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PUBLIC REASON, POLITICAL BEHAVIOR, AND THE DETERMINANTS OF
INFORMAL POLITICAL DELIBERATION IN BRAZIL

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Dissertação apresentada como requisito para o grau de Mestre pelo Programa de Pós Graduação em Economia do Desenvolvimento da Faculdade de Administração, Contabilidade e Economia da Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul.

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RESUMO

A presente dissertação tem por objetivo investigar o valor instrumental do comportamento humano para o funcionamento da democracia através da ideia de razão pública. A interação que existe entre governo e cidadãos é determinante para que as políticas públicas de um país sejam condizentes com as preferências da população e não de grupos de poder. Sendo assim, torna-se importante analisar a ideia subjacente à democracia de "governo pela discussão" à luz de teorias que nos iluminem tanto no que diz respeito à ideia de decisão coletiva justa, quanto, ao real comportamento humano. Para tal, primeiramente é apresentada a ideia de razão pública a contraponto, em particular, as visões de Rawls e Sen, dando ênfase para ao conceito de imparcialidade nas decisões políticas. Em seguida, na terceira seção, trabalham-se as ideias de racionalidade, razoabilidade, introduzindo-se os conceitos de heurísticas, vieses, e valores sociais. Assim, constrói-se uma associação para se pensar sobre os resultados de diferentes tipos de comportamento humano para a democracia e como é possível refletir a partir dele sobre as ideias de objetividade posicional e transcendental. Finalmente, na seção IV, realiza-se uma investigação empírica através da base de dados sobre a relação entre percepções sobre informações e disposições políticas e a frequência de conversa sobre política com os amigos. Utiliza-se um modelo de regressão logística ordenada, com dados do Latino Barômetro de 2015 para o Brasil, aliado ao método de componentes principais para capturar dimensões explicativas relevantes. Os seguintes resultados obtidos contradizem as hipóteses prévias: a falta de confiança no governo e a percepção de garantias faltantes não significativos, o ativismo dissociado a causas específicas reduz, ao passo que, um senso de cidadania ao reverso aumenta as chances de se conversar sobre política com mais frequência com amigos.

Palavras-chave: razão pública; comportamento humano; racionalidade; razoabilidade; imparcialidade; objetividade; comportamento político; conversas políticas.

ABSTRACT

The present dissertation aims to investigate the instrumental role of human behaviour for democracy through the idea of public reason. The interaction between government and citizens is decisive for a country's public policies to be in line with population preferences rather than power groups. Thus, it becomes important to analyse the idea underlying democracy of "government by discussion" in the light of theories that enlighten us both with regard to the idea of just collective decision and real human behaviour. To this end, we first counterpoint the idea of public reason, in particular, of Rawls and Sen, with an emphasis on the concept of impartiality in political decisions. Then, in the third section, we work on the notions of rationality, reasonableness, introducing the concepts of heuristics, biases, and social values. Thus, an association is constructed for thinking about the results of different types of human behavior for democracy and how the ideas of positional and transcendental objectivity fit this purpose well. Finally, in section IV, we conduct an empirical investigation based on the relationship between perceptions of relevant political information and dispositions and the frequency of political talk with friends. We use a logistic regression model, with data from the 2015 Latin Barometer for Brazil, combined with principal components method to capture relevant explanatory dimensions. The following results contradict previous hypotheses: lack of trust in the government and the perception of absent guarantees are not significant, while activism dissociated of specific causes reduces and a reverse sense of citizenship increases the chances of talking about politics more frequently with friends.

Key-words: public reason; human behaviour; rationality; reasonableness; impartiality; objectivity; political behaviour; political talk.

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I – Introduction

Societies prosper to a great extent through an interdependence of institutional and behavioral change. Analyzing one without properly recognizing the implications of the other for social outcomes may mislead us into accepting hasty conclusions. Norris (2012) present evidence that performance of democracy depends not only on political liberties but also on structural conditions. At the same time, both institutional organizations and norms of behavior evolve simultaneously, characterizing a dynamic process that functions as a feedback loop. As citizens enjoy the freedom of speech and institutions provide them with the opportunity to participate in the public discussions, representatives become better informed and can align their actions with the public interest. We can see the performance of democracy therefore as not only reliant on structural conditions and political freedoms per se, but also on citizens' political behavior, that is, on how they can profit from these opportunities in public dialogue. Citizens have to identify reliable sources from which they can access government performance and draw accurate political judgments whereby they provide the right incentives for government to improve policies according to rightly generated feedbacks from public reason.

