this notion of issue centrality is an essential feature of issue publics, it largely has been overlooked in previous measurement and

operationalization. Thus, it is important to understand how deeply issue public members care about a specific issue *compared to* other issues.

Summary

While previous literature has discussed these attitude-related attributes, including personal issue importance, personal issue relevance, attitude intensity and attitude stability, and issue centrality, as the requirements of an issue public member, the attributes have not been considered all together in order to study the concept of issue publics. Some studies found that these attitude-related attributes for issue public membership are significant correlated (Krosnick, et al., 1993; Wojcieszak, 2012), and this is one of the reasons why recent studies on issue publics mainly used personal issue importance as the indicator. However, issue publics should be considered a construct that includes the above-mentioned attributes instead of a single item. For example, personal issue importance is an attribute of an issue public member, but it would be arbitrary to use this single item to identify an issue public member. Therefore, when it comes to the concept of issue publics, these aforementioned attitude-related attributes should be considered a construct in that together, they can describe and operationalize an issue public member. This would be a more reliable way compared to using only one of the attributes to imply the existence of all other attributes when identifying an issue public member. This also would be a more valid approach to examine issue public members' political outcomes. In the next section, I describe these previous measurement strategies in more detail.

PREVIOUS MEASUREMENT STRATEGIES

Scholars have used various strategies in an attempt to distinguish issue public members from nonmembers. Studies of issue publics have employed three primary

measurement strategies: demographics, opinionation, and personal issue importance. However, each of these strategies should be questioned based on measurement validity and reliability. The following section will discuss previous measurements and their advantages and disadvantages. This dissertation aims to develop a better measure to identify issue public members on the basis of their aforementioned attributes.

First, some studies have identified issue public members based on their demographics (e.g., Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick, & Walker, 2008; Page & Shapiro, 1992; Price & Zaller, 1993). When the public is divided into pluralistic subgroups of informed and concerned citizens who care about specific issues, individuals' personal political agenda may vary depending on differences in their occupation, religion, geography, race, or personal experiences (Neuman, 1986). Therefore, females are assumed to be members of a gender-related issue public, and those who are elderly or have elderly parents are assumed to be members of the health care issue public. For instance, American Jews were found to consider the Arab-Israeli conflict to be highly personally relevant and express strong support for Israel (Gilboa, 1986, 1987; Iyengar & Suleiman, 1980). Previous studies have employed demographics as the indicator of issue public membership because these metrics target how close and relevant an issue was to an individual based on their social group membership. However, this indirect measurement may overestimate the size of issue publics by inappropriately including people who are not passionately concerned about the issue, or it may underestimate the size of issue publics by failing to identify all issue public members (Y. M. Kim, 2009; Krosnick & Telhami, 1995). Not all females care about gender-related issues (overestimate issue public members), and it is possible that individuals who are not elderly or have elderly parents, but personally have health problems may be strongly invested in health care issues (underestimate issue public members). Accordingly, this dissertation contends that the aforementioned

attributes of an issue public member, including personal issue importance, personal issue relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability, and issue centrality, serve as a better indicator of issue public membership than a single demographic item. Even though not all females are members of an abortion issue public, those who believe that abortion is personally important, who consider the abortion issue as having a significant impact on their lives, who hold strong and stable attitudes about abortion, and who care about abortion much more than other public issues *are* members of an abortion issue public.

Second, opinionation has been used as a way of identifying issue public members (Krosnick & Telhami, 1995). This approach assumes that individuals who have opinions on an issue likely have more crystallized attitudes toward the issue than those who have no opinion or maintain a neutral attitude (e.g., Rivers, 1988; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991). Thus, issue public members can be identified as those who take sides on an issue and have an opinion about it, while nonmembers are those who have no opinion, stay neutral on an issue, or don't know about the issue. This approach, however, raises the question of whether individuals offering opinions on an issue have strong feelings and crystallized attitudes about the issue. Converse (1964) tracked political opinions expressed by respondents and found the expressed opinions lacked stability. His non-attitudes thesis indicated that most response fluctuation is due to random guessing by people who have no meaningful opinions. Butler and Stokes (1969) found a similar result in Britain, where a few people had an identical and definite position over time. Zaller and Feldman (1992) also suggested that few people have "true attitudes" such that they are stable and consistent in their reactions to diverse aspects of issues (p. 610). Most individuals are to some extent ambivalent. They possess a series of autonomous responses to the opinion questions asked by pollsters, but their responses are often inconsistent and their attitudes are not crystallized. It is, therefore, not reliable to adopt

only individuals' opinion on an issue as the indicator of issue public membership. It would be more adaptive to directly measure individuals' attitude strength and stability on an issue instead of looking at whether individuals express opinions on an issue or not.

Yet others argued that personal issue importance is a better proxy to identify issue public members than demographics or personal opinions because personal issue importance captures subjective concerns and interests that reveal individuals' cognitive and behavioral involvement in issues (e.g., Petty & Krosnick, 1995). Personal issue importance has been one of the most common indicators used to define issue publics (e.g., Y. M. Kim, 2009; Krosnick, 1990; Krosnick & Telhami, 1995). Krosnick (1988a) found that people's attitudes toward issues were significantly more stable over time if they rated these attitudes as important. The higher the personal issue importance, the more specialized people are with respect to the issue.

Although personal issue importance is related to more stable opinions, higher personal relevance, and greater attitude strength (Boninger, et al., 1995; Krosnick, et al., 1993), by itself, it does not capture what issue publics are as they hypothetically function in political theory. Issue public members are not merely defined by whether people think an issue personally important, but they also are characterized by the other aforementioned attributes. Mixed results in recent research on issue publics may result from the use of a single indicator of issue public membership. For example, Kim (2009) found that issue public members enhanced their domain-specific knowledge by selecting issue-relevant information. However, Price et. al. (2006) found that personal issue importance did not predict issue knowledge and opinion expression; instead it only related to issue-specific participation in the case of health care reform. It is likely that these political outcomes also relate to other issue publics members' attributes. When other attributes are not taken into account, issue public members cannot be appropriately identified, thereby leading to

inconsistent findings. Based on the evidence to this point, an index that includes a multi-item measure related to issue public members' attributes would be a better and more reliable standard to capture issue public members.

Considering mixed results in previous research which was based on different operationalizations of issue public membership, the first aim of this dissertation is to reassess who is a member of an issue public. Identifying issue public members with only their demographic background or attitudes toward an issue is questionable. Using one item of personal issue importance to operationalize issue publics is an unreliable way to distinguish issue public members from nonmembers because other issue public members' attributes are not considered. This study aims to further the literature on issue publics and to solve the long-pending controversy of identifying issue public members by proposing a new measurement based on the aforementioned attributes of issue public members. Specifically, this dissertation analyzes whether personal importance, personal relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability, and issue centrality form a single construct to represent issue public membership. In addition, this dissertation examines whether the composite index has more consistent and stronger correlations with theoretically-related variables, which are the outcome variables of interest (e.g., issue-based selectivity, issue-specific knowledge, opinion quality, and issue-related political participation) compared to indicators of issue public membership used in previous research (i.e., demographics, opinionation, personal issue importance).

Research Question 1a: Do attributes of issue public members form a single measure?

Research Question 1b: How does the single measure with attributes of issue public members perform compared to earlier measures (i.e., demographics, opinionation,

and personal issue importance)? More specifically, does the single measure have stronger and more consistent relationships with the outcome variables of interest (e.g., issue-based selectivity, issue-specific knowledge, opinion quality, and issue-related political participation)?

ISSUE PUBLICS AND ISSUE-BASED SELECTIVITY

Selective exposure, the idea that individuals actively seek out like-minded information and avoid information that challenges their beliefs or attitudes, has received recent attention. Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance has been the most prominent theory in explaining the role of selective exposure in reducing the psychologically uncomfortable state of dissonance. Recent research has found that people exhibit a preference for consonant political information or messages that can reinforce their pre-existing opinions (e.g., Garrett, 2009; T. J. Johnson, Bichard, & Zhang, 2009; T. J. Johnson, Zhang, & Bichard, 2011; Stroud, 2008; Stroud, 2010). The phenomenon of selective exposure has been widely studied as a biased information search.

Not all selective behaviors, however, are trying to avoid dissonance and look for messages that are supportive of one's predispositions. A notable characteristic of issue publics revealed in previous studies is their tendency to seek out issue-relevant information—issue-based selectivity (e.g., Iyengar, et al., 2008; Y. M. Kim, 2009). Early research already showed that interest in an issue is a strong predictor of future information seeking (Sears & Freedman, 1967). Issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to seek information in domains about which they care and are already relatively well-informed (Boninger, et al., 1995; Iyengar, 1990b; Y. M. Kim, 2007, 2009). For example, Krosnick and his colleagues (1993) documented that considering an

issue personally important and relevant leads to information gathering and inspires extensive thinking about the issue. Berent and Krosnick (1993) also found that when participants were told to read only three out of six issues for each candidate, they selected information related to issues they considered important at the expense of information relevant to issues they did not consider important. Price and Zaller (1993) provided partial support for the idea that people look for issue-relevant information by examining individuals' awareness of issue-relevant information as a proxy of information seeking. For example, people over age 64 were more likely to know about the government's plans for taxing the elderly on a part of their medical insurance. Residents of the New York area were more likely than others to know about the results of New York's mayoral primary. However, Price and Zaller did not find a significant relationship between women of childbearing age and awareness of the Supreme Court's abortion decision in the Webster case. They also failed to find a relationship between Texas residency and the awareness of the resignation of House Speaker Jim Wright of Texas. Although their test only partially supported issue-based selectivity, their adoption of the items such as demographics, partisan identification, residency, and media viewing as indicators of issue public membership were inconsistent and of questionable validity. Bolsen and Leeper (2013) found that individuals' attention to specific issues varies based on whether or not information is relevant to their self-interest (i.e., personal issue relevance). In other words, intrinsic motivation, or caring about an issue, can help to determine when it is adaptive to take a cognitive miser's approach and ignore the information or when a more effortful, systematic approach is warranted when considering attitude-relevant information (Boninger, et al., 1995).

Although scholars theoretically distinguish issue-based selectivity from the dissonance-avoidant type of selective exposure, the extent to which issue-based

selectivity is different has not been empirically tested. Iyengar and his colleagues (2008) examined these two types of selectivity—issue-based exposure and anticipated agreement exposure (i.e., partisan selective exposure) in a field experimental setting at the same time. However, this study did not tap into the question: when individuals exercise their issue-based selectivity, does it imply that they will select pro-attitudinal information? Kim's (2007) study touched on this question by examining issue public members' information seeking of issue-relevant information and whether the issue-relevant information they selected was pro-attitudinal or counter-attitudinal. She indicated that issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to have unbiased information consumption because they select information from both sides of an issue (Y. M. Kim, 2007). Her study, however, operationalizes this exposure by whether individuals select or do not select the information. The extent to which individuals sought out pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal information, such as how many articles were selected or how long individuals spent reading the information, was not taken into consideration. Even if issue public members select two-sided information, it is unclear whether they expose themselves to more pro-attitudinal or more counter-attitudinal information, or if they have a relatively balanced exposure between these two types of information. This is a key question that needs to be carefully examined so that we can better understand how issue publics contribute to the functioning of deliberative democracy.

Issue public members' issue-based selectivity is driven by an intrinsic interest in an issue. As Atkin (1971) suggested, an intrinsic interest in an issue, such as self-interest or personal importance, plays an important role in determining information selection. Motivated by intrinsic interest, a self-motivated passion for the information, individuals can perform comprehensive information searches (Atkin, 1971). Thus, when an individual is deeply concerned about an issue and strives to understand the issue

comprehensively, the individual may be more likely to expose him or herself to counter-attitudinal political views. Knoblock-Westerwick and Meng (2009) found that the selection of counter-attitudinal information was heightened among individuals with higher issue importance, for example.

Taking prior literature into account, issue public members may select counter-attitudinal information in order to perform an exhaustive information search on the issue. In addition, since issue public members have strong and stable attitudes, they are more likely to feel free to encounter opposing views without a fear of changing attitudes. Intensive attitudes toward the issues, which represent strong, or possibly extreme, attitudes, can work as leverage to allow people to expose themselves to opposing views because they have the strong self-conviction that they will not be affected by counter-attitudinal messages (Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). As a result, issue public members may expose themselves not only to attitude-consistent information, but also to counter-attitudinal political views in order to gain a more well-rounded sense of the issue which concerns them. The following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1a: Issue public members will be more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to attitude-consistent political views about the issue.

Hypothesis 1b: Issue public members will be more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves counter-attitudinal political views about the issue

After examining the relationship between issue public membership and exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views, it is important to understand to what extent issue public members expose themselves to these two different perspectives by analyzing the discrepancy between exposure to counter-attitudinal information and exposure to attitude-consistent information. As discussed above, whether

issue public members have a relative balance of exposure to pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal information compared to nonmembers provides significant information about of the role of issue publics in contributing to deliberative democracy, but has not yet been explored. Therefore, this dissertation posits a research question:

Research Question 2: How does issue public membership affect the relative balance of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views?

ISSUE PUBLICS AND ISSUE-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Evidence of a relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge can be found in scores of studies about the positive relationship between the strength of an individual's attitude toward an object and the amount of information an individual possesses about the object (e.g., Berent & Krosnick, 1995; Krosnick, et al., 1993; Wood, 1982; Wood, Rhodes, & Biek, 1995). These studies recognized the strength of an attitude as an intrinsic motivator of information processing that enhances individuals' comprehension and retention. Personal importance and relevance frequently have been used to measure the strength of an individual's attitude toward an object, and to examine the relationship with information processing.

Berent and Krosnick's (1995) study sheds light on the relationship between issue publics and issue-specific knowledge when considering personal issue importance as an indicator of issue public membership. They found a positive relationship between personal issue importance and knowledge across three studies, each with a different approach. The first study tested the ease with which people use stored knowledge and found that participants made inferences more quickly and were more consistent in their

inferences when they involved personally important attitudes than when they involved unimportant attitudes. The second study examined how knowledge is stored. The findings revealed that participants who considered an issue personally important listed psychologically related pieces of knowledge as closer to each other (better organized) than did participants who considered an issue unimportant. In the last study, Berent and Krosnick assessed the way in which people classify pieces of stored knowledge. Participants were first asked to list their knowledge about abortion or capital punishment. Participants grouped pieces of knowledge that they thought were related to one another in some respect, described why those pieces of knowledge were related for each group they classified, and rated how well all of the pieces of knowledge were described by each descriptor phrase. The pieces of information that were grouped together reflected a relation among them in memory and represented a dimension of knowledge. The results showed that people who considered their attitudes on abortion or capital punishment more important organized the pieces of knowledge into more groups. Similarly, other studies have documented a positive relationship between the personal importance of an attitude object and knowledge about the object (Holbrook, et al., 2005; Krosnick, et al., 1993; Wood, 1982). People considering an issue personally important are more likely to accurately perceive the candidates' positions on the issue (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996; Krosnick, 1990), and acknowledge differences in the issue positions of candidates (Krosnick, 1988b). These studies provide support for the positive relationship between issue publics and issue-specific knowledge.

Other studies measured attitude strength by analyzing the personal relevance of an attitude object, and found that people considering an attitude object personally relevant engage in more effortful information processing and retrieve more information about the attitude object from memory (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Petty,

Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983). Although these studies mainly focused on either personal importance or personal relevance as an attribute of attitude strength, which this dissertation argues is insufficient to define issue publics, they do provide some evidence in support of the relationship between issue publics and issue-specific knowledge as personal issue importance and personal issue relevance are prerequisites for being an issue public member.

The underlying process that leads to domain-specific knowledge has been explored further. Iyengar (1990) indicated that accessibility bias—the ease with which information about a subject can be retrieved from memory—has a great impact on individuals’ political knowledge. Accessibility bias can be determined not only by contextual factors, such as media salience (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Higgins, Bargh, & Lombardi, 1985; Iyengar, 1990a; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Taylor & Fiske, 1978), but also by individual characteristics. To the degree that individuals are concerned about a particular issue, knowledge related to that issue is easier to access and retrieve. For example, individuals who care passionately about gun control policy tend to have more stored information about gun control policy than other issues. Thus, they are more likely to retrieve issue-related information for making political decisions or evaluating candidates.

Another explanation for the development of issue-specific knowledge is selectivity. Attitude strength helps individuals to determine the information to which they should attend, which in turn will enhance their issue-specific knowledge. Berent and Krosnick (1993) found that subjects exhibited better memory for issues that they care about when they were able to select issue-relevant information. Similarly, Holbrook and her colleagues (2005) asked participants to watch televised debates between presidential candidates and found that participants were better able to remember the statements made

about policy issues that they considered more personally important. When diverse information is available, and when cognitive resources are limited or information costs (e.g., cognitive effort and time) are substantial, it is unlikely that individuals can attend to all kinds of available information. Accordingly, attitude strength motivates individuals to seek relevant information, and prompts them to process information more deeply. Following the same line of reasoning, Kim (2009) argued that information selectivity is the underlying process that contributes to issue public members' issue-specific knowledge. She found a positive relationship between issue public membership and issue-based selectivity, and another positive association between issue-based selectivity and domain-specific knowledge. It is worth noting that the relationships were examined separately without testing issue-based selectivity as a mediator. Therefore, we do not yet know whether issue-based selectivity mediates the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge, but it seems plausible.

This dissertation further separates issue-based selectivity into exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views for two purposes. First, the dissertation will be able to distinguish issue-based selectivity from partisan-based selectivity to understand if issue public members not only expose themselves to like-minded political perspectives, but also select challenging information or opinions. Second, examining issue-based selectivity with the separation of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives is the first step to understanding the contribution of issue publics to deliberative democracy because exposure to disagreement is a core element of collective deliberation in democratic politics. As Curtin (1997) argues, "the deliberative view relies on a person's capacity to be swayed by rational arguments and to lay aside particular interests and opinions in deference to overall fairness and the common interests of the collectivity" (p. 54). If individuals seek

only information that supports their beliefs and limit their exposure to challenging information, deliberation will be harmed (Benhabib, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Mutz, 2006). On the contrary, when individuals are exposed to contrasting viewpoints, they can expand their understanding of others' perspectives, and enhance their awareness of rationales for their own viewpoints, which in turn can foster political tolerance (Mutz, 2002b; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). While previous literature has not empirically tested issue-based selectivity as a mediator of the relationship between issue publics and issue-specific knowledge, this dissertation hypothesizes that exposure to attitude-consistent *and* counter-attitudinal political views mediate the relationship between issue public membership and domain-specific knowledge.

Hypothesis 2: Issue public members have a higher level of issue-specific knowledge than nonmembers.

Hypothesis 3a: Exposure to attitude-consistent political views mediates the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge.

Hypothesis 3b: Exposure to counter-attitudinal political views mediates the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND OPINION QUALITY

This study not only investigates how issue public membership and issue-based selectivity influence issue-specific factual knowledge, but it also aims to understand to what extent issue publics and their selectivity contribute to deliberative democracy by understanding issue public members' opinion quality. Price and Neijens (1997) argued that the quality of public opinion is inextricably related to the quality of democratic decision making. Thus, understanding issue publics' opinion quality is important

because it is even more closely related to deliberative democracy than factual political knowledge (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002).

Opinion quality has been understood using *process-oriented* criteria, such as the extensiveness of information search/discussion/debate, independence from social pressure, and the understanding of and respect for differing viewpoints, and using *outcome-oriented* criteria, such as stability of opinions, representation of collective interests, and extensiveness of information base (Price & Neijens, 1997). Several measurements have been developed to measure opinion quality (Kuhn, 1991; Woodard, 1995; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000). In particular, argument repertoire measures how people generate rationales for their own and oppositional positions on a specific political topic (Cappella, et al., 2002). Scholars have developed a reliable and valid measure of argument repertoire that has been adopted in many studies to assess this facet of opinion quality (e.g., Cappella, et al., 2002; Nir, 2011b; Wojcieszak, 2012). After describing the relationship between issue publics and opinion quality, the next section will discuss how and why argument repertoire is adopted to provide insight into the contribution of issue publics to deliberative democracy.

What differentiates a public from a crowd or a mass of people is that a public forms opinions through communicative action with mutual understanding, equal exchange, and rational discourse to shape collective choices (Blumer, 1946; Habermas, 1984, 1989; Park, 1972). Furthermore, issue public members are different from those who have what Converse called “non-attitudes” about public issues because they are more likely than nonmembers to form rational opinions about an issue based on their belief system (Converse, 1964). Considering this, issue public members are assumed to have better reasoning ability that fosters opinion quality with respect to the issue about which they care in comparison to non-issue public members. Two areas of research

explain why issue public members have higher quality opinions than nonmembers. First, studies using the Elaboration Likelihood Model have documented the positive influence of personal issue relevance on information processing and comprehension of information related to a personally relevant issue. Second, literature on political deliberation has contended that dissimilar political views play a significant role in affecting individuals' reasoning abilities and in contributing to a healthy democracy.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM, Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) provides support for issue publics' reasoning activities. As mentioned earlier, the central route refers to elaboration that is based on relatively expensive and effortful information processing activity, aimed at scrutinizing and uncovering the central merits of the message. The peripheral route, alternatively, refers to elaboration that is based on the use of heuristics, such as identification with the message source, which requires less cognitive effort. The ELM suggests that when people think that an issue is of high personal relevance, they tend to process information with central routes more than when the issue is perceived to be of little personal relevance (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). As they find the issue more relevant, issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to carefully process information regarding the issue about which they are concerned.

In addition to the literature on the ELM, studies on political deliberation have stressed the importance of disagreement in forming quality opinions. Political deliberation refers to "a combination of careful problem analysis and an egalitarian process in which participants have adequate speaking opportunities and engage in attentive listening or dialogue that bridges divergent ways of speaking and knowing" (Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2002, p. 398). According to deliberative democratic theory, face-to-face group discussion is considered "the ideal setting for deliberation, because such discussion often introduces conflicting points of view, highlights moral and

practical trade-offs, and stimulates critical thinking” (Gastil & Dillard, 1999, p. 5). Thus, literature on political deliberation has been widely examined in the context of face-to face discussion regarding political conversation as a key deliberative activity (Cho et al., 2009; McClurg, 2006; Mutz, 2002b; Nir, 2005, 2011a; Wojcieszak, 2011; Wojcieszak, Baek, & Delli Carpini, 2010). A similar deliberation process can happen when using media that either agrees or disagrees with one’s views. In addition to political conversation, news media has been shown to contribute to deliberative opinions because they enhance understanding of political information and foster the opinion quality (e.g., Kam, 2006; J. Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; Page, 1996). More importantly, it is the diversity and disagreement embedded in political conversation and news content that are particularly influential in creating the conditions for rational argumentation, comprehensive evaluation and balanced judgments (Hively & Eveland, 2009; Meffert, Guge, & Lodge, 2004; Mutz, 2002b; Mutz & Mondak, 2006). Therefore, exposure to alternative perspectives or counter-attitudinal political views fosters individuals’ deliberative ability to generate reasons, in particular reasons why others oppose their views, thereby fostering opinion quality. Exposure to counter-attitudinal political views about issues of interest can provide an explanation for issue public members’ deliberative ability.

To capture deliberative ability, studies have examined the extent to which individuals exercise their reasoning behavior in two main ways. The first is to examine how much individuals elaborate in response to a stimulus (i.e., media or discussion), and the second is to assess the extent to which individuals provide rational arguments on a particular subject (e.g., argument repertoire). In this dissertation, argument repertoire is adopted for two reasons. First, this dissertation aims to examine the number of arguments people can generate to understand how issue public membership and issue-based

selectivity affect opinion quality, which is selected as an indicator of deliberative democracy. Second, argument repertoire allows the possibility of examining the extent to which people can come up with rationales not only for their own views, but also for oppositional political views. Through the rationales people generate, individuals' information processing after exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political perspectives can be recognized in a clearer manner. In the next section, I first will discuss elaboration, however, because literature on elaboration provides insight into how media content and political conversation contribute to individuals' reasoning behaviors. Afterward, I will describe argument repertoire.

Eveland (2001) defined elaboration as “the process of connecting new information to other information stored in memory, including prior knowledge, personal experiences, or the connection of two new bits of information together in new ways” (p. 573). Elaboration as a reasoning behavior can occur when people reflect on media content (Eveland, 2001) or anticipate a conversation (Eveland, Hayes, Shah, & Kwak, 2005). Elaboration plays an influential role in facilitating learning (e.g., Eveland, 2001; Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002), and is a critical mediator of the relationships between news media use, interpersonal discussion, and political attitudes and behaviors (Cho, et al., 2009; Eveland, 2001, 2004; Eveland & Thomson, 2006; Shah et al., 2007). In previous studies, elaboration is measured by asking people the extent to which they try to connect what they see in the media or what they discuss with others to what they already know, and how often they evaluate the information from the media or from conversations based on their prior experience and thoughts (Eveland, 2001, 2004; Eveland & Thomson, 2006; Shah, et al., 2007). Although elaboration is a useful measurement for examining individuals' deliberative ability, this measurement may be called into question when it comes to understanding opinion quality. First, self-reported elaboration can only tap into

whether people *believe* that they connect media content and discussion to their information processing. Given that elaboration is a perceptual measure, there may be perceptual errors where people overestimate or underestimate their deliberative abilities. Second, this measurement is not able to capture the types of information (e.g., attitude-consistent or counter-attitudinal) that people link more often to their stored knowledge or prior experience. Therefore, it would be difficult to evaluate the extent to which a person's deliberative ability is established on a foundation of mutual understanding and rational comprehension.

The second approach to understanding deliberation is measuring individuals' argumentation. For example, Kuhn (1991) examined whether people can generate genuine evidence in support of their opinions. More importantly, she emphasized the significance of counterargument, which is the reasoning ability of envisioning others attempting to falsify one's argument. She also suggested the ability to refute counterarguments as a higher level of argumentative complexity. Drawing on a similar idea, Kim and his colleagues assessed argumentation by examining the ability of respondents to argue their views (J. Kim, et al., 1999; Wyatt, et al., 2000).

More recently, argument repertoire, proposed by Cappella and his colleagues (2002), follows a similar line of conceptualization and measurement to assess opinion quality. Argument repertoire is defined as "the range of arguments people hold both in support of and against their favored position on a particular political issue or toward some political object" (p. 76). This assessment not only considers individuals' rationales for their own viewpoints, but also takes direct empirical account of their understanding of others' counter-attitudinal positions. For example, if people indicate that their position is pro-life on the abortion issue, they will be asked to list substantive reasons for why they are against abortion (i.e., own argument repertoire), and also outline reasons for why

others support a pro-choice view (i.e., other argument repertoire). Different from assessing the extent to which individuals elaborate, argument repertoire put greater emphasis on individuals' deliberative processes and reflective ability in providing different sides of arguments and opinions.

Although previous research has investigated the relationship between issue publics and their issue-specific knowledge, no research to date has investigated the relationship between issue public membership and opinion quality, which is a core element for understanding deliberative democracy. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4a: Issue public members generate more rationales for their own viewpoints on the issue than nonmembers.

Hypothesis 4b: Issue public members generate more rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the issue than nonmembers.

Similar to examining the relative balance of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives in issue-based selectivity, when individuals' rationales are separated into own viewpoints (i.e., pro-attitudinal perspective) and oppositional viewpoints (i.e., counter-attitudinal perspective), it is important to understand whether issue public membership affects the generation of more rationales for one point of view compared to the other. While issue public members tend to generate more rationales for their own and oppositional viewpoints compared to nonmembers, as hypothesis 4 posited, it is possible that issue public members generate significantly more rationales for one point of view compared to the other. It is also possible that issue public members have a balanced rationale generation compared to nonmembers. This dissertation, therefore,

raises the following research question to examine the discrepancy between generating rationales for one's own viewpoints and oppositional viewpoints:

Research Question 3: How does issue public membership affect the relative balance of generating rationales for one's own viewpoints and oppositional viewpoints?

This dissertation also proposes that exposure to counter-attitudinal political views mediates the relationship between issue public membership and opinion quality. First, as hypothesized, issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to engage in cross-cutting exposure, and they have greater deliberative abilities than nonmembers which allows them to generate rationales for their own and oppositional viewpoints on an issue. Second, exposure to counter-attitudinal information positively influences people's understanding of oppositional viewpoints (Mutz, 2002b). Although Mutz (2002b) failed to identify the hypothesized positive relationship between exposure to counter-attitudinal information and generating reasons to support one's own viewpoint, an earlier study showed that people became more aware of both sides of an issue when they were exposed to both sides of an issue (Green, Visser, & Tetlock, 2000). It is also possible that an individual may be inclined to produce counterarguments to defend his or her own stance after exposure to counter-attitudinal perspective, thereby leading to a rationalization of one's own viewpoints based on exposure to oppositional views (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). Taking previous work into consideration, this dissertation proposes the following mediated relationship: issue public members will be more likely to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal perspectives than nonmembers, which, in turn, will foster a better opinion quality.

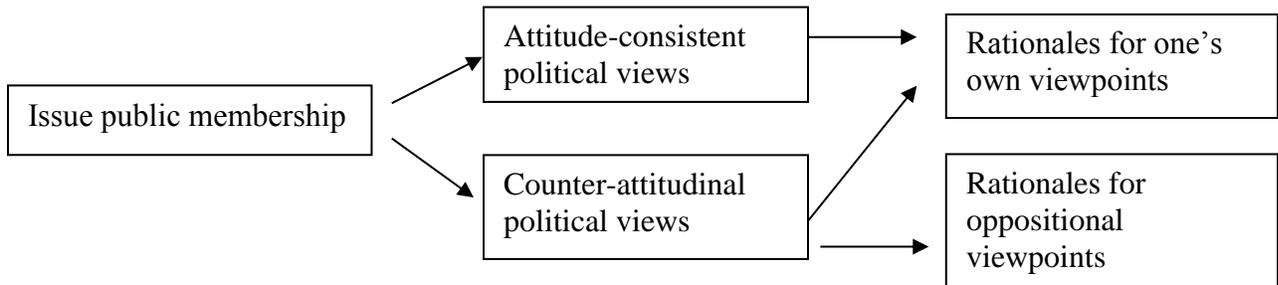
In terms of the effects of exposure to attitude-consistent political views on generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints, literature on partisan selective exposure indicates that people who seek to expand their familiarity with information supporting their beliefs and avoid opinion-challenging information will have greater attitude extremity and political polarization (Garrett, 2009; Stroud, 2010; Sunstein, 2001). Exposure to supporting information bolsters individuals' prior attitudes. However, without the balance of contrasting viewpoints, individuals will lack the awareness of legitimate rationales for oppositional viewpoints, and politically fragment. Accordingly, this dissertation does not propose a mediating effect of exposure to attitude-consistent political views on issue publics' rationales for *oppositional* viewpoints. Instead, this study hypothesizes that exposure to attitude-consistent political views on the issue mediates the relationship between issue public membership and generating rationales for *own* viewpoints.

Hypothesis 5a: Exposure to attitude-consistent political views mediates the relationship between issue public membership and rationales for members' own viewpoints on the issue

Hypothesis 5b: Exposure to counter-attitudinal political views mediates the relationship between issue public membership and rationales for members' own viewpoints.

Hypothesis 5c: Exposure to counter-attitudinal political views mediates the relationship between issue public membership and rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

Figure 2.1: The Mediating Role of Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views in the Relationships between Issue Public Membership and Argument Generation



ISSUE PUBLICS AND POLITICAL BEHAVIORS

Political participation refers to actions by ordinary citizens that are aimed at influencing government, policies, or other political outcomes (Brady, 1999; Verba, et al., 1978). Theoretically, an ideal democracy would have citizens who have high levels of deliberation and participation. Thus, citizen participation is essential to the functioning of a healthy democracy (Barber, 1984; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). For issue publics to provide a resolution of the paradox of how the public in the aggregate could contribute to the development of democracy despite low levels of political engagement, it is necessary that issue publics not only pay attention to and deliberate on the issues, but also actively engage in issue-related activities. As Price and his colleagues (2006) argued, “knowledge alone, in the absence of well-informed opinions and motivations to engage politically, may not translate into effective public opinion” (p. 55). Government and politicians are likely to respond to those who actively participate in political activities, but not to those who merely pay attention to an issue. Therefore, issue publics’ actions could play a significant role in the progress of democracy.

Although previous literature has examined the cognitive and attitudinal outcomes of issue publics, little attention has been paid to the behavioral outcome of issue publics. Theoretically, issue public members' intrinsic concern about an issue motivates them to engage in activities that "give rise to the probability of affecting action, directly and indirectly" relating to the issue (Allport, 1937, p. 23). Price and his colleagues (2006) argued that issue public members attach varied degrees of importance to specific issues, which leads to involvement in activities that are in line with the issues they perceive to be important. They focused on health care and found that people who consider health care personally important are more likely than those who do not to participate in health-related political activities. Another study emphasized a more general form of political participation. Sides and Karch (2008) examined whether the issue content of campaign messages can mobilize issue publics and increase their voter turnout. They only found partial support for the idea. For example, issue-specific campaign messages about education and childcare only slightly increased turnout among parents, and messages about security and Medicare had no association with turnout among senior citizens. Also, veterans were not mobilized to vote by messages about veterans. The operationalization of issue public members based on demographic membership may account for the insignificant relationships. The measurement of political participation as voter turnout instead of participation in issue-related activities also may explain the nonsignificant relationships. Accordingly, it is still unclear how politically engaged issue public members are, as the literature has explored issue publics only by inconsistently adopting demographics or personal issue importance as indicators of issue public membership. In addition, health care is the only issue that has been investigated in the literature so far when analyzing the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific political participation.

Research on attitude structure and its effect on political outcomes sheds further light on the relationship between issue public membership and political participation. Strong attitudes motivate people to engage in attitude-relevant behavior (see Krosnick, et al., 1993 for review). Wojcieszak (2012) analyzed the issue of sexual minority rights in Poland and found that a composite attitude strength index—an index that averaged attitude importance, attitude certainty, and attitude intensity while controlling for attitude extremity—significantly predicted both *communicative participation*, such as talking about the issue and attempting to persuade others, and *active participation*, such as joining an organization, protesting, and petitioning. Visser et al. (2003) also uncovered that attitude importance and attitude certainty (i.e., the degree of the certainty with which individuals hold their attitude on political issues) positively influenced attempts to persuade others to adopt one’s attitude. Focusing on global warming, Visser et. al. (2003) found that the combination of high attitude importance and high attitude certainty was associated with a pronounced increase in attitude-expressive political behaviors, including giving money to an organization concerned with global warming, writing a letter to a public official about global warming, and attending a meeting to discuss the issue.

More importantly, while literature has found that issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to use the Internet for seeking issue-related information (Y. M. Kim, 2009), no research to date has extended issue publics’ political participation from the offline world to the online environment. It is important to examine online political participation separately not only because issue public members tend to use online media (Kim, 2007), but also because of the Internet’s role in facilitating political participation. Online political participation has been differentiated from offline political participation in many recent studies given that online activities require low costs (i.e., money, time, and

physical effort) (e.g., Gil de Zúñiga, Puig-i-Abril, & Rojas, 2009; Jung, Kim, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2011; Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2007). For example, people can donate money, e-mail news organization or public officials, or participate in an internet-based protest. The online environment provides an avenue for political activities that is convenient and easy to access (Best & Krueger, 2005). Thus, understanding whether issue public members harness the Internet to their advantage for political activities can advance the literature on the relationship between issue publics and political activities.

Although there are inconsistent findings about the influence of the Internet on political participation (Graber, 1996; Norris, 2001; Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001; Weber, Loumakis, & Bergman, 2003), some scholars indicated that it is because Internet use for entertainment purposes is negatively related to political participation (Prior, 2007; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002). When it comes to issue public members who care deeply about an issue and use the Internet to seek issue-relevant information, the Internet is more likely to serve as a virtual public sphere and as a less costly way to participate in politics.

To conclude, this study hypothesizes a positive relationship between issue public membership and offline political participation as well as online political participation. As the participation measures were assessed immediately after participation in the remainder of the study, I use intentions to participate, rather than actual participation.

Hypothesis 6a: Issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to intend to participate in issue-related political activities offline.

Hypothesis 6b: Issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to intend to participate in issue-related political activities online.

FROM DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY TO PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

After examining issue publics, information selectivity, and the political consequences, this dissertation proposed a theoretical model to understand issue publics' contribution to democracy from deliberative dimension to participatory dimension (Figure 2.1). Studies have demonstrated that deliberative and reasoning ability affects political participation (e.g., Cho, et al., 2009; Eveland, 2001). Deliberative and reasoning ability has been examined in a variety of forms, such as reflection on media content (i.e., elaboration; Eveland, 2001), political conversation (Eveland, 2004), expressing political views (i.e., online political messaging; Cho, et al., 2009), and integration and understanding (McLeod et al., 2001). Even though argument generation has been regarded as a deliberative ability, no research to date has examined the effect of argument generation on political participation. A link, however, could be proposed by including indicators of deliberation and participation together in a model.

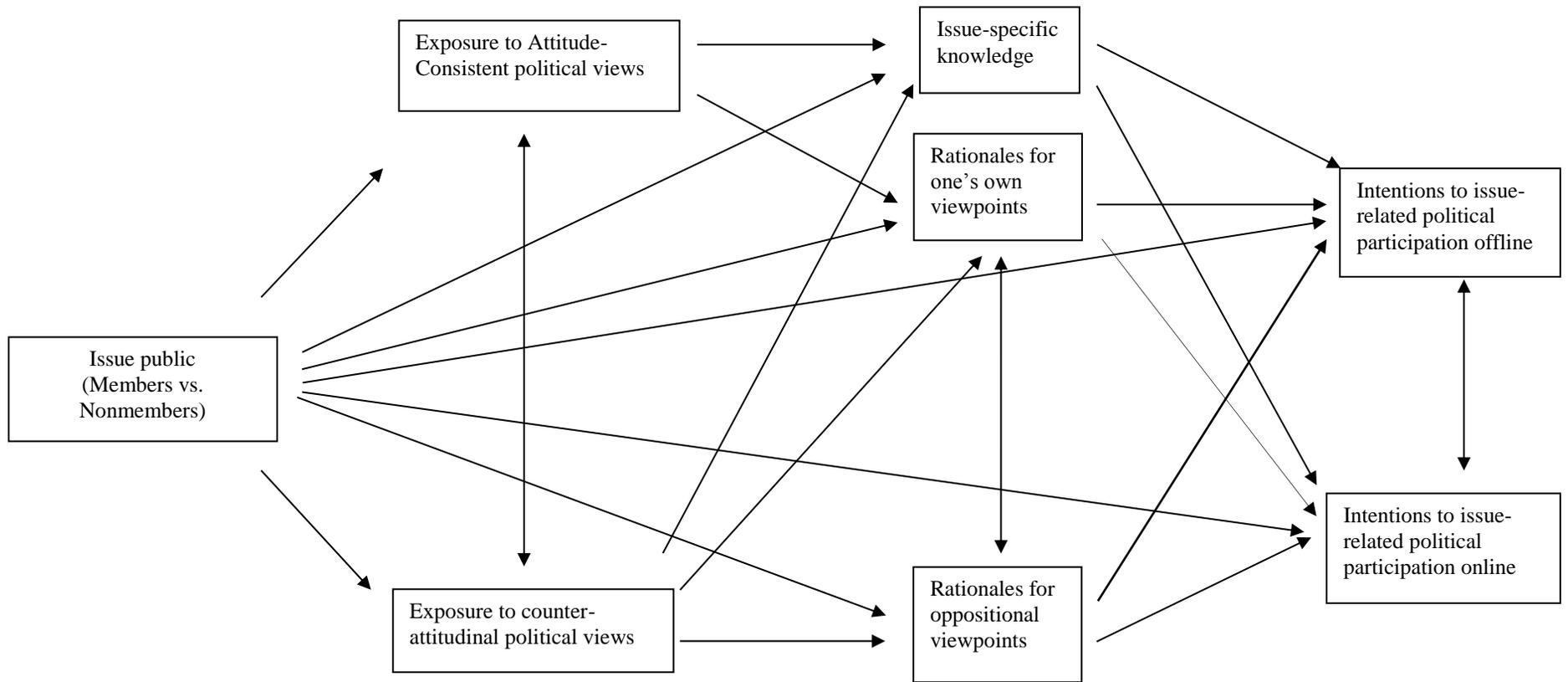
In addition, political knowledge has been tested in many studies as a consequence of media use (e.g., Barabas & Jerit, 2009; Brians & Wattenberg, 1996; Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Feldman & Price, 2008), and as a significant predictor of political participation (e.g., Jennings, 1996; Jung, et al., 2011; Neuman, 1986; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). Issue-specific knowledge, therefore, was modeled as an antecedent of intentions to participate in issue-related political activities.

Overall, to understand how issue publics contribute to democracy when taking both the deliberative and the participatory dimensions into account, intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline and online were considered consequences of issue-specific knowledge, rationales for one's own viewpoints, and rationales for oppositional viewpoints. Intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline and

online were also the outcomes of issue public membership. All other relationships posited in the previous hypotheses about the role of issue publics in deliberative democracy were placed in the model as well.

Research Question 4: Does this integrated model fit the data for each issue?

Figure 2.2: The Integrated Model



EFFECTS OF MOTIVATED-REASONING GOALS ON ISSUE-BASED SELECTIVITY AND DELIBERATION

Although the relationship between issue publics and issue-based selectivity has been identified, and issue public members' tendency to seek not only attitude-consistent but also counter-attitudinal political views is theoretically hypothesized, literature has shown that different motivational factors can powerfully determine how individuals process information. Thus, it is important to recognize that the relationship between issue public membership and issue-based selectivity may be conditionally influenced by motivational factors. This dissertation asks, under what conditions would the relationship between issue public membership and their issue-based selectivity, including exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views, be enhanced or diminished? This dissertation investigates motivated-reasoning goals as potential motivational factors that moderate the relationships.

Motivated-reasoning goals are "strategies for accessing, constructing, and evaluating beliefs" (Kunda, 1990, p. 481). These goal-directed strategies for cognitive processing fall into two major categories: accuracy goals and directional goals. An accuracy goal refers to the desire to reach an accurate conclusion and maintain a correct belief (Kunda, 1990). When people are motivated to be accurate, they are afraid of invalid information and worried about incorrect answers. Thus, they would attend to issue-relevant information more carefully, access not only *confirming* but also *disconfirming* information, invest cognitive effort in issue-related reasoning, and process the information more deeply by using more complex rules (Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Kunda, 1990).

Directional goals, on the contrary, deviate from the accuracy goals with a tendency to uphold one's existing belief structure, maintain a preferred conclusion, and

avoid disconfirming information. When motivated by directional goals, people access relevant information that supports a favorable conclusion. People with directional goals weigh supportive evidence more heavily when they process information, while devaluing unsupportive information and processing information in a more biased manner (Kunda, 1990).

Motivated-reasoning goals have been examined in experimental settings. Many of them only manipulated accuracy goals to understand its effect on information selectivity and processing given that individuals, by nature, have a directional motivation to find supporting information and reach a preferred conclusion (Kunda, 1990). For instance, Lundgren and Prislin (1998) manipulated accuracy goals by telling participants the purpose of the experiment was to examine their logic and reasoning abilities. They found that accuracy goals resulted in more objective information search and processing. Thompson and his colleagues (1994) enhanced participants' accuracy motivation by instructing them to make accurate judgments and saying that some of them would be asked to participate a short group discussion to talk about their judgments. Their findings indicate that accuracy goals can attenuate covert priming. Participants with accuracy motivations showed no special attention to primes and no awareness of their influence on judgment. Also, Simmons and his colleagues (2010) found that participants in an accuracy goal condition adjusted away from provided anchors when making judgments.

This line of research has been extended to the political context and motivated-reasoning goals have been manipulated as a situational factor. Taber and Lodge (2006b) manipulated accuracy goals by instructing participants to view information in an evenhanded way and telling them that they will need to explain the issue (e.g. affirmative action or gun control issues) to other students. Their study indicated that even though participants' accuracy motivations were enhanced, when they were free to choose pro-

attitudinal or counter-attitudinal information about affirmative action or gun control issues, they *still* sought out more confirming than disconfirming information (i.e., confirmation bias). In addition, accuracy goals did not eliminate biased information processing, leading to attitude polarization (Taber, Cann, Kucsova, & Lodge, 2009; Taber & Lodge, 2006b).

Other than Taber and his colleagues' less than optimistic results, Kim's (2007) study showed that participants in an accuracy goal condition did demonstrate a greater degree of unbiased information-gathering than those in the directional goal condition. She applied motivate-reasoning goals to issue publics, and found that issue public members extended their search beyond the issues of their personal concerns in the accuracy goal condition. Also, issue public members were unbiased in information seeking even in the directional goal condition compared to nonmembers. Notably, however, as discussed before, the operationalization of unbiased information seeking in Kim's (2007) study is whether individuals selected two-sided information or not. The study did not consider to what extent individuals selected pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal information, and did not examine whether individuals selected more articles with one viewpoint over those with the other viewpoint.

In addition to manipulating motivated-reasoning goals as a situational factor in an experimental setting, many other studies have measured motivated-reasoning goals as individual characteristics in survey research. Prior to discussing this line of research, it is worth noting that this dissertation aims to test motivated-reasoning as a situational factor rather than individuals' characteristics. However, the relationships found in studies considering and measuring motivated-reasoning goals as individual characteristics can theoretically support the hypotheses proposed in this dissertation, in particular the hypotheses related to opinion quality. Therefore, I first discuss the theoretical link of

motivated-reasoning goals with need for cognition and need to evaluate. Second, I moved to the findings on opinion quality, which helps to explain the rationales for proposing the following hypotheses.

Studies have been linking motivated-reasoning goals to two concepts—need for cognition and need to evaluate (e.g., Lodge & Taber, 2000; Nir, 2011b). The need for cognition and the need to evaluate are closely-related to motivated reasoning in the literature. Both variables have been studied as motivational factors in influencing information processing, and they have been frequently measured in survey research as individual characteristics (e.g., Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996; Cacioppo, Petty, Kao, & Rodriguez, 1986; Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983; Petty & Jarvis, 1996). Even though the terms, need for cognition and need to evaluate, are different from accuracy goals and directional goals, similar conceptualizations and effects have been found across different domains of research on cognitive information processing.

Need for cognition refers to “an individual’s tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavors” (Cacioppo, et al., 1996, p. 197). Individuals with a high need for cognition are willing to make greater cognitive effort to engage in a comprehensive review of all available information. Studies have found that individuals with a greater need for cognition are likely to elaborate on issue-relevant information when forming attitudes, and their attitudes have a strong association with their behaviors (e.g., Cacioppo, et al., 1986). This concept is similar to Kunda’s accuracy goals (Nir, 2011b). Need for cognition is also positively related to the tendency to formulate complex attributions, base judgments on empirical information and rational consideration, search for relevant information when making decisions, perceive social

issue to be personally relevant, and make cognitive effort to maximize information gain (see Cacioppo, et al., 1996 for review).

Need to evaluate (Jarvis & Petty, 1996) is close to having directional goals. The need to evaluate is an individual's tendency to engage in evaluative thoughts (Jarvis & Petty, 1996). People who have a greater need to evaluate tend to make quick judgments with cognitive shortcuts corresponding to their existing belief structures. Thus, need to evaluate is positively associated with extreme ideological commitments, and is negatively related to political ambivalence (Federico, 2004, 2007; Federico & Schneider, 2007). As such, need for cognition and need to evaluate exert similar effects and support the findings from motivated-reasoning research.

Motivated-reasoning goals have been examined to understand individuals' opinion quality and perceptions of public opinion with the measures of need for cognition and need to evaluate. Nir (2011b) adopted Lodge and Taber's (2000) fourfold typology of political reasoning,¹ and found that motivated reasoning can affect the extent to which people generate arguments, and the extent to which people are aware of collective preferences in society. Classical rationalists (i.e., weak directional motivation and high accuracy motivation) were the least likely to overestimate support for their own opinions, compared to partisan reasoners, and they were also able to list more reasons for opposite viewpoints than did any other groups. Although the relationships were found in survey research with the operationalization of motivated-reasoning goals as individual characteristics, the relationships may be identified in an experimental setting when

¹ Lodge and Taber (2000) proposed a four-category typology of motivated reasoning by crossing the accuracy goals with need for cognition measure (strong vs. weak) and the directional goals with need to evaluate measure (strong vs. weak). Lodge and Taber (2000) labeled them as partisan reasoner (strong direction, weak accuracy goals), intuitive scientist (strong direction, strong accuracy), classical rationalist (weak direction, strong accuracy), and low motivation (weak direction, weak accuracy). The relative mix of accuracy and directional goals helps to explain different individual information-processing strategies.

accuracy and directional goals are manipulated. Therefore, this dissertation aims to understand how accuracy and directional goals in an experimental setting can affect individuals' argument generation, and how the goals can moderate the effects of issue public membership on argument generation.

To conclude, individuals seek information not only based on their intrinsic interest (i.e., issue public membership), but also affected by the two motives of information processing—accuracy and directional goals. While the two motivated-reasoning goals can promote different information acquisition and processing, the following hypotheses are proposed to examine the effects of the two goals on two different stages: issue-based selectivity (i.e., exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views) and deliberation (generating rationales for own and oppositional viewpoints). In other words, this dissertation points to a complex process in which both intrinsic interest and motivated-reasoning goals affect issue-based selectivity and deliberation.

Based on the discussion, accuracy goals motivate individuals to access not only pro-attitudinal but also counter-attitudinal information, while directional goals prompt individuals to seek supporting information and avoid disconfirming information. The main effects of accuracy goals and directional goals on exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views are hypothesized:

Hypothesis 7a: People with accuracy goals are *more* likely than those with no goals to expose themselves to attitude-consistent political views.

Hypothesis 7b: People with directional are *more* likely than those with no goals to expose themselves to attitude-consistent political views.

Hypothesis 8a: People with accuracy goals are *more* likely than those with no goals to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views.

Hypothesis 8b: People with directional goals are *less* likely than those with no goals to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views.

In addition to information seeking, accuracy goals and directional goals exert influence on individuals' argument generation. Accuracy goals were found to promote objective information processing (e.g., Lundgren & Prislin, 1998), and individuals with strong accuracy motivation and weak directional motivation (i.e., classical rationalists) appeared to list the largest number of rationales for oppositional viewpoints than did any other groups (Nir, 2011b). Following this line of reasoning, this dissertation proposes that accuracy goals can enhance the generation of not only rationales for one's own viewpoints, but also rationales for oppositional viewpoints. Further, given that directional goals enhance biased information processing and stimulate individuals to reach preferred conclusions (e.g., Kunda, 1990), this dissertation posits that individuals with directional goals will tend to generate rationales for their own viewpoints, but they will be less likely to generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints compared to those without goal manipulation.

Hypothesis 9a: People with accuracy goals are *more* likely than those with no goals to generate rationales for their own viewpoints.

Hypothesis 9b: People with directional are *more* likely than those with no goals to generate rationales for their own viewpoints.

Hypothesis 10a: People with accuracy goals are *more* likely than those with no goals to generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

Hypothesis 10b: People with directional goals are *less* likely than those with no goals to generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

After examining the main effect of accuracy and directional goals on information selectivity and argument generation, this dissertation attempts to understand how motivated-reasoning goals interact with issue public membership in influencing these two outcome variables of interest.

Research Question 5a: How do motivated-reasoning goals (i.e., accuracy goals and directional goals) moderate the effects of issue public membership on exposure to attitude-consistent political views?

Research Question 5b: How do motivated-reasoning goals (i.e., accuracy goals and directional goals) moderate the effects of issue public membership on exposure to attitude-consistent political views?

Research Question 6a: How do motivated-reasoning goals (i.e., accuracy goals and directional goals) moderate the effects of issue public membership on generating rationales for own viewpoints?

Research Question 6b: How do motivated-reasoning goals (i.e., accuracy goals and directional goals) moderate the effects of issue public membership on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints?

Chapter 3: Method

STUDY DESIGN

An experiment was carried out (a) to assess issue public members' attributes, (b) to test the effects of issue public membership on information selection and processing, and (c) to examine the moderating effect of motivated-reasoning goals in the relationship. Participants took part in the study in a natural online setting and were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions—(1) no-information search; (2) information search without goals; (3) information search with accuracy goals; and (4) information search with directional goals. The no-information-search group only completed pre- and post-surveys without any information search. In the information-search groups, participants completed the pre-survey, browsed a website, and then took the post-survey. Motivated-reasoning goals were manipulated before participants started their information search to understand whether motivated-reasoning goals affected information selection and processing.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants above the age of 18 were recruited from February 14 to March 4, 2013 from Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (MTurk).² MTurk is a crowd-sourcing system that allows requesters to post Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs) to a large number of people who complete tasks for monetary payment. Compared to other experimental pools, MTurk is less expensive in terms of the cost for recruitment and the time required for implementing studies (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Bohannon, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2011). Therefore, a growing number of studies across the social sciences have used MTurk for experimental subject recruitment (Antin & Shaw, 2012; Horton, Rand, &

² On MTurk, I set qualifications requirement to recruit participants, including participants are U.S. residents, and they completed more than one hundred tasks with an approval rate greater than or equal to 95 percent. Participants were paid a dollar and fifty cent as compensation.

Zeckhauser, 2011). Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling (2011) also suggested that the data obtained through MTurk are of high-quality and reliable. The data are also more representative of the U.S. population than convenience samples (Berinsky, et al., 2012). Since this study aims to understand participants' online information seeking, MTurk is a feasible platform to conduct the online experiment.

A total of 827 subjects completed the study without encountering any technical problems in browsing news website.³ Two hundred and seventeen participants were assigned to the no-information search condition, 224 participants were assigned to the information search without goals condition, 189 participants were assigned to the information search with accuracy goals condition, and 197 participants were assigned to the information search with directional goals condition. There were no statistically significant differences among the four conditions in terms of age, gender, race, political predisposition, education, and income. The computerized random assignment, therefore, appeared to be successful. Table 3.1 describes the general demographics of the participants, and a comparison with two other sources. MTurk participants were younger and more educated.

³ A total of 901 participants completed the study, and there were 74 participants who had a technical problem in viewing the news website correctly. Some participants messaged the researcher that they could not view the articles after the instruction for information search. Some of them directly commented in the open-ended questions in the post-survey saying that the web page did not display correctly. Some cases were detected by the researcher because of the missing web tracking records among individuals who were assigned to information search (no goals, accuracy goals, or directional goals). As a result, those cases were eliminated resulting in a total of 827 completed participation

Table 3.1: Demographic Profile of Study and Other Comparable Surveys

	MTurk Participants (N = 827)	Pew Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey Nov. 2010 (Unweighted)	U.S. Census Current Population Survey 2011
	(%)	(%)	(%)
<i>Age:</i>			
18-24	18.7	9.7	11.1
25-34	39.5	11.7	13.5
35-44	18.8	12.7	13.0
45-64	20.8	39.0	26.4
65 or more	2.2	26.9	12.8
<i>Gender:</i>			
Male	46.7	43.6	49.2
Female	53.3	56.4	50.8
<i>Race / Ethnicity:</i>			
White	79.0	72.2	64.5
Hispanic	5.4	9.7	16.3
Black or African- American	6.3	10.6	12.8
Asian	5.8	1.7	4.7
Native American	1.0	1.4	0.9
<i>Education:</i>			
High school or less	16.7	37.8	43.1
Some college	32.9	27.6	26.4
College degree	35.4	22.7	19.5
Graduate degree	15.0	11.8	10.9
<i>Household Income:</i>			
Less than \$49,999	56.8	56.2	46.3
\$50,000 to \$99,999	32.7	27.3	29.1
\$100,000 or more	10.5	16.5	20.3

PROCEDURE

Participants accessed the online survey-experiment through Qualtrics, a survey software system. The participation session consisted of pre-survey, random assignment to condition, post-survey, debriefing information, and compensation information.

The pre-survey first asked participants about their attitudes toward the issues and issue public membership (i.e., personal issue importance, personal issue relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability, and attitude centrality to the issues). After the pre-survey, Qualtrics randomly assigned participants to one of the four conditions. In the *information search with accuracy goal condition*, participants were instructed to read the news articles and find information that they thought would be helpful and useful for them to build an accurate and objective view of political issues in order to make a valid political decision. In addition, participants were instructed that after reading the news, they would be asked to answer some questions about the political issues and to objectively describe the issues. Participants in the *information search with directional goal condition* were asked to find information that they thought would be useful to build a strong and convincing justification for their position on political issues. They also were instructed that they would be asked to answer some questions about political issues and to defend their position on political issues (e.g., Y. M. Kim, 2007; Taber & Lodge, 2006b). Those assigned to the *information-search without goal condition* were directed to view the website without instructions, and those assigned to *no-search condition* did not view the website and were not given any instructions.

Participants in the three search conditions viewed a news website with twelve news articles listed on the home page, and they were able to select the articles that they wanted to read. They also were instructed that a four-minute minimum was required for the news browsing session. A real-time, click-by-click tracking method was used to

record participants' information search behaviors.⁴ Participants first were identified by their IP address and then each page that the participants accessed was recorded with a time stamp, so that the order, hit, and duration of page views could be tracked.

After four minutes, participants could click a "Proceed" button to take the post-survey, where participants were asked questions about their issue-specific knowledge, intentions to participate in issue-related political activities, arguments for their own and oppositional perspectives (i.e., argument repertoire) on the issues, general political knowledge, political predispositions, and demographic information. Once individuals completed the study, they were thanked and provided with debriefing and compensation information.

STIMULI

Several web pages were built to mimic a website on Qualtrics (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick, 2012; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Taber & Lodge, 2006b).⁵ The first web page is an issue overview page. Three different issues that have been discussed in previous election periods, including abortion, gun control, and the environment, were included.

These issues were chosen because they are controversial issues, so participants with differing views on both sides of the issues were available. The abortion issue has been a dominant subject of intense public and political discussion in the United States (Alvarez & Brehm, 2002; Friedman, 1983), and it has been studied in the issue public literature (Y. M. Kim, 2007, 2009). The gun control issue is another issue that has a history of disagreement in terms of both public policy and public opinion in the United

⁴ The tracking software was developed by Josh Rachner.

⁵ The web pages were built on the template designed and provided Ashley Muddiman and Dr. Natalie Stroud.

States (Bruce & Wilcox, 1998; Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998). It has been frequently studied in previous public opinion research (e.g., Singh, 1998), and in studies about information processing (e.g., Taber, et al., 2009).

This dissertation adopted the environment as the third issue. In particular, the environment as it relates to energy was chosen because discussions of the environment “can range from international to very local concerns and from rather abstract to very concrete concerns” (McCombs, 2004, p.80). This dissertation, therefore, narrowed the environment issue down to one related to energy. The main reason for choosing the environment as one of the issues in the experiment was because the environment, compared to the abortion and gun control issues, was less controversial, and was less obtrusive (McCombs, 2004).

According to the Pew Research Center (2012), Americans are evenly divided over whether it is more important to control gun ownership (49%) or to protect the right to own guns (42%). There are significant partisan differences over the issue. For example, seventy-two percent of Democrats say control gun ownership is more important, while 69 percent of Republicans say protecting gun rights is more important (Pew Research Center, 2012). Similar to the abortion issue, Americans are closely divided over whether abortion should be legal (in all or most cases; 53%) or illegal (in all or most cases; 41%) (Pew Research Center, 2012). There are also wide partisan differences over abortion. Sixty-five percent of Republicans oppose legal abortion, while 80 percent of Democrats support legal abortion (Pew Research Center, 2012).⁶ As for the environment issue, there are fewer divides among Americans and fewer partisan differences. More Americans say the priority for the energy supply should be developing renewable energy sources, such

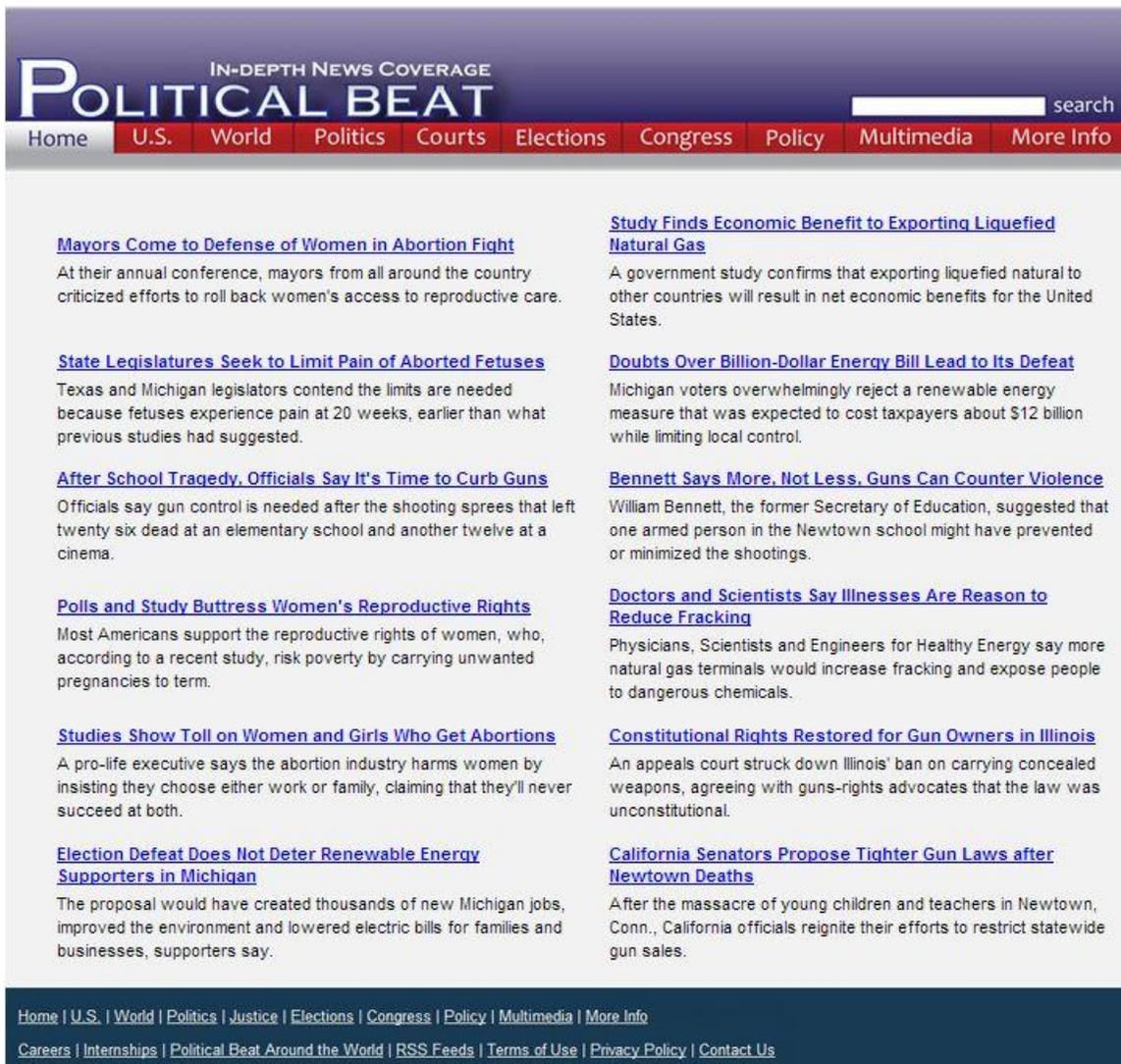
⁶ In the abortion issue, the Republicans refer to Conservative Republican, and the Democrats refer to the Liberal Democrats.

as wind, solar and hydrogen (54%), over increased production of oil, coal, and natural gas (34%) (Pew Research Center, 2013). Also, forty-five percent of Republicans and the same proportion of Democrats put priority on developing alternative energy sources (Pew Research Center, 2013). Indeed, the environment and energy has been categorized as an unobtrusive issue in agenda-setting research, which indicates that the environment and energy issue is less likely to obtrude into individuals' daily lives and people have less direct experience with the issue compared to other, obtrusive issues (McCombs, 2004). The environment issue, therefore, is considered less controversial and less obtrusive than the abortion and gun control issues in this dissertation. Through examining these three issues, this dissertation includes the possibility that issue attributes may affect the outcome variables of interest.

The issue overview page contained four articles featuring opposing perspectives (2 right-leaning and 2 left-leaning) on each of the three issues (Figure 3.1). Thus, the page had 12 articles in total. Only headlines and news leads were provided, and they were randomly displayed on the issue overview page. Participants had to click on the headline or the news lead to enter the article page and read the full content. The articles were drawn from online news websites and online publications of real issue-relevant interest groups. The articles were edited to have similar complexities, such as reading level, writing style, and sentence length.⁷

⁷ The articles were edited by Kathleen McElroy, a former editor in *New York Times*.

Figure 3.1: Screenshot of the Home Page



STIMULI TEXTS PRETEST

News headlines, leads, and articles were subjected to a pre-test in order to assure that the news headlines and leads had an unambiguous stance while being equally interesting for the pro and con versions of each issue. Questionnaires were given to 158 people over age 18 recruited from MTurk. Each of the respondents was asked to answer

questions about two issues, which were randomly assigned from the three issues. For each issue, two of four headlines with the corresponding leads, and articles were randomly included. Participants were asked to indicate if the news headlines and leads opposed or supported each target issue, and they also were asked to do the same for the articles. For example, “In your impression, is the portrayal of [issue] in the article strictly neutral, or does it take sides with supporters or opponents of [issue]?” The answer was a 7-point scale with 1 = “strongly opposing” and 7 = “strongly supporting.” Participants also rated their level of interest in the article on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = “not at all interesting” to 7 = “extremely interesting.” The headlines, leads, and articles with an unambiguous stance and a rated as similarly interesting were used for the website in the experiment.

The news headlines contained seven to ten words ($M = 9.08$, $SD = .90$), and the news leads ranged from 20 to 25 words in length ($M = 22.00$, $SD = 1.60$). The articles were edited to have a similar length, which ranged from 692 to 712 words ($M = 700.25$, $SD = 5.89$) (see Table 3.2 for headlines and full news leads). Tables 3.3 and 3.4 show the results from paired t -tests to examine whether the four news headlines and the four news leads were perceived as different in issue stance while being equally interesting for each of the three chosen topics. Table 3.5 reports similar results on the four news articles from paired t -tests. It demonstrates that the four news articles were perceived as having an unambiguous issue stance, and as equally interesting.

Table 3.2: Presented News Headlines and News Leads

Issue	“Left-Leaning” Headlines & Leads	“Right-Leaning” Headlines & Leads
Abortion	<p>Polls and Study Buttress Women's Reproductive Rights Most Americans support the reproductive rights of women, who, according to a recent study, risk poverty by carrying unwanted pregnancies to term (Abortion 1).</p>	<p>State Legislatures Seek to Limit Pain of Aborted Fetuses Texas and Michigan legislators contend the limits are needed because fetuses experience pain at 20 weeks, earlier than what previous studies had suggested (Abortion 3).</p>
	<p>Mayors Come to Defense of Women in Abortion Fight At their annual conference, mayors from all around the country criticized efforts to roll back women's access to reproductive care (Abortion 2).</p>	<p>Studies Show Toll on Women and Girls Who Get Abortions A pro-life executive says the abortion industry harms women by insisting they choose either work or family, claiming that they'll never succeed at both (Abortion 4).</p>
Gun Control	<p>After School Tragedy, Officials Say It's Time to Curb Guns Officials say gun control is needed after the shooting sprees that left twenty six dead at an elementary school and another twelve at a cinema (Gun Control 1).</p>	<p>Constitutional Rights Restored for Gun Owners in Illinois An appeals court struck down Illinois' ban on carrying concealed weapons, agreeing with guns-rights advocates that the law was unconstitutional (Gun Control 3).</p>
	<p>California Senators Propose Tighter Gun Laws after Newtown Deaths After the massacre of young children and teachers in Newtown, Conn., California officials reignite their efforts to restrict statewide gun sales (Gun Control 2).</p>	<p>Bennett Says More, Not Less, Guns Can Counter Violence William Bennett, the former Secretary of Education, suggested that one armed person in the Newtown school might have prevented or minimized the shootings (Gun Control 4).</p>
Environment	<p>Election Defeat Does Not Deter Renewable Energy Supporters in Michigan The proposal would have created thousands of new Michigan jobs, improved the environment and lowered electric bills for families and businesses, supporters say (Environment 1).</p>	<p>Doubts Over Billion-Dollar Energy Bill Lead to Its Defeat Michigan voters overwhelmingly reject a renewable energy measure that was expected to cost taxpayers about \$12 billion while limiting local control (Environment 3).</p>
	<p>Doctors and Scientists Say Illnesses Are Reason to Reduce Fracking Physicians, Scientists and Engineers for Healthy Energy say more natural gas terminals would increase fracking and expose people to dangerous chemicals (Environment 2).</p>	<p>Study Finds Economic Benefit to Exporting Liquefied Natural Gas A government study confirms that exporting liquefied natural to other countries will result in net economic benefits for the United States (Environment 4).</p>

Table 3.3: Pretest Results on Perceptions of Presented News Headlines

News Headlines	Perceived Issue Support			Interest		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> Test	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> Test
Abortion						
1 vs. 3	4.65	1.80	4.93 (16)***	5.18	1.13	.00 (16)
	2.29	.85		5.18	1.29	
1 vs. 4	5.38	1.09	5.67 (20)**	4.43	1.91	.36 (20)
	2.57	1.28		4.29	1.98	
2 vs. 3	5.67	1.15	5.96 (20)***	4.29	1.79	-1.54 (20)
	2.81	1.47		4.95	1.66	
2 vs. 4	4.80	1.42	3.24 (14)**	4.47	1.81	-.59 (14)
	2.80	1.94		4.73	1.75	
1 vs. 2	4.37	1.80	-.19 (18)	4.11	1.66	1.57 (18)
	4.47	1.74		4.68	1.57	
3 vs. 4	2.50	1.55	-.38 (15)	4.75	1.61	1.07 (15)
	2.69	1.70		4.38	1.74	
Gun Control						
1 vs. 3	5.94	1.06	6.97 (17)***	4.56	1.82	-.41 (17)
	2.56	1.25		4.72	1.49	
1 vs. 4	5.88	1.15	6.59 (15)***	4.69	1.35	-.57 (15)
	2.06	1.29		4.94	1.61	
2 vs. 3	4.87	.99	4.10 (14)**	5.00	1.69	-.38 (14)
	2.87	1.30		5.13	1.13	
2 vs. 4	5.24	1.30	4.35 (16)***	4.41	1.77	.34 (16)
	3.18	1.19		4.29	1.65	
1 vs. 2	5.21	1.40	-.17 (18)	4.47	1.31	-.19 (18)
	5.26	1.10		4.53	1.54	
3 vs. 4	3.60	1.23	1.31 (19)	5.25	1.21	.53 (19)
	3.05	1.70		5.05	1.57	
Environment						
1 vs. 3	5.00	1.03	3.29 (17)**	4.28	1.84	-.16 (17)
	3.83	.79		4.33	1.88	
1 vs. 4	4.78	1.35	3.09 (17)**	4.39	2.15	.50 (17)
	3.00	1.28		4.11	2.06	
2 vs. 3	4.69	1.66	2.39 (15)*	4.50	2.00	-.54 (15)
	3.69	.94		4.88	1.54	
2 vs. 4	5.06	1.24	4.32 (15)**	4.69	1.74	.63 (15)
	2.81	1.22		4.38	1.86	
1 vs. 2	4.35	.93	-.82 (16)	4.12	1.32	-.72 (16)
	4.53	.94		4.35	1.27	
3 vs. 4	3.74	1.15	1.48 (18)	4.47	.91	.40 (18)
	3.16	.96		4.37	1.17	

Note: *** t-values indicate that means different at $p < .001$; ** t-values indicate that means different at $p < .01$; * t-values indicate that means different at $p < .05$.

Table 3.4: Pretest Results on Perceptions of Presented News Leads

News Leads	Perceived Issue Support			Interest		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> Test	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> Test
Abortion						
1 vs. 3	4.71	1.53	5.74 (16)***	5.06	1.35	-.85 (16)
	2.14	.87		5.29	.99	
1 vs. 4	5.24	1.51	5.66 (20)***	4.62	1.83	1.21 (20)
	2.24	1.34		4.19	1.78	
2 vs. 3	5.38	1.56	4.66 (20)***	4.62	1.77	-1.30 (20)
	2.86	1.49		4.90	1.41	
2 vs. 4	4.53	1.46	2.83 (14)*	4.27	1.83	-1.00 (14)
	2.80	1.86		4.73	1.71	
1 vs. 2	4.42	1.61	-.37 (18)	4.42	1.61	.44 (18)
	4.63	1.50		4.26	1.33	
3 vs. 4	2.50	1.46	.00 (15)	5.00	1.32	1.60 (15)
	2.50	1.16		4.56	1.09	
Gun Control						
1 vs. 3	5.94	.94	7.21 (17)***	4.56	1.54	-1.73 (17)
	2.72	1.36		5.17	.86	
1 vs. 4	5.88	1.20	6.70 (15)***	4.88	1.20	.00 (15)
	1.94	1.24		4.88	1.54	
2 vs. 3	4.93	.96	5.28 (14)***	4.93	1.49	-.24 (14)
	2.73	1.03		5.00	1.00	
2 vs. 4	4.88	1.36	2.69 (16)*	4.35	1.66	.19 (16)
	3.18	1.43		4.29	1.31	
1 vs. 2	5.16	1.50	-.17 (18)	4.58	1.54	-.48 (18)
	5.21	1.34		4.74	1.49	
3 vs. 4	3.90	1.29	1.57 (19)	5.25	1.12	.89 (19)
	3.35	1.50		5.05	1.64	
Environment						
1 vs. 3	5.22	1.11	4.12 (17)**	4.83	1.69	.66 (17)
	3.50	1.04		4.50	2.04	
1 vs. 4	4.72	1.18	3.88 (17)**	4.06	1.89	-.93 (17)
	2.89	1.08		4.56	1.95	
2 vs. 3	4.44	1.50	2.33 (15)*	5.00	1.86	-.47 (15)
	3.31	.95		5.25	1.18	
2 vs. 4	5.31	1.01	4.70 (15)***	4.75	1.73	.12 (15)
	3.06	1.12		4.69	1.92	
1 vs. 2	4.35	.93	-.68 (16)	4.71	1.26	.19 (16)
	4.52	1.01		4.65	1.32	
3 vs. 4	3.53	.77	1.68 (19)	4.58	1.02	.00 (18)
	3.21	.85		4.58	1.22	

Note: *** t-values indicate that means different at $p < .001$; ** t-values indicate that means different at $p < .01$; * t-values indicate that means different at $p < .05$.

Table 3.5: Pretest Results on Perceptions of Presented News Articles

News Articles	Perceived Issue Support			Interest		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> Test	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> Test
Abortion						
1 vs. 3	4.35	1.54	2.67 (16)*	5.18	1.59	-.47 (16)
	2.94	1.39		5.35	1.58	
1 vs. 4	5.14	1.59	6.62 (20)***	5.00	1.73	.67 (20)
	2.00	1.00		4.71	1.74	
2 vs. 3	5.52	1.54	5.50 (20)***	4.57	1.78	-1.36 (20)
	2.81	1.57		5.05	1.69	
2 vs. 4	5.20	1.86	6.17 (14)***	4.40	2.13	-.89 (14)
	1.87	1.13		4.87	1.85	
1 vs. 2	4.89	1.91	-.62 (18)	5.11	1.37	.74 (18)
	5.21	2.04		4.84	1.68	
3 vs. 4	2.19	1.47	-.93 (15)	4.38	1.86	.00 (15)
	2.69	1.89		4.38	1.75	
Gun Control						
1 vs. 3	5.72	1.18	5.15 (17)***	4.83	1.79	-1.07 (17)
	3.06	1.66		5.22	1.11	
1 vs. 4	6.00	1.32	6.62 (15)***	4.94	1.34	.21 (15)
	2.06	1.29		4.81	2.20	
2 vs. 3	5.00	1.00	5.82 (14)***	5.13	1.13	.81 (14)
	2.53	1.06		5.00	1.31	
2 vs. 4	5.06	1.52	4.15(16)**	4.88	1.45	.00 (16)
	2.59	1.77		4.88	1.54	
1 vs. 2	5.53	1.12	1.72 (18)	5.21	1.55	1.38 (18)
	4.95	1.27		4.84	1.61	
3 vs. 4	3.40	1.60	1.25 (19)	5.30	1.42	-1.13 (19)
	2.90	1.77		5.65	1.42	
Environment						
1 vs. 3	5.17	1.10	3.17 (17)**	4.44	2.28	1.16 (17)
	3.83	1.15		3.89	2.11	
1 vs. 4	5.28	1.36	5.61 (17)***	3.89	2.17	-.17 (17)
	2.50	1.10		3.94	1.86	
2 vs. 3	5.19	1.33	3.99 (15)**	5.31	1.66	-.11 (15)
	3.56	1.03		5.38	1.86	
2 vs. 4	5.50	1.32	5.29 (15)***	4.56	2.10	-.45 (15)
	2.38	1.15		4.81	2.14	
1 vs. 2	5.18	.88	1.24 (16)	4.71	1.31	.84 (16)
	4.82	1.13		4.41	1.66	
3 vs. 4	3.42	1.12	1.82 (18)	4.37	1.21	1.17 (18)
	2.89	.74		3.84	1.61	

Note: *** t-values indicate that means different at $p < .001$; ** t-values indicate that means different at $p < .01$; * t-values indicate that means different at $p < .05$.

MEASURES

Pre-survey questionnaire

Personal issue importance

Participants were asked to indicate how important each issue was to them personally for the three issues considered here (Holbrook, et al., 2005; Y. M. Kim, 2009) with response options ranging from 1 = “not at all important” to 7 = “extremely important” (Abortion: $M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.96$; Gun control: $M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.63$; Environment: $M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.53$).

Personal issue relevance

Participants were asked to indicate how relevant each issue was to them personally with response options ranging from 1 = “not at all relevant” to 7 = “extremely relevant.” They also were asked to what extent they expect the issue to have significant consequences for their lives. The answer categories ranged from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree” (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Another two 7-point semantic-differential items were included to ask whether participants say that the issue “does not matter to me/ matters to me,” and is “of no concern to me/of concern to me” (Bouza, 2004; Evatt & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs, 1999). The four items were combined and averaged to represent a measure of personal issue relevance (Abortion: $\alpha = .89$, $M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.66$; Gun control: $\alpha = .91$, $M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.50$; Environment = $\alpha = .94$, $M = 5.49$, $SD = 1.40$).

Attitude intensity

Participants were asked to indicate from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree” how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement for each of the three issues: “I have strong feelings about the [abortion/gun control/environment] issue” (Abortion: $M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.64$; Gun control: $M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.53$; Environment: $M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.50$) (e.g., Wojcieszak, 2012).

Attitude stability

Attitude stability was measured by asking participants to indicate whether they were confident that their opinion on the issue will not change for each of the three issues (e.g., Wojcieszak, 2012). The response options ranged from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree” (Abortion: $M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.23$; Gun control: $M = 5.49$, $SD = 1.35$; Environment: $M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.36$).

Attitude centrality

To measure attitude centrality, participants were asked for each of the three issues “Compared to the way I feel about other issues, I think this issue is more important than others” (e.g., Visser, et al., 2003). The answer responses range from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree” (Abortion: $M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.80$; Gun control: $M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.64$; Environment: $M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.67$).

Attitude toward the issue (Issue position)

For each of the issues, participants were asked four items about their attitudes toward the issue to locate their position on the issue. For the abortion issue, participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: “Abortion is immoral and should be prohibited by law,” “Abortion has negative consequences, so they should be strongly discouraged whenever possible,” “Abortion

must always be protected by federal law so that women always have the right to have one,” and “Abortion should be legal so that when one is necessary, it can be performed in a proper and safe man.” The response options ranged from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree” (Visser, et al., 2003). The third and the fourth items with a prochoice position as a 7 were reverse coded. Similar to Taber and Lodge’s (2006) measure of attitude position,⁸ the four items were averaged to form an index of attitudes toward abortion first. Then, the measure of participants’ issue position was derived from the index of attitude toward the abortion issue, with responses above 4 suggesting a prolife position, and below 4 indicating a prochoice position ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.99$). Responses with 4, which suggests a neutral position on the issue were excluded from the data analysis related to exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives. To make sure the measure is correctly identifying participants’ issue position, the measure was confirmed with participants’ argument repertoire (e.g., rationales for one’s own viewpoints and rationales for oppositional viewpoints). Through generating rationales for one’s own viewpoints and oppositional viewpoints, participants stated which position they support and oppose. When the measure did not identify participants’ issue position in the same way as how they responded to the argument repertoire, the dissertation used participants’ response to argument repertoire as the priority to identify their issue position. Fifty-one cases, therefore, were adjusted.

For the gun control issue, the questions were “Increased gun ownership leads to more gun crime and unintended gun injuries,” “Concealed handguns are not an effective form of self-defense,” “Criminals carry concealed weapons regardless of their legality. Responsible citizens should have the same advantages when it comes to protecting

⁸ Taber and Lodge (2006) used six items to measure attitude position for gun control and affirmative action. The six items were combined and rescaled to [0,1] with responses below 0.5 indicating “con” and above 0.5 indicating “pro” for the issues.

themselves from armed attackers,” and “It is people’s right to keep and bear arms.” (Taber & Lodge, 2006b). The third and the fourth items with a position of supporting gun rights as a 7 were reverse coded. The four items were averaged to form an index of attitudes toward gun control ($\alpha = .79$, $M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.78$). A response above 4 is a position of supporting gun control, and a response below 4 suggests a position of supporting gun right. Again, the position was confirmed with participants’ argument repertoire, and seven-two cases were adjusted.

For the environment issue, participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: “I support tax incentives for alternative/green technology,” “It is important to strengthen emission controls on all gasoline or diesel-powered engines,” “It is important to protect the environment even if it costs loss of jobs or reduces our standard of living,” and “I do NOT support the exporting of liquid natural gas because it will cause environmental contamination.” (Y. M. Kim, 2005). Attitudes toward the environment were constructed by averaging the four items ($\alpha = .73$, $M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.31$). Similarly, responses above 4 suggest that respondents are proponents of environmental protection and those below 4 indicate that respondents are opponents of environmental protection. Again, the position was confirmed with participants’ responses to argument repertoire. If inconsistency emerged, participants’ argument repertoire was given priority to identify respondents’ issue positions, and twenty-nine cases were adjusted.

Post-survey questionnaire

Issue-specific knowledge

Issue-specific knowledge was measured by creating factual knowledge items pertaining to each of the three issues. The factual knowledge index for each of the three

issues was constructed by adding the number of correct responses to five questions for each of the three issues. In the five questions, four of them are related to information in the articles (see Appendix for the question wording). For each correct answer, participants received 1 point, with the number of correct answers summed up to construct the variable of issue-specific knowledge for each of the three issues (Abortion: $\alpha = .46$, $M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.23$; Gun control: $\alpha = .41$, $M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.17$; Environment: $\alpha = .49$, $M = 1.84$, $SD = 1.31$). Although issue-specific knowledge has low Cronbach's alphas, as in previous literature, the primary purpose of the knowledge items was not the development of unidimensional scale (Y. M. Kim, 2009). Based on this study's aim of understanding how individuals' exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives on the specific issues affects their issue-specific knowledge, the five items for each issue were constructed based on the following criteria rather than relying on inter-item reliability (Y. M. Kim, 2009). First, the percentage of people answering correctly was not too high or too low. Each item's correct proportion was checked to make sure there were different levels of difficulty in the issue-specific knowledge questions, but that the questions were not too easy or too hard to answer. Second, items were correlated with general political knowledge. According to Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), people with basic knowledge also tend to know other facts across different topics. Therefore, issue-specific knowledge should be to some extent linked to general political knowledge. Last, each item has a significant correlation with the other four items to form a well-structured measure of issue-specific knowledge. Details of the item performance are reported in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Issue-Specific Knowledge Item Performance Analysis

	Item	Correct Proportion	Correlation with General Political Knowledge	Item Total Correlation (Total without the item included)
Abortion	1	.28	.08*	.30***
	2	.83	.39***	.16***
	3	.43	.32***	.33***
	4	.50	.14***	.28***
	5	.15	.08*	.50***
Gun Control	1	.62	.18***	.19***
	2	.14	.11**	.15***
	3	.22	.19***	.16***
	4	.59	.18***	.21***
	5	.34	.11**	.14***
Environment	1	.25	.16***	.31***
	2	.44	.41***	.24***
	3	.54	.17***	.37***
	4	.13	.13**	.21***
	5	.48	.11***	.21***

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Intentions to participate in issue-related political activities offline

For each of the three issues, participants were asked if they planned to engage in any of the following activities: “Call or send a letter to an elected public official to express your views,” “Post a political sign, banner, button, or bumper sticker,” “Participate in any demonstrations, protests, or marches,” “Vote in a local or in a statewide election,” “Write a letter to a news organization or an editor to express your views,” “Talk to anyone and try to convince him or her why he or her should vote for or against a political candidate,” “Donate money to an organization,” “Try to get another person to sign a petition,” and “Take part in public discussions or hearing.” Response options ranging from 1 = “*very unlikely*” to 7= “*very likely*” were used for each item (Abortion: $\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.59$; Gun control: $\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.53$; Environment: $\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.58$) (Jung, et al., 2011; Price, et al., 2006) .

Intentions to participate in issue-related political activities online

For each of the three issues, participants were asked to indicate how likely they would be to engage in each of the following activities when using the Internet: “Sign a petition online,” “Organize an internet-based protest or boycott,” “Participate in an internet-based protest,” “Write about politics or societal issues on my own blog or website,” “Produce or put up videos with an important political message,” “Link to a video clip with a political message,” “Create a group on Facebook (or similar) for the issue,” “Try to persuade others to vote for a specific candidate,” and “Write an email to a news organization.” Response options ranged from 1 = “*very unlikely*” to = “*very likely*” (Abortion: $\alpha = .94$, $M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.65$; Gun control: $\alpha = .94$, $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.57$; Environment: $\alpha = .94$, $M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.59$) (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Valenzuela, Kim, & Zúñiga, 2011).⁹

Argument Repertoire

For each of the three issues, participants were asked to answer two open-ended argument repertoire questions. The first open-ended question constructs *rationales for one’s own viewpoints*. Participants were asked to list arguments why they were favorable toward their own position on the issue and unfavorable toward the opposite position on the issue. For example, if a participant was pro-choice, the participant was asked to provide arguments about why the participant supports a pro-choice perspective and opposes a pro-life view. The second open-ended question establishes *rationales for oppositional viewpoints*. Participants were asked to generate arguments that they thought an opponent would provide to support the oppositional position to oppose the

⁹ Correlation between intentions to participate in abortion-related activities offline and online is .88 ($p < .001$), between intentions to participate in environment-related activities offline and online is .88 ($p < .001$), and between intentions to participate in gun control-related activities offline and online is .86 ($p < .001$).

participant's position (Cappella, et al., 2002). For example, participants supporting a pro-choice perspective were asked to provide arguments about how pro-life people would argue against pro-choice position and support their own pro-life position.

Responses were coded such that 0 was assigned to an answer that was irrelevant, did not make sense, or only restated an opinion, and a 1 was given for every substantive argument. If the participant left the question blank, the answer was coded as missing (-99). For the abortion issue, the number of reasons for one's own position ranged from 0 to 10, with 2.3 percent of the participants giving no arguments, and 80.9 percent of them giving 2 to 5 arguments ($Mdn = 3$, $M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.51$, $N = 823$). The number of reasons for others' oppositional viewpoints ranged from 0 to 10, with 6.6 percent of the participants giving no reasons, and 75.1 percent of them giving 1 to 3 reasons ($Mdn = 2$, $M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.41$, $N = 823$). For the gun control issue, the number of rationales for one's own viewpoints ranged from 0 to 8, with 1.8 percent of the participants providing no arguments, and 84.2 percent of them offering 2 to 5 arguments ($Mdn = 3$, $M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.46$, $N = 821$). The number of rationales for oppositional viewpoints also ranged from 0 to 7, with 7.8 percent of the participants giving no reasons and 85.5 percent of participants listing 1 to 4 arguments ($Mdn = 2$, $M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.38$, $N = 821$). For the environment issue, the number of rationales for one's own viewpoints ranged from 0 to 15 ($Mdn = 3$, $M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.72$, $N = 820$), and the number of rationales for the oppositional viewpoints ranged from 0 to 11 ($Mdn = 3$, $M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.56$, $N = 820$). Three point three percent of the participants did not provide rationales for their own position, and 8.2 percent of the participants did not generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints. Seventy-eight point nine percent of the participants gave 2 to 5 reasons for one's own viewpoints, and 80 percent of them generated 1 to 4 rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

To assess intercoder reliability, Cohen's kappa was computed for a sample of 50 open-ended responses coded by two coders. The Cohen's kappa value was .76, which reached a satisfactory level of intercoder reliability (greater than .70) (Cohen, 1960).

Control variables

The following variables were included as control variables to avoid the potential confounding effects of general political knowledge, political predispositions, news media use, and demographics when analyzing the relationship between issue publics and individuals' information search and processing.

General political knowledge

To measure general political knowledge, Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996) index of five items about civics and public affairs knowledge (e.g., veto override percent, party control of House, judicial review, party ideological location, and identifying the vice president) was adopted ($\alpha = .64$, $M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.31$).

Political ideology/Partisanship

Participants were asked to rate their political ideology using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = "very liberal" to 7 = "very conservative." The scale is recoded that -3 = "very liberal" to 3 = "very conservative," and zero represents a moderate political ideology ($M = -.67$, $SD = 1.66$).

For partisanship, participants were first asked to indicate their party identification (Democrats: 48.5%; Republican: 17.4%; Independent: 34.1%). A follow-up question asked whether the partisans identified strongly or weakly with their party. For Republicans, the response ranged from 1 = "not a very strong Republican" to 7 = "a strong Republican" (Democrats: $M = 4.83$, $SD = 1.87$). For Democrats, the response were 1 "not a very strong Democrats" to 7 = "a strong Democrats" (Republican: $M = 4.99$, SD

= 1.63). For those who did not identify with a party, the follow-up question asked if they leaned toward one of the two parties. Response options ranged from 1 = “*leaning toward Democratic Party*” to 7 = “*leaning toward Republican Party*” with 4 = no leaning toward Democratic or Republican parties ($M = 4.47, SD = 1.21$).

A partisanship measure was created by combining items asking respondents their partisanship, strength of partisanship, and partisan leanings (for those who responded moderate in their party identification). First the partisan leanings for the Independents were recoded to -1 (leaning toward Democratic Party) to 1 (leaning toward Republican Party; (zero indicates no leaning toward either Democratic or Republican Party). Republicans’ strength of partisanship was recoded that 2 = “not very a strong Republican” and 3 = “a very strong Republican.” For Democrats, their strength of partisanship was also recoded that -2 = “not a very strong Democrats” and -3 = “a very strong Democrats.” Second, the recoded scores were combined to form a measure of political leaning from -3 to 3 with smaller values indicating stronger Democratic leanings and a larger value indicating stronger Republican leanings.

Political ideology and partisanship were significantly correlated ($r = .80, p < .001$). Therefore, they were combined and averaged to form a single political ideology/partisanship measure ($Range = -3$ to $3, M = -0.77, SD = 1.74$).

Political interest

Participants were asked to rate how interested they were in information about what is going on in politics and public affairs. The response ranged from 1 = “*none*” to 7 = “*a great deal*” ($M = 5.04, SD = 1.55$).

News media use

News media use was obtained by measures of television news viewing, newspaper reading, online news reading, and radio listening. Television news viewing had three items, including national network news (e.g., ABC, CBS, NBC and PBS), cable news (e.g., CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC), and local television news exposure. Newspaper reading included reading national newspapers in print and local newspapers in print. Online news reading was measured using two items: reading national newspapers online and local newspapers online. Political radio talk shows (e.g., Rush Limbaugh) and radio news programs (e.g., NPR) were included as well. The response options were 1 = “never,” 2 = “less often,” 3 = “once every few weeks,” 4 = “1 to 2 days per week,” 5 = “3 to 4 days per week,” 6 = “5 to 6 days per week,” and 7 = “every day.” Total news media use was created by averaging these nine items ($\alpha = .77$, $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.07$).

Demographics

A variety of demographic variables were included for control purposes. Participants were asked about their age ($M = 35.47$, $SD = 12.24$), gender (Male = 46.7%, Female = 53.3%), and race/ethnicity (White = 79%). In addition, they were asked about their highest level of formal education attained, which ranged from 1, indicating “less than high school”, to 7, indicating “doctoral degree” ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.20$, $Mdn =$ college degree). Income was measured with 9 categories, with 1 indicating “under \$10,000” and 9 indicating “over \$150,000” ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 2.20$, $Mdn =$ \$40,000 to under \$50,000) (see Table 3.1 for the comparison of the demographic profile between the current study and other comparable surveys).

THE PROPOSED MEASUREMENT OF ISSUE PUBLICS AND THE PREVIOUS MEASUREMENT OF ISSUE PUBLICS

The first goal of this dissertation is to clarify the definition of issue publics and reassess issue public membership using a refined measurement. The proposed new measurement of issue publics was examined by factor analyzing the proposed attributes of issue publics, including personal issue importance, personal issue relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability, and attitude centrality (RQ1a). Those attributes forming a single factor were combined and averaged to form a measure of issue public membership for each of the three issues. In order to distinguish issue public members from nonmembers, for each of the three issues, the mean scores of the measures were used to identify issue public members. Those who rated higher than the mean scores were included as members of an issue public.