The content and quality of active debate are contingent on the predisposition of individuals to reasonably motivate their view on these political issues; such matters can be the source of much counterproductive behavior, such as intolerance, unwillingness to dialogue with those that hold opposing views, and demagoguery when politicians profit from this kind of behavior. All these ultimately lead to better or worse social outcomes regarding justice. In consonance, authors, such as Sen (2011) and Rawls (2001), posit that just political decisions require impartiality possible in democracy by citizens' deliberation in the process of public reason.

The theory of public reason develops on how political issues, establishing the moral or political rules that regulate our common life, should be motivated. Equally, it accounts for how the active participation of citizens in the public discussion about political matters might lead society to better outcomes, particularly if certain rules of conduct exist. Many talked about the ideal political behavior, but the literature seems to lack a clear analysis on the connection of the theory to the actual behavior of citizens, which may inform us about its impact on social outcomes in general. On the other hand, different analysis of behavior, especially behavior economists and social

psychologists, has provided us with tools to interpret standard patterns, which, in turn, can illuminate us with a proper account of public reason in its actual state. In particular, the concepts of heuristics, cognitive biases, and positional objectivity offer valuable insight into the way citizens assess relevant information for political deliberation and react to others in society.

One of the main issues in our knowledge of public reason refers to the effects of open political discussion on social priorities and outcomes. Sometimes what we know about the benefits of deliberation regarding individual conduct is a lack of its association with what we know already about how value judgments occur. This particular area of confrontation has been overlooked and yet remains unclear.

Understanding how individuals behave is necessary to conceive a proper account of the possibility of public reason as well as of government by discussion. This dissertation proposes to devise an analysis of the concept of public reason through the light of what studies of human behavior infer about individual political behavior. The theory of public reason offers valuable insights about the way in which societies might debate and mature views about political issues. Moreover, it may help us see how different patterns of behavior end up affecting policy choices and, ultimately, social outcomes. The purpose of this dissertation is to address the central issue of reflecting about the instrumental role of behavior in achieving results in society through public reason and how behavior norms affect the performance of democracy. We explore the ways in which ordinary, still often unconscious, mental processes may induce technical and issue bias. Particularly the idea of objectivity and the dissonance of the ideas pertained in the idealization of the concept and the actual behavior of citizens is relevant for analyzing this problem – something already propelled in Amartya Sen's notion of positional objectivity.

This dissertation develops as follows. The second section gives an overview of the idea of public reason, initiating by Rawls' institutionalist approach, followed by some constructive criticism that introduces a broader view undertaken in Amartya Sen perspective of democracy as public reason. In the third section, we analyze the concepts of rationality and reasonableness, reviewing some relevant literature to the topic of deliberation and choice, including a further look at the idea of positional objectivity. The fourth section consists of an empirical analysis of the Latino Barômetro dataset, focusing on the determinants of informal political deliberation, specifically, political talk with friends. Our purpose in this last chapter is to investigate which dimensions of

relevant political information (e.g. economic situation) and dispositions (e.g. to protest for higher wages) are more associated with dialogues that happen broadly in every sphere of society. With this aim in mind, perform an ordinal logistic regression together with principal components analysis for capturing relevant explanatory dimensions. Finally, in the last section, we present some concluding remarks.

II. Public Reason, Deliberation, and the Search for Justice through Impartiality

The idea of justice and morality deriving from procedures of impartial decision-making dates back to Smith (1759), Kant (1785) and Mill (1861). Recently this approach has gained relevance with some scholars (Harsanyi, 1953, 1955; Rawls, 1971; Scanlon, 1982, 1998; Sen, 2011). In John Rawls account of impartial justice - of his Theory of Justice -, the “veil of ignorance” requires that people do not have any particular information concerning their identity, and in the idealized place called “original position” this veil guarantees impartial decision-making on the principles of justice. The theory served as a basis for the contemporary debate on impartiality and justice. Moreover, his perspective extends on the idea of public deliberation in democracy; the way reasonable individuals are to behave in the political process of public reason, where issues of basic justice are at stake. Public reason, then, denotes the idea of democratic procedures influencing collective decisions that, by definition, encompasses the dependence of social outcomes on citizens’ exchange of views about political issues.

Following, the dynamic of public reason generates incentives for a citizen to confront their ideas of what is just and what is not. In full-democracies, freedom of speech provides an opportunity for individuals to arrive at more considered judgments themselves. Through deliberation about political matters, citizens can change collective decision by influencing the judgment of others and raise the sense of political autonomy and the effective fairness of policy choices (Landa; Meirowitz, 2009). It also enables a better assessment of others’ motives on a given political choice, and even inspires the production of other-regarding motives (Elster, 1995). A selection of preferences and justifications for those preferences occurs in the process of deliberation. Furthermore, it may also increase the stability of collective choice by reducing the number of issue dimensions - the topics of public discussion - and introduce more structure into individual preferences (Dryzek; List, 2003; Knight; Johnson, 1994). On the other hand,

the way people read the world they inhabit and react to stances about political issues (biases playing an important role here) can restrain the reach of public reason, and their circumstances can ultimately obscure diagnoses of social problems.