To understand how the proposed issue public measure performs compared to earlier measures (RQ1b), correlations were computed to examine the relationships between each of the issue public measures and numerous outcome variables for each of the three issues. The issue publics measures tested include: the new measure proposed in this dissertation (as a scale and as a dichotomy), the single item of personal issue importance (as a scale and as a dichotomy), opinionation, and demographic background characteristics. For the demographic background characteristics, female (53.3% of the participants) was used for the abortion issue, gun ownership (Yes = 19.3%; No = 80.7%) was used for the gun control issue, and location was used for environment issue (16% of the participants live in the states which were mentioned in the environment articles, including Michigan, Louisiana, and Florida, such as articles about Michigan proposal, and LNG export).

The comparison of the results among different indicators of issue public membership can help to solve the long-pending controversy of identifying members and can assist with clarifying the mixed results found in previous research on issue publics.

WEB SELECTIVITY

Participants' selection of news articles were tracked in seconds by logging every link upon which they clicked. The news article selections were therefore operationalized in two ways: article selection and article reading time in seconds (Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009).

On average, participants click on 3.06 articles ($SD = 2.40$), with a range from 1 to 12. The average total article reading time was 299 seconds, with a range from 13 to 1,659 seconds ($SD = 175.15$).

For hypothesis testing, two key variables were exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views. For each article associated with each of the three issues, attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal articles were coded based on participants' issue position. The following measures were generated for each article: (1) selection of attitude-consistent article, (2) selection of counter-attitudinal article, (3) reading time in seconds of attitudinal-consistent article, and (4) reading time in seconds of counter-attitudinal article. Each issue has four articles featuring two pro and two con perspectives. The measures for the two pro-perspective articles were combined to form the measure of total number of attitude-consistent articles selected and total time spent reading attitude-consistent articles for each of the issues. The same procedure was used for the two articles with con perspectives. Measures of the total number of counter-attitudinal articles selected and the total time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles were created for each issue.

On average, participants selected 1.58 attitude-consistent articles to read ($SD = 1.32$, $min = 0$, $max = 6$), and spent 165.14 seconds on reading attitude-consistent articles ($SD = 141.33$, $min = 0$, $max = 978$). In terms of the selection of counter-attitudinal articles, participants clicked on an average of 1.28 counter-attitudinal articles ($SD = 1.36$, $min = 0$, $max = 6$), and spent an average total reading time of 118.20 seconds with counter-attitudinal articles ($SD = 129.48$, $min = 0$, $max = 913$).

Chapter 4: Issue Publics, Information Selectivity, and Political Consequences

INTRODUCTION

The concept of issue publics provides an optimistic perspective that bridges the gap between democratic theories that emphasize the need for informed, deliberative, and active citizens (e.g., Barber, 1984; Dahl, 1999; Dryzek, 2000; Fishkin, 1991), and empirical studies showing that the majority of American citizens are apathetic about politics, lack crystalized attitudes, and are not politically sophisticated (e.g., Berelson, 1952; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Erskine, 1963; Neuman, 1986). Literature, however, has inconsistently operationalized issue publics, and shows mix results regarding the effects of issue public membership on political knowledge and participation (Y. M. Kim, 2009; Krosnick & Telhami, 1995; Price, et al., 2006; Price & Zaller, 1993; Sides & Karch, 2008). This confounds our understanding of to what extent issue publics can contribute to democratic society. To clarify the operationalization of issue publics and have a better understanding of the role of issue publics in democracy, attributes of issue public members were analyzed to develop a new measurement of issue public membership.

After identifying issue public members, the effects of issue public membership on information selectivity, issue-specific knowledge, opinion quality, and intentions to participate in issue-relevant political activities were examined. How information selectivity mediates the relationship of issue public membership with issue-specific knowledge and opinion quality were investigated as well. For the information selectivity and opinion quality, in addition to the straightforward measures of information selectivity (i.e., exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views), and opinion quality (i.e., generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints), this

dissertation also considered the *discrepancy* between pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal information selection and argument generation. This offers further understanding of how issue public membership affects the relative balance of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views, and generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints.

Lastly, the integrated model with all the hypothesized relationships included was analyzed for each of the issues to provide an overall understanding of issue publics' contribution to deliberative and participatory democracy.

IDENTIFYING ISSUE PUBLIC MEMBERS

To test if the previously-defined attributes of issue public members form a single measure (RQ1a), the eight items assessing issue public attributes were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis with the extraction method of generalized least squares and direct oblimin rotation for each of the three issues (Table 4.1).¹⁰ For the abortion issue, factor analysis yielded a one-factor structure that explained 60.34 percent of variance (Eigenvalue = 4.83). In addition to the unidimensional structure, these items also form a reliable index ($\alpha = .92$). The factor analysis also showed a one-factor structure with Eigenvalue equal 5.45 and 64.11 percent variance explained for the gun control issue. Reliability diagnostics found that attributes of the gun control issue form a reliable index ($\alpha = .94$). Similarly, the attributes of the environment issue public form a unidimensional construct. The one-factor structure explained 68.82 percent of variance (Eigenvalue =

¹⁰ Oblique rotation was chosen because it allows factors to be correlated with one another, while orthogonal rotation (e.g., varimax) treats the factors as uncorrelated. Since attributes of issue public members are assumed to be correlated, oblique rotation should be more appropriate than orthogonal rotation. In addition, direct oblimin rotation is the most popular among oblique rotation methods producing factors with an assumption of correlation among them (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). Factor analysis using varimax rotation yielded identical structure for the three issues.

5.77). A reliable index of issue public attributes in the environment issue also emerged ($\alpha = .94$).

Answering the first research question (RQ1a), factor analyses across three different issues indicate that personal issue importance, personal issue relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability, and attitude centrality represent one overarching construct.

Table 4.1: Attributes of Issue Public Members: A Factor Analysis

	Abortion	Gun Control	Environment
Personal issue importance	.87	.85	.91
Personal issue relevance			
1. Relevance	.74	.79	.89
2. Significant consequences	.61	.73	.80
3. Matters to me	.95	.95	.96
4. Of concern to me	.93	.94	.96
Attitude intensity	.84	.85	.86
Attitude stability	.51	.53	.56
Attitude centrality	.71	.67	.59
Eigenvalue	4.83	5.45	5.77
Variance explained	60.34%	64.11%	68.82%
Cronbach's alpha	.92	.94	.94

Note: Cell entries are factor loadings from the factor matrix. No rotated factor matrixes emerged (e.g., pattern matrix, and structure matrix) because the solution cannot be rotated when only one factor was extracted.

INDICATORS OF ISSUE PUBLICS

As previously discussed, the notion of issue publics suggests that issue public members pay attention to the issue about which they care, and accumulate knowledge on the issue, but they do not necessarily do the same for other issues. Thus, issue public members theoretically are distinct from citizens in an attentive public who are interested in a wide range of issues and who are politically well-informed. In light of the distinction between issue publics and the attentive public, the new measure of issue publics should be distinguished from measures of attentive publics. Therefore, discriminant validity tests

were used to examine whether measures of constructs that are assumed to be unrelated (i.e., the new measure of issue publics and measures of attentive publics) are, in fact, not related to each other (John & Benet-Martinez, 2000).

As education and general political knowledge have been used to identify attentive public members who are interested in a wide range of issues, and who are politically well-informed (Krosnick, 1990; Price & Zaller, 1993), the relationships between education, general political knowledge, and the new measure of issue publics were examined. The results shown in Table 4.2 indicate that the new measure of issue public membership for the abortion, gun control, and environment issues was not significantly related to education or general political knowledge. The insignificant correlations confirm the distinction between issue publics and attentive publics.

In addition to the relationship between issue publics, education, and general political knowledge, issue public members who are interested in particular issues may not be interested in general politics (Krosnick, 1990). The correlation between the new measure of issue public membership and political interest was examined as well (Y. M. Kim, 2009). Results in Table 4.2 indicate that the new measure of issue publics was significantly correlated with political interest (Abortion: $r = .17, p < .001$; Environment: $r = .19, p < .001$; Gun control: $r = .24, p < .001$), but had a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Individuals who had greater involvement in the abortion issue, the environment issue, or the gun control issue tended to be more interested in politics in general, but the relationship was modest.

Table 4.2: Correlations between the New Measure of Issue Public Membership and the Indicators of Attentive Public Membership

	Abortion	Environment	Gun Control
Education	-.03	.008	-.05
General political knowledge	.02	-.02	-.03
Political interest	.17***	.19***	.24***

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, income, race, political ideology/partisanship, news media use, and the manipulation of information search. Bivariate correlations yielded same result. $N = 807$, listwise for missing cases. *** $p < .001$.

In each issue public, there are two distinct groups of individuals: members and nonmembers based on the concept of issue publics. To identify issue public members and to differentiate them from nonmembers, I also dichotomize the new continuous measure of issue public membership by following the technique used in Kim's (2009) study (using mean score), and I examine the relationships with the indicators of attentive public membership. The results were similar when individuals were divided into issue public members and nonmembers based on the mean score of the new measure of issue public as a scale. Based on this categorization, 439 participants were members of the abortion issue public, and 388 participants were nonmembers. For the gun control issue, there were 425 members and 402 nonmembers. Four hundred and sixty three participants were members of the environment issue public, while 364 participants were nonmembers.

Point-biserial correlations show that there were no significant differences in education or general political knowledge between issue public members and nonmembers (Table 4.3).¹¹ Issue public members were, however, more politically interested than

¹¹ The point-biserial correlation is used to estimate the degree of relationship between a naturally occurring dichotomous scale and an interval or ratio scale (Rosenthal, Rosnow, & Rubin, 2000; Tate, 1954). The point-biserial is a special case of the Pearson product moment correlation.

nonmembers (Abortion: $r = .13, p < .001$; Environment: $r = .15, p < .001$; Gun control: $r = .20, p < .001$), but again, the effect size was small.

Overall, the results support the idea that issue publics are different from attentive publics in terms of education and general political knowledge. Individuals do not need to be highly educated or knowledgeable about general politics to be involved in a specific issue, such as abortion, gun control, or environment. However, those who have more political interest are more likely than others to be involved in a specific issue.

Table 4.3: Correlations between the New Dichotomous Measure of Issue Public Membership and the Indicators of Attentive Public Membership

	Abortion	Environment	Gun Control
Education	.00	.00	-.06
General political knowledge	.01	-.01	-.04
Political interest	.13***	.15***	.20***

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, income, race, political ideology/partisanship, news media use, and manipulation of information search. Bivariate correlation yielded same result. $N = 807$, listwise for missing cases. *** $p < .001$.

In addition, a between-item variance analysis was conducted to examine if participants who are involved in the specific issues about which they are concerned tend to be indifferent to other issues. The results show that the three issues were statistically different $F(2, 824) = 1.70, p < .05$. Among all the participants, 31.8 percent of them cared about one issue, 35.4 percent of them belonged to two issue publics, and 19.2 percent of them were involved in all the three issues.

I also conducted partial correlation analyses for the measures of issue public membership across the three issues.¹² Results from the partial correlation analyses

¹² Although it is not a stringent methodological statistic to use partial correlation for two dichotomous variables, partial correlations can include control variables in the analysis, while a phi coefficient cannot. Therefore, I used partial correlations to provide a general understanding of the relationships between the issue publics, and I also adopted logistic regression to confirm the findings. Results from the logistic regressions are consistent to what were found in the partial correlations. Results from the logistic

indicate that that there was a significant correlation between the abortion issue public and the gun control issue public ($r = .09, p < .01$). However, the strength of the correlation was weak. There were not significant relationships between the abortion issue public and the environment issue public, or between the environment issue public and the gun control issue public. The analyses provide evidence to understand if there is an overlap between issue public memberships. Membership in the environment issue public was not associated with membership in the abortion and the gun control issue publics. However, membership in the abortion issue public had a significant, but weak, relationship with the membership in the gun control issue public. Overall, issue public members who are interested in particular issue do not necessarily interested in other issues.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND ISSUE-BASED SELECTIVITY

As another check on the validity of the issue publics measure, I first computed partial correlations to understand how the different issue public measures relate to issue-based selectivity. Theoretically, there should be strong correlations between issue public membership and the selection of information about that issue. Second, I analyzed whether issue public members exercise their issue-specificity in their information selections. In other words, I examine whether issue public members pay more attention to articles on the issue about which they care than to articles about other issues.

For the first analysis, the new continuous measure and the new dichotomous measure of issue public membership have a consistent and significant association with the number of issue-related articles selected and the time spent reading issue-related articles (Table 4.4). This pattern was found consistently across the three issues for the

regressions show that with control variables, abortion issue public membership significantly predicted membership in gun control issue public ($B = .44, p < .01$), and it did not predict membership in the environment issue public. Gun control issue public did not predict membership in the environment issue public either.

new measures compared to other measures. In addition, the new *continuous* measure has a stronger correlation with the number of issue-related articles selected and the time spent reading issue-related articles than other measures have, including personal issue importance *as a scale*, opinionation, and demographics. Similarly, the new *dichotomous* measure of issue public membership has a stronger relationship with the number of issue-related articles selected and the time spent reading issue-related articles than personal issue importance *as a dichotomy*, opinionation, and demographics.

The new *dichotomous* measure of issue public membership is used in all subsequent analyses given that it is consistently and significantly correlated with issue-based selectivity across number of articles selected and time spent reading articles and across the three issues. In addition, the correlation is stronger than other indicators (i.e., personal issue importance as a dichotomy, opinionation, and gender). The dichotomous variable allows this research to identify who the issue public members are and help to understand how issue public members within an issue public contribute the democratic process. At the same time, it provides a more conservative measure than using the new continuous measure in the analyses. When the new dichotomous measure is a significant predictor of the issue-based selectivity, the new continuous measure tend to yield similar, and at times slightly stronger, results. Although the analyses presented in the text utilize the dichotomous measure, I replicated the analyses with the continuous measure of issue public membership. The results are largely similar to those with the dichotomous measure. Presenting both would be duplicative, so I report findings with the dichotomous measure in the result section and the results with the continuous measure are reported in the footnotes and Appendix.

Table 4.4: Correlations among Measures of Issue Publics and Issue-Based Selectivity

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Article	Reading	Article	Reading	Article	Reading
	Selection	Time	Selection	Time	Selection	Time
The new continuous measure	.23***	.24***	.16***	.20***	.10*	.16***
The new dichotomous measure	.17***	.24***	.12***	.17***	.11**	.12***
Personal issue importance as a scale	.19***	.17***	.10*	.16***	.06	.13**
Personal issue importance as a dichotomy	.15***	.12**	.07	.10*	.08	.12**
Opinionation	.07	.11*	.02	.08*	.05	.04
Demographics						
1. Female (abortion)	.06	.15***				
2. Location (environment)			.00	.04		
3. Gun ownership (gun control)					.14***	.06

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and the manipulation of information search. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

For the second analysis, I examined whether issue public members exercised issue-specificity in their information selectivity. This is another validity check on the issue public measure, as members should be more likely than nonmembers to select and spend time with articles on the issue in which they expressed interest. Also, issue public members may not pay attention to articles on other issues. The results shown in Table 4.5 indicate that for the abortion issue, issue public membership is positively and significantly associated with selecting and reading abortion articles (The number of article selected: $r = .17, p < .001$; Time spent reading articles: $r = .24, p < .001$), but negatively related to selecting and reading articles about the other issues.

For the environment issue, there are positive and significant relationships between issue public membership and the number of issue-related articles selected ($r = .12, p < .01$), and between issue public membership and time spent reading issue-related articles ($r = .17, p < .001$). Similarly, environment issue public membership is not significantly related to selecting abortion articles, and it is negatively associated with reading or selecting articles associated with the other issues.

The same result was found for the gun control issue; issue public membership was positively and significantly related to selecting and reading gun control articles (Article selection: $r = .11, p < .01$; Reading time: $r = .12, p < .01$), but negatively related to selecting and reading articles about the abortion and environment issues. To this point, the partial correlations show that people involved with an issue will tend to expose themselves to the articles related to the issue, but they do not tend to select or read articles about other issues.

Table 4.5: Issue Public Membership and Issue-Specificity in Information Selectivity

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Article	Reading	Article	Reading	Article	Reading
	Selection	Time	Selection	Time	Selection	Time
<i>Issue public membership: The new dichotomous measure</i>						
Abortion	.17***	.24***	-.15***	-.08*	-.11**	-.11**
Environment	.00	-.10*	.12**	.17***	-.04	-.07
Gun control	-.03	-.10*	-.12**	-.15***	.11**	.12**

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goals manipulation. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. $N = 587$, listwise. Bivariate correlation yielded same result.

Issue Publics and Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views

To test Hypothesis 1a, which predicts that issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to attitude-consistent political views, regression analyses were conducted. The new dichotomous measure of issue public membership for each of the three issues was adopted to assess the effect of issue public membership on exposure to attitude-consistent political views. In Table 4.6, three issues are presented (Model 1 for the abortion issue, Model 2 for the environment issue, and Model 3 for the gun control issue), and exposure to attitude-consistent political views is reported in terms of the number of attitude-consistent articles selected and time spent reading attitude-consistent articles separately (Model a for article selection, and Model b for reading time).

Throughout, demographics (i.e., age, gender, race, education, and income), political predispositions (i.e., political ideology/partisanship, political interest, and general political knowledge), news media use, and goal manipulation are included as

control variables.¹³ With all the controls, membership in the abortion issue public is significantly associated with choosing attitude-consistent abortion articles ($\beta = .22, p < .001$; see Model 1a in Table 4.6), and amount of time with attitude-consistent abortion articles ($\beta = .25, p < .001$; see Model 1b in Table 4.6). Members of the abortion issue public, therefore, are more likely than nonmembers to look for issue-related information consistent with their viewpoints.

Similarly, the results demonstrate significant relationships between environment issue public membership and selecting attitude-consistent articles about the environment ($\beta = .11, p < .01$; see Model 2a in Table 4.6), and between environment issue public membership and time spent reading attitude-consistent environment articles ($\beta = .13, p < .01$; see Model 2b in Table 4.6), after including all of the controls. Members of the environment issue public select more environment-related articles that confirm their viewpoints and also spend more time reading those articles than nonmembers.

For the gun control issue, the same control variables are included. Similar to the abortion and the environment issues, issue public membership is a significant predictor of the number of attitude-consistent articles selected ($\beta = .18, p < .001$; see Model 3a in Table 4.6), and time spent reading attitude-consistent articles ($\beta = .14, p < .001$; see Model 3b in Table 4.6). Members of the gun control issue public tend to select more attitude-consistent articles, and spend more time reading those attitude-consistent articles compared to nonmembers.

Overall, Hypothesis 1a was supported. The preference for consonant political views was consistent across the abortion, environment, and gun control issues. Issue

¹³ Only the participants who went through the web browsing session were included in the analyses. Information search with accuracy goals, information search with directional goals, and information search without goals were dummy coded, and entered as control variables. Information search with goals was the reference group in the analysis.

public members were more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to the issue-related information expressing attitude-consistent political views.¹⁴

¹⁴ The regression analyses were conducted again with the new continuous measure as the independent variable. The results stayed the same, and the table is included in the Appendix (Table A.1).

Table 4.6: Issue Public Membership Predicting Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views

	Abortion		Environment		Gun Control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.06	.04	.02	.18***	-.09*	-.02
Gender (Male)	-.02	-.05	.08	.01	.07	.06
Race (White)	.01	.03	.03	.02	-.03	-.03
Education	.09*	.05	.00	-.01	.01	.05
Income	-.02	-.08	.04	.01	-.05	-.09
Political ideology/ Partisanship	-.03	.07	-.11*	-.10*	-.02	.04
Political interest	.03	.01	.03	-.02	.02	.03
General political knowledge	-.04	-.02	.00	.00	.06	-.03
News media use	-.11*	-.09*	.03	.02	.01	.02
Accuracy goals	.04	.03	.00	-.08	.05	-.03
Directional goals	-.01	.03	.02	.02	.01	.10*
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>						
Abortion issue	.22***	.25***				
Environment issue			.11**	.13**		
Gun control issue					.18***	.14**
Total R²	.09***	.10***	.04*	.07***	.05*	.05*

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; The no goals condition is the reference group for the variables of accuracy goals and directional goals; In Model 1a, the dependent variable is the selection of attitude-consistent articles about abortion; In Model 1b, the dependent variable is the time spent reading attitude-consistent articles about abortion; In Model 2a, the dependent variable is the selection of attitude-consistent articles about the environment; In Model 2b, the dependent variable is the time spent reading attitude-consistent articles about the environment; In Model 3a, the dependent variable is the selection of attitude-consistent articles about gun control; in Model 3b, the dependent variable is the time spent reading attitude-consistent articles about gun control. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Issue publics and Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Political Views

It was hypothesized that issue public members would be more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views on the issues in which they are involved (Hypothesis 1b). Table 4.7 presents regression analyses for each of the issues (Model 1 for the abortion issue, Model 2 for the environment issue, and Model 3 for gun control issue). Exposure to counter-attitudinal political views was analyzed as selecting articles with counter-attitudinal perspectives (Model a), and spending time on reading articles with counter-attitudinal perspectives (Model b).

The same control variables as the previous table were included in the regression analyses. For the abortion issue, the findings indicate that issue public membership was significantly associated with the number of counter-attitudinal articles selected ($\beta = .10, p < .05$; see Model 1a in Table 4.7) and time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles ($\beta = .12, p < .01$; see Model 1b in Table 4.7). Members of the abortion issue public were more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views.

Consistent with the abortion issue, membership in the environment issue public was significantly related to selecting more counter-attitudinal environment-related articles ($\beta = .12, p < .01$; see Model 2a in Table 4.7) and spending more time reading counter-attitudinal environment-related articles ($\beta = .11, p < .05$; see Model 2b in Table 4.7).

However, for the gun control issue, there was not a significant relationship between issue public membership and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views in either the article selection or reading time analyses (see Model 3a and Model 3b in Table 4.7).¹⁵

¹⁵ The new continuous measure was used as the independent variable in the regression analyses again. The results were similar and they are reported in the Appendix (Table A.2).

After examining the three issues, Hypothesis 1b was partially supported. Individuals who were more involved in the abortion issue and the environment issue, but not the gun control issue, tended to select and read abortion-related articles and environment-related articles that had oppositional political viewpoints.

Overall, the results demonstrate that issue public members are more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to issue-related information; however, if issue-related information is separated into attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives, the results differ depending on the issue. The findings suggest that members of the abortion and environment issue publics tend to select issue-related information not only supporting their issue positions, but also opposing their viewpoints. However, for the gun control issue public, members are more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to gun control articles with attitude-consistent political views, but not with counter-attitudinal political perspectives.

Table 4.7: Issue Public Membership Predicting Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Political Views

	Abortion		Environment		Gun Control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.11*	-.04	-.03	.06	-.04	.06
Gender (Male)	.01	-.03	.10*	.08	.10*	.03
Race (White)	-.02	-.01	-.05	-.02	.04	.07
Education	.04	.00	.06	.03	-.01	.03
Income	.03	.05	.06	.07	.03	-.05
Political ideology/ Partisanship	-.19***	-.12**	.00	.03	-.02	.05
Political interest	-.02	-.01	-.07	-.06	-.07	-.05
General political knowledge	-.05	-.13**	.10*	.10*	-.02	-.05
News media use	.03	.02	-.04	-.05	.05	-.01
Accuracy goals	-.03	-.06	.10*	.01	.06	.05
Directional goals	-.17***	-.11*	.03	.01	-.06	.03
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>						
Abortion issue	.10*	.12**				
Environment issue			.12**	.11*		
Gun control issue					.03	.03
Total R²	.10***	.07***	.06**	.04*	.03	.02

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; The no goals condition is the reference group for the variables of accuracy goals and directional goals; In Model 1, the dependent variable is the selection of counter-attitudinal articles about abortion; In Model 2, the dependent variable is the time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles about abortion; In Model 3, the dependent variable is the selection of counter-attitudinal articles about the environment; In Model 4, the dependent variable is the time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles about the environment; In Model 5, the dependent variable is the selection of counter-attitudinal articles about gun control; in Model 6, the dependent variable is the time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles about gun control . * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND INFORMATION SELECTIVITY: THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO ATTITUDE-CONSISTENT POLITICAL VIEW AND EXPOSURE TO COUNTER-ATTITUDINAL POLITICAL VIEWS

In the previous section, this dissertation found that issue public membership had a significant effect on exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views (for the abortion and environment issues; membership in the gun control issue did not predict exposure to counter-attitudinal political views). However, it is not yet clear whether issue public members' information selectivity is biased or unbiased. A significant question was raised: does selecting challenging information indicate unbiased information selectivity?

Although issue publics members were more likely than nonmembers to select both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal information, it is possible that the amount of attitude-consistent information issue public members selected still may be significantly more than the amount of counter-attitudinal information they selected compared to nonmembers. If this pattern occurred, even though issue public members tended to select both challenging and like-minded information more than non-issue public members, their selectivity could be more unbalanced than nonmembers, and cannot be claimed to be unbiased. To examine if individuals' information selectivity is biased or not, I take into account the extent to which people's exposure to attitude-consistent political views differs from their exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (Research Question 2).

Regression analyses were conducted with the difference between exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views employed as the dependent variable. Larger positive values of the dependent variable indicate that people spent more time with pro-attitudinal articles relative to counter-attitudinal articles. Table 4.8 presents the descriptive statistics of the difference between exposure to attitudinal and counter-attitudinal political views.

Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics of the Difference between Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political views

	Positive value (%)	Zero (%)	Negative value (%)	Mean	SD
<i>Abortion</i>					
Article selection	28.1	54	17.9	.14	.82
Reading time	35.7	38.9	25.5	14.64	125.28
<i>Environment</i>					
Article selection	22.6	58.7	18.7	.04	.73
Reading time	28.7	46.6	24.7	10.39	108.80
<i>Gun control</i>					
Article selection	18.4	51.5	30.1	.13	.79
Reading time	39.2	34.4	26.4	25.1	124.57

As before, article selection (Model a) and reading time (Model b) were analyzed separately for each issue (Model 1: abortion issue; Model 2: environment issue; Model 3: gun control issue). As presented in Table 4.9, issue public membership was a significant predictor of the difference between exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views for both the number of articles selected ($\beta = .11, p < .05$; see Model 1a), and the amount of time spent reading articles for the abortion issue ($\beta = .11, p < .05$; see Model 1b). That is, members of the abortion issue public were more likely than nonmembers to have a larger difference between selecting attitude-consistent articles and selecting counter-attitudinal articles, and between spending time reading attitude-consistent articles and spending time reading counter-attitudinal articles.

Similarly, results show that issue public membership significantly predicted the discrepancy between selecting attitude-consistent political views and selecting counter-attitudinal political views for the gun control issue ($\beta = .12, p < .01$; see Model 3a). Issue public membership was a significant predictor of the discrepancy between time spent reading attitude-consistent political view and time spent reading counter-attitudinal political view for the gun control issue as well ($\beta = .09, p < .05$; see Model 3b). The findings suggest that members of the

gun control issue public had a greater difference between attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives in the articles they selected and in the time they spent reading articles than nonmembers.

For the environment issue, however, issue public membership was not a significant predictor of the difference between selecting attitude-consistent articles and selecting counter-attitudinal articles. Membership in the environment issue public did not significantly predict the difference between the time spent reading attitude-consistent articles and the time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles either.

Combining the results with what was found in previous selection regarding issue public members' information selectivity, for the abortion issue, issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views. However; they were more biased than nonmembers in that they had a significantly larger discrepancy between exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views. For the environment issue, there were no differences between issue public members and nonmembers on their preferences for like-minded over non-like-minded information. For the gun control issue, issue public members did not tend to expose themselves to more counter-attitudinal information than nonmembers. Yet members are more biased than nonmembers because the gap between exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views is wider for members than for nonmembers.

Table 4.9: Issue Publics Predicting Difference between Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views and Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Political Views

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	.03	.06	.05	.10*	-.04	-.06
Gender (Male)	-.03	-.02	-.02	-.04	-.03	.02
Race (White)	.02	.03	.08	.03	-.07	-.06
Education	.05	.03	-.05	-.03	.02	.02
Income	-.05	-.09*	-.02	-.04	-.07	-.04
Political ideology	.13**	.14**	-.10*	-.10*	-.00	-.00
Political interest	.05	.01	.01	.03	.07	.06
General political knowledge	.01	.08	-.06	-.07	.06	.01
News media use	-.12*	-.08	.05	.05	-.03	.02
Accuracy goals	.06	.06	-.06	-.07	-.00	-.05
Directional goals	.13**	.10*	-.03	.01	.05	.06
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>						
Abortion issue	.11*	.11*				
Environment issue			-.01	.02		
Gun control issue					.12**	.09*
Total R²	.06*	.06*	.03	.04	.04	.03

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The goals manipulation (i.e., accuracy goals, directional goals, and no goals) was dummy-coded and included as control variables. The no goals condition was the reference group. Results remained the same when the total number of article selected and the total amount of time spent on reading articles were included as control variables. In Model a, the dependent variable is the difference between the number of attitude-consistent articles selected and the number of counter-attitudinal articles selected; In Model b, the dependent variable is the difference between the amount of time spent reading attitude-consistent articles and the amount of time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND ISSUE-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Prior to examining the hypotheses about issue-specific knowledge, I conducted two sets of partial correlations. The first one is to investigate how different measures of issue public membership relate to issue-specific knowledge, and the second one is to understand if issue public members tend to have more knowledge on the issue about which they care, but not about other issues.

Table 4.10: Correlations among Measures of Issue Publics and Issue-Specific Knowledge

	Abortion Knowledge	Environment Knowledge	Gun Control Knowledge
The new continuous measure	.14***	.19***	.11**
The new dichotomous measure	.13***	.19***	.09**
Personal issue importance as a scale	.12***	.18***	.10**
Personal issue importance as a dichotomy	.12***	.16***	.09*
Opinionation	.05	.03	.10**
Demographics			
1. Female (abortion)	.09*		
2. Location (environment)		.06	
3. Gun ownership (gun control)			.03

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and the manipulation of information search. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

As shown in Table 4.10, the new measures of issue public membership (as a continuous measure and as a dichotomous measure) are significant and have stronger correlations with issue-specific knowledge across the three issues compared to other measures. Notably, the personal issue importance measures (as a scale and as a dichotomy) also significantly correlates with issue-specific knowledge across the three

issues, and the correlation coefficients were very close to those with the new measures. Yet on the basis of the earlier validity checks, and the comparable correlations for the new measures, I adopted the new dichotomous measure of issue public membership in the analyses.

In Table 4.11, the partial correlations provide a general understanding of the extent to which issue public members are well-informed about their issues of interest. Membership in the abortion issue public is significantly associated with abortion knowledge ($r = .13, p < .001$), but not with gun control knowledge or environment knowledge.

In the same manner, membership in the environment issue public was significantly related to environment knowledge ($r = .19, p < .001$), but not to abortion or gun control knowledge. Similarly, there was a significant relationship between membership in the gun control issue public and gun control knowledge ($r = .09, p < .01$), but not with knowledge of the other issues. As a result, issue public members display issue-specificity in their knowledge.

Table 4.11: Issue Public Membership and Issue-Specificity in Knowledge

	Abortion Knowledge	Environment Knowledge	Gun Control Knowledge
<i>Issue public membership:</i>			
<i>The new dichotomous measure</i>			
Abortion	.13***	-.01	.03
Environment	.00	.19***	.02
Gun control	-.00	-.03	.09**

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and the manipulation of information search. $N = 783$, listwise for missing cases. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

The Direct Effect of Issue Publics on Issue-Specific Knowledge

To answer Hypothesis 2, predicting that issue public members will have greater issue-specific knowledge than nonmembers, regression analyses were conducted for each issue. Demographics (i.e., age, gender, race, education, and income), political predispositions (i.e., political ideology/partisanship, political interest, and general political knowledge), news media use, and the manipulation of information search were included as control variables.¹⁶ The results of these regressions analyses are reported in Table 4.12 with the abortion issue presented in Model 1, the environment issue in Model 2, and the gun control issue in Model 3.

With all of the controls included in the analysis, the results document that membership in the abortion issue public was significantly related to abortion knowledge ($\beta = .13, p < .001$; see Model 1 in Table 4.12). Members of the abortion issue public had a higher level of abortion knowledge than nonmembers. For the environment issue, issue public membership was a significant predictor of environment knowledge as well ($\beta = .18, p < .001$; see Model 2 in Table 4.12). Issue public members were more knowledgeable about the environment than nonmembers. A similar pattern was found for the gun control issue. Members of the gun control issue public tended to have more knowledge about the gun control compared to nonmembers ($\beta = .09, p < .01$; see Model 3 in Table 4.12).¹⁷

The evidence of a consistent relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge supports Hypothesis 2.

¹⁶ All participants were included in the analyses. Therefore, four conditions were controlled. Information search with accuracy goals, information search with directional goals, information search without goals, and no-information search were dummy coded, and entered as control variables. The no-information search group was the reference group in the analyses.

¹⁷ The new continuous measure was used as the independent variable in the regression analyses to examine its relationship with issue-specific knowledge. The same results were found and they are reported in the Appendix (Table A.3).

Table 4.12: Issue Public Membership Predicting Issue-Specific Knowledge

	Model 1: Abortion Knowledge	Model 2: Environment Knowledge	Model 3: Gun Control Knowledge
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Age	-.03	.02	-.00
Gender (Male)	-.04	.11**	.09**
Race (White)	.07*	-.00	.04
Education	.12**	.16***	.01
Income	.03	.07*	.06
Political ideology/ Partisanship	-.05	-.11**	-.11**
Political interest	.18***	.12**	.13***
General political knowledge	.21***	.18***	.17***
News media use	.03	.01	.04
Accuracy goals	.09*	.15***	.11**
Directional goals	.10*	.12**	.15***
No goals	.17***	.17***	.16***
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>			
Abortion issue	.13***		
Environment issue		.18***	
Gun control issue			.09**
Total R²	.21***	.23***	.15***

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; The no information search condition is the reference group for the variable of accuracy goals, directional goals, and no goals. In Model 1, the dependent variable is abortion knowledge; In Model 2, the dependent variable is environment knowledge; In Model 3, the dependent variable is gun control knowledge. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

The Mediating Role of Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Exposure on Issue-Specific Knowledge

In addition to the direct effect of issue public membership on issue-based selectivity and issue-specific knowledge, it was hypothesized that the relationship between issue publics and issue-specific knowledge would be mediated by issue-based selectivity, which is separately examined as exposure to attitude-consistent political views (Hypothesis 3a) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (Hypothesis 3b).

The multiple mediation models with 5,000 bootstrapped bias corrected resamples was adopted to test the hypotheses for each of the three issues (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). By using multiple mediation models, exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views can be tested as mediators simultaneously by statistically controlling for the relationships among the mediators and the covariates in the model for the total effects.

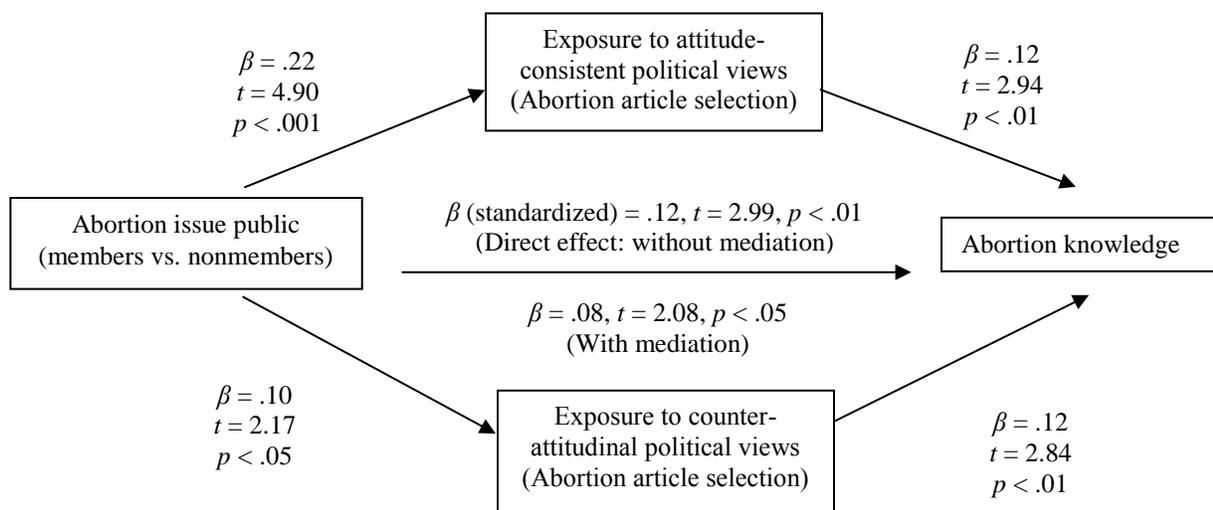
Similar to the previous analyses, the mediation analyses are presented separately for the three issues (Figure 4.1 for the abortion issue, Figure 4.2 for the gun control issue, and Figure 4.3 for the environment issue). The number of articles selected (Figure a) and the exposure time for reading articles (Figure b) are reported separately for each of the issues as well.

(1) The Mediating Effect on Issue-Specific Knowledge: The Abortion Issue Public

As shown in Figure 4.1a, when exposure to attitude-consistent perspectives and exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives were analyzed simultaneously, they both appeared as significant and positive mediators of the relationship between membership in the abortion issue public and abortion knowledge. Adding the mediators reduced the

direct effect of issue public membership on abortion knowledge from $\beta = .12$ ($p < .01$) to $\beta = .08$ ($p < .05$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs for selecting attitude-consistent articles was (.005, .059) and for selecting counter-attitudinal articles was (.002, .037). The CIs do not include zero which indicates that selecting attitude-consistent articles and selecting counter-attitudinal articles were both significant mediators.

Figure 4.1a: Abortion Issue Public and Abortion Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)

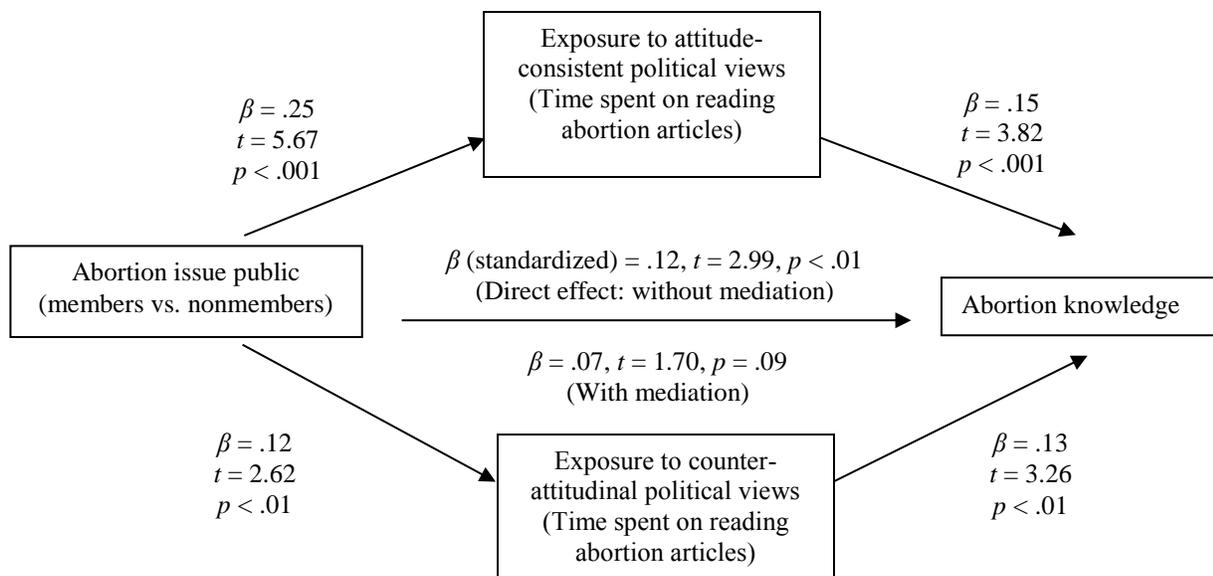


Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.005, .059) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.002, .037). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

Similar results were found when attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal exposure were measured using the amount of time spent reading articles. As shown in Figure 4.1b, including the mediators in the model reduced the strength of the relationship

between membership in the abortion issue public and abortion knowledge from $\beta = .12$ ($p < .01$) to $\beta = .07$ ($p = .09$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs for the attitude-consistent article exposure time was (.011, .075), and for the counter-attitudinal article exposure time was (.002, .040), which indicates that they were both significant mediators. Figure 4.1a and 4.1b demonstrate that time spent with attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views mediate the direct effect of issue public membership on issue-specific knowledge for the abortion issue.

Figure 4.1b: Abortion Issue Public and Abortion Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)

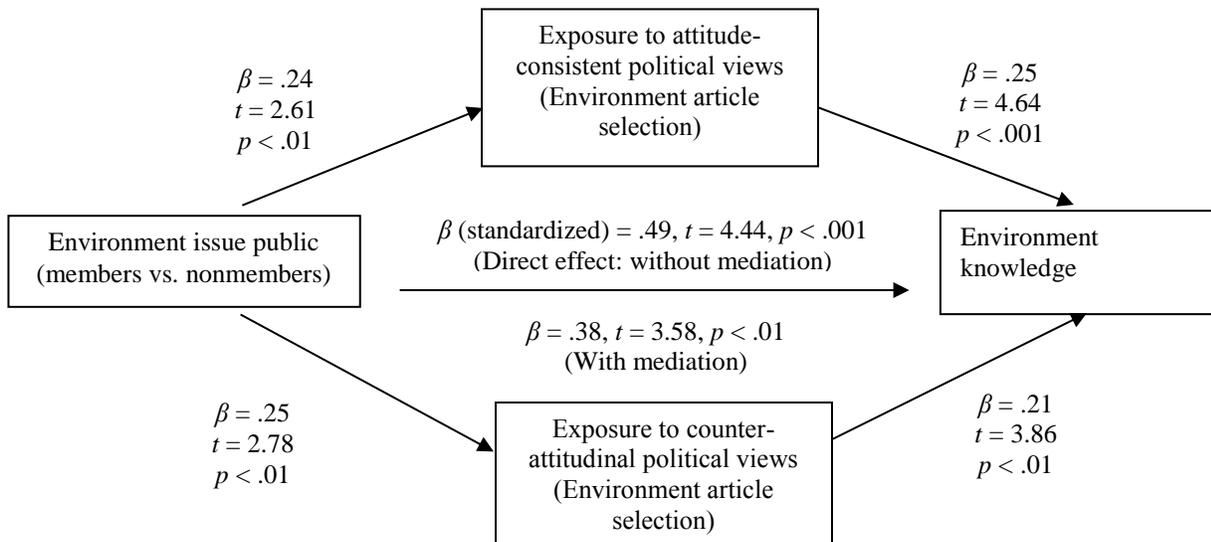


Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.011, .075) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.002, .040). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

(2) The Mediating Effect on Issue-Specific Knowledge: The Environment Issue Public

For the environment issue, the results are similar to those for the abortion issue. As shown in Figure 4.2a, when selecting attitude-consistent articles and selecting counter-attitudinal articles were analyzed simultaneously, they both appeared as significant and positive mediators of the relationship between membership in the environment issue public and environment knowledge. Adding the mediators reduced the direct effect of issue public membership on environment knowledge from $\beta = .49$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .38$ ($p < .01$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs also indicate that exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.005, .148) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.004, .137) do not contain zero; thus, they are both significant mediators.

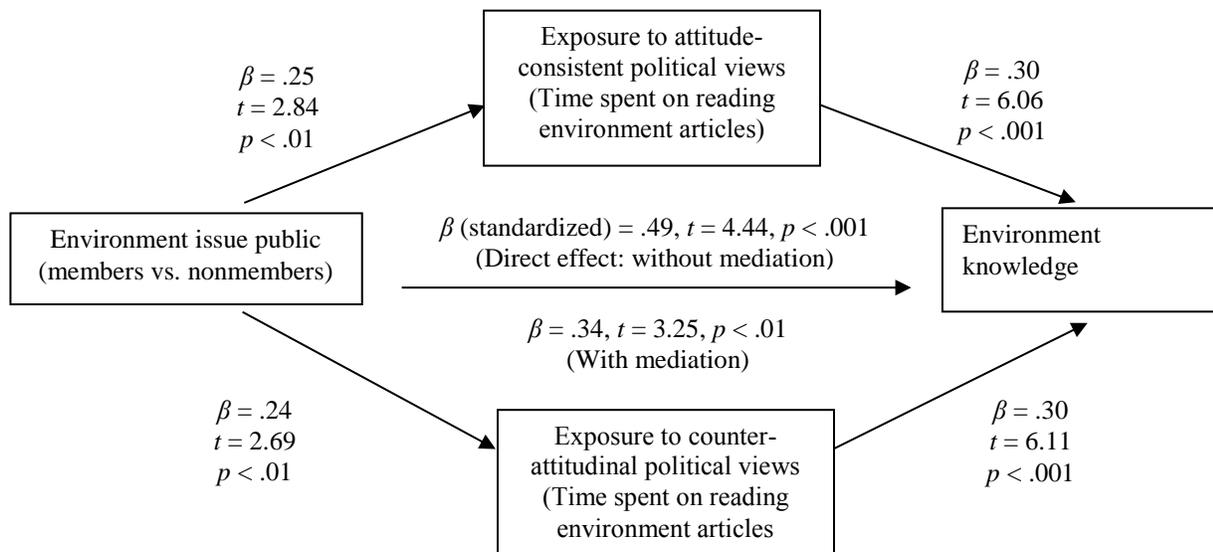
Figure 4.2a: Environment Issue Public and Environment Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.005, .148) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.004, .137). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 561$.

In addition to article selection, time spent reading articles was used in the analysis (Figure 4.2b). In the same manner, adding the mediators in the model reduced the effect of issue public membership on environment knowledge from $\beta = .49$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .34$ ($p < .01$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs for the time spent with attitude-consistent articles was (.016, .162), and for the time spent with counter-attitudinal articles was (.003, .151), which indicates that they were both significant mediators. Together, Figure 4.3a and 4.3b demonstrate the unique effects of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views regarding the environment issue mediate the direct effect of membership in the environment issue public on environment knowledge.

Figure 4.2b: Environment Issue Public and Environment Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)

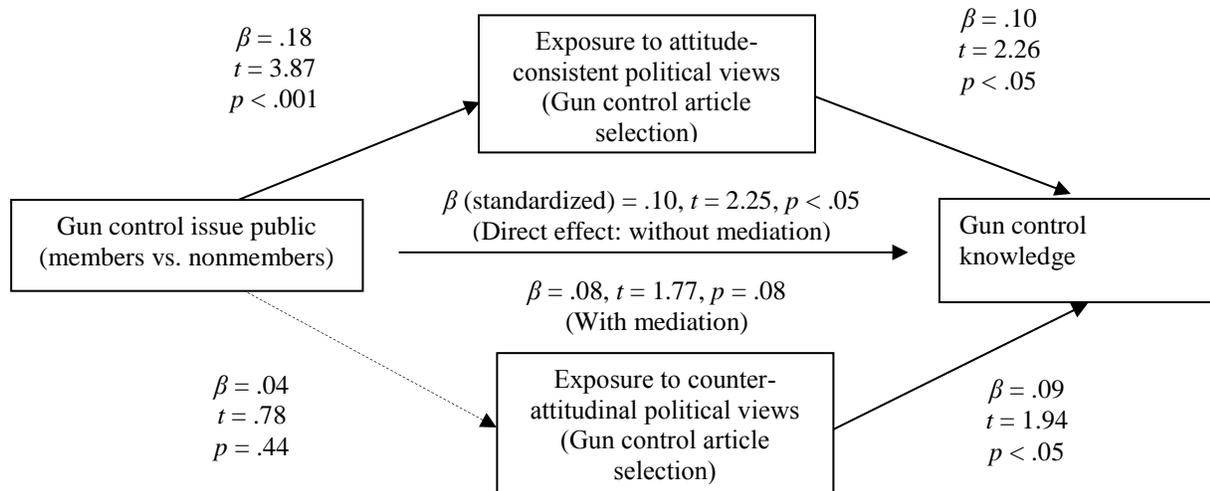


Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.016, .162) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.003, .151). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 561$.

(3) The Mediating Effect on Issue-Specific Knowledge: The Gun Control Issue Public

For the gun control issue, Figure 4.3a presents the relationship with issue public membership as the independent variable, gun control knowledge as the dependent variable, and attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal article selections as mediators. When selecting articles with attitude-consistent perspectives and selecting articles with counter-attitudinal perspectives were analyzed simultaneously, only attitude-consistent exposure emerged as a significant and positive mediator for the relationship between membership in the gun control issue public and gun control knowledge (Figure 4.3a). Even though selecting counter-attitudinal articles had a significant positive effect on gun control knowledge ($\beta = .09, p < .05$), membership in the gun control issue public was not significantly related to selecting counter-attitudinal articles as previously found for the other issues. Including the mediators reduced the direct effect of issue public membership on gun control knowledge from $\beta = .10 (p < .05)$ to $\beta = .08 (p = .08)$. The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs also show that exposure to attitude-consistent political views was a significant mediator (.002, .052), while exposure to counter-attitudinal views was not (-.006, .022) because the CI contains zero.

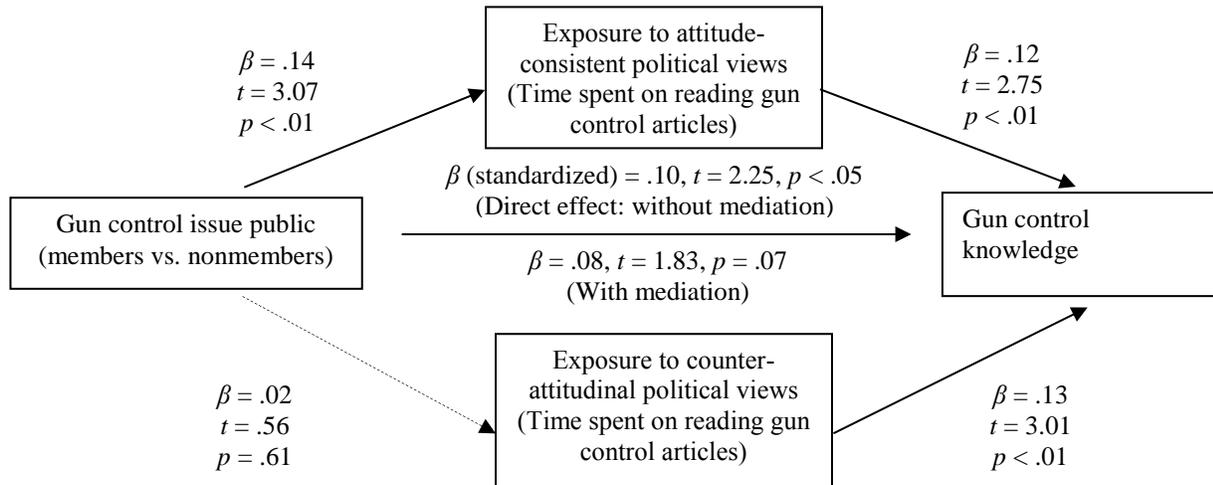
Figure 4.3a: Gun Control Issue Public (Dichotomous) and Gun Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.002, .052) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.006, .022). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 517$.

The results stay the same when exposure to attitude-consistent and exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives were measured using exposure time, as opposed to article selection (Figure 4.3b). Including the mediators in the model reduced the magnitude of the previous relationship between membership in the gun control issue public membership and gun control knowledge from $\beta = .10$ ($p < .05$) to $\beta = .08$ ($p = .07$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs indicates that exposure to attitude-consistent political views was the only significant mediator (.001, .045), and the exposure to counter-attitudinal views did not have significant mediating effect (-.010, .026).

Figure 4.3b: Gun Control Issue Public (Dichotomous) and Gun Control Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.001, .045) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.010, .026). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 517$.

Taking both models into consideration (Figure 4.3a and Figure 4.3b), for the gun control issue, only exposure to attitude-consistent political views emerged as a significant mediator.¹⁸

Overall, hypothesis 3a is supported across the three issues. Exposure to attitude-consistent political views mediates the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge. Hypothesis 3b, however, is only partially supported because the mediating role of exposure to counter-attitudinal political views in the relationship

¹⁸ After analyzing the mediating relationships by using the new measure of issue publics as a dichotomy, the same analytical process was conducted for the new continuous measure for each of the three issues. The results reveal consistent patterns and are reported in the Appendix (Figure A.1 for the abortion issue, Figure A.2 for the environment issue, and Figure A.3 for the gun control issue).

between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge was only identified for the abortion and environment issues, but not for the gun control issue.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND OPINION QUALITY

As was done prior to examining the issue-based selectivity and issue-specific knowledge hypotheses, two validity check analyses were conducted before turning to an analysis of issue publics and opinion quality. The first analysis is to provide an understanding of the performance of the different measures of issue publics with respect to opinion quality, including the number of rationales provided for one's own viewpoints and the number of rationales provided for the oppositional viewpoints (Table 4.13). The second analysis is to examine if issue public members display issue-specificity in argument generation (Table 4.14). In other words, the analysis investigates whether issue public members generate more arguments related to the issue in which they are involved compared to other issues.

As shown in Table 4.13, the new continuous measure and the new dichotomous measure showed the strongest correlations with rationales for one's own viewpoints and rationales for oppositional viewpoints for the abortion and environment issues. For the gun control issue, the new continuous measure and the new dichotomous measure also had the strongest correlations with rationales for one's own viewpoints, but not with rationales for oppositional viewpoints. In fact, none of the issue public indicators were related to providing rationales for oppositional viewpoints for the gun control issue. Notably, female also had a significant relationship with opinion quality on the abortion issue; the coefficient for generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints is as strong as the relationship between the new dichotomous measure and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

For the three issues, previously-used measures of issue publics, including the single item assessing personal issue importance as a scale and as a dichotomy, opinionation, and demographics (except female for the abortion issue), show weaker or insignificant correlations with opinion quality compared to the new measures. For instance, opinionation on the abortion issue was not significantly correlated with generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the abortion issue. For the environment issue, there was not a significant correlation between individuals' location and generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints on the environment issue. Therefore, the new continuous measure and the new dichotomous measure, provide better measurements to identify issue public member and to examine the relationship between issue public membership and political outcomes.

Table 4.13: Correlations among Measures of Issue Publics and Opinion Quality

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Rationales for one's own viewpoints	Rationales for oppositional viewpoints	Rationales for one's own viewpoints	Rationales for oppositional viewpoints	Rationales for one's own viewpoints	Rationales for oppositional viewpoints
The new continuous measure	.26***	.09**	.30***	.23***	.21***	.04
The new dichotomous measure	.28***	.13***	.30***	.22***	.25***	.05
Personal issue importance as a scale	.20***	.09*	.27***	.19***	.20***	.04
Personal issue importance as a dichotomy	.17***	.08*	.25***	.17***	.22***	.06
Opinionation	.13***	.04	.18***	.16***	.16***	.06
Demographics						
1. Female (abortion)	.21***	.17***				
2. Location (environment)			.03	.04		
3. Gun ownership (gun control)					.11**	.06

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and the manipulation of information search. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

In the partial correlations from Table 4.13, the new dichotomous measure of issue publics had a slightly stronger correlation with opinion quality than the new continuous measure, at least for the abortion issue and gun control issues. Therefore, I cannot claim that using the dichotomous measure for testing the following hypotheses was a more conservative statistical analysis, as it was in the previous analyses. However, to understand the difference between issue public members and nonmembers and to be consistent with the analyses in the previous sections, the new dichotomous measure of

issue public membership was used in the following analysis. Just as in the previous sections, the results with the new continuous measure are reported in the footnotes. Tables and figures related to the results are included in the Appendix as well.

To understand if issue public members exercise issue-specificity in argument generation, Table 4.14 presents the partial correlations for each issue. For the abortion issue, issue public membership was significant associated with both rationales for one's own viewpoints ($r = .28, p < .001$), and rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the abortion issue ($r = .13, p < .001$). In addition, issue public membership was not related to rationales on the environment and gun control issues. Similarly, membership in the environment issue public was significantly related to environment argument generation, including rationales for one's own viewpoints ($r = .30, p < .001$) and rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($r = .23, p < .001$), but not to abortion argument generation. The results show that membership in environment issue public was significant associated with rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the gun control issue ($r = .10, p < .01$), though the coefficient is smaller than generating rationales for the environment issue. A similar pattern was found for the gun control issue; issue public membership was significantly related to rationales for one's own viewpoints on the gun control issue ($r = .25, p < .001$). Membership in the gun control issue public was not related to the abortion argument generation, and it was negatively associated with the environment argument generation (rationales for one's own viewpoints: $r = -.07, p < .05$; rationales for oppositional viewpoints: $r = -.09, p < .05$).

Overall, the correlations indicate that issue public members display issue-specificity in generating arguments. Issue public members tended to generate more arguments for the issues in which they involved, and they did not list more arguments for other issues compared to nonmembers.

Table 4.14: Issue Public Membership and Issue-Specificity in Opinion Quality

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Rationales for one's own viewpoints	Rationales for oppositional viewpoints	Rationales for one's own viewpoints	Rationales for oppositional viewpoints	Rationales for one's own viewpoints	Rationales for oppositional viewpoints
<i>Issue public membership: The new dichotomous measure</i>						
Abortion	.28***	.13***	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.02
Environment	.01	-.03	.30***	.23***	.02	.10**
Gun control	.01	-.03	-.07*	-.09*	.25***	.05

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goals manipulation.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. $N = 795$, listwise for missing cases. Bivariate correlations yielded same result.

The Direct Effect of Issue Publics on Opinion Quality

Turning to the hypothesis testing, it was expected that issue public members would be more likely than nonmembers to generate rationales for their own viewpoints (Hypothesis 4a) and to generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints (Hypothesis 4b) on the issue. Table 4.15 presents the results of the regression analyses for the abortion issue in Model 1, the environment issue in Model 2, and the gun control issue in Model 3. Model a shows the results of issue publics predicting rationales for one's own viewpoints, while Model b presents the findings of issue publics predicting rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

The results document the significant effects of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoint. Members of the abortion issue public were more likely than nonmembers to provide reasons for their own positions ($\beta = .28, p < .001$; see Model 1a in Table 4.15), after including all of the controls. The same relationship appears for the environment issue; issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to provide reasons for their own points of view ($\beta = .30, p < .001$; see Model 2a in Table 4.15). In a similar way, members of the gun control issue public were more likely than nonmembers to generate rationales for their own perspectives ($\beta = .25, p < .001$; see Model 3a in Table 4.15). Hypothesis 4a was therefore supported.

Evidence of the effects of issue public membership on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints was found for the abortion and the environment issues. Members of the abortion issue public were more likely than nonmembers to list rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($\beta = .13, p < .001$; see Model 1b in Table 4.15), and members of the environment issue public were more likely than nonmembers to provide reasons for oppositional positions ($\beta = .22, p < .001$; see Model 2b in Table 4.15). However, there was no significant difference between members and nonmembers of the gun control issue public in generating arguments for the opposite point of view. As a result, Hypothesis 4b was only partially supported.¹⁹

Considering the results of generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints together, interesting findings emerged across the three issues. The findings are similar to the previous section's findings regarding exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political perspectives. Members of the abortion and environment issue publics tended to not only generate rationales supporting their own viewpoints, but

¹⁹ Using the new continuous measure yielded the same results for both Hypothesis 4a and 4b. A table of the results is included in the Appendix (Table A.4).

also reasoned from oppositional perspectives on the issues. Members of the gun control issue public, however, only tended to generate more rationales for their own positions compared to nonmembers.

Table 4.15: Issue Publics Predicting Rationales for One's Own and Oppositional Viewpoints

	Abortion		Environment		Gun Control	
	Model 1a: Rationales for one's own Viewpoints	Model 1b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 2a: Rationales for one's own Viewpoints	Model 2b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 3a: Rationales for one's own Viewpoints	Model 3b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.12**	-.11**	-.04	-.08*	-.05	-.10**
Gender (Male)	-.13***	-.13***	-.06	-.04	-.13***	-.05
Race (White)	.10**	.06	.04	.03	.02	.03
Education	.16***	.18***	.13***	.15***	.14***	.15***
Income	.01	.02	.05	.09*	.08*	.01
Political ideology/Partisanship	-.02	-.07*	-.07*	-.01	.07	.01
Political interest	.07	.06	.09**	.08*	.13***	.11**
General political knowledge	.08*	.12**	.11**	.15***	.05	.13**
News media use	-.09*	-.14	-.05	-.08*	-.05	-.10**
Accuracy goals	.09*	.07	.09*	.09*	.09*	.05
Directional goals	.13**	.14**	.14***	.12**	.14***	.08*
No goals	.12**	.13**	.09*	.12**	.13**	.04
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>						
Abortion issue	.28***	.13***				
Environment issue			.30***	.22***		
Gun control issue					.25***	.05
Total R²	.21***	.15***	.20***	.16***	.17***	.09***

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; In Model 1, the dependent variable is the rationales for one's own viewpoints on the abortion issue; In Model 2, the dependent variable is the rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the abortion issues; In Model 3, the dependent variable is the rationales for one's own viewpoints on the environment issue; In Model 4, the dependent variable is the rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the environment issue; In Model 5, the dependent variable is the rationales for one's own viewpoints on the gun control issue; and in Model 6, the dependent variable is the rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the gun control issue.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

The Mediating Role of Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Exposure on Opinion Quality

In addition to the direct effect of issue public membership on opinion quality, this dissertation hypothesized that the relationship between issue public membership and opinion quality would be mediated by issue-based selectivity. More specifically, the effects of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints would be mediated by exposure to attitude-consistent political views (Hypothesis 5a) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (Hypothesis 5b). Furthermore, the effects of issue public membership on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints would be mediated by exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives (Hypothesis 5c).

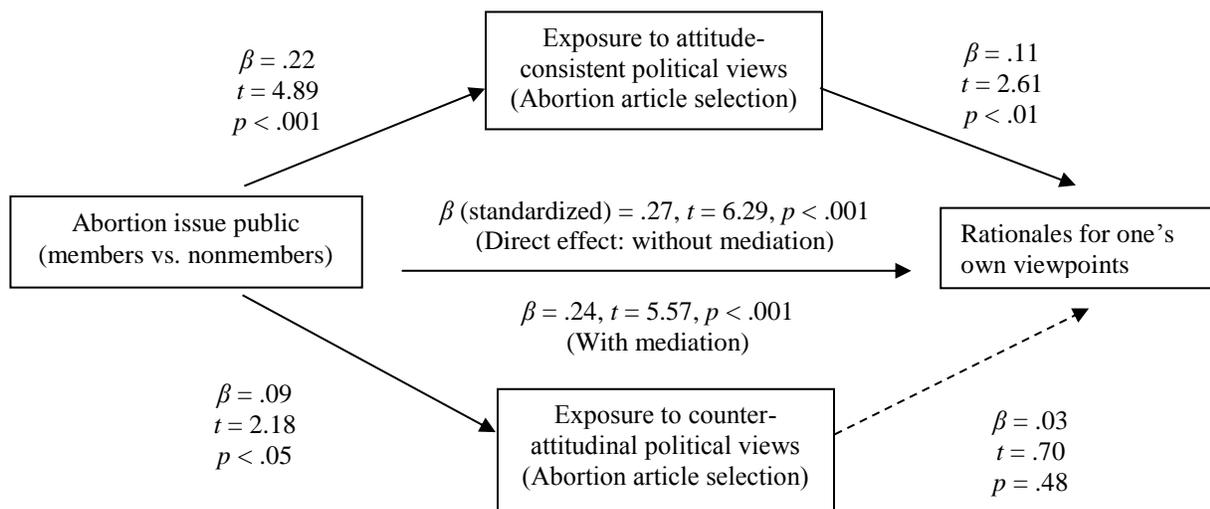
To test the hypotheses for each of the three issues, multiple mediation models with 5,000 bootstrapped bias corrected resamples were used (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Similar to the previous analyses, the new measure of issue public membership as a dichotomy (members versus nonmembers) was used as the independent variable in the following analyses.

(1) The Mediating Effect on Rationales for One's Own Viewpoint: The Abortion Issue Public

Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show the results with respect to the abortion issue. Figure 4.4 presents the mediating effects of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views on generating rationales for one's own viewpoint. Figure 4.5 illustrates the mediating effects on reasoning for oppositional viewpoints. The number of articles selected (Figure a) and the exposure time for reading articles (Figure b) are reported separately for each of the issues as well. The results for the environment issue (Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7) and the gun control issue (Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9) are documented in the same way.

As shown in Figure 4.4a, when selecting abortion articles with attitude-consistent perspectives and selecting abortion articles with counter-attitudinal perspectives were analyzed simultaneously, only selecting abortion articles with attitude-consistent perspectives appeared to have a significant mediating effect on the relationship between membership in the abortion issue public and generating rationales for one's own viewpoints. Adding the mediators reduced the direct effect of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints from $\beta = .27$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .24$ ($p < .001$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs for selecting attitude-consistent articles also did not include zero (.001, .065), which showed that selecting attitude-consistent articles was a significant mediator in the relationship.

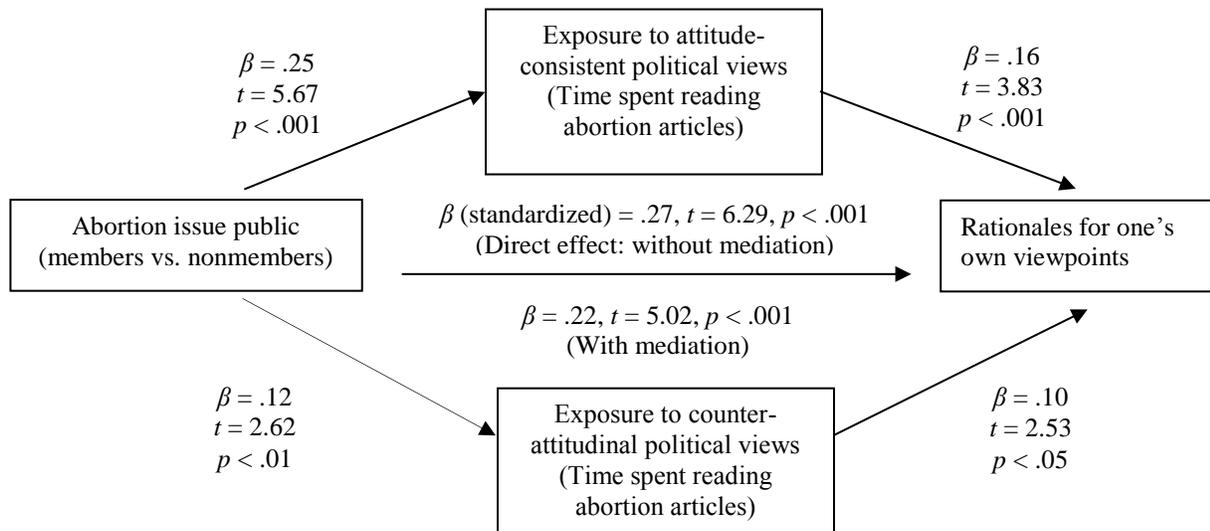
Figure 4.4a: Abortion Issue Public and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.001, .065) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.008, .020). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

Interestingly, when exposure was measured in time spent reading abortion articles, rather than number of abortion articles selected, not only exposure to attitude-consistent political perspectives, but also exposure to counter-attitudinal political views appeared to be significant mediators of the relationship (Figure 4.7b). Adding the mediators reduced the direct effect of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints from $\beta = .27$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .22$ ($p < .001$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs showed that both time spent reading abortion articles with attitude-consistent perspectives (.014, .074), and time spent reading articles with counter-attitudinal perspectives (.001, .038) were significant mediators of the relationship.

Figure 4.4b: Abortion Issue Public and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)

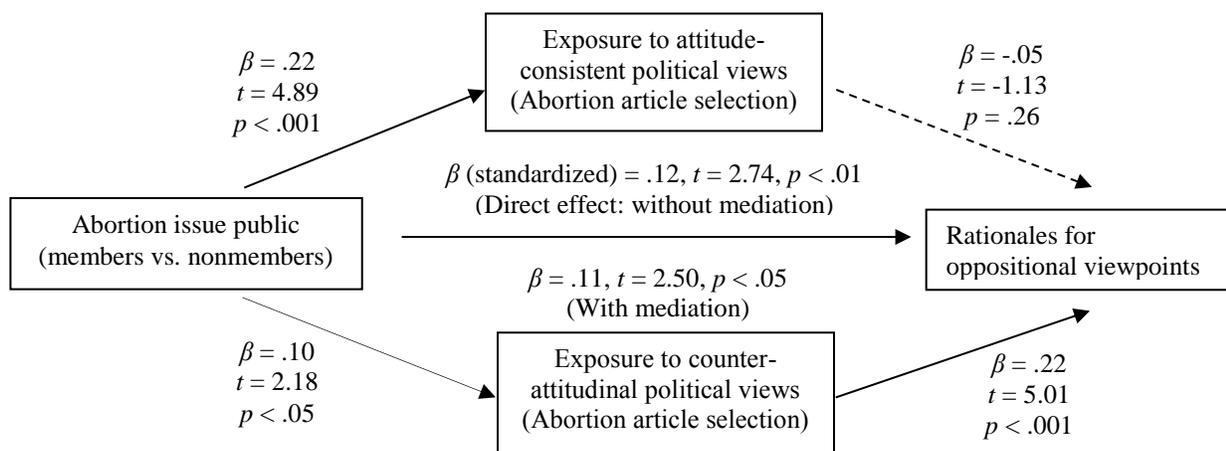


Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.014, .074) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.001, .038). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

(2) The Mediating Effect on Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoint: The Abortion Issue Public

When it came to the effect of membership in the abortion issue public on reasoning from an oppositional position, as I hypothesized, only selecting abortion articles with counter-attitudinal political views served as a significant mediator in the relationship (Figure 4.5a). Including the mediators in the model slightly reduced the magnitude of the previous relationship between the abortion issue public and rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the abortion issue from $\beta = .12$ ($p < .01$) to $\beta = .11$ ($p < .01$).

Figure 4.5a: Abortion Issue Public and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



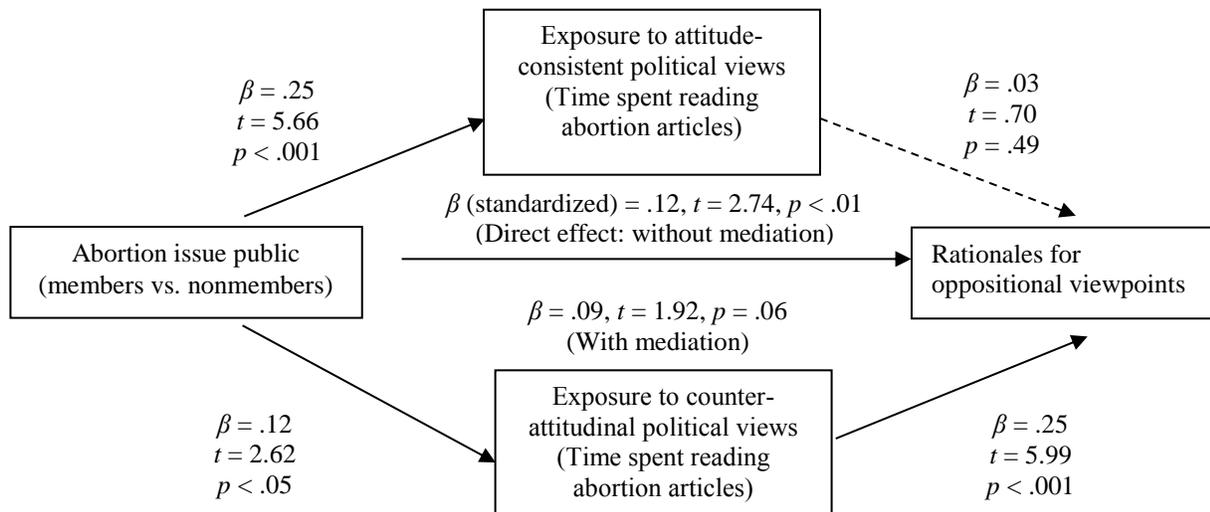
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.045, .026) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.003, .055). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

Similar results appeared for time spent reading articles. Only time spent reading counter-attitudinal abortion articles mediated the relationship between membership in the

abortion issue public and the generation of rationales for oppositional viewpoints (Figure 4.5b). Adding the mediators decreased the direct effect of membership in the abortion issue public on reasoning from opposing positions from $\beta = .12$ ($p < .01$) to $\beta = .09$ ($p = .06$).

The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs also indicated that exposure to counter-attitudinal political views regarding the abortion issue was the only significant mediator (Article section: [.003, .055]; Reading time: [.004, .074]), and the exposure to attitude-consistent views was not a significant mediator (Article selection: [-.045, .026]; Reading time: [-.026, .040]).

Figure 4.5b: Abortion Issue Public and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)

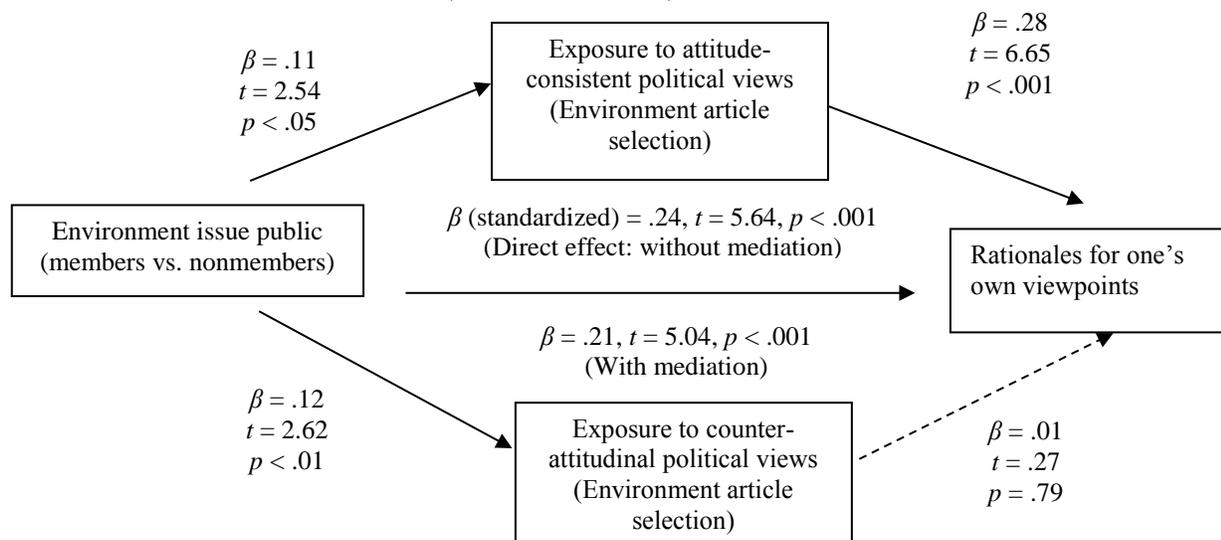


Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.026, .040) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.004, .074). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

(3) The Mediating Effect on Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoint: The Environment Issue Public

For the environment, the results were similar to the results for abortion. When the number of attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal articles selected was used in the mediation analysis, only selecting environment articles with attitude-consistent perspectives had a significant mediating effect on generating rationales for one’s own point of view (Figure 4.6a). The magnitude of the direct effect of membership in the environment issue public on reasoning for one’s own viewpoints was reduced from $\beta = .24$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .21$ ($p < .001$) after adding the mediators. The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs also showed that only exposure to attitude-consistent political views was a significant mediator (.002, .076).

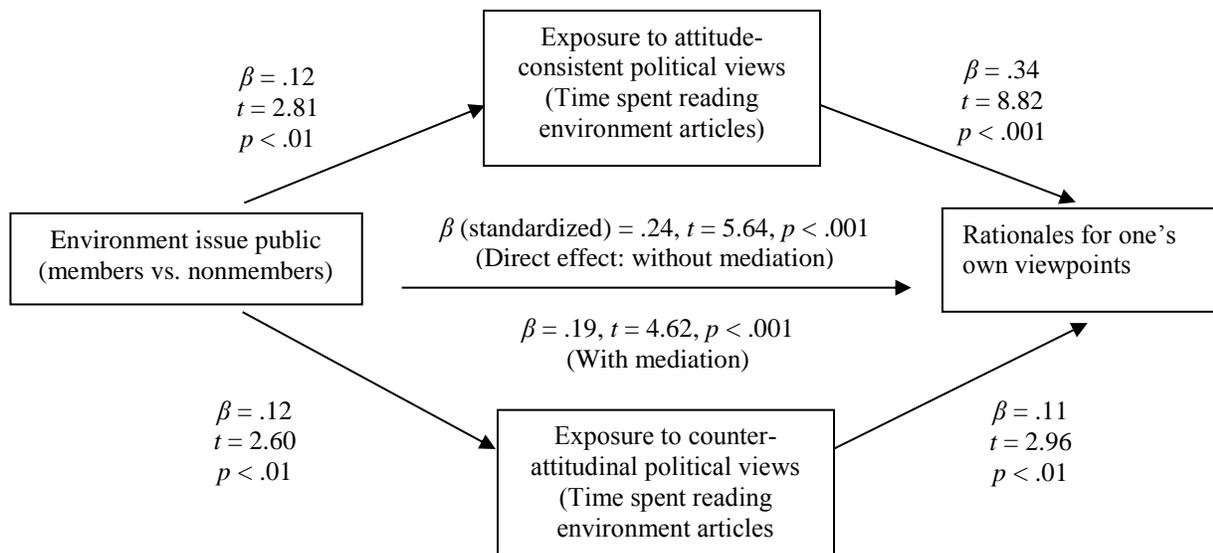
Figure 4.6a: Environment Issue Public and Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.002, .076) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.012, .020). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

Similar to the findings for the abortion issue, the results change slightly when analyzing reading time, instead of article selections. Not only did exposure to attitude-consistent political views emerge as a significant mediator, exposure to counter-attitudinal political views also was a significant mediator in the multiple mediation model (Figure 4.6b). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs for time spent reading attitude-consistent articles regarding the environment issue was (.008, .087), and for time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles was (.002, .036), which suggests that they are both significant mediators. In addition, including the mediators in the model reduced the direct effect from $\beta = .24$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .19$ ($p < .001$).

Figure 4.6b: Environment Issue Public and Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)

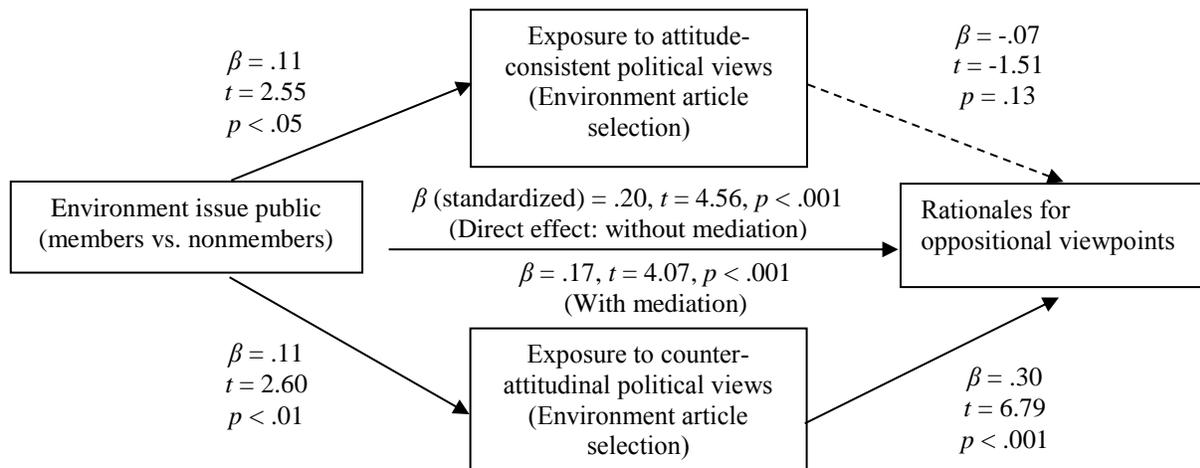


Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.008, .087) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.002, .036). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

(4) The Mediating Effect on Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoint: The Environment Issue Public

In terms of the mediating effects on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints, the results for the environment again were similar to the results for abortion. When exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views were tested simultaneously in a multiple mediation model, only exposure to counter-attitudinal political views was a significant mediator of the relationship between membership in the environment issue public and oppositional reasoning regarding the environment. The result of this mediating effect was found both in the number of article selected (The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CI: [.003, .075]; see Figure 4.7a) and in the amount of time spent reading articles (The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CI: [.003, .071]; see Figure 4.7b).

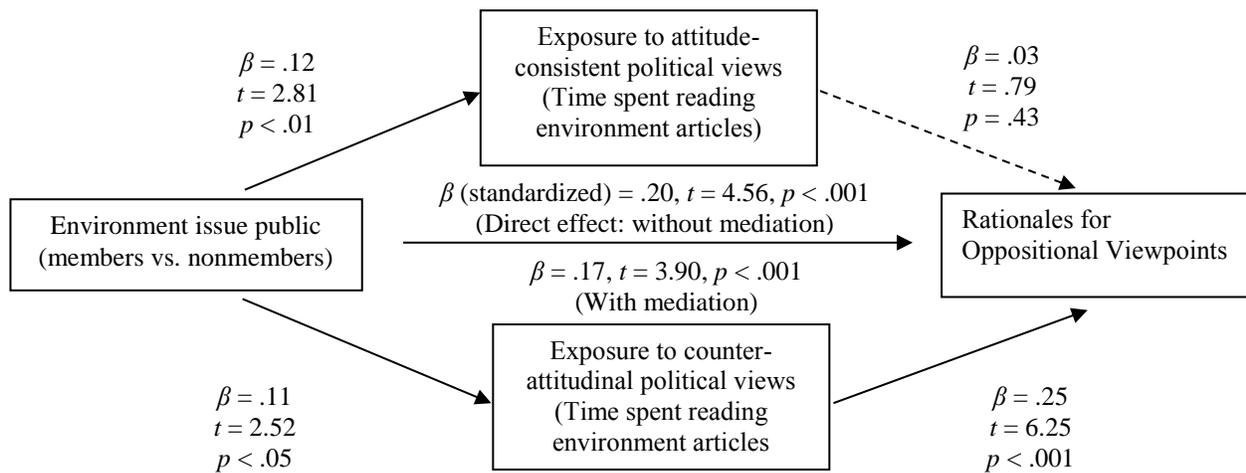
Figure 4.7a: Environment Issue Public and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.030, .006) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.003, .075). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

For the environment article selection, including the mediators in the model reduced the strength of the relationship between membership in the environment issue public and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints from $\beta = .20$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .17$ ($p < .001$) (Figure 4.7a). For the amount of time spent reading environment articles, the magnitude of the relationship was reduced from $\beta = .20$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .17$ ($p < .001$) (Figure 4.7b).

Figure 4.7b: Environment Issue Public and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.011, .021) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.003, .071). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

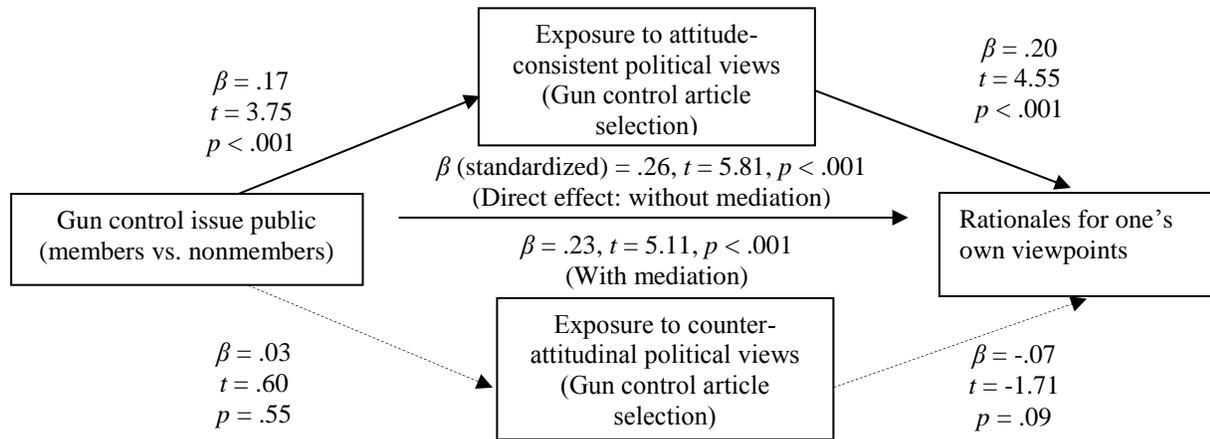
(5) The Mediating Effect on Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoint: The Gun Control Issue Public

For the gun control issue, a significant mediating effect of selecting attitude-consistent gun control articles was found (Figure 4.8a). This result was similar to what was found for the abortion and the environment issues—selecting attitude-consistent

articles mediates the relationship between issue public membership and generating rationales for one's own viewpoints. Adding the mediators reduced the strength of the relationship between membership in the gun control issue public and reasoning about one's own position from $\beta = .26$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .23$ ($p < .001$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CI for selecting gun control articles with attitude-consistent perspectives indicated that it was a significant mediator of the relationship (.011, .078).

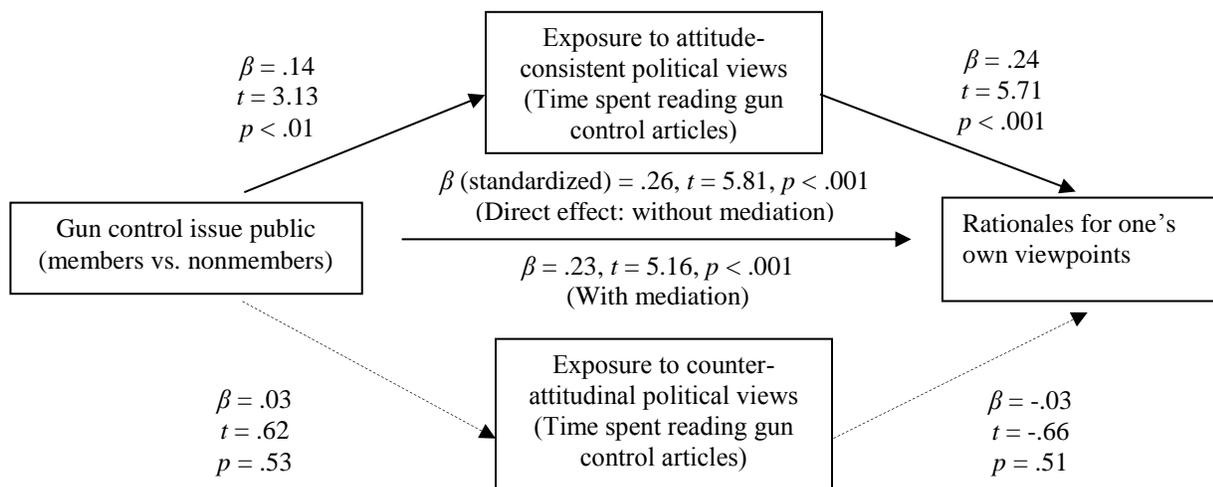
Similar results were found regarding the amount of time spent reading articles. As shown in Figure 4.8b, time spent reading gun control articles with attitude-consistent perspectives significantly mediated the relationship between membership in the environment issue public and generating rationales for one's own viewpoint. The strength of the relationship between membership in the gun control issue public and reasoning about one's own position was reduced from $\beta = .26$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = .23$ ($p < .001$). The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CI for time spent reading gun control articles with attitude-consistent perspectives also demonstrated that it played a significant mediating role in the relationship (.007, .077). This pattern differs from the results for abortion and the environment in which both time spent reading attitude-consistent articles and time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles had a significant mediating effect on generating rationales for one's own viewpoint.

Figure 4.8a: Gun Control Issue Public and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.011, .078) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.027, .006). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

Figure 4.8b: Gun Control Issue Public and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



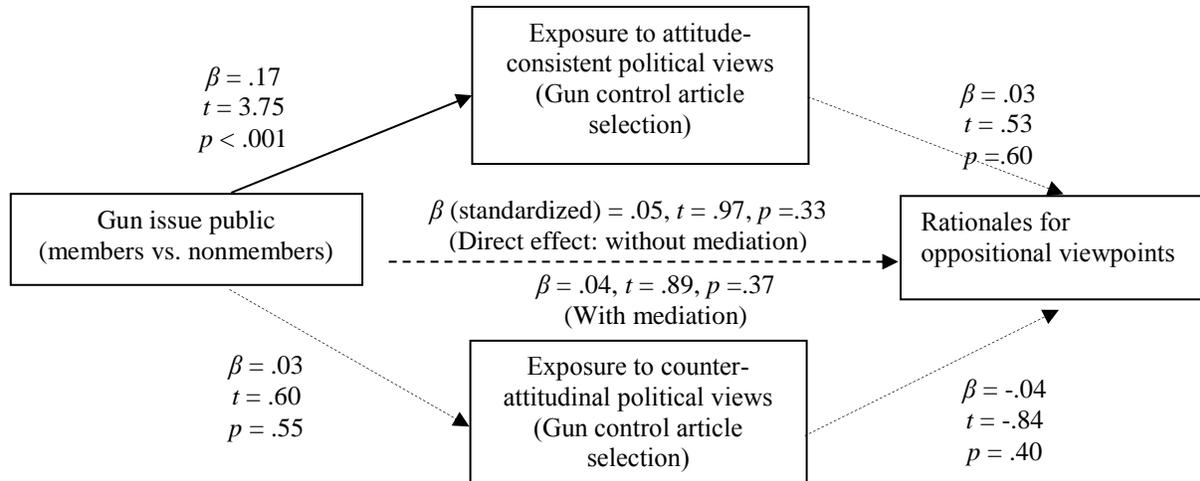
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.007, .077) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.009, .004). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

(6) The Mediating Effect on Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoint: The Gun Control Issue Public

In terms of the mediating effects of exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives on reasoning for the opposite position (Figure 4.9a and Figure 4.9b), no significant effects were found when analyzing the selection of gun control articles (Figure 4.9a).²⁰ For time spent reading articles, although there were significant paths from issue public membership to time spent reading attitude-consistent articles and from time spent reading attitude-consistent articles to generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints (Figure 4.9b), the bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs for spend time reading attitude-consistent articles included zero (-.001, .040). It indicated that spend time reading attitude-consistent articles was not a significant mediator in the relationship.

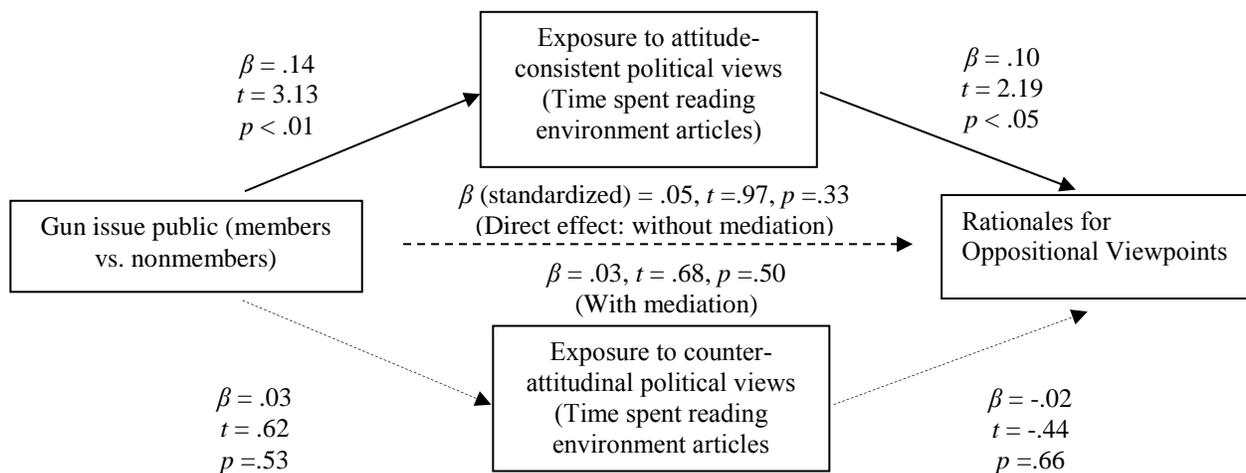
²⁰ According to Hayes' (2013) it is fine to proceed with mediation analysis even in the absence of a significant direct effect. Rucker and his colleagues (2011) also demonstrated that significant indirect effects can be observed even if the direct effect is not significant. Presenting the mediation analyses for the gun control issue can provide a better understanding of the mediating relationships in the three different issues.

Figure 4.9a: Gun Control Issue Public and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.017, .029) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.016, .004). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

Figure 4.9b: Gun Control Issue Public and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.001, .040) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.016, .004). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

To summarize the findings of the multiple mediation models across the three issues, Hypothesis 5a was supported across all three issues, and across different operationalizations of selectivity (i.e., number of article selected and amount of time spent reading articles). Exposure to attitude-consistent political views mediated the direct effect of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints. Hypothesis 5b, which proposed that exposure to counter-attitudinal political views would mediate the direct effect of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints; however, was only supported for the abortion and environment issues, and only when exposure was measured by the amount of time spent reading articles.