The ideal of a liberal democratic society is based upon a set of conditions that enables a person to express her ideas as she wants, insofar as respecting others liberties, a major component being that of political freedoms such as freedom of speech and dissent. Furthermore, the most distinct characteristic of democracy from authoritarian forms of government is that it requires political and judiciary leaders to justify their actions to the public. Even when political consensus about a decision does not occur, representatives feel the necessity to justify their positions.

As Sen (1999) emphasizes, the importance of political freedoms is not only as basic natural capabilities for humans as social creatures that value free participation in political and social activities. It is valuable also as a potential instrumental mechanism whereby rulers have the incentive to listen to what people want since they have to face their criticism, while also fighting for their support on elections. Furthermore, it may have a constructive aspect: the conceptualization of what society values and priorities is directly related to the practices of open discussion, debate, criticism, and dissent according to what informed and reflected choices emerge (Sen, 1999, p.152-154).

As we will see later, this has a profound link with the concept of objectivity and the search for impartiality in political judgments. Both these ideas suggest that the approach towards political problems should be no different from that of a disinterested (unbiased) scientist (spectator). That is, parochialism - a tendency to reason only from one's limited perspective (whether as a member of a specific group or as an atomized individual) - should not hinder one's stance on political issues. Aiming towards a discussion of these complex notions, we now elaborate on these topics from the concept of public reason¹, particularly as it is delineated by Rawls and extended by Amartya Sen.

II.I Rawls' Conception

The idea of Public Reason was distinctly stated formally as a part of John Rawls's contractarian theory of Political Liberalism (2005). For him, since the

¹ Given that Sen has a more robust dialogue with Rawls in his idea of justice, we opt not to consider other important authors such as Habermas.

reformation in the 16th century, when Martin Luther initiated a schism of Christianity from Roman Catholic Church, Western society had to deal with a pluralism of comprehensive doctrines. There was no consensus on the principle of toleration between Catholics and Protestants, and both faiths sustain that "it was the duty of the ruler to uphold the true religion and to repress the spread of heresy and false doctrine" (1993, p.148). Addressing the matter with the balancing of forces of competing groups could end up, as it did, in the tyranny of the majority who was in power - persecuting those who diverge from their conception of the good. By contrast, Rawls then argues that through political tolerance, a plurality of conflicting comprehensive doctrines may coexist. The latter case could only exist in a society if individuals were to justify their opinions about fundamental political questions, and their deliberate use of force on others, by a reasonable political conception of justice. Otherwise, even if well-designed institutions could manage to avoid violent conflict between different groups, the result would be a mere "Modus Vivendi," "dependent on a fortuitous conjunction of contingencies."

In other words, Rawls claims that under free institutions we should expect "profound and irreconcilable differences" in people's religious and philosophical worldviews; thus, reasons are the sole legitimate basis for the justification, and not the use or threat of force, or any other exercise of power. Since a social order under free, democratic institutions will not be one in which people accept the same religious and moral reasons; a narrower set of values, such as a commitment to fair cooperation, basic rights, the rule of law, and mutual toleration would support justification of political views. These political values contrast with comprehensive moral and religious ones. For Rawls, public reasons, based on these values, constitute the common ground on which reasonable citizens can deliberate together, despite the diversity of their fundamental convictions. He is arguing that a just society only suits public debates organized around alternative conceptions of the public good and parties should be responsive to citizen's demands that are "argued for openly by reference to a conception of the public good" (Rawls, 1971, p.360-361).

Rawls argues that the aim of public deliberation should be to work out the details of the conceptions of the public good that will serve as the basis for public justification and explanation of laws and public policy (1971, p.362). Citizens, as reasonable and rational, should be ready to explain the basis of their actions to one another in terms each could reasonably expect that others might validate as consistent

within his or her freedom and equality. That is, participation in a democratic system discussions of political issues require that citizens understand how to behave by an ideal of public reason. The idea serves as a platform in which a set of deeply specified moral and political values determine a constitutional democratic government's relation to its citizens and their relation to one another. For this dialogue to flourish, people would need to be acquainted with certain traits of engagement necessary for them if they want to participate in the public debate. That is, an individual needs to have the ability to rationalize not only on disregard self-interest manner; He has to articulate reasonable positions of matters of public concern without neglecting others reasonable interests as well. (Rawls, 1993) The basis of public reason would be "the principle of legitimacy," which entails that:

"our exercise of political power is proper and hence justifiable only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals accepted to them as reasonable and rational" (Rawls, 2005, p.217)

In turn, the primary aim in a constitutional democracy would be to present a shared political conception of justice that "cannot only provide a shared public basis for the justification and social institutions but also helps to ensure stability from one generation to the next" (Rawls, 1987).