Lastly, Hypothesis 5c, which stated that exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives would mediate the direct effect of issue public membership on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints, was supported for the abortion and environment issues, but not gun control. It is worth noting that the results in the previous section about issue publics and issue-based selectivity already showed that gun control issue public members did not tend to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views, while abortion and environment issue public members did. In addition, there was not a significant difference between members and nonmembers of the gun control issue public in generating oppositional points of view. Accordingly, it is not surprising that exposure to counter-attitudinal political views did not have a significant mediating effect either on generating rationales for one's own or on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints.²¹

²¹ All the multiple mediation models also were analyzed using the new continuous measure of issue public membership. The results were similar. Figures are included in the Appendix (From Figure A.4 to Figure A.9).

ISSUE PUBLICS AND OPINION QUALITY: THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN GENERATING RATIONALES FOR ONE'S OWN VIEWPOINTS AND GENERATING RATIONALES FOR OPPOSITIONAL VIEWPOINTS

In addition to information selectivity, the extent to which issue public members generate rationales for their own viewpoints and reason from the opposite perspective was explored. As previously found, issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to generate both rationales for their own viewpoints and rationales for oppositional viewpoints (for the abortion and environment issues; membership in the gun control issue did not predict generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints). However, the analyses did not show whether issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to generate more rationales for their own views than for other views. Compared to the nonmembers of issue publics, do issue public members have a more balanced number of rationales for their own and oppositional viewpoints when reasoning about an issue? Or, do issue public members tend to list more rationales to support their own position than to generate counter-attitudinal rationales compared to the nonmembers?

To answer Research Question 3, the difference between the number of rationales for one's own viewpoint and the number of rationales for oppositional viewpoints was employed as the dependent variable in a regression analysis for each issue (Model 1: abortion issue; Model 2; environment issue; Model 3; gun control issue). Larger positive values of the dependent variable indicate that people generate more rationales for one's own viewpoints relative to oppositional viewpoints. Table 4.16 presents the descriptive statistics of the difference between exposure to attitudinal and counter-attitudinal political views.

Table 4.16: Descriptive Statistics of the Difference between Generating Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints and Oppositional Viewpoints

	Positive value (%)	Zero (%)	Negative value (%)	Mean	SD
<i>Abortion</i>	50.8	34.1	15.1	.61	1.28
<i>Environment</i>	45.5	38.0	16.5	.60	1.46
<i>Gun control</i>	55.7	32.4	11.9	.81	1.40

As shown in Table 4.17, issue public membership was a significant predictor of the difference between rationales for own and oppositional viewpoints across the three issues (abortion: $\beta = .19, p < .001$; environment: $\beta = .11, p < .001$; gun control: $\beta = .21, p < .001$). Issue public members had larger difference between generating rationales for their own and oppositional viewpoints than nonmembers across all three issues.

Taking the findings of opinion quality in the previous section and the results in this section into account, even though issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to provide reasons for both sides of an issue, they still displayed unbalanced opinion quality. More specifically, for the abortion and environment issues, issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints. Yet they also had a wider gap between generating rationales for their own and oppositional viewpoints than the nonmembers. For the gun control issue, issue public members did not tend to reason from the opposite perspective, yet they tended to list significantly more rationales for their own viewpoints than for oppositional viewpoints compared to the nonmembers.

Table 4.17: Issue Publics Predicting Difference between Rationales for Own Viewpoints and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints

	Model 1: Abortion	Model 2: Environment	Model 3: Gun Control
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Age	-.02	.05	.04
Gender(Male)	-.02	-.04	-.09**
Race (White)	.04	.01	-.01
Education	-.01	-.01	.00
Income	-.01	-.04	.07
Political ideology/partisanship	.06	-.07	.06
Political interest	.02	.03	.03
General political knowledge	-.04	-.03	-.07
News media use	-.09*	.02	.04
Accuracy goals	.03	.01	.05
Directional goals	.01	.04	.06
No goals	.00	-.02	.10*
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>			
Abortion issue	.19***		
Environment issue		.11**	
Gun control issue			.21***
Total R²	.06***	.04**	.09***

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The manipulation of information search (i.e., accuracy goals, directional goals, no goals, and no search) was dummy-coded and included as control variables. The no search condition was the reference group. Results remained the same when the total number of rationales for own and oppositional viewpoints was included as a control variable. The dependent variable is the difference between the number of rationales for own viewpoints and the number of rationales for oppositional viewpoints; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND INTENTIONS TO ISSUE-RELEVANT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Turning from issue publics' information search (i.e., selectivity) and information processing (i.e., knowledge and argument repertoire) to their political behaviors (i.e., intentions to political participation), two sets of partial correlations were used which are consistent with the analyses in previous sections. The first set of partial correlations is to examine the relationships among the issue public measures and intentions to participate in issue-relevant political activities (Table 4.18). The new continuous measure had the strongest correlations with intentions to participate issue-relevant political activities both offline and online across the three issues compared to other measurements. The dichotomous measure also was consistently related to the participation intention measures. To be consistent with the previous sections of this chapter, I again employed the new dichotomous measure. This measure was more conservative than the continuous measure for analyzing the relationships between issue publics and intentions for issue-relevant political participation in the following analyses. It is worth noting that personal issue importance as a dichotomy also appeared to have a strong correlation with offline and online participation intentions with a slightly smaller magnitude than the relationships between the new measures and the participation measures.

Table 4.18: Correlations among Measures of Issue Publics and Intentions to Issue-Relevant Political Participation

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation
The new continuous measure	.48***	.44***	.42***	.38***	.37***	.33***
The new dichotomous measure	.41***	.37***	.37***	.32***	.30***	.27***
Personal issue importance as a scale	.41***	.35***	.36***	.33***	.35***	.32***
Personal issue importance as a dichotomy	.33***	.28***	.31***	.25***	.32***	.29***
Opinionation	.06	.07*	.14***	.13***	.09*	.09*
Demographics						
1. Female (abortion)	.22***	.16***				
2. Location (environment)			.00	.03		
3. Gun ownership (gun control)					.14***	.15***

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and the manipulation of information search. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Before moving to the hypotheses testing, a second set of partial correlations was conducted to provide a general understanding of whether issue publics exercise issue-specificity in their political behaviors. In previous sections, issue public members

displayed issue-specificity in their information selectivity, political knowledge, and opinion quality. The partial correlations indicate whether issue public members intend to engage in political participation offline and online with respect to the issue about which they care, and whether they intend to participate in political activities related to the other issues.

In Table 4.19, membership in the abortion issue public was significantly associated with intentions to participate in abortion-related political activities offline ($r = .41, p < .001$) and online ($r = .37, p < .001$). Interestingly, membership in the abortion issue public also was correlated with intentions to participate in environment-related political activities offline ($r = .14, p < .001$) and online ($r = .13, p < .001$), although the relationships were weaker than with intentions to participate in abortion-related political activities.

For the environment issue, issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to intend to participate in environment-related activities offline ($r = .37, p < .001$) and online ($r = .32, p < .001$). In addition, environment issue public membership also was found to correlate with intentions to participate in abortion-related political activities (offline: $r = .12, p < .01$; online: $r = .11, p < .01$), and gun control-related political activities (offline: $r = .07, p < .05$; online: $r = .07, p < .05$); however, the correlations were weaker outside of the issue public members' issue domain than within their issue domain.

In the same manner, for the gun control issue, issue public membership was significantly associated with intentions to participate in gun control issue-relevant political activities offline ($r = .30, p < .001$) and online ($r = .26, p < .001$). It also was correlated with intentions to participate in abortion issue-relevant activities (offline: $r =$

.13, $p < .001$; online: $r = .12$, $p < .01$), and environment issue-relevant activities (offline: $r = .12$, $p < .01$; online: $r = .11$, $p < .05$). Similarly, the correlations with participation intentions outside of the issue domain were weaker than those in the issue domain.

Table 4.19: Issue Public Membership and Issue-Specificity in Intentions to Political Participation Offline and Online

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>						
Abortion	.41***	.37***	.12**	.11**	.13***	.12**
Environment	.14***	.13***	.37***	.32***	.12**	.11*
Gun control	.07	.05	.07*	.07*	.30***	.26***

Note: Cell entries are partial correlation coefficients, controlling for age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and the manipulation of information search. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

These correlations demonstrate a different pattern than what was found earlier in this chapter about issue publics' selectivity and knowledge. With regard to information search, issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to select articles about the issues associated with their issue public membership, and they did not pay more attention than nonmembers to articles about other issues. In addition, at the cognitive level, issue public members had significantly higher knowledge than nonmembers about the issue associated with their issue public membership, and they were not better-informed about other issues. Interestingly, when it comes to the behavioral level, issue

public members intended to engage in political activities not only with respect to the issues associated with their membership, but they also intended to participate in activities associated with other issues more than nonmembers. Yet correlations between issue public membership and intentions to participate in non-issue-relevant activities were weaker than the correlations between issue public members and intentions to engage in political activities related to their issue public membership.

To further investigate the influence of issue public membership on intentions to participate in issue-relevant political activities (Hypothesis 6a and Hypothesis 6b), regression analyses were conducted for each of the three issues (Model 1 for abortion, Model 2 for the environment, and Model 3 for gun control). Intentions to participate in issue-relevant activities offline and online also were analyzed separately in Model a and Model b for each of the issues.

As shown in Table 4.20, abortion issue public membership was a significant predictor of intentions to participate in abortion-related political activities offline ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$; see Model 1a) and online ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$; see Model 1b), after taking the controls into account. Members of the abortion issue public had greater intentions to participate in abortion-related political activities in both offline and online environments than nonmembers. In the same manner, there were significant differences between environment issue public members and nonmembers in intentions to participate in issue-relevant political activities after the controls. Members of the environment issue public were more likely than nonmembers to intend to participate in offline environment activities ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$; see Model 2a), and online environment-related political activities ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$; see Model 2b). For the gun control issue, the regression analysis showed that members of the gun control issue public had greater intentions to

participate in gun control-related activities offline compared to nonmembers ($\beta = .28, p < .001$; see Model 3a). The relationship remained significant when the intentions to participate moved from offline to online environments ($\beta = .25, p < .001$; see Model 3b). Hypothesis 6a and Hypothesis 6b were supported, therefore, across the three issues. Issue public members had greater intentions to participate in political activities within their issue domains in both offline and online environments than nonmembers.²²

²² The regression analyses were conducted again with the new continuous measure of issue public membership as the independent variable. The results were similar, and the table is included in the Appendix (Table A.5)

Table 4.20: Issue Publics Predicting Intentions to Participate in Issue-Relevant Political Activities

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a:	Model 1b:	Model 2a:	Model 2b:	Model 3a:	Model 3b:
	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.11***	-.16***	-.08*	-.13***	-.08*	-.13***
Gender (Male)	-.09**	-.05	-.06	-.03	-.08*	-.04
Race (White)	.08**	.06	.07*	.05	.07*	.04
Education	-.01	-.05	.03	-.02	.01	-.04
Income	-.01	-.04	-.03	-.06	-.04	-.06
Political ideology	-.09**	-.09**	-.14***	-.15***	-.05	-.08*
Political interest	.23***	.18***	.25***	.21***	.26***	.21***
General political knowledge	-.01	-.02	.03	-.01	-.01	-.01
News media use	.20***	.21***	.20***	.23***	.25***	.26***
Accuracy goals	.07*	.06	.02	.01	.03	.02
Directional goals	.06	.07*	.03	.03	.02	.03
No goals	.04	.05	.03	.04	.02	.02
<i>The New Dichotomous Measure: Issue Public Members vs. Nonmembers</i>						
Abortion issue	.39***	.36***				
Environment issue			.34***	.29***		
Gun control issue					.28***	.25***
Total R²	.36***	.30***	.36***	.30***	.29***	.25***

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The manipulation of information search (i.e., accuracy goals, directional goals, no goals, and no search) was dummy-coded and included as control variables. The no search condition was the reference group. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

FROM DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY TO PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

After examining the relationships among issue publics, information selectivity and other political outcomes (e.g., issue-specific knowledge, opinion quality, and intentions to participate in issue-related political activities), Research Question 4 aims to understand these relationships in a comprehensive manner. Structural equation modeling (SEM) with Mplus 7 was conducted for each of the issues to integrate all the proposed relationships. The model, therefore, provides a picture of the path regarding issue public's contribution to the functioning of democracy from deliberative democracy to participatory democracy.

(1) Integrated Models for the Abortion Issue

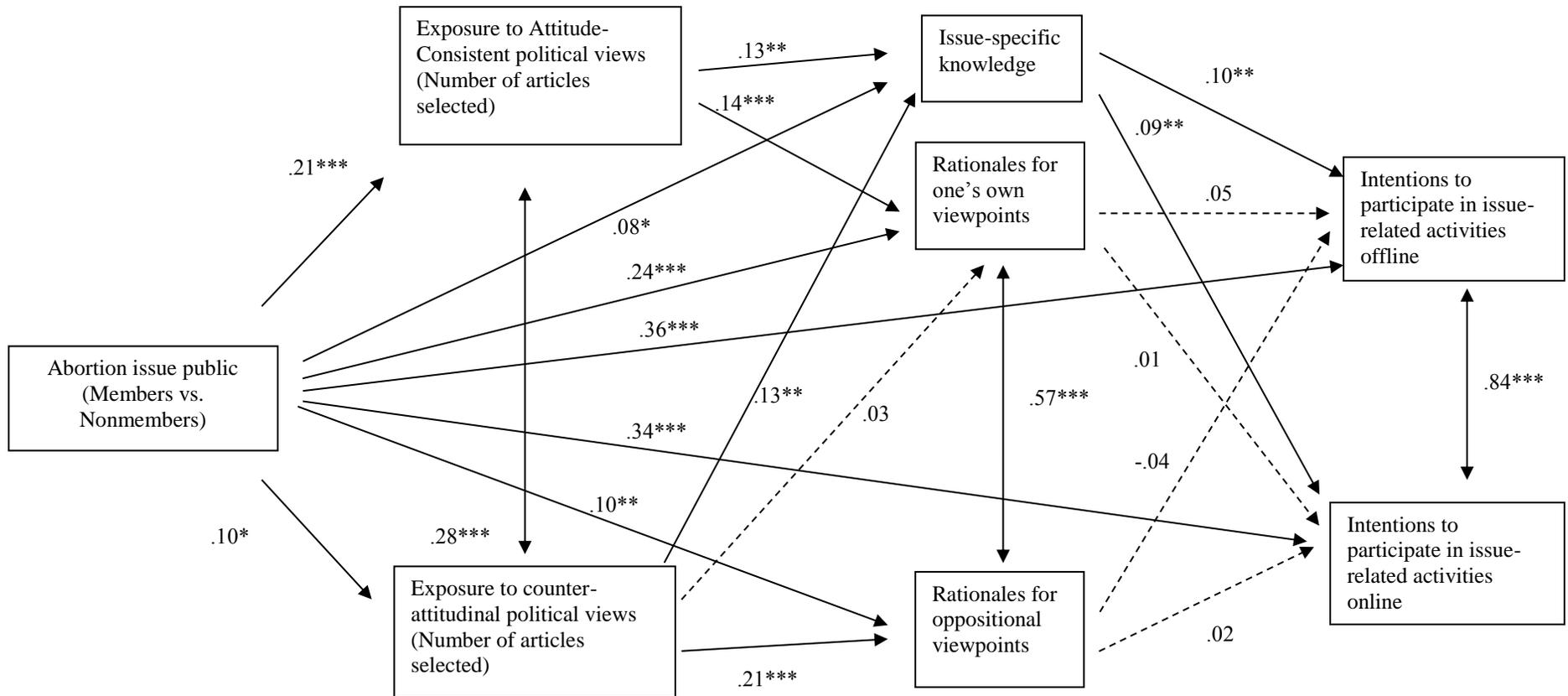
Figures 4.10a shows the model for the abortion issue with exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views using number of articles selected. The Chi-square statistic for the model is 16.04 ($df = 7, p < .05$), indicating an inadequate model fit. Given that the Chi-square statistics is sensitive to the sample size (Bollen, 1989; Kline, 2011), other model indices also are considered. The Bentler Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is .996, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is .95, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is .04, and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is .01, all indicating adequate model fit based on the thresholds of acceptable fit ($CFI \geq .95$, $TLI \geq .90$, $RMSEA \leq .05$, and $SRMR \leq .05$, see Hu & Bentler, 1999)

In this model, all significant results found in previous hypotheses testing related to the abortion issue (article selection) sustained in the model. For the link between the deliberative and participatory dimensions, the model indicates a significant effect of

issue-specific knowledge on intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($\beta = .10, p < .01$) and online ($\beta = .09, p < .01$). However, there are no significant effects of generating rationales for one's own or oppositional viewpoints on intentions to participate politically offline and online.

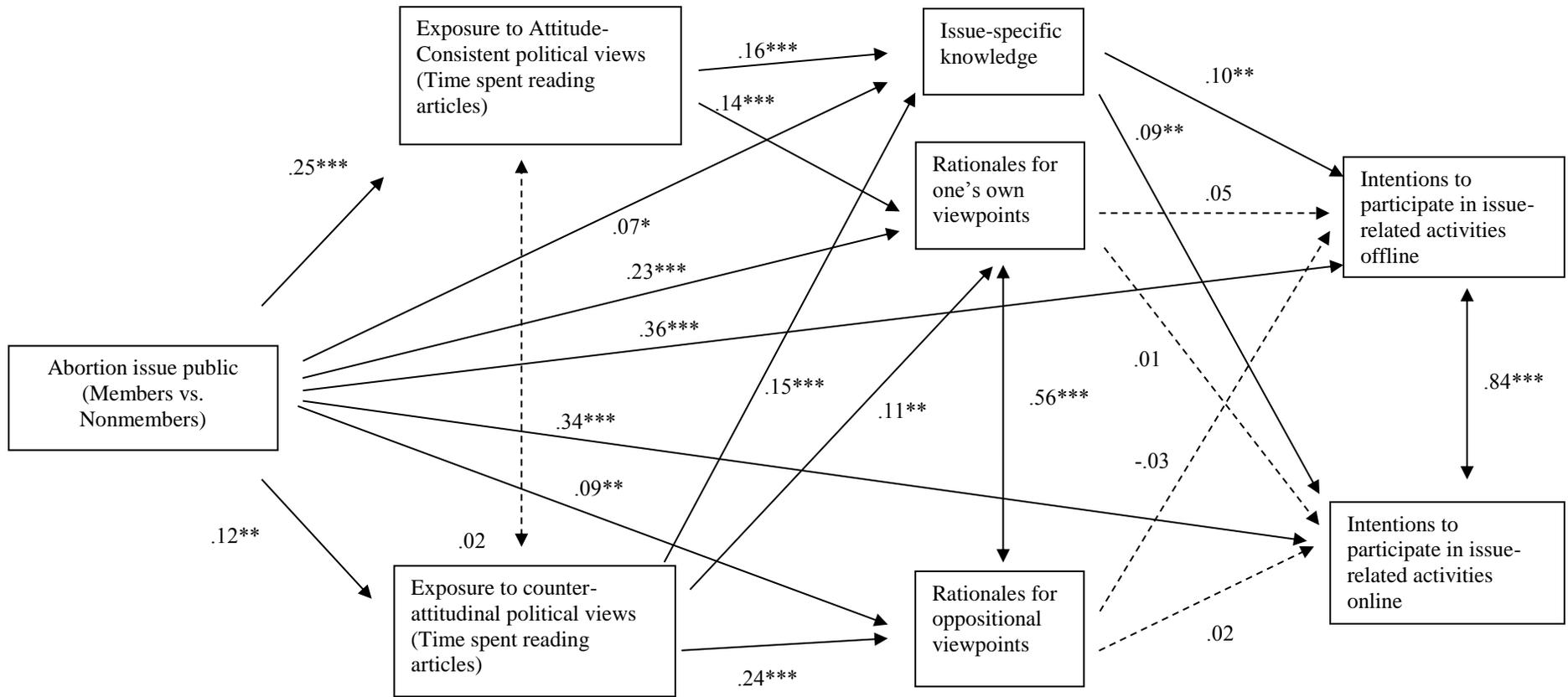
Figure 4.10b presents the abortion issue model with time spent reading articles as the indicator of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views. The Chi-square statistic ($\chi^2 = 10.41, df = 7, p = .17$) is not significant, which indicates an adequate fit between the overall model and the observed data. The structural model also fits the data well across model goodness-of-fit indices (CFI = .99, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .02, SRMR = .01). All relationships found in previous hypotheses testing related to the abortion issue public with time spent reading articles stayed the same. Similar to the model presented in Figure 4.10a, this model shows a significant relationship between issue-specific knowledge and intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($\beta = .10, p < .01$) and online ($\beta = .09, p < .01$). There are no significant relationships between generating rationales for one's own viewpoints and intentions to participate offline and online. There are no significant associations between generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints and intentions to participate offline and online either.

Figure 4.10a: The Integrated Model of the Abortion Issue (With Article Selection)



Note: The goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = 16.04$ ($df = 7, p < .05$), RMSEA = .04, CFI = .996, TLI = .95, SRMR = .01. $N = 542$. Path entries are standardized coefficients. The effects of demographics variables (gender, age, education, income, and race), political predispositions (political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), media use, and goal manipulation were included in the model as control variables, but not shown in the Figure. The model predicts the following variance for attitude-consistent exposure ($R^2 = 8.6\%$), counter-attitudinal exposure ($R^2 = 8.7\%$), issue-specific knowledge ($R^2 = 22.6\%$), rationales for own viewpoints ($R^2 = 22.1\%$), rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($R^2 = 17.8\%$), intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($R^2 = 37.0\%$), and intentions to participate in issue-related activities online ($R^2 = 30.8\%$).

Figure 4.10b: The Integrated Model of the Abortion Issue (With Reading Time)



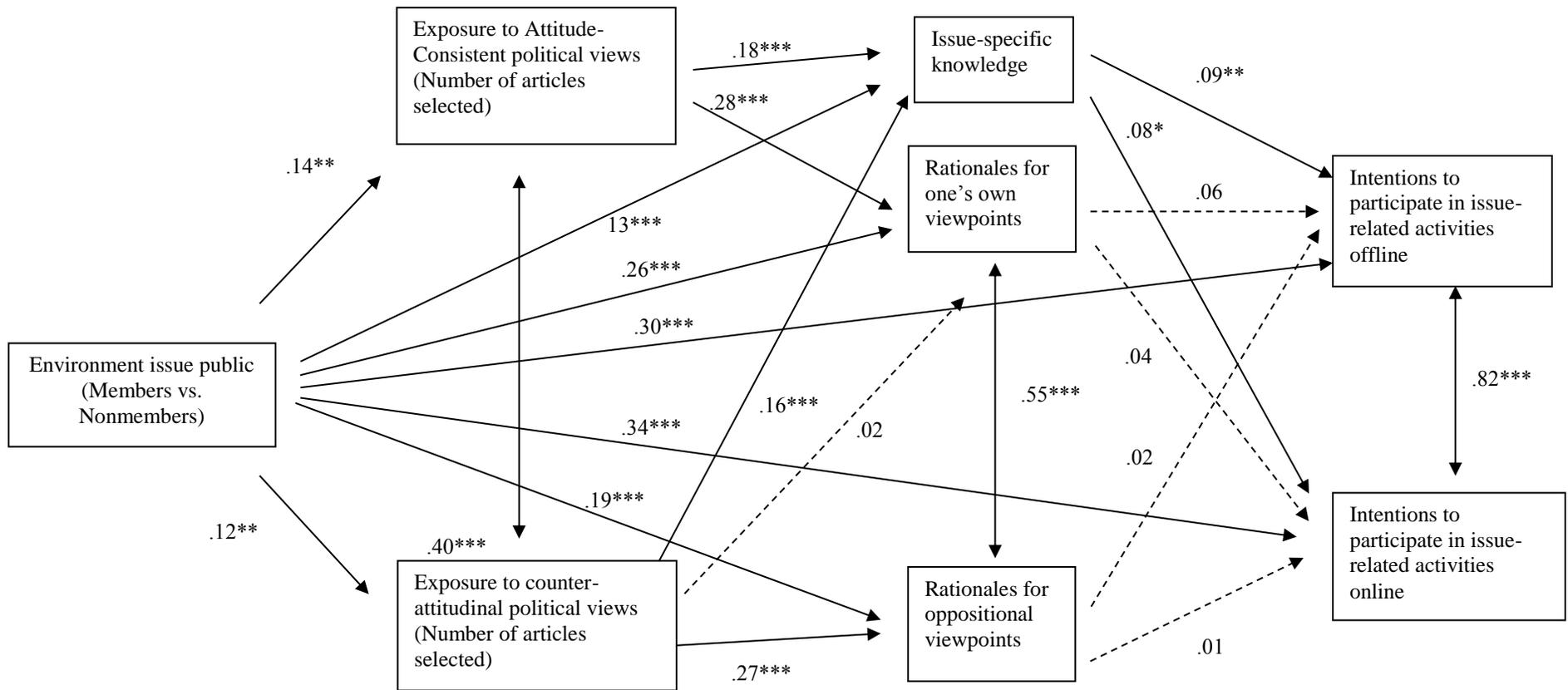
Note: The goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = 10.41$ ($df = 7, p = .17$), RMSEA = .02, CFI = .999, TLI = .98, SRMR = .01. $N = 542$. Path entries are standardized coefficients. The effects of demographics variables (gender, age, education, income, and race), political predispositions (political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), media use, and goal manipulation were included in the model as control variables, but not shown in the Figure. The model predicts the following variance for attitude-consistent exposure ($R^2 = 9.5\%$), counter-attitudinal exposure ($R^2 = 6.3\%$), issue-specific knowledge ($R^2 = 23.1\%$), rationales for own viewpoints ($R^2 = 23.1\%$), rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($R^2 = 19.4\%$), intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($R^2 = 37.0\%$), and intentions to participate in issue-related activities online ($R^2 = 30.8\%$).

(2) Integrated Models for the Environment Issue

Figure 4.11a and Figure 4.11b show the integrated models for the environment issue with number of articles selected demonstrated in Figure 4.11a and with time spent reading articles presented in Figure 4.11b. For the environment issue with number of articles selected (Figure 4.11a), although the Chi-square statistic is significant ($\chi^2 = 23.68$, $df = 7$, $p < .01$), other fits statistics support an adequate model fit (CFI = .99, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .049, SRMR = .01). Similar to what was found in the abortion issue public, there is a significant effect of issue-specific knowledge on intentions to engage in issue-related political participations offline ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$) and online ($\beta = .08$, $p < .01$), but generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints do not influence intentions to participate issue-related activities. All other relationships identified in previous hypotheses testing stayed the same.

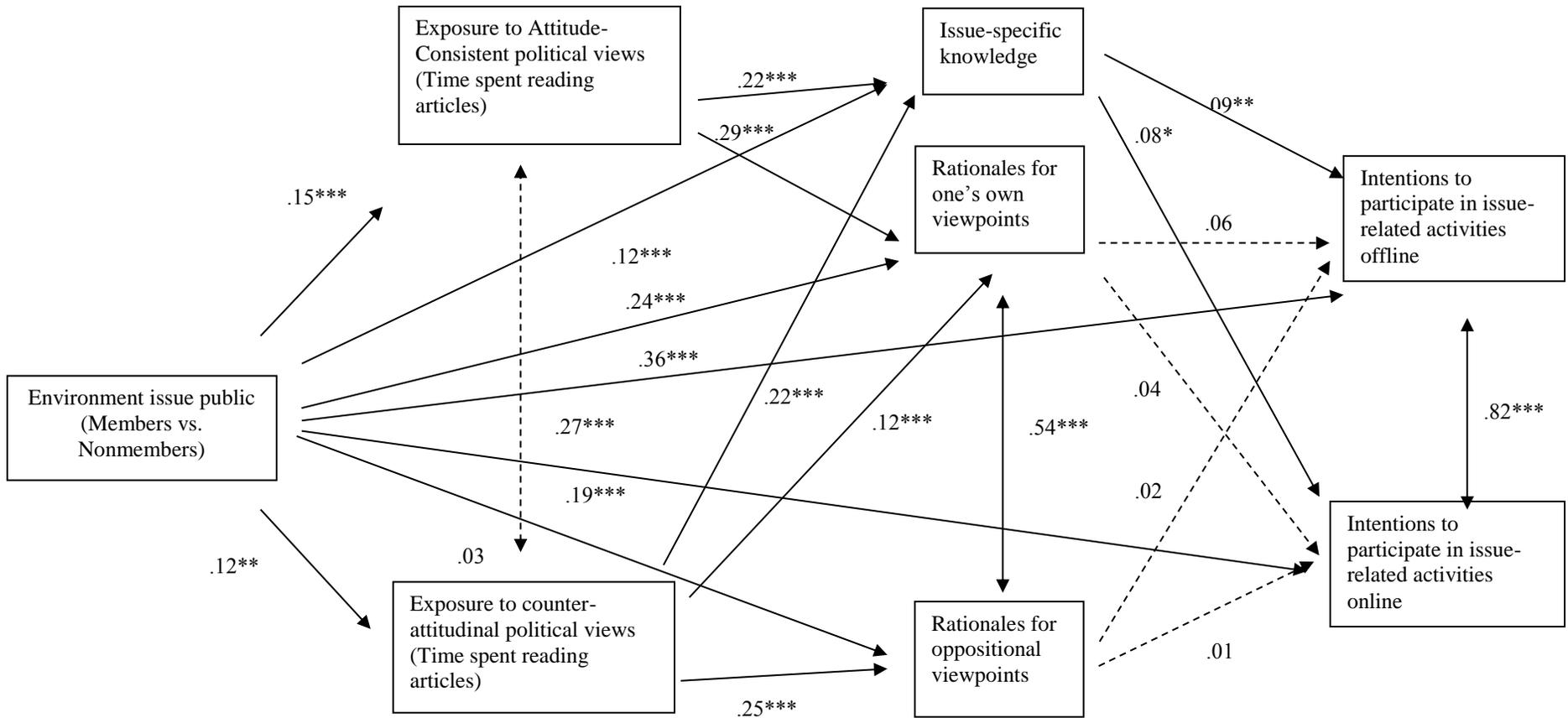
For the environment issue with time spent reading articles (Figure 4.11b), a similar pattern to the abortion issue public was observed. Even though the Chi-square statistic is significant ($\chi^2 = 19.35$, $df = 7$, $p < .01$), other fit statistics support an adequate fit for the model (CFI = .995, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .046, SRMR = .01). Issue-specific knowledge significantly affects intentions to participate in issue-related political activities offline ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$) and online ($\beta = .08$, $p < .01$). No significant path from argument generation to intentions to participate politically was found. All other relationships were consistent with the previous hypotheses testing.

Figure 4.11a: The Integrated Model of the Environment Issue (With Article Selection)



Note: The goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = 23.68$ ($df = 7$, $p < .01$), RMSEA = .049, CFI = .99, TLI = .91, SRMR = .01. $N = 544$. Path entries are standardized coefficients. The effects of demographics variables (gender, age, education, income, and race), political predispositions (political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), media use, and goal manipulation were included in the model as control variables, but not shown in the Figure. The model predicts the following variance for attitude-consistent exposure ($R^2 = 4.8\%$), counter-attitudinal exposure ($R^2 = 6.5\%$), issue-specific knowledge ($R^2 = 29.3\%$), rationales for own viewpoints ($R^2 = 26.9\%$), rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($R^2 = 22.1\%$), intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($R^2 = 37.2\%$), and intentions to participate in issue-related activities online ($R^2 = 30.7\%$).

Figure 4.11b: The Integrated Model of the Environment Issue (With Reading Time)



Note: The goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = 19.35$ ($df = 7$, $p < .01$), RMSEA = .046, CFI = .995, TLI = .93, SRMR = .01. $N = 544$. Path entries are standardized coefficients. The effects of demographics variables (gender, age, education, income, and race), political predispositions (political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), media use, and goal manipulation were included in the model as control variables, but not shown in the Figure. The model predicts the following variance for attitude-consistent exposure ($R^2 = 6.6\%$), counter-attitudinal exposure ($R^2 = 4.5\%$), issue-specific knowledge ($R^2 = 30.9\%$), rationales for own viewpoints ($R^2 = 28.5\%$), rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($R^2 = 21.4\%$), intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($R^2 = 37.2\%$), and intentions to participate in issue-related activities online ($R^2 = 30.7\%$).

(3) Integrated Models for the Gun Control Issue

Figure 4.12a presents the integrated model for the gun control issue with exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views using the number of articles selected. Even though the Chi-square static is significant ($\chi^2 = 15.60$, $df = 7$, $p < .01$), other model goodness-of-fit indices indicate a strong model fit (CFI = .996, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .01). For the link between deliberative and participatory dimensions, different from what was found for the abortion and the environment issues, issue-specific knowledge, rationales for one's own viewpoints, and rationales for oppositional viewpoints did not significantly predict intentions to participate issue-related activities offline or online. Gun control issue public membership is the only significant factor in influencing intentions to engage in issue-related political participation offline ($\beta = 26$, $p < .001$), and online ($\beta = 24$, $p < .001$), consistent with the results for Hypotheses 6a and 6b.

Figure 4.12b demonstrates the integrated model for the gun control issue with exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views using time spent reading articles. The Chi-square statistic is significant ($\chi^2 = 23.78$, $df = 7$, $p < .01$), and TLI is .87, which indicates an inadequate fit between the observed data and the model. Other indices, however, suggest an adequate fit for the model (CFI = .99, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .01). Similar to the gun control model with article selection, there are no significant paths from issue-specific knowledge or argument generation to intentions to participate in issue-related political activities offline or online.

For these two models, all relationships tested in previous hypotheses for the gun control issue stayed the same. For example, members of the gun control issue public were more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to attitude-consistent perspectives,

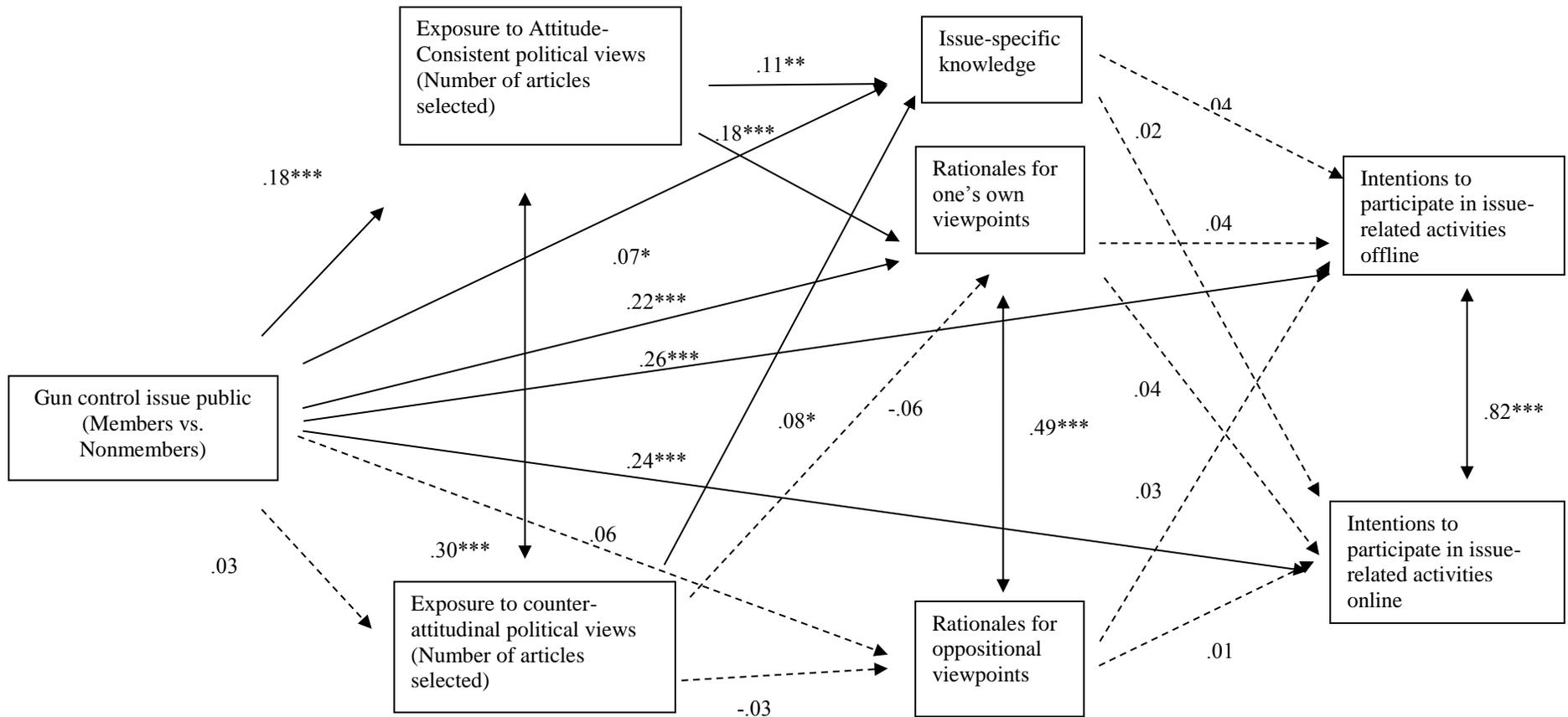
but not to counter-attitudinal perspectives. Members also were more likely than nonmembers to generate rationales for their own viewpoints, but not rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

Summary for the Models

Based on the models across three different issues, the gun control issue public again shows a different pattern from the abortion and environment issue publics regarding the path from deliberative democracy to participatory democracy. For the gun control issue, issue public membership contributes to deliberative and participatory democracy separately. This is demonstrated by the fact that issue-specific knowledge, rationales for one's own viewpoints and rationales for oppositional viewpoints do not lead to intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline and online. Issue public membership is the only factor that affects intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline and online. Notably, membership in issue public has only a limited contribution to deliberative democracy since gun control issue public members do not expose themselves to more counter-attitudinal political views or generate more rationales for oppositional viewpoints than nonmembers.

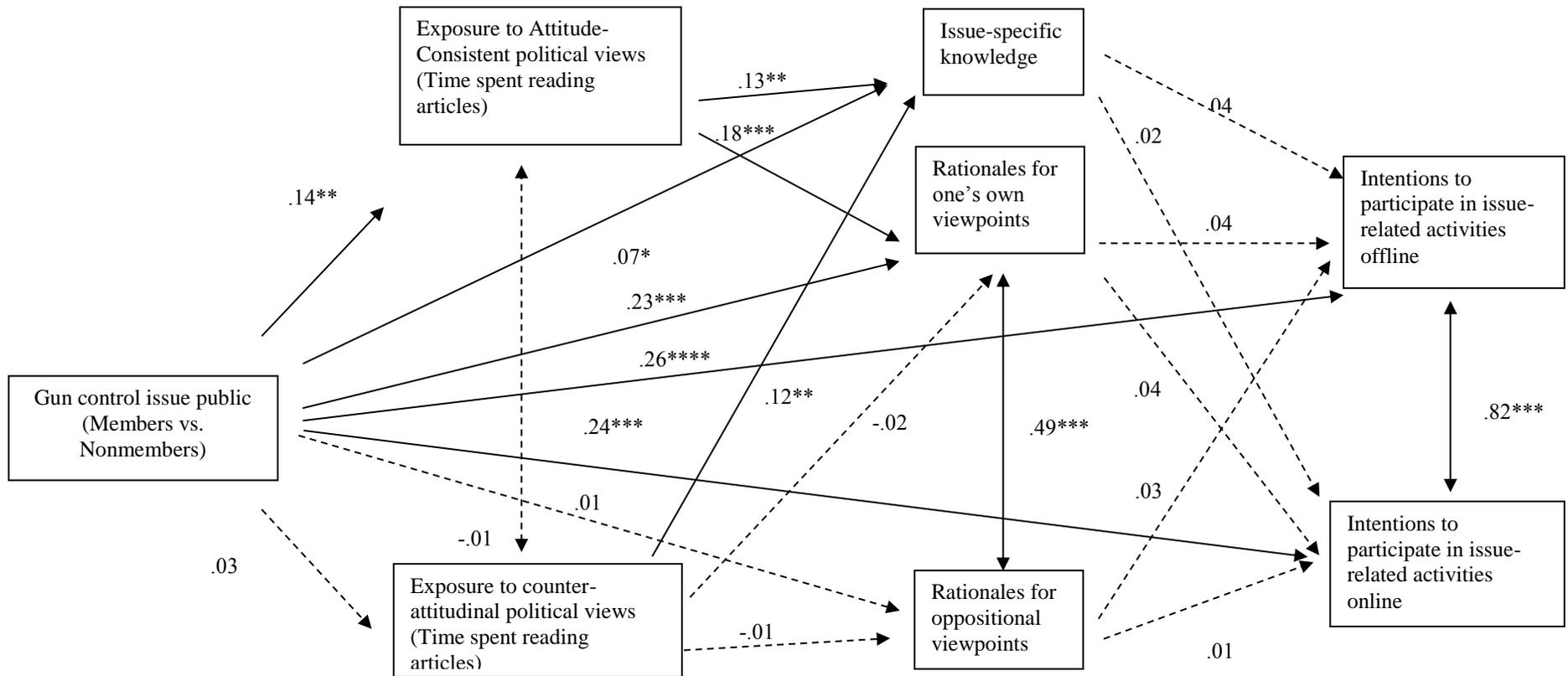
For the abortion and environment issues, the deliberative and participatory dimensions are bridged by issue public membership, which exerts a significant influence on all dependent variables. Further, the two dimensions of democracy also are connected by issue-specific knowledge. In the models for the abortion and environment issue publics, issue-specific knowledge, which is significantly affected by issue public membership, exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views (both article selection and reading time), result in greater intentions to engage in issue-related participation both offline and online.

Figure 4.12a: The Integrated Model of the Gun Control Issue (With Article Selection)



Note: The goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = 15.60$ ($df = 7, p < .05$), RMSEA = .04, CFI = .996, TLI = .94, SRMR = .01. $N = 501$. Path entries are standardized coefficients. The effects of demographics variables (gender, age, education, income, and race), political predispositions (political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), media use, and goal manipulation were included in the model as control variables, but not shown in the Figure. The model predicts the following variance for attitude-consistent exposure ($R^2 = 5.5\%$), counter-attitudinal exposure ($R^2 = 2.3\%$), issue-specific knowledge ($R^2 = 15.4\%$), rationales for own viewpoints ($R^2 = 18.4\%$), rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($R^2 = 8.7\%$), intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($R^2 = 29.8\%$), and intentions to participate in issue-related activities online ($R^2 = 25.2\%$).

Figure 4.12b: The Integrated Model of the Gun Control Issue (With Reading Time)



Note: The goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = 23.78$ ($df = 7$, $p < .01$), RMSEA = .05, CFI = .99, TLI = .87, SRMR = .01. $N = 501$. Path entries are standardized coefficients. The effects of demographics variables (gender, age, education, income, and race), political predispositions (political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), media use, and goal manipulation were included in the model as control variables, but not shown in the Figure. The model predicts the following variance for attitude-consistent exposure ($R^2 = 4.7\%$), counter-attitudinal exposure ($R^2 = 2.1\%$), issue-specific knowledge ($R^2 = 16.2\%$), rationales for own viewpoints ($R^2 = 19.0\%$), rationales for oppositional viewpoints ($R^2 = 8.7\%$), intentions to participate in issue-related activities offline ($R^2 = 29.8\%$), and intentions to participate in issue-related activities online ($R^2 = 25.1\%$).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The results in this chapter provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of issue publics in information selectivity, issue-specific knowledge, opinion quality, and intentions to participate politically. Table 4.21 presents a summary of the findings in this chapter.

For selectivity, issue public members exercised their issue-specificity in information selection. They tended to select more articles on the issue of interest and spend more time reading these articles than they selected or read articles about other issues. In addition, for the abortion and environment issues, issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to select both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal articles about the issue. They also were more likely than nonmembers to spend time reading both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal issue-related articles. This information seeking pattern, however, was not found for the gun control issue. Members in the gun control issue public were more likely to expose themselves to pro-attitudinal information (in both article selection and reading time), but not to counter-attitudinal information than nonmembers.

For information selectivity, I also found that members of the abortion and gun control issues were biased in their information selection given that they have a wider gap between exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views in both article selection and reading time compared to nonmembers.

Across all three issues, issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to have issue-specific knowledge, and the relationship was mediated by their issue-based selectivity. For the abortion and environment issues, exposure to both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views served as significant mediators of the relationship.

For the gun control issue, only exposure to attitude-consistent political views significantly mediated the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge.

With regard to opinion quality, issue public members were issue-specific in their ability to generate rationales. For the abortion and environment issue publics, members were more likely than nonmembers to reason not only from their own side, but also from the opposite position. Similar to the results for issue public's information selectivity, members of the gun control issue public were more likely than nonmembers to generate rationales supporting their own position, but there was not a significant difference between issue public members and nonmembers in generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

For opinion quality, I also found that issue public members had unbalanced opinion quality across the three issues. Issue public members generated significantly more rationales for their own viewpoints than rationales for oppositional viewpoints relative to nonmembers. In addition, issue public members had a wider gap between generating rationales for their own and for oppositional viewpoints than nonmembers.

There were significant relationships between issue public membership and generating rationales for one's own viewpoints across the three issues, and exposure to attitude-consistent political views was a significant mediator. Also, exposure to counter-attitudinal political views was a significant mediator for the abortion and environment issues. It is worth noting that the relationship only sustained when counter-attitudinal exposure was measured in time spent on reading articles, as opposed to the number of counter-attitudinal articles selected. Given that issue public membership predicted exposure to counter-attitudinal political views only for the abortion and environment

issues, it was not surprising that counter-attitudinal exposure played a significant role in explaining the relationship between issue public membership and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints for the abortion and the environment issues, but not for the gun control issue.

This chapter turned from information selectivity and information processing to individuals' political behaviors. Issue public members' intentions to participate politically were not limited to their issue domain, a finding that differed from the results for information selectivity, political knowledge and opinion quality. Issue public members not only intended to engage in issue-related participation, but they also had greater intentions than nonmembers to engage in political activities related to the other issues. It is worth mentioning that the relationships among issue public membership and intentions to participate in issue-related activities were stronger than the relationships among issue public membership and intentions to participate in activities related to other issues. This pattern was found consistently across the three issues.

Lastly, an overall model was analyzed including both the deliberative and participatory dimensions for the three issues. For the abortion and environment issues, the deliberative and participatory dimensions were bridged through issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge, but not through argument generation. For the gun control issue, which again shows a different pattern, issue public membership links deliberative and participatory dimensions. Although there is a link between the two dimensions, it does not mean that members of gun control issue public contribute to deliberative democracy given that members of the gun control issue public did not tend to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views, nor did they tend to generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints compared to nonmembers.

This chapter identified issue public members, examined their information selectivity, and analyzed the political consequences (i.e., knowledge, opinion quality, and intentions to political participation). In the next chapter, motivated-reasoning goals were brought into the relationship to understand if the relationships among issue public membership, information selectivity, and opinion quality may be affected by these external factors.

Table 4.21: Summary of Results (Chapter 4)

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Results

Identifying issue public members

RQ1a Do attributes of issue public members form a single measure?

Yes

RQ1b How does the single measure with attributes of issue public members perform compared to earlier measures (i.e., demographics, opinionation, and personal issue importance)?

The new measures of issue publics had stronger correlations with the outcome variables of interest than other measures. The correlations were also more consistent across the three issues compared with other measures of issue publics.

Issue-based selectivity

H1a Issue public members → exposure to attitude-consistent political views (a) article selection (b) reading time

(a)(b) Supported

H1b Issue public members → exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (a) article selection (b) reading time

(a)(b)Supported
(abortion; environment)

RQ2 How does issue public membership affect the relative balance of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views?

Issue public members have unbalanced information selectivity (abortion; gun control)

Table 4.21: Summary of Results (Cont.)

Issue-specific knowledge

H2	Issue public members → issue-specific knowledge	Supported
H3a	Issue public members → exposure to attitude-consistent political views (a) article selection (b) reading time → issue-specific knowledge	(a)(b) Supported
H3b	Issue public members → exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (a) article selection (b) reading time → issue-specific knowledge	(a)(b)Supported (abortion; environment)
Opinion quality		
H4a	Issue public members → generate rationales for own viewpoints	Supported
H4b	Issue public members → generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints	Supported (abortion; environment)
H5a	Issue public members → exposure to attitude-consistent political views (a) article selection (b) reading time → generate rationales for own viewpoints	(a)(b)Supported
H5b	Issue public members → exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (a) article selection (b) reading time → generate rationales for own viewpoints	(a) Not supported (b) Supported (abortion; environment)
H5c	Issue public members → exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (a) article selection (b) reading time → generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints	(a)(b) Supported (abortion; environment)

Table 4.21: Summary of Results (Cont.)

RQ3	Research Question 3: How does issue public membership affect the relative balance of generating rationales for one's own viewpoints and oppositional viewpoints?	Issue public members have unbalanced argument generation.
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Intentions to participate in Issue-relevant political activities

H6a	Issue public members → intentions to participate in Issue-relevant political activities offline	Supported
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H6b	Issue public members → Intentions to participate in Issue-relevant political activities online	Supported
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RQ4	Does this integrated model fit the data for each issue?	The integrated models for the abortion and environment issues fit the data well, while for the gun control issue, the model is less fit for the data. In addition to the relationships identified in previous hypotheses testing, the models show significant paths from issue-specific knowledge to intentions to participate in issue-related activities online and offline for the abortion and environment issues.
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Chapter 5: Motivated-Reasoning Goals on Information Selectivity and Deliberation

INTRODUCTION

Individuals' information selectivity and processing can be affected not only by issue public membership, but also by conditional factors—motivated-reasoning goals. Accuracy goals can enhance individuals' motivation to reach an accurate conclusion by accessing different sides of messages, and promote effortful cognitive reasoning (Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Kunda, 1990), while directional goals can direct people to search for information supporting their own viewpoints, to avoid disconfirming information, and to devalue counter-attitudinal messages (Kunda, 1990; Lodge & Taber, 2000). In light of this, individuals' information selection patterns and the rationales that they generate regarding an issue may be contingent upon which motivated-reasoning goal is promoted. In this chapter, I examine the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on information selectivity (i.e., exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives) and opinion quality (i.e., generating rationales for own and oppositional viewpoints). I also investigate how motivated-reasoning goals moderate the effect of issue public membership on information selectivity and opinion quality.

EFFECTS OF MOTIVATED-REASONING GOALS ON INFORMATION SELECTIVITY

To understand the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on exposure to attitude-consistent political views, Hypothesis 7a proposed that people with accuracy goals are *more* likely than those with no goals to expose themselves to attitude-consistent political views, and Hypothesis 7b posited that people with directional goals are *more* likely than those with no goals to expose themselves to attitude-consistent political views. Regression analysis was adopted to examine the effect of motivated-reasoning goals,

which were manipulated in the experiment, on exposure to attitude-consistent political views compared to the control group (i.e., information search with no goals). Thus, only participants who were randomly assigned to the conditions of information search with accuracy goals, information search with directional goals, and information search without goals were included in the analyses ($N = 606$). Exposure to attitude-consistent political views was analyzed using the number of articles selected and the amount of time spent reading articles. Unlike the previous chapter, I first conducted the analysis without separating the issues to have a general understanding of the effects of accuracy goals and directional goals on information selectivity without considering variability across the issues. I further analyzed the effects on information selectivity by looking at the three different issues separately.

As shown in Table 5.1, the manipulation of accuracy goals did not significantly predict selecting articles with attitude-consistent perspectives (Model 1a) or time spent reading attitude-consistent articles (Model 1b). The manipulation of directional goals, however, significantly predicted time spent reading attitude-consistent articles ($\beta = .10, p < .05$; see Model 1b), but it was not a significant predictor of selecting attitude-consistent articles (Model 1a). That is, there was not a significant difference between participants with directional goals and participants without goals in selecting attitude-consistent articles; however, participants with directional goals spent more time reading attitude-consistent articles than those without goals.

To examine how motivated-reasoning goals affect individuals' information selectivity, in particular the selection of *issue-related* pro-attitudinal information, I conducted a regression analysis for each issue. Issue public membership was included as a control variable as the previous chapter found that issue public membership has a

significant influence on issue-based selectivity. Table 5.2 presents the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on exposure to attitude-consistent political views for abortion in Model 1, the environment in Model 2, and gun control in Model 3. Article selection is reported in Model a, and reading time is reported in Model b.

Consistent with what was found regarding the effects of accuracy goals on exposure to attitude-consistent political views when the three issues were analyzed together, there were no significant differences between participants with accuracy goals and those without goals in exposure to attitude-consistent political views across the three issues (Table 5.2). Hypothesis 7a, therefore, was not supported.

For the effect of directional goals on exposure to attitude-consistent political views, as presented in Table 5.2, there was a significant relationship between directional goals and time spent reading attitude-consistent articles for the gun control issue ($\beta = .10$, $p < .05$; see Model 3b). Here, participants in the directional goal condition spent more time reading gun control articles with attitude-consistent perspectives than those in the no goal condition. Directional goals were not significant for the abortion or environment issues. As a result, Hypothesis 7b was partially supported.

In addition to exposure to attitude-consistent political views, this dissertation analyzed the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on exposure to counter-attitudinal political views. It was hypothesized that people with accuracy goals are *more* likely than those without a manipulated goal to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views (Hypothesis 8a). On the contrary, people with directional goals are hypothesized to be *less* likely than those with no manipulated goals to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views (Hypothesis 8b). In Table 5.1, Model 2 presents the results of a regression analysis combining the three different issues. Accuracy goals did not have a

significant effect on exposure to counter-attitudinal political views. People in the accuracy goal condition and people in the no goal condition were not significantly different in exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives in either article selection (Model 2a) or reading time (Model 2b). The results also show that directional goals were not a significant predictor of exposure to counter-attitudinal views in either article selection (Model 2a) or reading time (Model 2b). There was not a significant difference between participants in the directional goals condition and those in the no goal condition in selecting counter-attitudinal articles and spending time reading counter-attitudinal articles.

However, some significant findings emerged after looking at the issues separately. As shown in Table 5.3, the accuracy goal condition was a significant predictor of selecting counter-attitudinal articles for the environment issue ($\beta = .10, p < .05$; see Model 2a). Participants with accuracy goals were more likely than those with no manipulated goals to select counter-attitudinal articles. The same was not true for the abortion or gun control issues. Accordingly, Hypothesis 8a was partially supported.

In addition, for the abortion issue, the directional goal condition was negatively related to exposure to counter-attitudinal articles. Participants with directional goals were less likely than those in the no goal condition to select counter-attitudinal articles ($\beta = -.17, p < .001$; see Model 1a), and to spend time reading counter-attitudinal articles ($\beta = -.11, p < .05$; see Model 1b). The relationship was not significant for the gun control or environment issues. Thus, the results partially supported Hypothesis 8b.

Table 5.1: Motivated-Reasoning Goals (Compared with the Control Group) Predicting Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views

	Attitude-Consistent		Counter-Attitudinal	
	Model 1a: Total article selection	Model 1b Total reading time	Model 2a: Total article selection	Model 2b Total reading time
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Age	-.07	.10*	-.09*	.03
Gender (Male)	.00	-.06	.06	.00
Race (White)	-.00	.00	-.03	.01
Education	.06	.06	.04	.05
Income	-.03	-.11*	.05	.03
Political ideology/Partisanship	-.08	.02	-.11*	-.04
Political interest	.06	.08	-.04	-.02
General political knowledge	.02	-.04	.03	-.05
News media use	-.04	-.03	.01	-.03
<i>Motivated-Reasoning Goals</i>				
Accuracy goals	.07	-.04	.06	.00
Directional goals	.01	.10*	-.08	-.04
Total R²	.03	.05**	.05**	.01

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The no goals condition is the reference group for the variables of accuracy goals and directional goals. In Model a, the dependent variable is the total number of articles selected across the three issues; In Model b, the dependent variable is the total amount of time spent reading articles across the three issues. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 5.2: Motivated-Reasoning Goals (Compared with Control Group) Predicting Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views (by Issue)

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.06	.04	.02	.18***	-.09*	-.02
Gender (Male)	-.02	-.05	.08	.01	.07	.06
Race (White)	.01	.03	.03	.02	-.03	-.03
Education	.09*	.05	.00	-.01	.01	.05
Income	-.02	-.08	.04	.01	-.05	-.09
Political ideology/Partisanship	-.03	.07	-.11*	-.10*	-.02	.04
Political interest	.03	.01	.03	-.02	.02	.03
General political knowledge	-.04	-.02	.00	.00	.06	-.03
News media use	-.11*	-.09*	.03	.02	.01	.02
Issue publics: Abortion issue	.22***	.25***				
Issue publics: Environment issue			.11**	.13**		
Issue publics: Gun control issue					.18***	.14**
<i>Motivated-Reasoning Goals</i>						
Accuracy goals	.04	.03	.00	-.08	.05	-.03
Directional goals	-.01	.03	.02	.02	.01	.10*
Total R²	.09***	.10***	.04*	.07***	.05**	.05*

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The no goals condition is the reference group for the variables of accuracy goals and directional goals. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 5.3: Motivated-Reasoning Goals (Compared with Control Group) Predicting Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (by Issue)

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.11*	-.04	-.03	.06	-.04	.06
Gender (Male)	.01	-.03	.10*	.08	.10*	.03
Race (White)	-.02	-.01	-.05	-.02	.04	.07
Education	.04	.00	.06	.03	-.01	.03
Income	.03	.05	.06	.07	.03	-.05
Political ideology/partisanship	-.19***	-.12**	.00	.03	-.02	.05
Political interest	-.02	-.01	-.07	-.06	-.07	-.05
General political knowledge	-.05	-.13**	.10*	.10*	-.02	-.05
News media use	.03	.02	-.04	-.05	.05	-.01
Issue publics: Abortion issue	.10*	.12**				
Issue publics: Environment issue			.12**	.11*		
Issue publics: Gun control issue					.03	.03
<i>Motivated-Reasoning Goals</i>						
Accuracy goals	-.03	-.06	.10*	.01	.06	.05
Directional goals	-.17***	-.11*	.03	.01	-.06	.03
Total R²	.10***	.07***	.06**	.04*	.03	.02

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The no goals condition is the reference group for the variables of accuracy goals and directional goals. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

EFFECTS OF MOTIVATED-REASONING GOALS ON OPINION QUALITY

In addition to the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on information selection, I also examined the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on individuals' opinion quality. It was expected that people with accuracy goals (Hypothesis 9a) and directional goals (Hypothesis 9b) would be *more* likely than those without goals to generate rationales for own viewpoints.

The first set of regression analyses was conducted without separating the three different issues. Results show that there was not a significant difference between participants in the accuracy goal condition and those in the no goal condition in generating rationales for their own viewpoints. In addition, participants in the directional goal condition were not significantly different from those in the no goal condition in generating rationales for their own viewpoints (see Model 1 in Table 5.4).

In terms of the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints, this dissertation hypothesized that people with accuracy goals would generate *more* rationales for oppositional viewpoints than those with no goals (Hypothesis 10a). In addition, people with directional goals were hypothesized to generate *fewer* rationales for oppositional viewpoints than those with no goals (Hypothesis 10b). Neither hypothesis was supported when the three issues were analyzed together. No significant difference was found between participants in the accuracy goal condition and participants in the no goals condition in generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints. Similarly, participants in the directional goal condition were not significantly different from those in the no goal condition in reasoning from the opposite perspective (see Model 2 in Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Motivated-Reasoning Goals Predicting Rationales for Own and Oppositional Viewpoints

	Model 1: Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints	Model 2: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints
<i>Control Variables</i>		
Age	-.08*	-.12**
Gender (Male)	-.22	-.10*
Race (White)	.07	.04
Education	.19***	.18***
Income	.05	.05
Political ideology/partisanship	-.05	-.06
Political interest	.24***	.15**
General political knowledge	.03	.11*
News media use	-.08	-.06
<i>Motivated-Reasoning Goals</i>		
Accuracy goals	-.03	-.04
Directional goals	.05	.02
Total R²	.17***	.12***

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The no goals condition is the reference group for the variable of accuracy goals and directional goals. In Model 1, the dependent variable is the total number of rationales for own viewpoints across the three issues; In Model 2, the dependent variable is the total number of rationales for oppositional viewpoints across the three issues. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

I conducted another set of regression analyses to examine the effects of motivated-reasoning goals on generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints for each of the three issues separately (Table 5.5). Consistent with what was found previously, neither accuracy goals nor directional goals significantly predicted generating rationales for one's own viewpoints or generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints across the three issues. Participants in the accuracy goal condition were not significantly different from those in the no goal condition in generating rationales for their own viewpoints (Hypothesis 9a) or in generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints across the three issue (Hypothesis 10a). Similarly, across three issues, there

were no significant differences between participants in the directional goal condition and those in the no goal condition in generating rationales for their own viewpoints (Hypothesis 9b) or in generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints (Hypothesis 10b).

Table 5.5: Motivated-Reasoning Goals Predicting Rationales for One’s Own and Oppositional Viewpoints (by Issue)

	Abortion		Environment		Gun Control	
	Model 1a: Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints	Model 1b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 2a: Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints	Model 2b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 3a: Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints	Model 3b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.12**	-.11**	-.02	-.08	-.06	-.13**
Gender (Male)	-.12**	-.15**	-.07	-.02	-.15***	-.03
Race (White)	.11**	.06	.03	.00	.01	.04
Education	.17***	.18***	.11**	.15***	.12**	.12**
Income	-.00	.03	.04	.09*	.10*	.02
Political ideology/partisanship	-.01	-.07	-.10*	-.02	.04	-.01
Political interest	.10*	.06	.09*	.09*	.14**	.13**
General political knowledge	.04	.10*	.07	.10*	.02	.10*
News media use	-.11**	.00	-.04	-.07	-.03	-.07
Issue publics: Abortion issue	.28***	.11**				
Issue publics: Environment issue			.27***	.22***		
Issue publics: Gun control issue					.27***	.08
<i>Motivated-Reasoning Goals</i>						
Accuracy goals	-.03	-.07	-.01	-.04	-.04	.00
Directional goals	.02	.01	.06	.00	.01	.04
Total R²	.20***	.13***	.16***	.13***	.16***	.07***

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The no goals condition is the reference group for the variable of accuracy goals and directional goals. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

MODERATING EFFECTS OF MOTIVATED-REASONING GOALS ON INFORMATION SELECTIVITY

After understanding the main effects of motivated-reasoning goals on information selectivity and opinion quality, another focus of this dissertation was to explore the role of motivated-reasoning goals in conditioning the effect of issue public membership on information selectivity and opinion quality. First, analyses were conducted to examine whether accuracy and directional goals moderated the relationship between issue public membership and exposure to attitude-consistent political views (Research Question 5a), and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (Research Questions 5b).

Recapitulating what was found in previous analyses, issue public membership had a significant main effect on exposure to attitude-consistent political views across the three issues (found in the previous chapter about issue publics' issue-based selectivity). Neither accuracy goals nor directional goals had significant main effects on exposure to attitude-consistent political views across the three issues (found in previous section). Table 5.6 presents the results of the potential moderating role of accuracy and directional goals on exposure to attitude-consistent political views for abortion in Model 1, the environment in Model 2, and gun control in Model 3. Article selection and reading time are presented separately in Models a and b for each issue. No interaction effects were found between issue public membership and motivated-reasoning goals on exposure to attitudinal-consistent political views across the three issues. That is, the significant effect of issue public membership on exposure to attitude-consistent political views across the three issues was not influenced by accuracy or directional goals.

Table 5.6: Moderating Role of Motivated-Reasoning Goals for Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
Prior blocks (R^2)	.09***	.10***	.04*	.07***	.05*	.05*
Interaction term						
<i>Abortion</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals	.01	.07				
Issue public x Directional goals	.08	.09				
<i>Environment</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals			.01	-.08		
Issue public x Directional goals			.02	.10		
<i>Gun control</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals					-.06	-.01
Issue public x Directional goals					-.03	.06
Incremental R^2	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00
Total R^2	.09***	.10***	.04*	.07***	.05*	.05*

Note: Prior blocks include age, gender, race, education, income, political ideology/partisanship, political interest, political knowledge, news media use, issue public membership, accuracy goals, and directional goals (see Table 5.2 for the coefficients without the interaction). Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients after controlling for the prior blocks. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

This dissertation further examined the moderating effects of motivated-reasoning goals on the relationship between issue public membership and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views. Before continuing to the moderating effects, I restate briefly what I previously found regarding the main effects of issue public membership and motivated-reasoning goals on exposure to counter-attitudinal political views. There was a significant main effect of issue public membership on exposure to counter-attitudinal political views in both article selection and reading time for the abortion and environment issues, but not for the gun control issue (found in previous chapter about issue publics' issue-based selectivity). In addition, this dissertation found that there was a significant effect of accuracy goals on selecting counter-attitudinal article for the environment issue, and a negative effect of directional goals on selecting counter-attitudinal articles and time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles for the abortion issue (found in previous section).

Table 5.7 shows the results of the potential moderating role of accuracy and directional goals on exposure to counter-attitudinal political views. The abortion issue is presented in Model 1, the environment issue is shown in Model 2, and the gun control issue is included in Model 3. Article selection and reading time are separately presented in Models a b for each issue. As shown in Model 1a and 1b, no interaction effects between issue public membership and motivated-reasoning goals were found for the abortion issue. In other words, the significant effect of membership in the abortion issue public on exposure to counter-attitudinal abortion articles was not contingent upon either accuracy goals or directional goals. No interaction effect was found for the gun control issue, either (Model 3a and Model 3b). For the gun control issue, when it comes to the exposure to counter-attitudinal political views, there were no main effects of issue public

membership and motivated-reasoning goals, nor an interaction effect between issue public membership and motivated-reasoning goals.

Yet for the environment issue, there was a interaction effect between issue public membership and accuracy goals on selecting environmental articles with counter-attitudinal perspectives ($\beta = .18$, $B = .31$ $p < .05$; see Model 2a in Table 5.7). The main effects of issue public membership ($\beta = .03$, $B = .04$, $p = .69$) and accuracy goals ($\beta = -.01$, $B = -.01$, $p = .93$) became insignificant with the inclusion of the interaction. There was not an interaction effect between issue public membership and directional goals. The change in R-square for the interaction block in the regression was marginally significant ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $p < .10$).²³

To better understand the interaction coefficient, Figure 5.1 displays the interaction effect between environment issue public membership and accuracy goals on selecting counter-attitudinal environmental articles, with the grey line representing issue public members and the black line representing nonmembers. As shown in Figure 5.1, accuracy goals significantly widen the gap in the number of counter-attitudinal articles selected by environment issue public members and nonmembers. Members of the environment issue public were significantly affected by the manipulation of accuracy goals. Issue public members with accuracy goals tended to select the greatest number of counter-attitudinal articles compared to other groups. Summarizing the findings regarding

²³ I also conducted analyses comparing participants in the accuracy goals condition and those in the directional goals condition. A significant interaction effect was found between membership in the environment issue public and goal manipulation (accuracy vs. directional) on time spent reading attitude-consistent political views ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .05$), as shown in Figure A.10 in Appendix. The directional goal significantly widened the gap in time spent reading attitude-consistent political views between issue public members and nonmembers. Members of environment issue public with directional goals spent the greatest amount of time reading attitude-consistent articles compared to the other groups. No other significant interaction effects were found in the abortion and the gun control issues. As a result, members of environment issue public appeared to be the ones easily affected by goal manipulation.

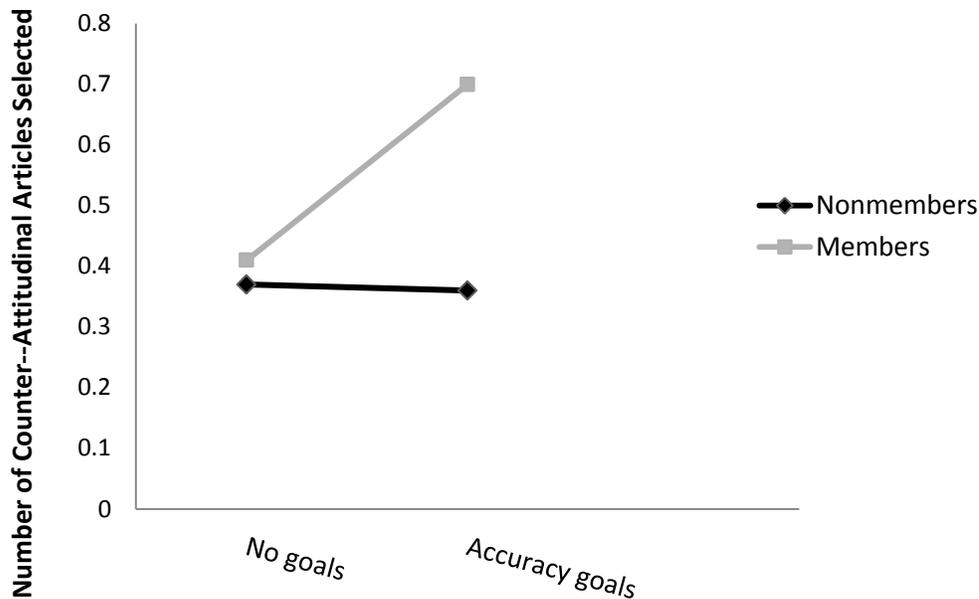
the environment issue, there were main effects of issue public membership and accuracy goals on selecting counter-attitudinal articles. In addition, these two main effects interacted and exerted influence on selecting counter-attitudinal articles.

Table 5.7: Moderating Role of Motivated-Reasoning Goals for Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Political Views

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
Prior blocks (R^2)	.10***	.07***	.06**	.04*	.03	.02
Interaction term						
<i>Abortion</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals	-.15	-.14				
Issue public x Directional goals	-.03	-.01				
<i>Environment</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals			.18*	.15		
Issue public x Directional goals			.07	.06		
<i>Gun control</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals					-.02	.09
Issue public x Directional goals					-.08	.03
Incremental R^2	.01	.01	.01	.01	.00	.00
Total R^2	.10***	.07***	.07**	.05*	.03	.02

Note: Prior blocks include age, gender, race, education, income, political ideology/partisanship, political interest, political knowledge, news media use, issue public membership, accuracy goals, and directional goals (see Table 5.3 for all coefficients without the interaction). Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients after controlling for the prior blocks. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 5.1: Interaction Effects of Issue Public Membership (Environment Issue) and Accuracy Goals on Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



MODERATING EFFECTS OF MOTIVATED-REASONING GOALS ON OPINION QUALITY

This dissertation also explored whether accuracy and directional goals moderated the effect of issue public membership on opinion quality, including generating rationales for one's own viewpoints (Research Question 6a), and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints (Research Question 6b). In the previous chapter, I found that there was a main effect of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints across the three issues, and on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints for the abortion and environment issues. Furthermore, as found in the

previous section, neither accuracy goals nor directional goals had significant main effects on generating rationales for own or oppositional viewpoints across the three issues.

Addressing the interaction effects of issue public membership and motivated-reasoning goals on generating rationales for own and oppositional viewpoints, Table 5.8 shows that there were no significant interaction effects for any of the three issues. The influence of issue public membership on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints or on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints was not affected by the goal manipulation.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

Table 5.9 summarizes the results of this chapter. The findings provide an examination of the effect of motivated-reasoning goals on individuals' information selectivity and opinion quality, and how motivated-reasoning goals interact with issue public membership in influencing individuals' information selectivity and opinion quality.

For the main effects of motivated-reasoning goals on information selectivity, the results show that accuracy goals did not significantly affect exposure to attitude-consistent political views, while directional goals significantly influenced exposure to attitude-consistent political views (i.e., time spent reading articles) only in the context of the gun control issue. In terms of the counter-attitudinal exposure, accuracy goals had a significant effect on the selection of counter-attitudinal articles for the environment issue. Also, directional goals had significant and negative effects for both selecting counter-attitudinal articles and time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles for the abortion issue.

Table 5.8: Moderating Role of Motivated-Reasoning Goals for Rationales for One’s Own and Oppositional Viewpoints

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a: Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints	Model 1b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 2a: Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints	Model 2b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 3a: Rationales for One’s Own Viewpoints	Model 3b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints
Prior blocks (R^2)	.20***	.13***	.16***	.13***	.16***	.07***
Interaction term						
<i>Abortion</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals	-.07	-.12				
Issue public x Directional goals	-.06	.01				
<i>Environment</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals			-.14	-.12		
Issue public x Directional goals			-.08	.10		
<i>Gun control</i>						
Issue public x Accuracy goals					.02	.06
Issue public x Directional goals					.08	.03
Incremental R^2	.00	.01	.01	.00	.00	.00
Total R^2	.21***	.14***	.16***	.14***	.16***	.08***

Note: Prior blocks include age, gender, race, education, income, political ideology/partisanship, political interest, political knowledge, news media use, issue public membership, accuracy goals, and directional goals (see Table 5.5 for all coefficients without the interaction). Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients after controlling for the prior blocks. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

For the main effects of motivated-reasoning goals on opinion quality, accuracy goals did not prompt people to generate more rationales for their own or oppositional viewpoints across the three issues. In addition, directional goals did not have positive effects on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints, and it did not have negative effects on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints.

Turning to the moderating effect of motivated-reasoning goals on the relationship between issue publics and information selectivity, the results only showed an interaction effect between issue public membership and accuracy goals on selecting counter-attitudinal articles for the environment issue. Members of the environment issue public were significantly affected by the manipulation of accuracy goals and selected more counter-attitudinal articles compared to other groups.

However, for the moderating effect of motivated-reasoning goals on the relationship between issue public membership and opinion quality, no significant interaction effects were found across the three issues. The relationship between issue public membership and generating rationales for one's own viewpoints was not contingent upon accuracy or directional goals. Similarly, the relationship between issue public membership and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints was not affected by the manipulation of accuracy or directional goals.

Overall, the findings show that directional goals influenced participants to apply either the strategies of selective approach or selective avoidance to seek information depending on the issue. Accuracy goals exerted a main effect on the environment issue that is relatively less controversial and less obtrusive. They also interacted with issue public membership in influencing the environment issue. Individuals' argument generation was not affected by accuracy or directional goals.

Table 5.9: Summary of Results (Chapter 5)

Research Hypotheses and Research Questions:		Results
The main effects of motivated-reasoning goals on information selectivity		
H7a	Accuracy goals (vs. no goals) → exposure to attitude-consistent political views (a) article selection (b) reading time	(a) Not supported (b) Not supported
H7b	Directional goals (vs. no goals) → exposure to attitude-consistent political views (a) article selection (b) reading time	(a) Not supported (b) Supported for the gun control issue
H8a	Accuracy goals (vs. no goals) → exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (a) article selection (b) reading time	(a) Supported for the environment issue (b) Not supported
H8b	Directional goals (vs. no goals) → (negative relationship) exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (a) article selection (b) reading time	(a) Supported for the abortion issue (b) Supported for the abortion issue
The main effects of motivated-reasoning goals on opinion quality		
H9a	Accuracy goals (vs. no goals) → generate rationales for own viewpoints	Not supported
H9b	Directional goals (vs. no goals) → generate rationales for own viewpoints	Not supported
H10a	Accuracy goals (vs. no goals) → generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints	Not supported

Table 5.9: Summary of Results (Cont.)

H10b	Directional goals (vs. no goals) → (negative relationship) generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints	Not supported
The moderating effect of motivated-reasoning goals on information selectivity		
RQ5a	Issue public members x motivated-reasoning goals (accuracy goals vs. no goals; directional goals vs. no goals) → exposure to attitude-consistent political views (a) article selection (b) reading time	(a) No interaction effects were found (b) No interaction effects were found
RQ5b	Issue public members x motivated-reasoning goals (accuracy goals vs. no goals; directional goals vs. no goals) → exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (a) article selection (b) reading time	(a) An interaction effect was found for the environment issue (b) No interaction effects were found
The moderating effect of motivated-reasoning goals on opinion quality		
RQ6a	Issue public members x motivated-reasoning goals (accuracy goals vs. no goals; directional goals vs. no goals) → generate rationales for own viewpoints	No interaction effects were found
RQ6b	Issue public members x motivated-reasoning goals (accuracy goals vs. no goals; directional goals vs. no goals) → generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints	No interaction effects were found

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

If we conceptualize citizens as members of different issue publics, individuals are more competent than we thought. Concerned about an issue, issue public members contribute to the functioning of deliberative and participatory democracy based on their issue-specific interest. By theoretically and empirically analyzing the attributes of issue public members, a new measurement strategy was developed to capture who issue public members are and to understand to what extent issue public members contribute to the democracy. Issue-based selectivity derived by individuals' membership in issue publics, which in turn influences issue-specific knowledge and argument generation, addresses how issue publics live up to some of the requirements of deliberative democracy. Although better than others at gathering both pro- and counter-attitudinal information and at generating diverse arguments, issue public members are not evenhanded in their information selection and argument generation. Rather, they favor like-minded information and arguments. Identifying a relationship between issue public membership and issue-related participation also clarifies how issue public membership is conducive to participatory democracy. This dissertation, therefore, argues that a significant role of issue publics is coming close to solving the deliberative-participatory democracy paradox. Further, this dissertation brought motivated-reasoning goals into the relationship by analyzing their main effects and interactions with issue public membership on the outcome variables of interest. It provides insight into how accuracy and directional goals have different effects on information selectivity and processing. For information selectivity, accuracy goals exerted influence only on the issue that is relatively less controversial and less obtrusive (i.e., the environment), while directional goals led individuals to apply different strategies (i.e., selective approach or selective avoidance) in

information selectivity depending on the issue (i.e., the abortion or the gun control issues). Motivated-reasoning goals, however, did not influence argument generation.

CONSTRUCTING ISSUE PUBLICS WITH NEW MEASUREMENT STRATEGY

What are issue publics? This is a central question that scholars have strived to answer in issue public research. Instead of applying operationalizations of issue publics that have been used but questioned in prior literature, a new measurement strategy that is desperately in need was proposed. Consistently, and across numerous analyses, this dissertation demonstrated that the new measure is a valid and reliable indicator of issue public membership. The new measure thus contributes to building a strong foundation for examining in the role of issue publics in a democracy.

Drawing on the definition of issue publics from previous studies, several attributes were evaluated and selected to test if they formed a single construct (Berent & Krosnick, 1995; Converse, 1964; Krosnick, 1990; Popkin, 1991). The attributes included personal issue importance, personal issue relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability, and attitude centrality. Results showed that these attributes did form a single construct. This construct was consistent across three different issues (i.e., abortion, gun control, and environment), and had high reliability. Therefore, it was combined as a new measure of issue public membership (as a continuous measure), and then dichotomized by using the mean score (as a dichotomous measure) for hypotheses testing. One may question whether the measure is more appropriately used as a dichotomy or as a continuous variable. From a statistical perspective, maintaining the original numerical scale to analyze the relationships has many advantages. Dichotomizing a continuous variable may lose information about individual differences, yielding misleading results and misinterpretation of relationships among variables (MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, & Rucker, 2002). However, the theory of issue publics argues that there are two distinct

groups of individuals: members and nonmembers of each issue public. To identify issue public members and to differentiate them from nonmembers, consistent with theory, a dichotomous categorization is needed. To compensate for the potential disadvantage of using the new dichotomous measure, the continuous measure also was used to reanalyze the relationships and check the robustness of the results. The findings from using new measure as a dichotomous variable and as a continuous variable were rather consistent, which demonstrates the reliability of the new measurement proposed in this research and should ease any concerns about the dichotomizing strategy.

Demonstrating discriminant validity, the new issue public measure was not correlated with attentive public indicators, including education and general political knowledge. It demonstrates the premise of issue public members – they do not need to be well-educated or have a high level of general political knowledge to care deeply about an issue (Krosnick, 1990).

Although the concept of issue publics suggests that issue public members may not be interested in other political issues, there was a significant correlation between issue public membership and general political interest in this research, although the correlation was small in magnitude. These findings suggest that membership in an issue public can enhance political interest in general, particularly when general political interest is measured by asking participants how interested they are in information about what is going on in politics and public affairs. For example, if an individual is heavily involved with an issue, it is likely that he or she will perceive him/herself as having a higher level of political interest than other people when answering the question. In short, general political interest is a rather broad measure that may tap an individual's interest in an issue. To establish discriminant validity even more clearly, it would be appropriate to have an additional question that taps individuals' general political interest, but excludes

their interest in the issue in which they already involved. For example, a question could ask, “besides the issue that concerns you most, to what extent are you interested in politics and political affairs more broadly?” With this comparison, it would be easier to understand the extent to which issue public members are interested in politics in general.

To further investigate the validity of the new measures, I compared correlations with the outcome variables of interest for previous issue public measurement strategies (i.e., the single item of personal issue importance as a scale and as a dichotomy, opinionation, and demographics) with the correlations for the new measures. Across the correlations, the new measures had the strongest relationships with the outcome variables (e.g., issue-based selectivity, issue-specific knowledge, issue-related argument generation, and issue-related participation). Overall, there was a considerable support for using the new measure instead of previous measures of issue public membership.

The dissertation, therefore, highlights the importance of operationalizing issue publics. Without a reliable and valid measure of issue public membership, it is difficult to build future research. Although several measurement strategies (i.e., demographics, opinionation, and personal issue importance) were adopted in previous literature to identify issue public members, inconsistent results from prior research regarding issue public members’ cognitions and behaviors have obscured our understanding of how issue publics contribute to democracy. The lack of a consistently-used and reliable measure of issue public membership may explain the mixed results (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Y. M. Kim, 2009; Price, et al., 2006; Price & Zaller, 1993; Sides & Karch, 2008; Zaller, 1986).

As a result, the new measure of issue publics, combining several attributes theoretically highlighted in the issue publics literature, is a more reliable way to capture

issue public members' characteristics, and is a more valid way to examine the effect of issue public membership on information selectivity, deliberation, and political behaviors.

Future research should consider adopting this new measure for studying issue publics. While this research used an eight-item measure that captured the multidimensional attributes of issue public members as a more stringent way to measure issue public membership, it is important to acknowledge that the methodological benefits of this measure are paired with some challenges. Given that each issue public needs to be examined separately to understand its own characteristics and unique patterns, use of this measure increases survey length relative to the older measures. Here is a trade-off: measurement quality versus survey length. Among the eight items used to measure the different attitudinal dimensions, four of them are for personal issue relevance adopted from research on attitude strength and agenda setting that examined how salient an issue is to an individual (e.g., Bouza, 2004; Evatt & Ghanem, 2001; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Future research may consider using one of the four personal issue relevance items for measuring issue public membership because these four items had high reliability. Further, additional analysis of the four items for personal issue relevance showed that the relationship between each of them and the outcome variables of interest followed a very similar pattern.²⁴ Theoretically and empirically, however, this dissertation documents the benefits of combining different attitude attributes, including personal issue importance,

²⁴ A partial correlation between each of the four items for personal issue relevance and the outcome variables of interest was conducted with the same control as other analyses in this dissertation. The relationships between each of the four items and the outcome variables of interest revealed similar patterns with very few exceptions. In the analysis for the abortion issue, the item asking whether the issue matters to participants was not significantly associated with exposure to counter-attitudinal political views measured using article selection and reading time. For the environment issue, the item "to what extent do you expect the issue to have significant consequences for your life" was not significantly related to environmental knowledge or time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles. All other relationships between each of the four items and outcome variables of interest were consistently significant or insignificant across the three issues. Therefore, among the four items that tap into personal issue relevance, future research should first consider using either the item of how relevant the issue is to the participant personally, or if the issue is of concern to the participant.

personal issue relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability, and attitude centrality. It is important to have five items, each representing one attitude attribute to construct a reliable and theoretically sound measure of issue public membership. By providing this new measure of issue public membership, the dissertation established a strong foundation on which future literature on issue publics can build.

Future research may consider expanding the concept of issue publics by extending personal relevance to examine emotional relevance. Emotional relevance has been found as one of the dimensions of relevance (Coleman & Wu, 2010; Evatt & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs, 1999; Miller, 2007). It has been measured by asking respondents whether they consider an issue boring/interesting or unexciting/exciting. Issue public members should be more likely than nonmembers to consider the issue more interesting and exciting, leading to a higher degree of emotional arousal.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Issue public members are expected to seek out and pay attention to the issue in which they are interested. It is their issue specificity in information selection that can enhance their issue-specific knowledge, and, in the aggregate, contribute to the functioning of the democracy. The extant literature on issue publics' information selectivity focused on how issue public members select issue-relevant information (Boninger, et al., 1995; Iyengar, 1990b; Y. M. Kim, 2009). However, a main question that previous literature largely has ignored is: do issue publics contribute to deliberative democracy? Although exposure to counter-attitudinal political views and awareness of oppositional political positions are two indispensable components of ideal democratic citizenship, the issue publics' literature has not yet paid attention to this area. Following, I discuss the findings regarding issue public members' information selectivity. Their

exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views aids in understanding their contribution to deliberative democracy.

The literature on issue publics and information selectivity has assumed that issue-based selectivity is a unique type of selectivity distinctive from the dissonance-avoidant selective exposure. Nonetheless, these two types of selectivity have not been empirically tested in the same context in terms of their similarities and differences (Iyengar, et al., 2008; Y. M. Kim, 2007). Although Iyengar and his colleagues (2008) examined issue-based selectivity and dissonance-avoidant selective exposure (i.e., partisan selective exposure; anticipated agreement hypothesis) as two different information seeking behaviors, they did not consider the possibility that dissonance avoidance can be a characteristic of issue-based selectivity. In addition, Kim (2007) claimed that issue public members engage in unbiased issue-relevant information seeking behavior without considering *to what extent* individuals expose themselves to confirming or disconfirming information when they look for issue-related information.

One concern is: What if issue-based selectivity occurs alongside the dissonance-avoidance type of selective exposure where individuals purposefully seek out information supporting their viewpoints and actively avoid information challenging their viewpoints on the issue that has captured their attention? As a result, not until issue-based selectivity is examined in more detail can we understand whether issue-based selectivity is desirable or not.

I first examined whether issue public members tend to select and spend more time reading articles related to the issues in which they are interested more than articles related to other issues. After confirming that issue public members did exercise issue specificity in information seeking, I separated issue-based selectivity into exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views. To have a

comprehensive understanding of exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views, I examined not only which articles individuals' selected, but also how long they spent reading those articles.

Results show that abortion and environment issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to select issue-relevant articles with attitude-consistent views *and* articles with counter-attitudinal views. In addition, these issue public members spent more time reading both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal articles than nonmembers. Issue public members, particularly those in the abortion and environment issue publics, contribute to deliberative democracy by exposing themselves to information not only supporting, but also challenging, their viewpoints. These findings add weight to literature which argues for some positive effects of attitude-related attributes on exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives. For the attributes of personal issue importance and personal issue relevance, prior literature has found that they motivate individuals to invest cognitive resources for all available information (Holbrook, et al., 2005; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2008; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). Attitude intensity and stability help to ease the dissonance that can result from counter-attitudinal information (Krosnick, et al., 1993; Krosnick & Schuman, 1988; Petty & Krosnick, 1995). This dissertation finds that issue public members, those with greater attitude importance, relevance, intensity and stability along with attitude centrality, were likely to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal messages than nonmembers.

Interestingly, the pattern of a higher degree of exposure to both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal information among issue public members compared to nonmembers was sustained only for the abortion and environment issues, but not the gun control issue. For the gun control issue, issue public members were only more likely than nonmembers to select and read gun control-related articles with *attitude-consistent*

perspectives. The distinctive pattern of information selectivity for the gun control issue highlights the importance of an issue itself. Drawing on the findings from the three different issues, this study demonstrates that issue-based selectivity depends on what the issue is. Each issue public may have its own characteristics, thus generalizing findings regarding one issue public to other issue domains may not be appropriate. The gun control issue public also presented different patterns from the abortion issue public and the environment issue public in the results of some other hypotheses (e.g., opinion quality); therefore, I will provide more discussion of the differences across issues in a later section.

The relationship between issue public membership and issue-based selectivity is privileged by the online environment given that issue public members can exercise control over the content to reach available information related to the issue in which they are interested more easily. The significant role of issue public membership in facilitating issue-based selectivity in the online environment may have implications for political apathy. Some scholars have argued that the Internet may be harmful for democratic society because the Internet enhances individuals' control over the online content, and increases the opportunities for individuals to avoid news and information about public affairs (Prior, 2005; Tewksbury, 2005). I argued that individuals' concern about an issue can spark exposure to issue-relevant information when they are provided with greater selectivity in the online environment. This claim, however, needs to be made carefully because this research did not include non-political information in the experimental design. Thus, the findings do not tell us whether individuals' preference for political information would trump their preference for non-political information. The findings do emphasize, however, the significant role of issue public membership in boosting the

selection of information related to issues about which members are deeply interested and passionately care, which may ease the concern about political apathy.

Some discouraging news emerging from the analysis of information selectivity is that issue public members' issue-based selectivity was more biased than nonmembers. For the abortion and environment issues, issue public members tended to exercise selectivity in a deliberative form by selecting not only more attitude-consistent, but also more counter-attitudinal information than nonmembers. The result is consistent with Kim's (2007) finding that members of the abortion issue public tended to select two sides of the information. With this finding, Kim suggested that issue public members are more likely to engage in unbiased information selectivity. I, however, argued that the claim of unbiased information seeking among issue public members needs be reconsidered by analyzing to what extent people consume different sides of information, instead of simply counting whether an individual selects only one- or two-sided information. For example, if an individual selects both sides, but chooses significantly more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information, the individual's information seeking is not unbiased. Thus, in addition to examining how issue public members approach attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal information separately, I also evaluated their information selectivity by measuring the *discrepancy* between exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views.

Members of the abortion and gun control issue publics had a wider gap between exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views than nonmembers in both article selection and reading time. Membership in the environment issue public did not significantly enhance the difference between exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views.

To summarize the results for the three issues, members of the abortion and environment issue publics were more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to information on both sides of each issue; however, their information selectivity was not unbiased because more time was spent on articles with an attitude-consistent perspective than on those with a counter-attitudinal perspective. In particular, membership in the abortion issue public significantly widened the gap between exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal information. Different from the abortion and environment issue publics, members of the gun control issue public did not seek oppositional perspectives more than nonmembers. Yet membership widened the gap between exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views. As a whole, membership in the gun control issue public significantly enhanced biased information selectivity. The results support Taber and Lodge's (2006a) findings about confirmation bias in the gun control issue that individuals tend to seek out confirming over disconfirming arguments.

Results across the three issues may help to explain the effect of issue-based selectivity on attitude extremity in Kim's (2009) study. Kim (2009) found that issue-based selectivity polarized attitudes toward issues; however, she suggested that issue publics' issue-based selectivity was unbiased because of their propensity for two-sided information selection (Kim, 2007). Relatively little explanation has been offered about the underlying mechanism of the relationships among issue publics, issue-based selectivity and attitude extremity. Why did issue-based selectivity enhance, instead of attenuate, issue public members' attitude extremity? The significantly greater amount of exposure to attitude-consistent than counter-attitudinal political views found in this dissertation offers an explanation. Issue public members still were drawn toward like-minded information even though they had a greater level of exposure to counter-

attitudinal information than nonmembers, and this may be a significant factor in intensifying their attitudes. The positive relationship between exposure to attitude-consistent information and attitude polarization has been documented in several studies (Jones, 2002; Lavine, Borgida, & Sullivan, 2000; Stroud, 2010; Taber & Lodge, 2006b). Given that like-minded information is congruent with preexisting values and beliefs, it is likely to be perceived as stronger and more persuasive. Therefore, a significantly higher level of exposure to attitude-consistent political views compared to counter-attitudinal political views may suggest that issue public members also process and recall attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political information in an unbalanced way.

The reason that issue public members (i.e., abortion and environment) were more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views may be due to their involvement in the issue and their strong and stable attitudes regarding the issue. While issue public members try to understand the issue comprehensively by selecting and reading different sides of issue-relevant information, their highly involving attitude may help to reduce dissonance avoidance and boost their defensive confidence to counter-argue dissonant information. The divergent pattern for the gun control issue will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Based on the discussion to this point, the findings across the three different issues imply a complicated relationship with information selection. Issue public membership prompts a greater selection of information with different political perspectives; however, consuming uncongenial information is not to the same as unbiased information selection. As a result, according to the normative ideas contained within deliberative democracy, there are reasons to question how much issue public members contribute.

To further understand the contribution of issue publics to deliberative democracy, issue-specific knowledge was examined. Although prior literature found relationships

between issue public membership and issue-based selectivity (without separating it into exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal perspectives), and between issue-based selectivity and issue-specific knowledge (Kim, 2009), the mediating relationship was not empirically tested. By understanding the relationships among issue public membership, exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views, and issue-specific knowledge, this dissertation furthers the literature by testing the mediating role of issue-based selectivity in the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge.

I first found that, similar to issue-based selectivity, issue public members had significantly more knowledge related to the issue about which they were concerned compared to nonmembers. For other issues, however, issue public members were no better informed than nonmembers. In short, issue public members possessed issue-specific political knowledge.

Beyond the direct influence of issue public membership on issue-specific knowledge, I also found that issue-based selectivity mediates the influence of issue publics on issue-specific knowledge. More specifically, for the abortion and environment issues, exposure to attitude-consistent political views and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views emerged as significant mediators of the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge. The results sustained whether exposure was measured in terms of the number of article selected or time spent reading articles. For the gun control issue, only exposure to attitude-consistent gun control articles mediated the direct effect issue public membership on gun control knowledge. Again, the mediating relationship was found when exposure was measured by using either number of articles selected or time spent reading articles.

Although individuals may not be well-informed about politics in general, their preference for political information related to issues about which they are concerned fosters the development of issue-specific knowledge. The results may ease concerns about low levels of general political knowledge among citizens documented in prior research (Althaus, 2003; Converse, 1962; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Dimock & Popkin, 1997; Neuman, 1986). For example, a member of the abortion issue public may not be able to name political figures and may not know how the government functions; however, he or she may pay more attention to abortion-related information, leading to a high level of abortion-related knowledge. Abortion-related knowledge can help one better understand policy making related to the abortion issue, and receive new abortion-related information, which in turn can benefit the democracy. If this same pattern occurs for other issues, which there are good reasons to suspect given that the pattern replicated across the three issues under consideration here, a clustered distribution of issue-specific knowledge could contribute *collectively* to democracy.

Even though some individuals are well-informed about specific issues, they cannot effectively influence the functioning of democracy without well-formed opinions. Different from factual knowledge, opinion quality provides an understanding of individuals' deliberative abilities and reasoning processes. In addition to understanding issue-specific knowledge as a consequence of issue public membership and issue-based selectivity, I also examined opinion quality, which is another essential element of deliberative democracy.

Employing argument repertoire to assess opinion quality, I found that issue public members exercise issue-specificity not only in information selection and knowledge development, but also in argument generation, which has not yet been examined in previous research. Similar to what was found when examining issue-based selectivity and

issue-specific knowledge, when participants were asked to provide rationales for all three issues, they generated more rationales for the issue about which they expressed concern than for other issues. Issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to not only generate rationales for their own viewpoints on the issue, but also for the opposite perspective. The result was somewhat consistent with Wojcieszak's (2012) study on the relationship between attitudes and group deliberation. Although not focusing on issue publics, her study showed that attitude strength, a composite that included attitude importance, attitude stability, and attitude intensity, significantly predicted generating rationales for one's own views and for oppositional viewpoints.²⁵ Issue public membership, operationalized using some of the same measures, exhibited the same pattern in this dissertation. However, the deliberative process of generating more rationales for both sides was only found for the abortion and environment issues, but not for the gun control issue. For the gun control issue, issue public members only tended to generate more viewpoints supporting their own position on the issue relative to nonmembers, echoing earlier findings of a distinctive pattern regarding this issue.

²⁵ Wojcieszak (2012) also tested these attitude attributes separately, and found that attitude importance was a significant predictor of generating rationales own and oppositional viewpoints. Attitude stability did not emerge as a significant predictor, and attitude intensity only significantly predicted rationales for own viewpoints, but not rationales for oppositional viewpoints. She suggested that research should examine attitude-related attributes separately. Although there were the significant correlations among attitude-related attributes and these attributes loaded on one factor, reducing them to a single construct inaccurately reflected attitude-related processes and functions (Wojcieszak, 2012). This dissertation stands on a perspective different from Wojcieszak's study. This dissertation attempts to understand specific groups of people, the issue public members, who are characterized by several attitude-related attributes rather than focusing on each attitude-related attribute. Therefore, it is necessary to combine the five attitude-related attributes (i.e., personal issue importance, personal issue relevance, attitude intensity, attitude stability and attitude centrality) discussed in the literature to construct the measure of issue public membership. Using one attitude attribute cannot sufficiently represent issue public members (i.e., personal issue importance) and may result in misleading findings. For example, in this dissertation, the new continuous measure and the new dichotomous measure of issue public membership show a consistent relationship with issue-based selectivity (both article selection and reading time) across three issues; however, personal issue importance as a scale and as a dichotomy only had a consistent relationship with the abortion issue.

Along with the straightforward measures of generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints, I also examined the *discrepancy* between generating rationales for one's own and oppositional viewpoints. First, I found that individuals generated significantly more rationales supporting their own position than those for the oppositional perspectives on the issue, regardless of whether they were issue public members or nonmembers. Second, issue public membership significantly widened the gap between generating rationales for one's own viewpoints and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints. The pattern was shown across the three issues.

The original purpose of measuring opinion quality in this dissertation was to provide a deeper understanding of individuals' information processing. Issue public members demonstrated greater deliberative ability by generating not only more rationales for their own viewpoints but also more rationales for oppositional viewpoints compared to the nonmembers. However, issue public members' deliberative ability was drawn toward supporting their own sides. The discrepancy between generating rationales for their own viewpoints and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints was significantly larger for issue public members than nonmembers. While these findings demonstrate the extent to which issue public members contribute to deliberative democracy, future research may consider using other reasoning measures, such as elaboration (e.g., Eveland, 2001, 2004; Eveland & Thomson, 2006; Shah, et al., 2007), and group discussion (Cho et al., 2009; McClurg, 2006; Mutz, 2002b; Nir, 2005, 2011a; Wojcieszak, 2011; Wojcieszak, Baek, & Delli Carpini, 2010) to examine if the relationships are similar when deliberation is measured in other ways.

Exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views mediated the relationship between issue public membership and opinion quality. More specifically, exposure to attitude-consistent political views mediated the relationship between issue

public membership and generating rationales for one's own viewpoints across the three issues. This indicates that issue public membership can spark more exposure to like-minded information, which, in turn, allows one to generate more supportive arguments. For the contrasting side, counter-attitudinal political views mediated the relationship between issue public membership and generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints. The positive role of exposure to counter-attitudinal political views in increasing awareness of rationales for oppositional viewpoints was consistent to what was found in past research (Mutz, 2002). That issue public membership is an antecedent of the relationship is one of the contributions of this dissertation. It was issue public membership that significantly increased counter-attitudinal exposure, which in turn enhanced reasoning ability in generating arguments for opposite side. This relationship reflected that issue public members are an important factor in a deliberative democracy. Notably, the mediating relationship was found only for the abortion and environment issues, which was not surprising given that gun control issue public members frequently exhibited a different pattern.

The mediating role of exposure to counter-attitudinal political views between issue public membership and generating rationales for one's own viewpoints was only found when exposure was measured using time spent reading counter-attitudinal issue-relevant articles, but not when exposure was measured using the number of counter-attitudinal articles selected. Accordingly, time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles affected by the issue public membership not only led to generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints, but also result in generating rationales for one's own viewpoint.

The results point to a significant difference between simply clicking on articles and engaging in actual reading, as measured by time spent with the article. The number of articles people selected does not inform us about to what extent people paid attention

to the articles. Although the time people spent reading articles is not a flawless attention measure, it does provide a better way to capture individuals' effort to read the articles than the number of articles selected. Consuming counter-attitudinal information and developing one's own viewpoint may require more effortful information processing than simply looking at the facts contained within an article. Individuals need to pay attention to the articles, spend time understanding what they have read, digest counter-attitudinal arguments, and then transform the information to develop more rationales for their positions. As a result, the length of time that individuals spent reading counter-attitudinal articles may be a more meaningful mediator of the relationship between issue public membership and generating rationales for one's own viewpoints than how many articles were clicked. Similarly, this finding was only supported for the abortion and environment issues, but not for the gun control issue.

From the perspective of deliberative democracy, there are both optimistic and pessimistic readings of these results. It is discouraging that issue public members are biased by exposing themselves to more attitude-consistent political views than counter-attitudinal political views, and generating more rationales for their own viewpoints than counter-attitudinal viewpoints relative to nonmembers. Yet it is important to recognize that issue public members have a higher level of issue-specific knowledge through exposure to attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal political views. They also display greater deliberative ability by providing more rationales for oppositional viewpoints, an outcome of their higher level of exposure to counter-attitudinal political views, (for the abortion and environment issues) than nonmembers.

ISSUE PUBLICS AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

To this point, the dissertation suggests that issue publics, particularly the abortion and environment issue publics, contribute to the deliberative democracy through exposure to both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal views on the issue, the development of issue-specific knowledge, and the generation of rationales for both one's own and oppositional viewpoints on the issue. To understand how issue publics contribute to participatory democracy, this dissertation examined issue public members' intentions to participate in issue-related political activities. In addition, issue-related political activities were analyzed in both offline and online forms.

Issue public members had greater intentions to participate in issue-related offline political action (e.g., sending a letter to an elected official) than nonmembers. This relationship was found across the three issues, which supports Price et al.'s finding (2006) that issue public membership was related political participation and also extends their findings about the health care issue public to three additional issue domains.

This dissertation also analyzes issue publics' political behaviors in the online environment. Issue public members had greater intentions to participate in issue-related *online* political activities (e.g., participate in an internet-based protest) than nonmembers. The findings persisted across three issues. They extended the literature on issue publics' online information selectivity and information processing to the online political participation. Also, issue public members' intention to participate in online political activities highlights the online environment's potential contribution in facilitating the formation of issue publics. By providing high selectivity and control to users, the online environment allows issue public members to exercise issue-based selectivity and to develop issue-specific knowledge and issue-related rationales. Furthermore, the online environment also offers them a place to be actively engaged in the issue-related political

activities. In short, the positive effect of issue public membership on intentions to engage in issue-related political activities offline and online demonstrates that issue public members can contribute to participatory democracy.

Interestingly, different from what was found in issue publics' information selectivity, knowledge, and opinion quality, issue public members' intention to participate in politics was not limited to their issue domain. Issue public members not only intended to participate in political activities related to the issue in which they were involved, they also intended to participate with other issues as well. It is, however, worth noting that even though issue public members intended to participate in activities beyond the issue about which they were concerned, their intentions to participate in activities related to the issue about which they *were* interested was of greater magnitude. The pattern was shown consistently whether the participation was in an online or offline form.

ISSUE MATTERS

As noted earlier, issues matter. The gun control issue resulted in a different pattern of results compared to the abortion and environment issues. More specifically, members of the gun control issue public did not expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views and they did not tend to reason from the opposite perspective more than nonmembers. These patterns differed for members of the abortion and environment issues, where members were more likely to do both of these things compared to nonmembers. The results may be explained by an internal factor and a contextual factor, each explained in turn.

For the internal factor, the gun control issue may be distinct from the other considered issues in that there is more "gray area" between supporting gun control and supporting gun rights. For example, individuals have different standards when it comes to which types of firearms should be banned. Pew Research found mixed reactions to the

types of firearms that should be banned when they tested four specific gun control proposals in their December 2012 survey (Pew Research Center, 2012). Over half of the respondents supporting banning bullets that explode or penetrate bullet-proof vests and banning high-capacity ammunition clips. The public was nearly evenly divided over banning semi-automatic guns. When it came to banning handguns for ordinary citizens, a majority of respondents were opposed (67%). The findings reflect mixed reactions about gun control. A similar pattern was observed in examining the rationales individuals provided regarding gun control in the experiment fielded for this dissertation. Even though participants did choose a side, their rationales for their own viewpoints did not fully support their issue position and tended to include caveats to their arguments. For example:

[Participant No. 86] First of all, I am not against gun rights. I think that citizens do have the right to bear arms, I just think we need to be more careful about who we give guns to, and what kind of guns. Citizens do not need assault rifles for home protection. Hunting rifles are one thing, pistols are one thing; I do think people should be able to have those weapons. But those who are prone to violence, including those with mental illness, should not be allowed to carry guns. People who pose a threat to general society should not be able to get a hold of these weapons from legal sources, and it seems like that is happening way too often. I know responsible gun owners exist, and I always feel sorry for them, too, when school shootings and the like happen, because it gives them a bad name.

The argument supports gun control; however, it also acknowledges that people have the right to bear arms. It also points to different opinions depending on the type of firearms considered. This suggests that gun control and gun rights are, for many people, not mutually exclusive. Following is a similar case:

[Participant No. 79] I support limited gun control. I think the evidence is pretty clear that people who commit heinous mass shooting sprees by in large obtain their weapons

legally... I think once those guns could be easily traced back to their original origin, it would drastically cut down on gun crime. I would also support extensive training classes to teach people to use their guns appropriately and safely. All in all though, I am a fervent supporter of the second amendment, and I would reject any move to outright ban guns, and I am largely opposed to legislation that limits the types of guns one can attain.

The beginning of the argument supports gun control; however, the argument then switches to supporting gun rights. For the opposite side, supporting gun rights, a similar pattern was uncovered. Below are two participants supporting gun rights only under some conditions of gun control, such as gun training sessions or background checks.

[Participant No. 505] I support gun rights only if people who do have guns in their homes store them in gun safes where children cannot get into them... ... if they are not taught how to properly use one, they can do more harm than good by owning a gun.

[Participant No. 508] I support the right to bear arms because it is legally granted to me as a US citizen by the constitution. I think that carrying firearms is a valid means of self-defense. I don't feel that an abundance of legally obtained firearms causes higher gun violence. I do support criminal background checks and similar measures, including high tech safety feature (Like fingerprint technology that prevents other than the owner from firing a weapon).

In sum, the arguments provided by participants do indicate a leaning toward gun control or gun rights; however, respondents did not classify themselves as fully supporting gun control or gun rights. With mixed reactions toward the gun control issue, it seems that individuals see the issue as more ambiguous and complicated than gun rights versus gun control. For the abortion and environment issues, the arguments provided by participants had a clearer issue stance than the gun control issues. Taking the argument for the abortion issue provided by Participant No. 86 as an example, it is rather clear that the participant supports a pro-choice view and opposes a pro-life perspective:

[Participant No. 86] I am pro-choice because the only one who should have legal rights over any woman's body is the woman. Pregnancy is a huge change in a woman's life, and sometimes it can be life-threatening or alter her life in a way that she is not physically, emotionally, or financially prepared for. She should have the right to pursue the kind of life she desires without the burden of an unplanned child. I am not pro-life because, the way I have experienced pro-life, those who are pro-life view women as cattle. They view women as only being good for producing and raising children, not having independent lives that may or may not include children at this time. They feel that women are bound by some sort of divine law to have children, and that if they don't, or if they don't want children right now, they are sinful heathens who deserve to be punished in this life and the next. They present pregnancy and raising a child as a punishment for pre-marital sex and seek to strip women of the basic human right of pursuing lie, liberty, and happiness. They are trying to control what another person does with their body, and no one has that right.

A pattern similar to the abortion issue was shown in the same participant's issue stance regarding the environment. The participant clearly supports renewable energy and environment protection:

[Participant No. 86] I think we need to find more renewable energy sources because we are quickly using up fossil fuels, and our population just continues to expand. We may begin to run out of clean food and water and power to keep all of us going. I think people who are against us either fail to see or refuse to acknowledge that human activity has a huge impact on the environment. There are 7 billion people living on this planet, and many of us are using up our limited resources. I think this thought scares people, so to not let it completely terrify them, they argue against it or just simply ignore it as an issue.

The pattern shown for Participant No. 86 also was found for the other three participants who were listed as examples above. Participant No. 508, for instance, had a rather clear statement supporting abortion and opposing the pro-life view on the abortion issue.

[Participant No. 508] I am pro-choice because I believe that a woman has a right to say what happens to her body. She has a constitutional right to a safe abortion. ESPECIALLY

in the case of rape or physical danger, abortion should not be discouraged by medical professionals. A woman is more than just a baby making machine. We have emotional and psychological connections to pregnancy and if that is occurring not on our own terms it can be extremely negative. The pro-life view doesn't look at women as people in their own right. It doesn't take into account the wide range of experience that exists. It endangers women's safety. It is emotionally abusive to women, and does not recognize that until birth, the fetus is not an individual entity but a part of the mother's body.

Also, the participant had an unambiguous position in supporting the development of renewable energy.

[Participant No. 508] I support renewable energy because: (1) We are only stewards of the environment and have a moral obligation to keep it healthy for the prosperity of future generations. (2) Renewable energy can help the economy.

Comparing the arguments across the three different issues, participants tended to make clearer statements about abortion and the environment; however, they were less definite when they wrote about the gun control issue. This may provide an explanation for the findings that members of the gun control issue public had a different pattern of issue-specificity from members of the other two issue publics.

For the contextual factor, the salience of the gun control issue around the time when the study was fielded could explain the different pattern. Sixteen mass shootings occurred in 2012, and the one closest to the time when the experiment was conducted was the serious tragedy that happened in Newtown, Connecticut, where twenty-seven people, including eighteen children, were shot to death inside an elementary school on December 14, 2012. After the Newtown shootings, there was a significant increase in the amount of news covering the debate between gun control and gun rights. To identify the salience of the gun control in the media before the experiment was conducted, I searched for the number of news articles in major newspapers using the keyword “gun control” on LexisNexis, and setting the date ranged from December 14, 2012 to February 13, 2013. I

compared the result with coverage of abortion and the environment. There were 578 articles for the gun control issue in the *New York Times*, compared with 152 articles about abortion, and 105 articles about the environment. Similarly, in the *Washington Post*, there were 409 articles mentioning gun control, 133 articles for the abortion issue, and 115 about the environment during the period. Clearly, gun control was more salient than abortion or the environment.

Before participating in the experiment, participants already may have been bombarded with information related to gun control issue. Possibly, participants' prior exposure to gun control-related news coverage may make them think that they already acquired enough gun control-related information. This may lead to a decreasing motivation to perform an exhaustive information search for gun control information. When participants do not want to perform effortful information seeking, articles with disconfirming perspectives may be the first ones that participants avoid because counter-attitudinal information may require greater cognitive processing.

Explaining the discrepant opinion quality findings for gun control, prior exposure to news coverage may inhibit gun control issue public members' reasoning ability for the opposite perspective for several reasons. First, news coverage on controversial issues is likely to be framed by media with political leanings. Second, individuals tend to select information supporting their political predispositions (Stroud, 2011). Therefore, when the gun control issue was more salient than the abortion and environment issues in the media, the intensive gun control-related news coverage may be more likely to increase the chances that individuals expose themselves to partisan news supporting their political predispositions. This may reduce the awareness of rationales for the oppositional perspectives on the gun control issue.

Taken together, these internal and contextual factors may help to explain why the patterns differed for the gun control issue public compared to the abortion and environment issue publics with respect to information selectivity and opinion quality. Differences among issues need to be carefully considered when examining issue publics.

SOLVING THE DELIBERATIVE-PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY PARADOX?

This dissertation now returns to its main question: Do issue publics solve the deliberative-participatory democracy paradox? After examining the relationships, the important role of issue publics in contributing to deliberative and participatory democracy is clear. However, there are limitations regarding the extent to which issue publics solve the paradox.

Issue public members are prone to select issue-relevant information with diverse perspectives, leading to an increase of issue-specific knowledge and higher quality opinions. At the same time, issue public members also have high intentions to participate in issue-related political activities both online and offline. The integrated models also show significant paths from issue-specific knowledge to intentions to engage in offline and online political activities. More importantly, issue public members did tend to approach more challenging information on the issues, and this in turn resulted in the generation of more rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the issues. By looking at these relationships, issue publics provide an optimistic implication for democracy that may ease the concern raised by previous empirical studies about a lack of political interest, a low level of political sophistication, and a decreasing level of political participation among citizens. Issue publics seem very promising as a way to bridge the gap between deliberative and participatory democracy. Issue publics also shed light on Schudson's (1998) concept of monitorial citizens, which suggests that individuals pay casual attention to the information environment so that they can be alerted on issues, and

may be mobilized around those issues. Individuals who are involved in an issue (i.e., issue public members) will be more likely than others to be aware of issue-related information in the media and to perform a monitorial function.

However, issue public members are not omnipotent. Although issue public members were more likely than nonmembers to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political views, they exacerbated (i.e., the abortion and gun control issue publics) a preference like-minded over disconfirming information. Moreover, issue public members' opinion quality also was unbalanced even though they were more likely than nonmembers to list rationales for oppositional perspectives on the issue. Issue public membership significantly sharpened the discrepancy between generating rationales for one's own viewpoints and for oppositional viewpoints.

Accordingly, the issue-based selectivity exercised by issue public members occurs alongside the dissonance-avoidant type of selective exposure. However, it would be a mistake to dismiss issue public members' contribution to deliberative democracy on these grounds alone. Issue public members did demonstrate greater political sophistication on the issue about which they cared, including issue-specific knowledge and generating rationales for their own and oppositional viewpoints as a result of their tendency of look at counter-attitudinal information. This is the relationship that deliberative theorist have emphasized. Therefore, the important role of issue publics in facilitating deliberative democracy should be recognized. Combined with issue-related political participation, Issue public members do help to solve the deliberative-participatory democracy.

This optimistic read, however, leaves unanswered the following question: how worrisome is issue public members' biased information seeking and unbalanced argument generation? The ideal situation that individuals have strong attitudes toward a subject and maintain unbiased information selectivity and information processing related

to the subject may not exist in the real world. It is likely that scholars would find that unbiased information selectivity is related to apathy about politics or a lack of concern about any political issue (like the nonmembers of issue publics in this dissertation). Without issues inciting citizen's interest, concerns would again turn to scholars' worries about uncrystallized attitudes, and political apathy (Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Downs, 1957; Zaller, 1992). Future research may examine whether, or to what extent, biased information selectivity affects the contribution of exposure to counter-attitudinal political views to deliberative democracy. For example, if we find a significant relationship between exposure to counter-attitudinal political views and awareness of rationales for oppositional viewpoints, does biased information selectivity weaken the relationship? If biased information selectivity does not significantly reduce the positive influence of exposure to counter-attitudinal political views on the outcomes, it may not be that worrisome in the development of democracy. However, if biased information selectivity is detrimental, we may need to carefully note the role of issue publics in the democratic process.

For opinion quality, it seems to be a natural tendency for people to generate more rationales for their own viewpoints than for oppositional viewpoints on different issues.²⁶ For individuals who are concerned about an issue, it would be less likely to find them have rather balanced arguments for different sides of the issue compared to individuals who are not concerned about the issue. A strong attitude tends to imply a strong pre-existing preference to one side of an issue. To understand if unbalanced argument generation is worrisome or not, a key question that need to be examined is: Do unbalanced arguments mean poor quality opinions? While this dissertation examined the

²⁶ Not only issue public members, but also nonmembers of issue publics generated more rationales for their own viewpoints than oppositional viewpoints across the three issues.

number of arguments people can generate, a more qualitative way to examine those arguments can be conducted. For example, one could analyze the extent to which people rely on correct information or provide supporting evidence. When individuals generate more rationales for their own viewpoints than oppositional viewpoints, if correct information and supporting evidence are equally presented in the rationales for these two different viewpoints, it may imply that individuals have a similar level of reasoning for these two different viewpoints. The additional arguments produced for one's own viewpoints may simply result from individuals' tendency to say more for like-minded perspectives.

Overall, it is important to recognize the contribution issue publics can make to deliberative and participatory democracy, but at the same time understand their limitation so that their role in the society can be valued, but not overvalued.

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATED-REASONING GOALS IN INFORMATION SELECTIVITY AND INFORMATION PROCESSING

In the first part of the dissertation, a reliable and valid measure of issue public membership was created and the empirical evidence confirmed issue public members' unique cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors. The second part of this dissertation aimed to understand whether issue public members' information seeking and argument generation may be affected by other conditional factors—motivated-reasoning goals. Prior research has shown that motivated-reasoning goals have a significant effect on information selectivity and information processing (e.g., Kunda, 1990; Lodge & Taber, 2000, 2005; Nir, 2011b). Goals were manipulated to understand their main effects on information selectivity and opinion quality, and whether they moderated the effects of issue public membership on these two outcome variables of interest.

There were no consistent patterns regarding how motivated-reasoning goals affected information selectivity and information processing. The findings were mixed in terms of which issues (i.e., abortion, environment, or gun control) were affected by which motivated-reasoning goals (i.e., accuracy or directional) on which type of information selectivity (i.e., exposure to attitude-consistent or counter-attitudinal information). Accuracy goals, for instance, significantly increased the selection of counter-attitudinal articles about the environment, but did not do the same for the other issues.

Although it is not possible to know for sure why differences among issues emerged, some speculation as to why the environment produced a different pattern is warranted. The main reason for choosing the environment as one of the issues in the experiment was because the environment, compared to the abortion and gun control issues, was less controversial and less obtrusive (McCombs, 2004). This may explain why individuals were more affected by the accuracy goal manipulation for the environment compared to abortion or gun control.

Individuals may have less extreme attitude about the environment than the abortion and the gun control issues. To confirm this assumption, I first combined and averaged the four issue position items in the pre-survey for each of the three issues. Then, I folded the issue position at the scale midpoint. Higher values, therefore, represent greater attitude extremity on the issue (range = 1 – 4). Results from the paired *t*-tests indicate that attitude extremity toward the environment issue ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .67$) was significantly lower than attitude extremity toward the abortion issue ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .77$; $t = -17.84$, $p < .001$) and the gun control issue ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .73$; $t = -6.16$, $p < .001$).²⁷

²⁷ Attitude extremity toward the abortion issue ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .77$) was significantly greater than extremity toward the gun control issue ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .73$; $t = 10.50$, $p < .001$). Overall, participants had the greatest attitude extremity toward the abortion issue, following with the gun control issue, and then the environment issue.

With a less extreme attitude toward the environment issue, individuals could be more susceptible to manipulation and affected by the accuracy goals to look for counter-attitudinal information on the environment issue. On the contrary, for the abortion and the gun control, it may be harder for the accuracy goals to exert influence on exposure counter-attitudinal information when individuals have more extreme attitude about an issue.

The directional goal manipulation significantly affected time spent reading *attitude-consistent* gun control articles, and it also *negatively* influenced individuals' selection of and time spent reading *counter-attitudinal* abortion articles. It is interesting that directional goals influenced individuals' selective exposure differently depending on the issue. In both instances, however, directional goals affected participants to display more biased information selectivity.

For the gun control issue, participants' selective approach strategy in the directional goal condition may be explained by the complexity and ambiguity of the gun control issue. Considering the complexity and ambiguity participants expressed on this issue, they may spend more time reading like-minded gun control articles to enhance their confidence in their own viewpoints when they were instructed to look for information that could help them defend their position on the issue.

While literature has shown mixed results regarding whether individuals exercise selective avoidance (e.g., Garrett, Carnahan, & Lynch, 2013; Johnson, Zhang, & Bichard, 2011), this dissertation found that it occurs with respect to the abortion issue. For the abortion issue, perhaps participants took a selective avoidance strategy, whereby they avoided counter-attitudinal articles, because of the degree of dissonance provoked by counter-attitudinal abortion articles. As mentioned earlier, individuals' attitude extremity on this issue lends some support on this. Participants may experience a greater degree of

dissonance when encountering counter-attitudinal abortion articles compared to other articles because of their attitude extremity. As such, participants may have tended to avoid disconfirming content, especially when they were in the directional goals condition. Overall, individuals use different strategies—selective approach or selective avoidance—to seek information for different issues.

These findings also suggest the need for further examination of which factors affect the adoption of different information seeking strategies.

In addition to the main effect of motivated-reasoning goals, an interaction effect between issue public membership and accuracy goals was found. Accuracy goals significantly enhanced issue public members' selection of counter-attitudinal environment articles compared to other groups. There were no significant differences in selecting counter-attitudinal articles between the no goal condition and the accuracy goal condition among nonmembers of issue publics. As previously discussed, the environment issue is less controversial and less likely to obtrude into individuals' daily lives, which may encourage people to search for oppositional views when they are told to objectively search for information and accurately describe the information. More importantly, the interaction effect signifies that an accuracy goal matters when individuals are involved in the issue, at least for some issues.

In addition to information selectivity, I also examined the effect of motivated-reasoning goals on individuals' opinion quality. The results show no significant main effects of the motivated-reasoning goals on generating rationales for one's own viewpoints or on generating rationales for oppositional viewpoints. In addition, no interaction effects between issue public membership and motivated-reasoning goals on opinion quality were found.

There are several possible explanations for the lack of any significant relationships between the motivated-reasoning goals and opinion quality. One explanation has to do with the amount of time elapsing between the goal manipulation and the measurement of opinion quality. Participants read the instructions before their minimum four-minute news browsing session and no additional emphasis was placed on these goals before participants were asked to generate rationales for their own and oppositional viewpoints on the issues. This may lessen the effect of goal manipulation on opinion quality. It would be a stronger test if the goal manipulation was emphasized again after participants' news browsing session and before they started generating their rationales on the issue to remind them the manipulated condition.

Kim's (2007) study used total time spent on information search as a manipulation check. She suggested that individuals with an accuracy goal should spend more time in information seeking than those with directional goals. However, this dissertation did not find a significant difference between participants in the accuracy goals condition and those in the directional goals condition in the total time they spent on information search.

Another explanation may be the measurement of argument repertoire. Previous research related to motivated-reasoning goals usually asked participants to provide their thoughts or opinions after the goals had been manipulated, which is a more direct indicator of one's feeling about an issue, as opposed to offering arguments for one's own viewpoints and oppositional viewpoints on the issue. For example, Taber and Lodge (2006) asked participants to list their thoughts for arguments that they read and then the responses were coded as denigrating or bolstering the presented argument. When participants in this dissertation read the goal manipulation instruction that they needed either to objectively describe the issues or to defend their position on the issues, they may have expected to provide their direct opinions or thoughts after browsing the news.

However, they were instead asked to provide rationales. In addition, they needed to consider rationales for their own position and for the opposite position on an issue. Argument repertoire may require more effortful processing than simply providing direct opinions or thoughts. This effortful cognitive processing may attenuate the effect of the goal manipulation on opinion quality.

These two reasons also may explain why Nir (2011) found that motivated-reasoning goals had a significant effect on listing rationales for oppositional viewpoints, but this research did not. In her study, motivated-reasoning goals were treated as personal traits by using the measures of need for cognition and need to evaluate to represent accuracy and directional goals. The survey measures were not mutually exclusive. Her findings showed that those who rated high in need for cognition (accuracy goals) and low in need to evaluate (directional goals) were able to generate the greatest number of rationales for both their own viewpoints and oppositional viewpoints compared to the other groups. When research measures motivated-reasoning goals as personality traits using a survey method, it aims to capture whether pre-existing characteristics are related to outcome variables of interest. However, when it comes to an experiment, motivated-reasoning goals are treated as situational factors that may exert influence on individuals. There may be differences in how outcome variables of interests are related to motivated-reasoning goals captured by state variables in experiments or by trait variables captured in survey.

Despite the insignificant effects of accuracy and directional goals on opinion quality, accuracy and directional goals do sometimes influence individuals' information consumption. Their effect, however, is highly contingent on the issue under consideration.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATION AND CONTRIBUTION

While this dissertation adds to the literature on issue publics, some limitations have to be acknowledged. This dissertation was carried out in a natural setting using a survey experiment. A natural setting can increase the generalizability of the results; however, there are limitations to the external validity based on the demographic attributes of the participants. I compared the participants' demographic data with other national sample data (i.e., 2010 Post-Election Survey from Pew Internet & American Life, and 2011 Current Population Survey from U.S. Census). Although the composition of the participants in this study was similar to the other data in terms of gender, race, and income, the participants in the experiment were younger and more educated than the national sample data.

Another limitation of the study relates to the issues used in the experiment. The experiment only analyzed the abortion, gun control, and environment issue publics; therefore, the generalizability of the findings to other issue publics may be limited. Based on the findings in this dissertation and previous research on issue publics (e.g., Y. M. Kim, 2009; Price, et al., 2006), some consistent patterns that can be identified across different issue publics. For example, issue public members tend to exercise issue-based selectivity (without distinguishing attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal information), have issue-specific knowledge, generate issue-related rationales (without separating rationales for one's own or oppositional viewpoints), and participate/intend to participate in issue-related political activities. The fact that issue public members devote themselves to an issue and develop issue-specific attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors is assured. However, for other outcomes, differences emerged across issues. These differences may occur when the political outcomes, such as the pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal news exposure and rationale generation, are strongly related to the

controversy, the complexity, and the media salience of the issue. This is particularly true given that the gun control issue exhibited a different pattern from the abortion and the environment issues in several analyses.

With the potential variability in issue publics, future research may consider testing issue publics by categorizing issue publics in two ways: from the perspective of issue characteristics and from the perspective of individual characteristics. First, researchers can examine issues with different levels of controversy, complexity, or media salience to see whether issues with similar levels of controversy, complexity, or media salience yield a similar pattern in attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors of issue public members. Studies also may consider categorizing issue publics from the perspective of individual characteristics by selecting issues inspiring different levels of attitude strength, for example, to see whether members of different issue publics who have similar attitude strength behave in a similar manner.

The issue of causality also is important to consider when thinking about these results. Research has suggested different causal directions for relationships between media use and individuals' political cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors. Some studies show that media use affects individuals' political attributes, while others indicate that media consumption can be a consequence of the same political attributes (Brundidge, 2010; Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997; Cho, et al., 2009; Eveland, 2001; Eveland, Marton, & Seo, 2004; Jones, 2002; Jung, et al., 2011; Stroud, 2010). The experimental method employed in this dissertation has the benefit of demonstrating causal relationships between the information search conditions and the outcome variables of interest (e.g., issue-specific knowledge and opinion quality). Further, identifying as an issue public member was temporarily prior to the information search in this study, which may imply that issue public membership precedes information search and information processing.

However, the data cannot rule out the possibility of reverse causality in the relationships between issue public membership and the outcome variables of interest, including issue-specific knowledge, opinion quality, and intentions to issue-related political participation. It is possible that having high issue-specific knowledge, generating more issue-related arguments, or having a greater intention to issue-related participation cause one to identify as an issue public member.

However, there are theoretical reasons to expect that issue public membership enhances individuals' issue-specific knowledge, argument generation, and intentions to engage in political activities. Literature has documented the significant impact of attitude strength on cognition development (Berent & Krosnick, 1995; Krosnick, et al., 1993) and on behaviors (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Boninger, et al., 1995; Petty & Krosnick, 1995). The relationship also has been applied to the political context to understand the effect of attitude strength on political knowledge (Holbrook, et al., 2005), opinion quality (e.g., Wojcieszak, 2012), and political participation (e.g., Moon, 2011; Verba, et al., 1995; Wang, 2007). Given that the operationalization of issue public membership was constructed by several different attitude attributes that tap into the strength of an individual's attitude toward different issues, this dissertation proposed that issue public membership increases issue-specific knowledge, facilitates quality opinions, and enhances intention to participate issue-related political activities rather than the opposite causal ordering.

Despite these limitations, this dissertation has several methodological strengths that allow it to contribute to the literature on issue publics. First, using web behavior tracking has the benefit of allowing for the direct observation of individuals' information selectivity and in overcoming the measurement error resulting from self-reported measurement. Second, building on how previous research on selectivity constructs

stimuli (e.g., news articles, news website), the experimental design strove to increase external validity by using articles from actual news websites, and the news narrative was maintained with slight editing to make the headlines, leads, and articles similar to those that appear on actual news websites.

In addition, building on work by Knoblock-Westerwick and Meng (2009), which includes two articles, featuring one pro and one con views, for each issue in the study, this study used four articles, with two pro and two con views, for each issue. Including more articles for participants to choose provides a clearer way to examine the extent to which individuals expose themselves to issue-related articles. For instance, when a participant who is interested in the abortion issue finishes reading two abortion-related articles, and has the desire to read more about the issue, the participant still has another two abortion-related articles to choose and does not need to pick other articles to fill the time during the four-minute news browsing session. Further, including one extra article for both pro and con views offers a more reliable way of measuring pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal exposure. For example, some participants may try to figure out how the news site functions by randomly clicking on links at the beginning of the news browsing session. A selection of a pro-attitude or a counter-attitudinal article may not be based on participants' interest in the article, but on a random or incidental exposure. Including one more article for both pro and con views can help to reflect a more natural pattern of information selection among participants.

CONCLUSION

Citizens are more competent than we thought. By conceptualizing individual citizens as members in different issue publics, this dissertation found that citizens contribute to deliberative *and* participatory democracy through their involvement with

issues about which they deeply care. This dissertation, therefore, highlights the importance of conceptualizing individuals as issue public members.

Much public opinion and political communication research sees the public as a mass. This perspective considers citizens as parts of an aggregate without examining systematic variation in individuals' issue-specific concerns and interests. Research from this traditional approach often casts doubt on citizens' competence in a democracy by demonstrating citizens' lack of interest in politics, uncrystallized attitudes, low levels of political knowledge, and lack of political participation (Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Downs, 1957; Zaller, 1992). This dissertation explores the systematic variation in individuals' political concerns and interests by studying individuals' information selectivity, information processing, and political behaviors from the perspective of issue publics. With this approach, we can be less pessimistic about citizens' competence.

Displaying rather strong, consistent, and stable attitudes about a personally-important issue, issue public members exercise issue-based selectivity, which in turn leads to the development of issue-specific knowledge and quality opinions. Also, issue public members' concern about an issue prompts their issue-related political participation. These findings indicate the significant role of issue publics. Issue public members link the general public and the attentive public. Possessing political competence in their issue domain, issue public members have higher knowledge and more informed opinions on issues than their less sophisticated counterparts in the public. Issue public members exert pressure on the government, grab the government's attention, and attend to the government's response. They also can communicate ideas to the general public and inform the general public about issue-related information. Thus, issue publics can help to

bridge the divide between general public and the attentive public, and have a great influence on the functioning of democracy.

By analyzing democracy in its deliberative dimension, issue public members signify their importance. Exposure to dissimilar views and an awareness of opposing viewpoints have been deemed two central elements of deliberative democracy (Arendt, 1968; Benhabib, 1996; Habermas, 1989; Manin, 1987). Issue public members contribute to deliberative democracy by exposing themselves to more dissimilar views and by generating more counter-attitudinal rationales than nonmembers do. Citizens' membership in an issue public prompts their exposure to counter-attitudinal political views, which in turn leads to a greater ability to generate rationales for oppositional viewpoints. This demonstrates the prominent contribution of issue publics to the deliberative democracy.

Although I had hoped to find that issue public members were unbiased in their information selection and argument generation, the evidence showed that they were biased, even as they were more open to dissonant information. Issue public members were still drawn toward attitude-consistent information. A similar pattern appears when analyzing opinion quality. Although issue public members displayed greater ability to reason from oppositional viewpoints, they were more likely to generate rationales for their own viewpoints than for the opposing side. Although this may be a limitation of the extent to which issue public contribute, it is important to ask how detrimental biased information selectivity and unbalanced argument generation are. It is possible that biased information selectivity is not problematic if it does not hinder the contribution of issue public membership and counter-attitudinal exposure to the society. For example, biased information selectivity may not reduce the effects of issue public membership and counter-attitudinal exposure on issue-specific knowledge and awareness of rationales for

oppose viewpoints. It is also possible that unbalanced arguments may contain higher quality opinions, making them not as objectionable as they seem at first blush. However, these questions warrant future research.

In addition, through examining democracy in its participatory dimension, issue public membership has a significant influence in motivating individuals' intentions to participate in issue-relevant activities. Membership also may exert influence on intentions to participation across a broader spectrum of issues, as issue public members not only intended to engage in issue-relevant political activities, but also in some non-issue-relevant political activities. The findings, again, make the role of issue public membership prominent given that researchers have been worried about the low levels of political participation and have strived to find the path to encourage citizens' participation in political activities (Gil de Zúñiga, et al., 2009; Gil de Zúñiga, Veenstra, Vraga, & Shah, 2010; Jung, et al., 2011) .

In sum, by examining issue publics' specificity in information selectivity, opinion quality, and political participation, the contribution of this study goes beyond challenging the argument that deliberative democracy and participatory democracy rarely coexist. In fact, individuals can hear the other side, which helps them reason from the other side when they have an issue about which they deeply care. They also intend to actively participate in politics related to the issue.

In discussing the role of issue publics in a democracy, the role of online environment in facilitating issue publics members' issue-specificity cannot be ignored. The online environment serves as an important information source for issue public members and provides them with increased control over the content. Issue public members are those who are particularly attentive to specific issues and highly motivated to consume information about the issue. The online environment allows issue public

members to search for issue-related information that may not be available elsewhere. Further, it is more difficult for issue public members to exercise issue-based selectivity in the traditional media environment than in the online environment because there may not be abundant information related to the issue which interests them. Without the opportunity to select issue-related information, the development of issue-specific knowledge and issue-related arguments would be hindered.

In addition to the normative and theoretical contributions of this project, the significance of issue publics documented in this dissertation also has practical implications for journalism. Given that individuals can be motivated by issue public membership to choose issue-related information, journalists can utilize online news sites to promote issue-related information, and to micro-target different audiences' interest in an issue in several ways.

First, news organizations should consider including sub-categories for different issues on their news sites. Political issues are often scattered in different categories on online news sites. Taking NYTimes.com as an example, readers can find abortion-related articles in politics, in health, or in opinion. Readers also can find articles about gun control in U.S., in politics, in N.Y./Region, in world, or in opinion. This complicates how issue-related news is organized on the site and obstructs individuals' ability to exercise issue-based selectivity. It would be better if abortion-related articles had their own category, and the same for other issues. Accordingly, news sites can encourage readers to look for more issue-related information and facilitate the development of issue-specific knowledge. At the same time, those who are motivated to search for information related to the issue in which they are interested can continue their information search for the issue, and not be interrupted by other non-issue-related information.

Second, journalists should consider providing more in-depth reports related to issues to enhance individuals' understanding. This may help individuals who are concerned about the issue to develop well-structured knowledge and construct well-formed opinions on the issue.

Third, journalists also may consider using hyperlinks to connect pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal information. When individuals are concerned about an issue and start looking for issue-related information, hyperlinks may help increase the chances of exposure to counter-attitudinal information.

Issue-related information can facilitate issue-based selectivity exercised by people who are interested in an issue, contributing to the development of citizen competence and the functioning of the democracy. Journalists should use caution in promoting issue-related information, however (i.e., a balanced number of hyperlinks for pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal information), so that they can help to minimize biased information seeking in issue-based selectivity.

To conclude, this dissertation stresses the importance of issue publics in the democratic process, and highlights the online environment as an important factor in empowering issue publics. It documents reasons to celebrate issue publics' contribution to deliberative and participatory democracy. While the role of issue publics is praised, we should understand that issue publics are not a panacea for all of the issues in a democracy.

Appendix A: Measurement

Issue-Specific Knowledge

Abortion:

1. As of 2008, 87% of US counties do not provide abortion services.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know

2. A woman's right to choose abortion is a "fundamental right" recognized by the US Supreme Court in the case of _____.
 - a. Roe v. Wade
 - b. Stenberg v. Carhart
 - c. Planned Parenthood v. Casey
 - d. Hope Clinic v. Ryan
 - e. Don't know

3. The pregnancy rate and the abortion rate both are dropping in the U.S.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know

4. The U.S. Congress has barred the use of federal Medicaid funds to pay for abortions, except when the woman's life would be endangered by a full-term pregnancy or in cases of rape or incest.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know

5. The first state to criminalize abortions based on the sex or race of a fetus is _____.
 - a. California
 - b. Arizona
 - c. Pennsylvania
 - d. Don't know

Gun Control:

1. The U.S. has the highest rate of homicides among advanced countries.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know

2. Most states currently maintain a _____ policy.
 - a. May-issue
 - b. Shall-issue
 - c. No-issue
 - d. Unrestricted

- e. Don't know
3. 49 states have passed laws allowing citizens to carry certain concealed firearms in public, either without a permit or after obtaining a permit from local government and/or law enforcement. _____ is the only state without such a provision – but its long-standing ban on concealed weapons was recently overturned in a federal appeals court, on constitutional grounds.
 - a. Maryland
 - b. Illinois
 - c. Massachusetts
 - d. Hawaii
 - e. Don't know
 4. Were most of the weapons used in U.S. mass shooting since 1982 obtained legally or illegally?
 - a. Legally
 - b. Illegally
 - c. Don't know
 5. What was the most common weapon used in U.S. mass shootings since 1982?
 - a. Revolvers
 - b. Semiautomatic handguns
 - c. Shotguns
 - d. Assault weapons
 - e. Don't know

Environment:

1. Proposal 3, the Michigan Renewable Energy Amendment, was rejected in 2012.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know
2. Did the U.S. ever ratify the Kyoto protocol?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
3. As of 2010, the U.S. had 4.5% of the world's population but was responsible for about 28% of all global greenhouse gas emissions.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know
4. Where is the location of the only approved LNG export terminal?
 - a. Baltimore, MD
 - b. Freeport, TX

- c. Valdez, Alaska
 - d. Sabine, LA
 - e. Don't know
5. The United States has nearly doubled renewable energy generation from wind, solar, and geothermal sources since 2008.
- a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know

Appendix B: Results with New Continuous Measure

This appendix includes results when issue public membership was measured by new continuous measure, including issue-based selectivity (Table A.1 and A.2), issue-specific knowledge (Table A.3), the mediating role of issue-based selectivity in the relationship between issue public membership and issue-specific knowledge (Figure A.1 to A.3), opinion quality (Table A.4), the mediating role of issue-based selectivity in the relationship between issue public membership and opinion quality (Figure A.4 to A.9), intentions to participate in issue-related political activities (Table A.5). Another figure about the moderating role motivated-reasoning goals on exposure to attitude-consistent perspectives when comparing between participants in accuracy goal condition and those in directional goal condition is included (Figure A.10).

Table A.1: Issue Public Membership (New Continuous Measure) Predicting Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views

	Abortion		Environment		Gun Control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.04	.05	.01	.17***	-.09*	-.02
Gender (Male)	.02	-.03	.08	.01	.07	.06
Race (White)	.00	.02	.03	.01	-.04	-.02
Education	.10*	.06	.00	-.01	.01	.04
Income	-.02	-.08	.04	.01	-.06	-.09*
Political ideology/ Partisanship	-.03	.07	-.09	-.08	-.02	.03
Political interest	.01	-.01	-.07	-.02	.02	.02
General political knowledge	-.04	-.02	.05	.01	.06	-.02
News media use	-.11*	-.09	.02	.02	.01	.01
Accuracy goals	.03	.01	.04	-.08	.06	-.02
Directional goals	-.02	.02	.00	.02	.01	.10*
<i>Issue public membership: The new continuous measure</i>						
Abortion issue	.29***	.29***				
Environment issue			.16***	.16***		
Gun control issue					.15**	.15**
Total R²	.11***	.11***	.05**	.08***	.04*	.05*

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; The no goals condition is the reference group for the variables of accuracy goals and directional goals; In Model 1a, the dependent variable is the selection of attitude-consistent articles about abortion; In Model 1b, the dependent variable is the time spent reading attitude-consistent articles about abortion; In Model 2a, the dependent variable is the selection of attitude-consistent articles about the environment; In Model 2b, the dependent variable is the time spent reading attitude-consistent articles about the environment; In Model 3a, the dependent variable is the selection of attitude-consistent articles about gun control; in Model 3b, the dependent variable is the time spent reading attitude-consistent articles about gun control. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A.2: Issue Public Membership (New Continuous Measure) Predicting Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Political Views

	Abortion		Environment		Gun Control	
	Model 1a: Article Selection	Model 1b: Reading Time	Model 2a: Article Selection	Model 2b: Reading Time	Model 3a: Article Selection	Model 3b: Reading Time
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.10	-.04	-.03	.06	-.05	.06
Gender (Male)	.03	-.04	.10*	.08	.10*	.04
Race (White)	-.02	-.01	-.06	-.03	.04	.07
Education	.04	.01	.06	.03	-.01	.03
Income	.03	.05	.06	.07	.03	-.05
Political ideology/ Partisanship	-.19***	-.12**	.01	.05	-.02	.04
Political interest	-.04	-.01	-.07	-.06	-.07	-.06
General political knowledge	-.05	-.13**	.11*	.11*	-.01	-.04
News media use	.03	.02	-.04	-.05	.04	-.02
Accuracy goals	-.04	-.06	.10*	.01	.06	.05
Directional goals	-.17***	-.12*	.03	.01	-.06	.03
<i>Issue public membership: The new continuous measure</i>						
Abortion issue	.13**	.10*				
Gun control issue			.12**	.13**		
Environment issue					.04	.06
Total R²	.10***	.06***	.06**	.05**	.03	.02

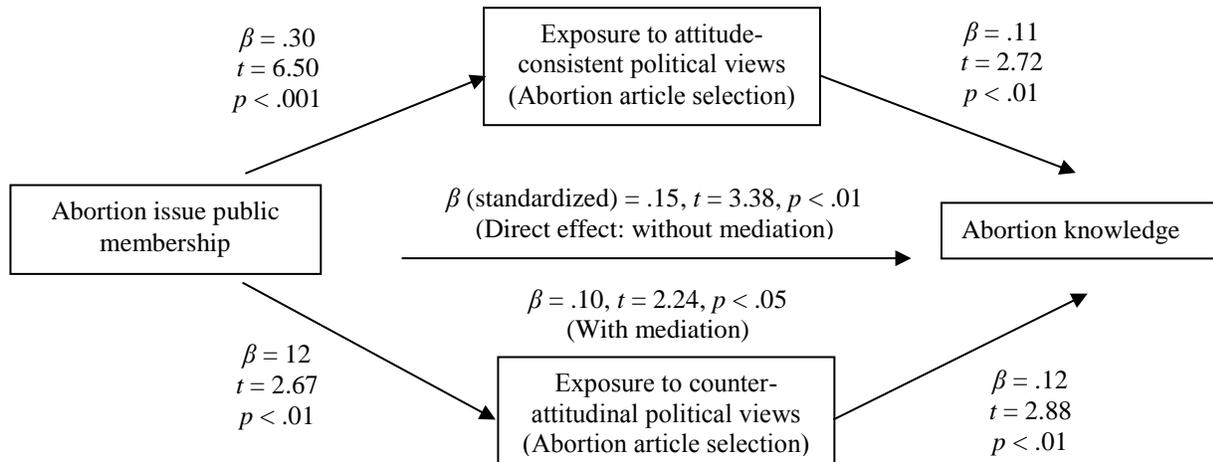
Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; The no goals condition is the reference group for the variables of accuracy goals and directional goals; In Model 1, the dependent variable is the selection of counter-attitudinal articles about abortion; In Model 2, the dependent variable is the time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles about abortion; In Model 3, the dependent variable is the selection of counter-attitudinal articles about the environment; In Model 4, the dependent variable is the time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles about the environment; In Model 5, the dependent variable is the selection of counter-attitudinal articles about gun control; in Model 6, the dependent variable is the time spent reading counter-attitudinal articles about gun control . * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A.3: Issue Public Membership (New Continuous Measure) Predicting Issue-Specific Knowledge

	Model 1: Abortion Knowledge	Model 2: Gun Control Knowledge	Model 3: Environment Knowledge
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Age	-.03	.02	-.01
Gender (Male)	-.03	.11**	.10**
Race (White)	.07*	-.01	.04
Education	.12***	.16***	.001
Income	.03	.07*	.06
Political ideology/ Partisanship	-.05	-.10**	-.11**
Political interest	.17***	.11**	.13**
General political knowledge	.21***	.18***	.17***
News media use	.03	.001	.04
Accuracy goals	.08*	.14***	.12**
Directional goals	.09*	.11**	.15***
No goals	.17***	.16***	.16***
<i>Issue public membership: The new continuous measure</i>			
Abortion issue	.14***		
Gun control issue		.19***	
Environment issue			.11**
Total R²	.21***	.24***	.15***

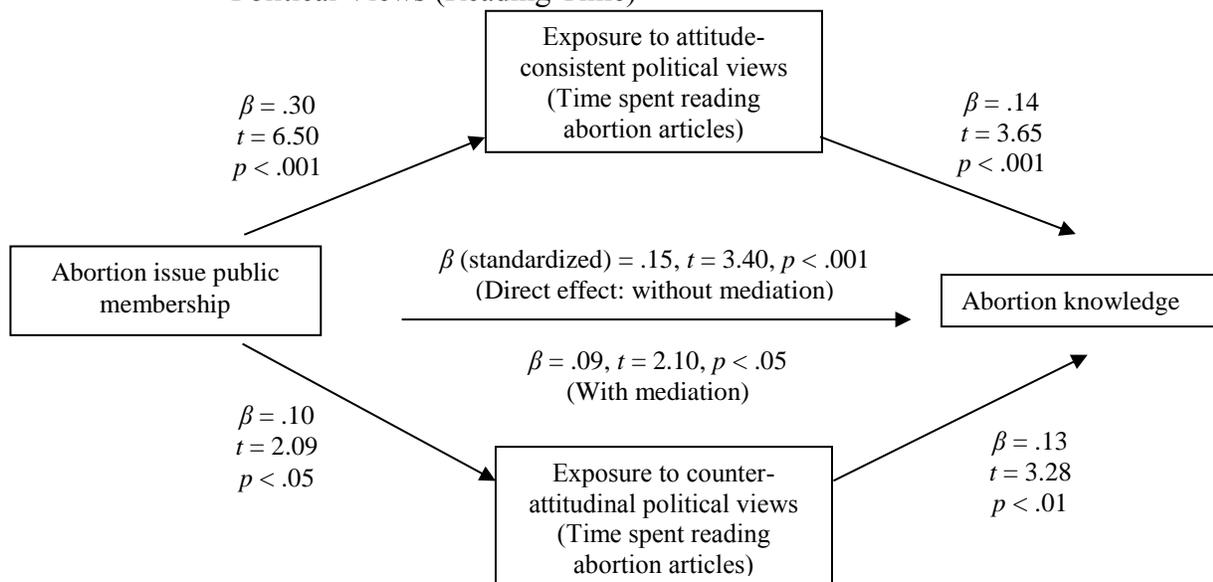
Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; The no information search condition is the reference group for the variable of accuracy goals, directional goals, and no goals. In Model 1, the dependent variable is abortion knowledge; In Model 2, the dependent variable is environment knowledge; In Model 3, the dependent variable is gun control knowledge. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure A.1a: Abortion Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Abortion Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.003, .071) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.002, .047). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

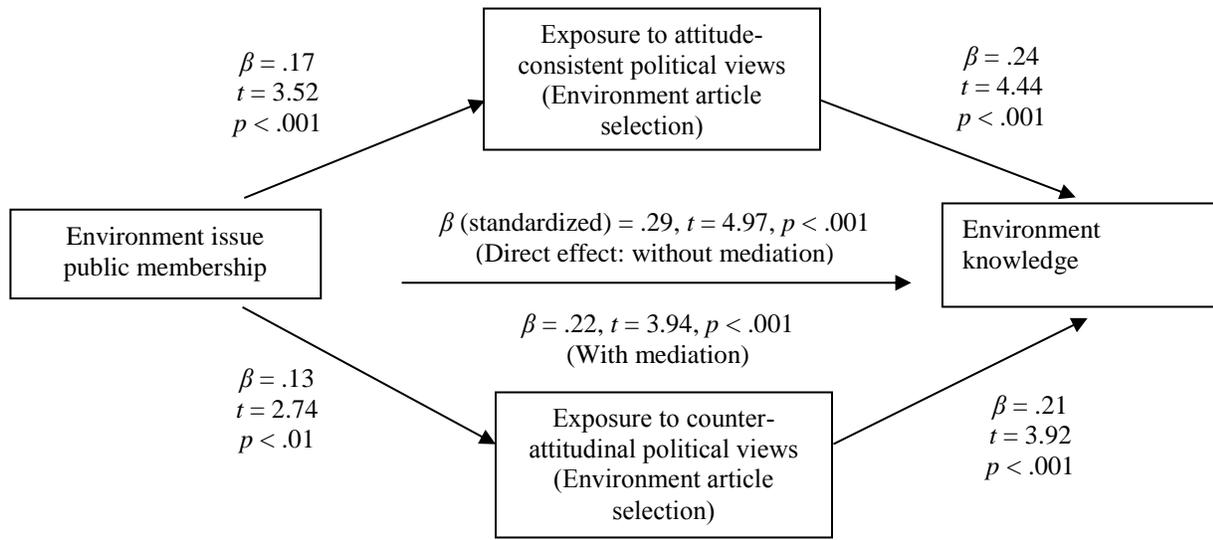
Figure A.1b: Abortion Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Abortion Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.010,

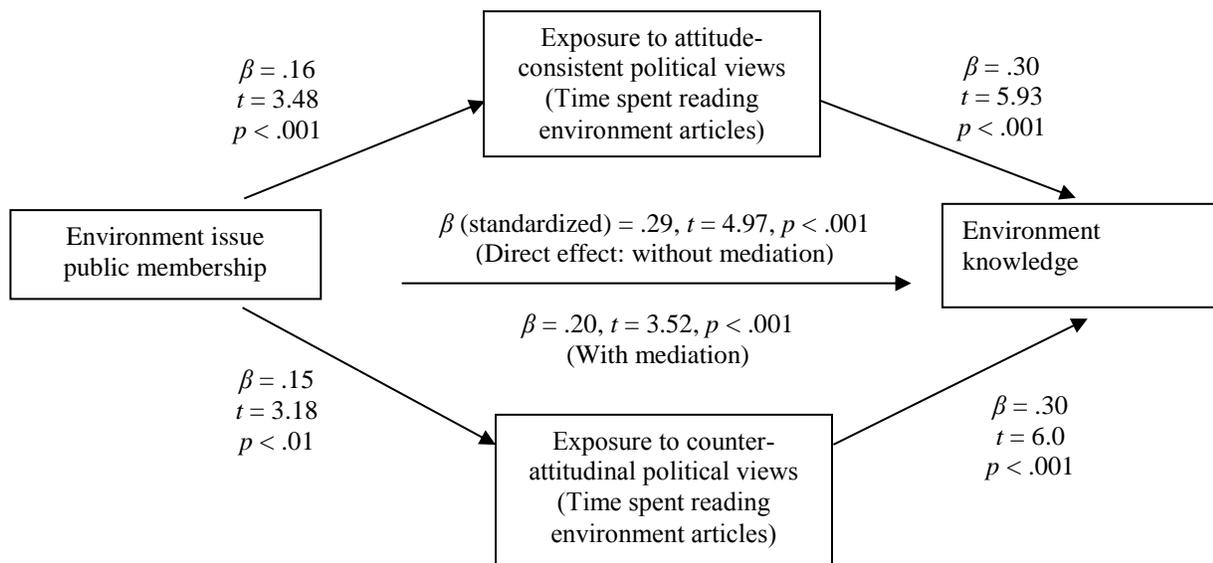
.085) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.001, .037). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

Figure A.2a: Environment Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Environment Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



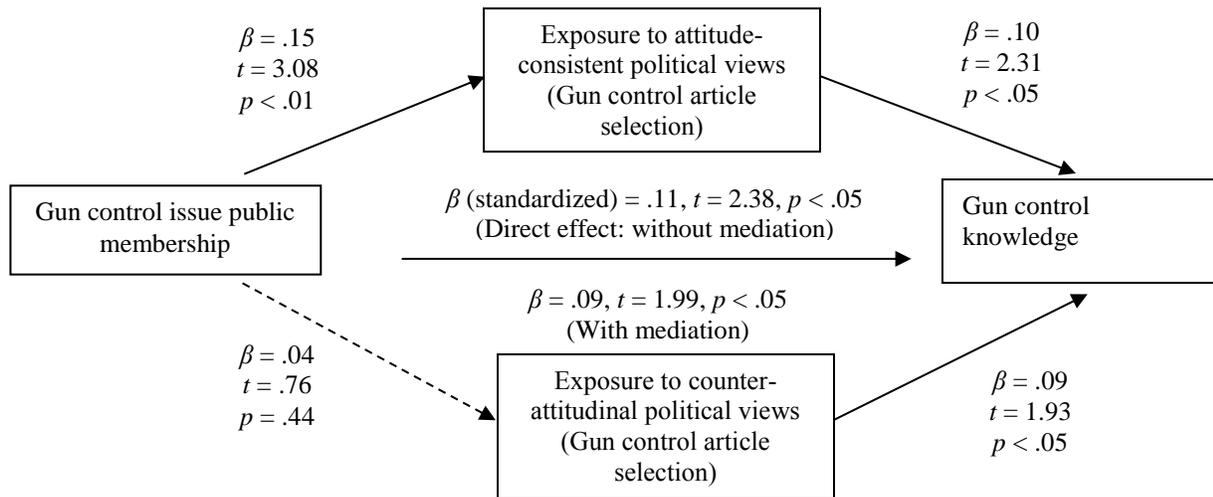
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.011, .090) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.002, .072). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 561$.

Figure A.2b: Environment Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Environment Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



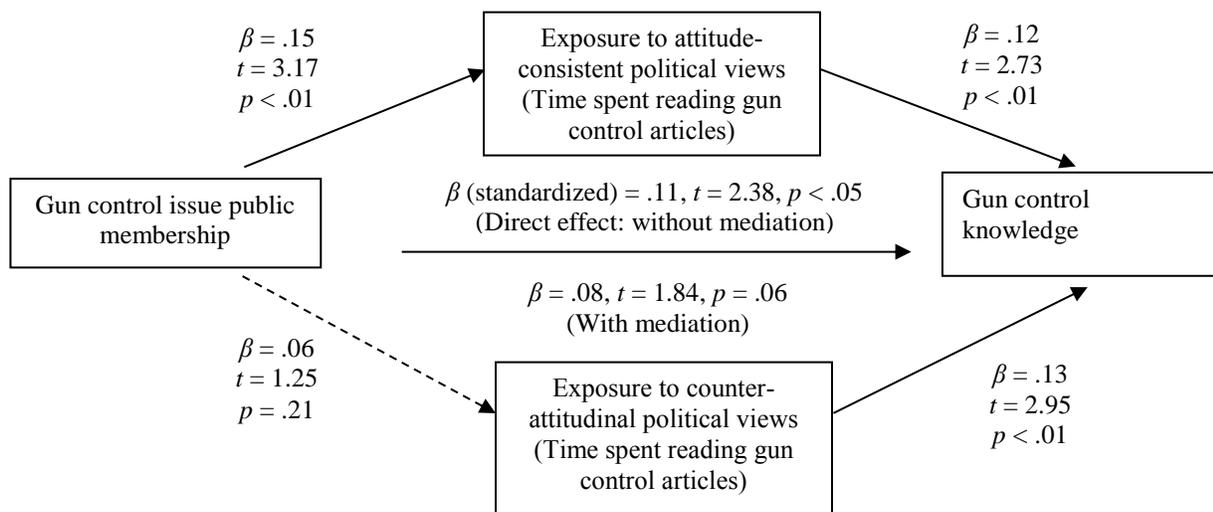
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.022, .092) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.011, .085). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 561$.

Figure A.3a: Gun Control Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Gun Control Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.002, .048) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.007, .023). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 517$.

Figure A.3b: Gun Control Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Gun Control Knowledge Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



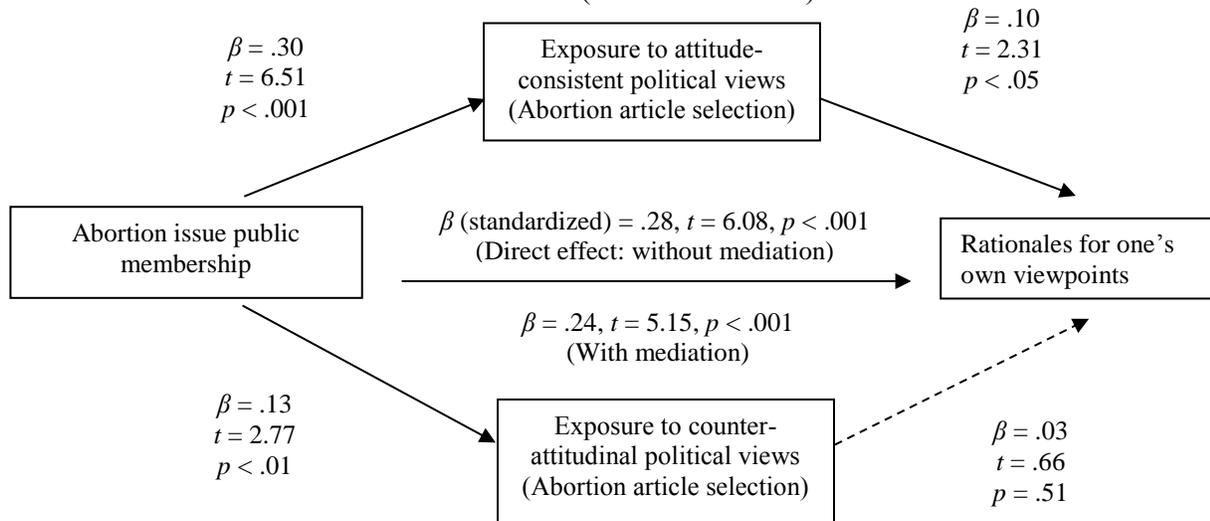
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.001, .048) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.006, .035). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 517$.

Table A.4: Issue Public Membership (New Continuous Measure) Predicting Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints

	Abortion		Environment		Gun Control	
	Model 1a: Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints	Model 1b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 2a: Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints	Model 2b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints	Model 3a: Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints	Model 3b: Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.12**	-.11**	-.04	-.09	-.05	-.10**
Gender (Male)	-.12**	-.13***	-.06	-.03	-.12***	-.04
Race (White)	.10**	.06	.03	.02	.01	.03
Education	.17***	.18***	.13***	.15***	.13***	.14***
Income	.00	.02	.04	.09*	.08*	.01
Political ideology/ Partisanship	-.02	-.07*	-.05	-.00	.07*	.01
Political interest	.06	.06	.08*	.07	.14***	.11**
General political knowledge	.07*	.11**	.11*	.15**	.05	.13**
News media use	-.09*	-.01	-.05	-.08*	-.06	-.10**
Accuracy goals	.07	.07	.08*	.09*	.10*	.05
Directional goals	.11**	.13**	.13**	.11**	.15***	.09*
No goals	.11**	.13**	.08*	.11**	.14**	.04
<i>Issue public membership: The new continuous measure</i>						
Abortion issue	.26***	.10**				
Environment issue			.31***	.23***		
Gun control issue					.21***	.04
Total R²	.20***	.14***	.20*	.17***	.15***	.09***

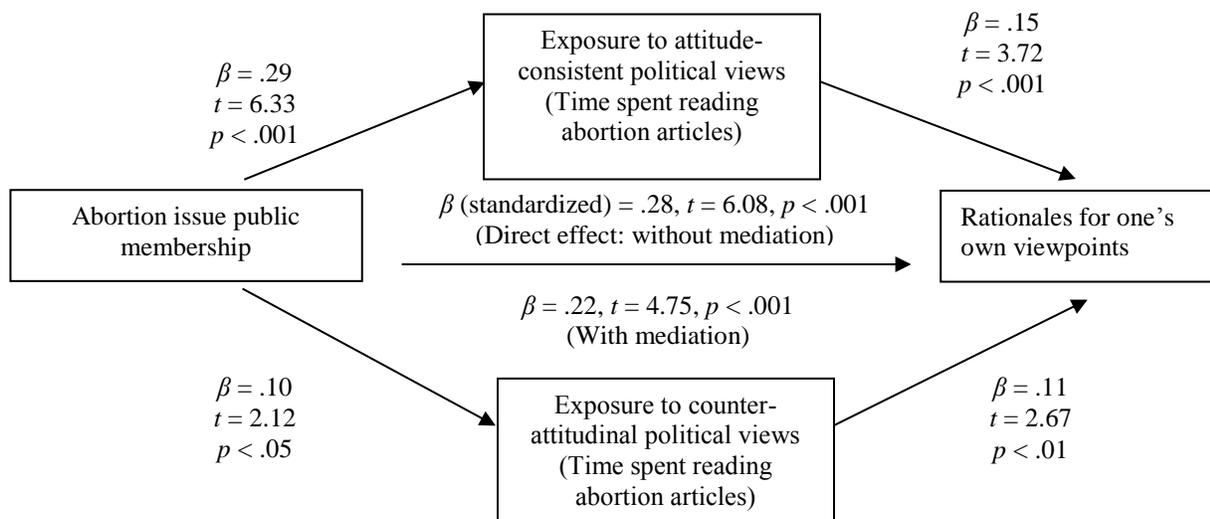
Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations; In Model 1, the dependent variable is the rationales for one's own viewpoints on the abortion issue; In Model 2, the dependent variable is the rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the abortion issues; In Model 3, the dependent variable is the rationales for one's own viewpoints on the environment issue; In Model 4, the dependent variable is the rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the environment issue; In Model 5, the dependent variable is the rationales for one's own viewpoints on the gun control issue; and in Model 6, the dependent variable is the rationales for oppositional viewpoints on the gun control issue. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure A.4a: Abortion Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.002, .078) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.010, .024). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

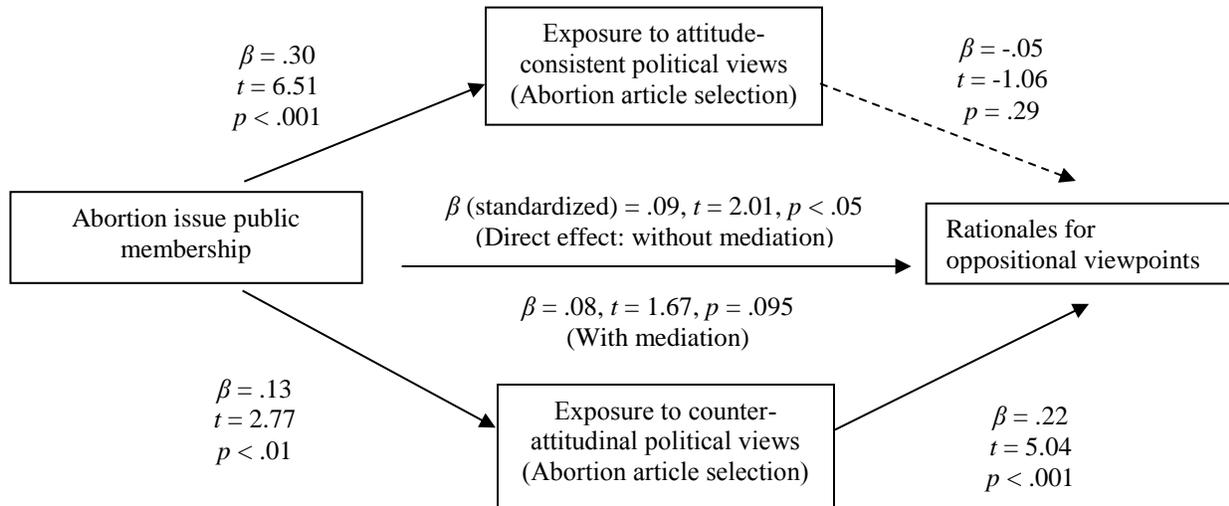
Figure A.4b: Abortion Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.015, .092)

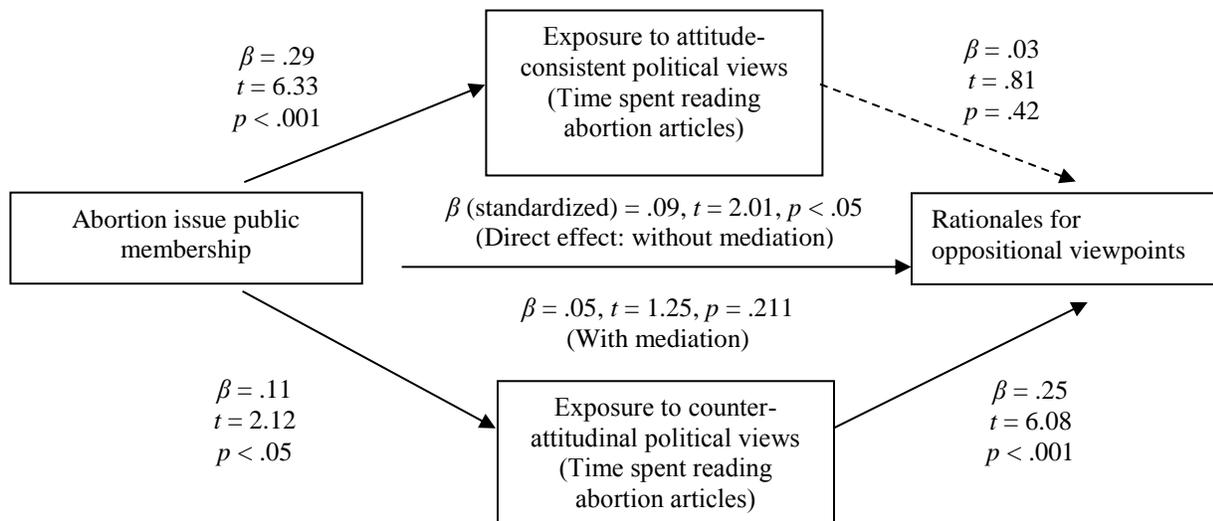
and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.003, .043). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

Figure A.5a: Abortion Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



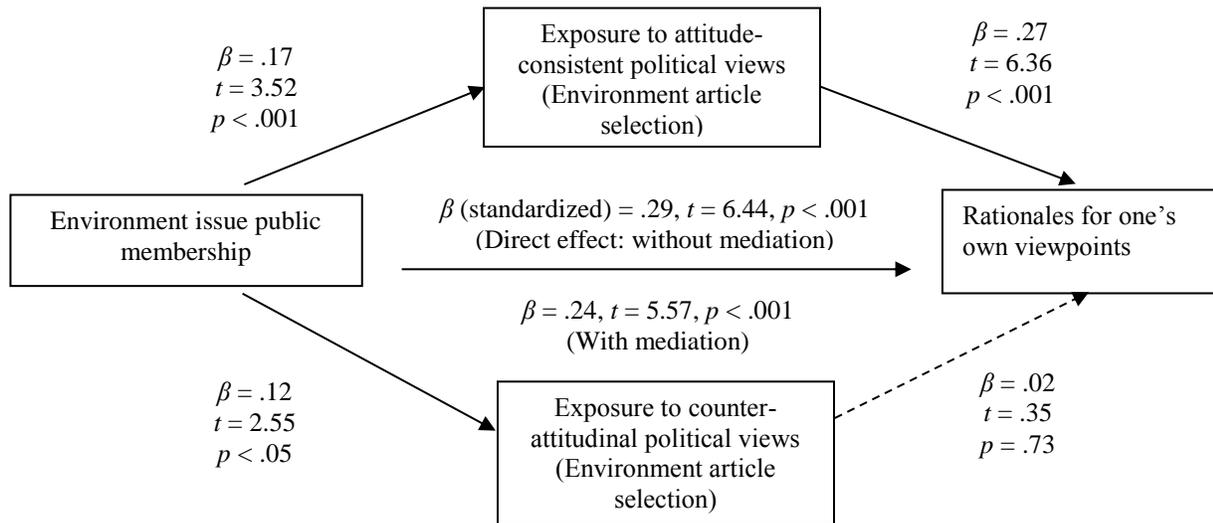
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.055, .030) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.004, .051). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

Figure A.5b: Abortion Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



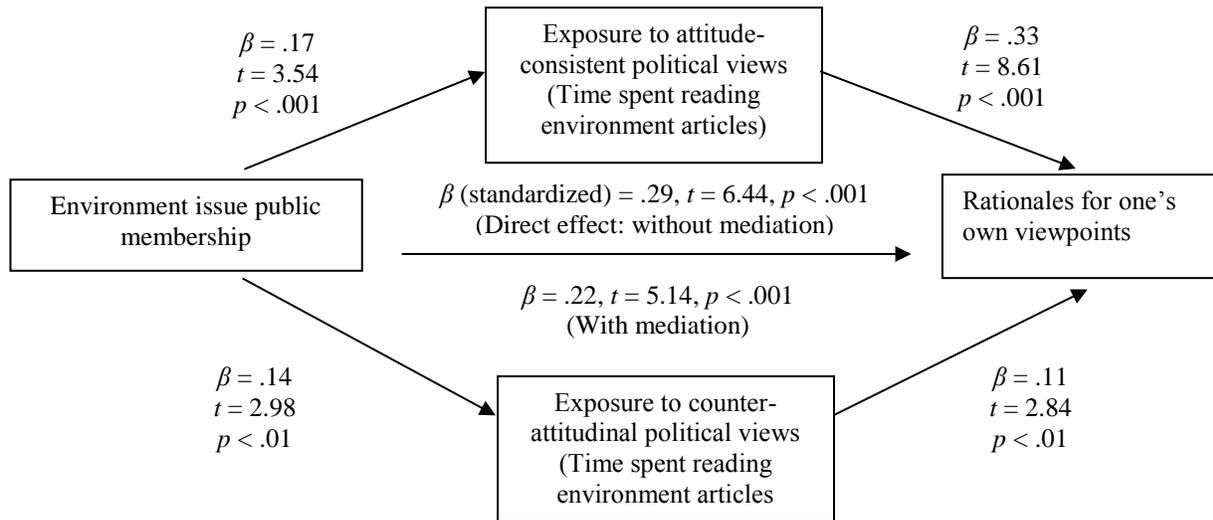
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.029, .046) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.005, .062). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, news media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 555$.

Figure A.6a: Environment Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



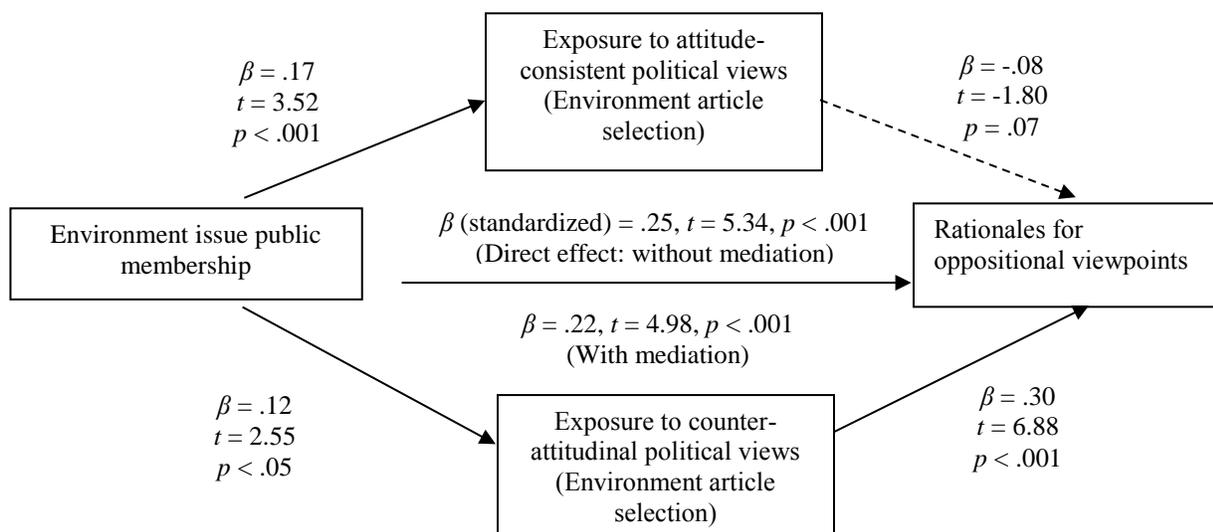
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.012, .093) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.015, .022). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

Figure A.6b: Environment Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



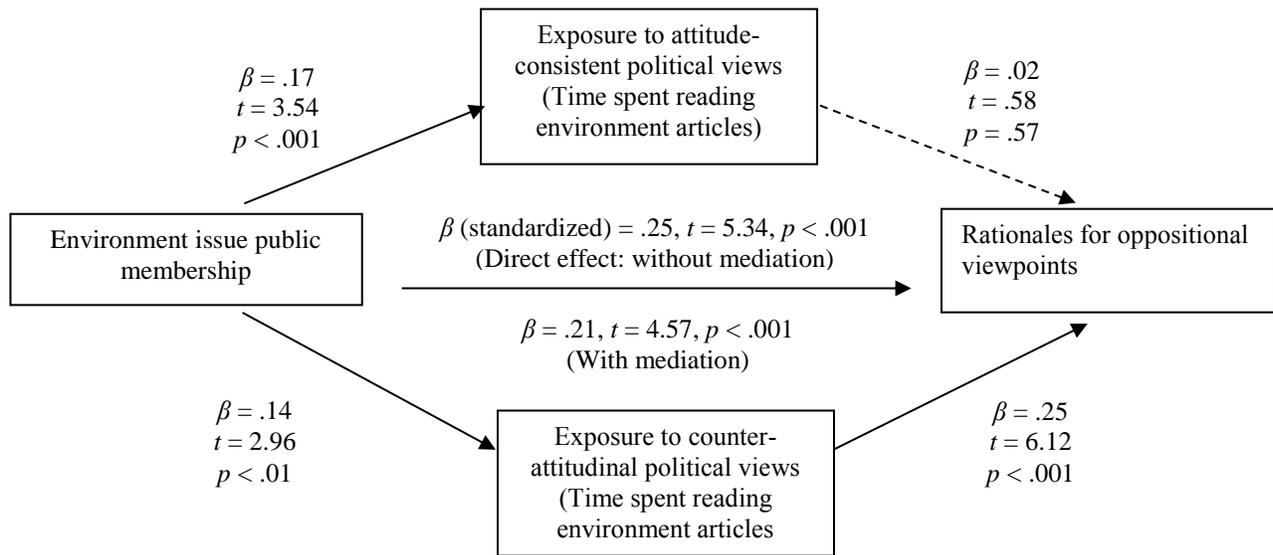
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.025, .101) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.002, .045). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

Figure A.7a: Environment Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



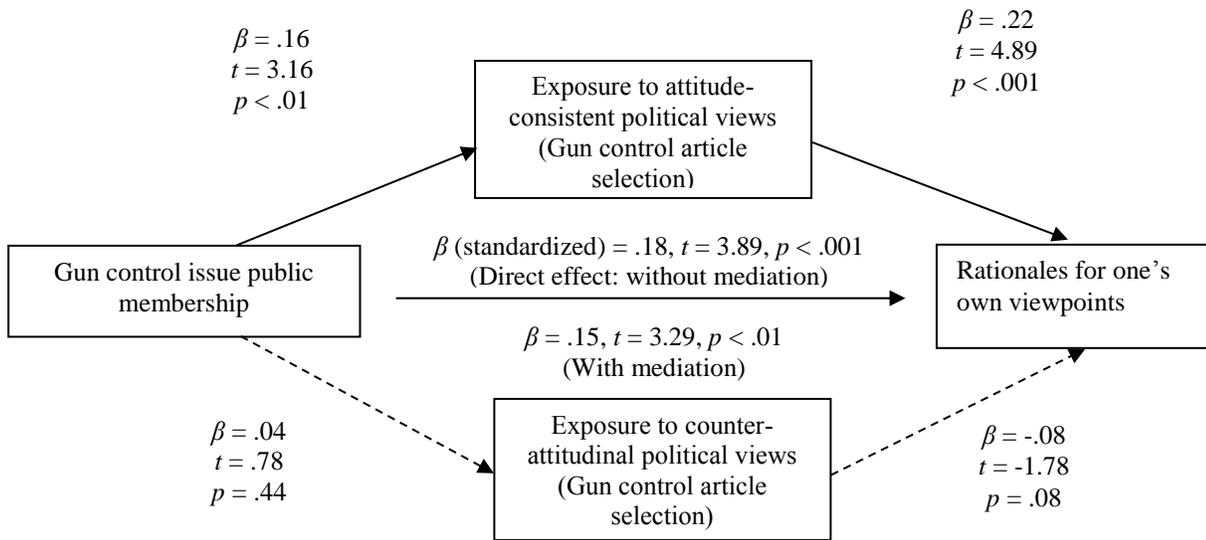
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.045, .005) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.002, .091). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

Figure A.7b: Environment Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



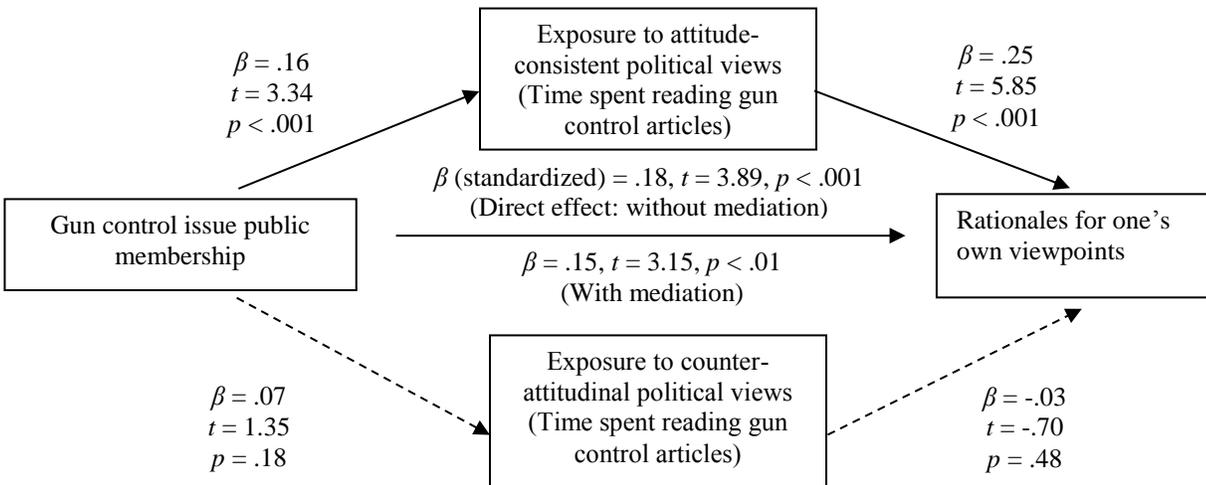
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.11, .021) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (.003, .071). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 557$.

Figure A.8a: Gun Control Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.006, .073) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.028, .006). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

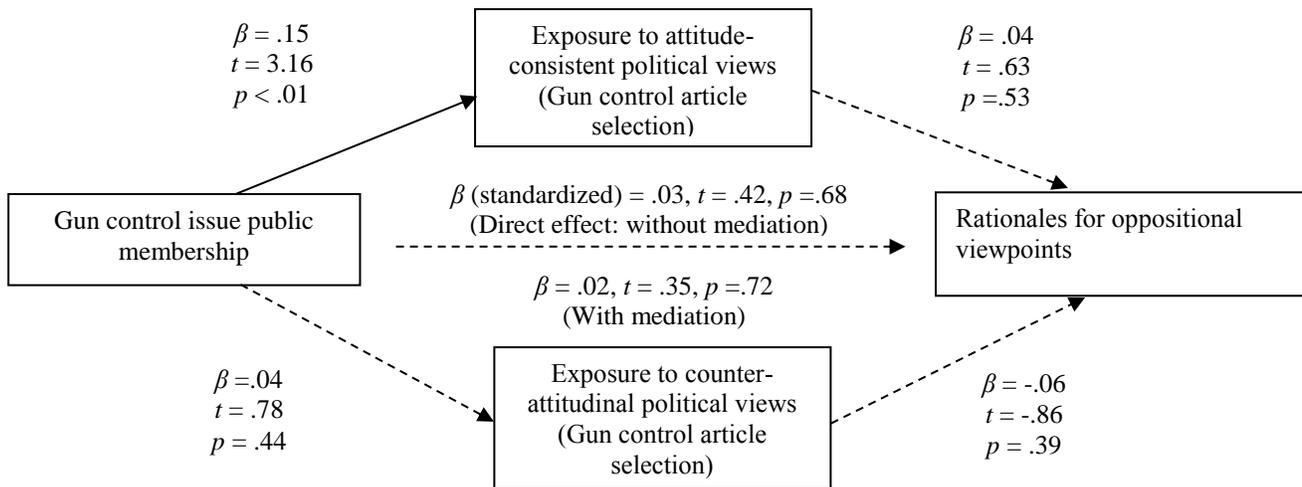
Figure A.8b: Gun Control Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for One's Own Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (.006, .088) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.018, .005). The control variables include age, gender, education,

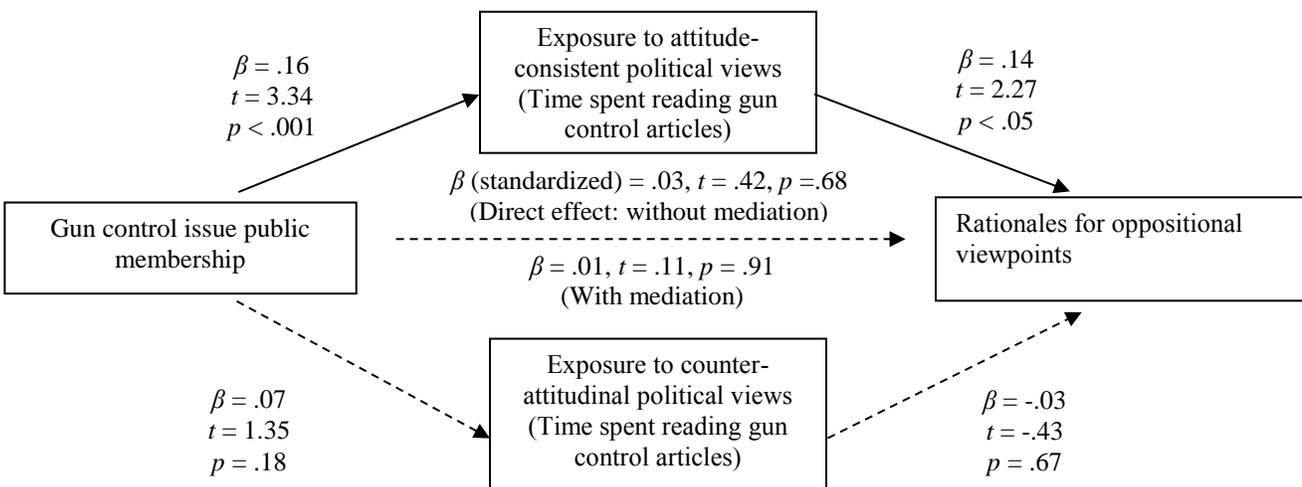
income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

Figure A.9a: Gun Control Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Article Selection)



Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.019, .043) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.032, .005). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

Figure A.9b: Gun Control Issue Public (New Continuous Measure) and Rationales for Oppositional Viewpoints Mediated by Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counter-Attitudinal Political Views (Reading Time)



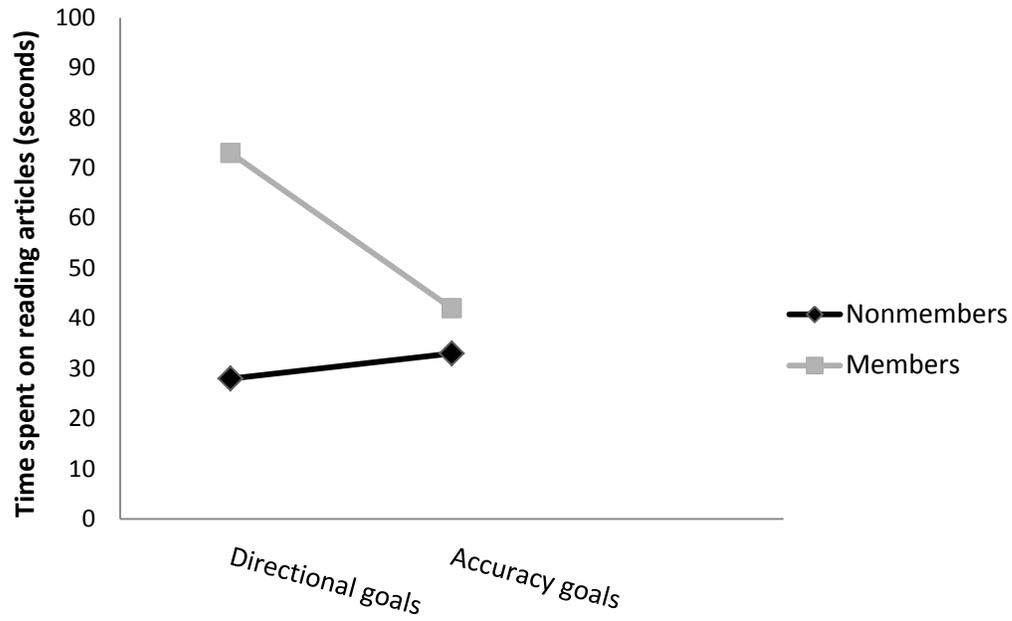
Note: The bootstrapped 95% bias corrected CIs: exposure to attitude-consistent political views (-.002, .067) and exposure to counter-attitudinal political views (-.025, .010). The control variables include age, gender, education, income, race, political interest, political ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, media use, and goal manipulation. $N = 529$.

Table A.5: Issue Public Membership (New Continuous Measure) Predicting Intentions to Participate Issue-Relevant Political Activities

	Abortion		Environment		Gun control	
	Model 1a:	Model 1b:	Model 2a:	Model 2b:	Model 3a:	Model 3b:
	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation	Offline participation	Online participation
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.10**	-.15***	-.09**	-.15***	-.09**	-.14***
Sex (Male)	-.04	.00	-.05	-.02	-.06	-.03
Race (White)	.08**	.05	.05	.04	.06	.03
Education	.00	-.04	.03	-.02	.01	-.04
Income	-.02	-.04	-.03	-.06*	-.04	-.06*
Political ideology	-.10**	-.09**	-.11***	-.12***	-.06*	-.09**
Political interest	.20***	.15***	.23***	.19***	.22***	.18***
General political knowledge	-.01	-.02	.04	.01	.01	-.00
News media use	.20***	.21***	.20***	.23***	.23***	.24***
Accuracy goals	.05	.03	.01	.01	.03	.03
Directional goals	.04	.05	.02	.01	.03	.04
No goals	.03	.05	.02	.03	.03	.03
<i>Issue public membership: The new continuous measure</i>						
Abortion issue	.46***	.44***				
Environment issue			.39***	.36***		
Gun control issue					.35***	.32***
Total R²	.41***	.35***	.39***	.34***	.33***	.28***

Note: Cell entries represent standardized coefficients from OLS regression equations. The manipulation of information search (i.e., accuracy goals, directional goals, no goals, and no search) was dummy-coded and included as control variables. The no search condition was the reference group. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure A.10: Interaction of Issue Public Membership (Environment) and Motivated-Reasoning Goals on Exposure to Attitude-Consistent Political Views (Time Spent Reading Articles)



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