Additionally, he asserts that the reason is public in three ways:

"as the reason of free and equal citizens, it is the reason of the public; its subject is the public good concerning questions of fundamental political justice, which questions are of the kinds, constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice; and its nature and content are public, being expressed in public reasoning by a family of reasonable political conceptions of justice reasonably thought to satisfy the criterion of reciprocity" (Rawls, 1997, p.767)

Furthermore, for Rawls, five major aspects describe the structure of the idea of public reason. First, the fundamental questions about political justice to which it applies. Second, the persons to whom it applies (government officials, legislators, judges and candidates for public office). Third, the content as defined by a family of political conceptions of justice. Fourth, the application of these conceptions in the discussions of coercive norms to be established in the form of legitimate law for the people. Finally, citizens checking that the principles from their conceptions of justice satisfy the criterion of reciprocity - by subjecting them to the reasonable scrutiny of other reasonable persons in society, as free and equal citizens, and not dominated or manipulated, or under the pressure of an inferior political or social position. As such, the idea of public reason would only apply to political discussion of fundamental

questions of basic justice that occur in what he calls the public political forum which encompasses

“ the discourse of judges in their decisions, and especially of the judges of a supreme court; the discourse of government officials, especially chief executives and legislators; and finally, the discourse of candidates for public office and their campaign managers, especially in their public oratory, party platforms, and political statements.” (Rawls, 1997, p.767)

An important feature of reasonable persons is that they acknowledge the fact of “reasonable pluralism in democracy.” In other words, they manifest a “willingness to recognize the burdens of judgment and to accept their consequences for the use of public reason in directing the legitimate exercise of political power” (1993, p.54). Similarly, Rawls distinguishes between the rational and the reasonable; the first corresponds to citizens’ capacity for a conception of the good, and the second to citizens capacity to form, revise and pursue a sense of justice. Every citizen who deliberates in public reason, then, possess these two moral powers.

The idea does not apply to what he calls the background culture - the culture of civil society because the deeply specified set of political values that structure public reason would not restrain the activities of those spaces.

"The culture of churches and associations of all kinds, and institutions of learning at all levels, especially universities and professional schools, scientific and other societies, plus any kind of media reside within the framework of law that ensures liberties of thought and speech, and the right of free association.” (Rawls, 1997, p.768)

As voters, citizens ideally would justify their decisions as if they were legislators, abiding by the values of public reason by deciding their support among those statutes they understand provide reasons that satisfy the criterion of reciprocity, and are the most reasonable. Similarly, citizens are reasonable

“when, viewing one another as free and equal in a system of social cooperation over generations, they are prepared to offer one another fair terms of cooperation according to what they consider the most reasonable conception of political justice; and when they agree to act on those terms, even at the cost of their own interests in particular situations, provided that other citizens also accept those terms.” (Rawls, 1997, p.770)

Rawls' theory of justice as fairness has an intrinsic association with his perspective on the idea of public reason. He argues that through his theory there is a way to identify those principles that satisfy the criterion of reciprocity and are appropriate for deliberation by public reason. He also clarifies that a family of political conceptions of justice, in which his “justice as fairness” is only one alternative, form the content of public reason. In turn, his theory of justice as fairness assumes that the

principles that guide society in which justice prevails emerge from all members deciding at the “original position.” In this idealized place, no member of the focal group (for instance, citizens’ of a given country) would know his particular characteristics (e.g. race, social class, gender) once the “veil of ignorance” refines his judgments. Simultaneously, the need for objectively thinking about the specific political matters of a community would be satiated only by using reasons agreed in the original position. Roughly, his concept of objectivity focuses on eliminating personal interests of the members of society, as they are devoid of personal characteristics while deciding on fair terms of cooperation.

Finally, Rawls’ idea of public reason also leads to the idealization of an overlapping consensus about a family of political conceptions of justice by supporters of different comprehensive doctrines - that can include, usually irreconcilable, systems of religious, political ideology, or morality. As a distinct feature of Political Liberalism, Rawls argues that the existence of an overlapping consensus on conceptions of justice among major civil groups holding differing reasonable comprehensive doctrines is necessary. Moral reasoning would support the overlapping consensus on principles of justice. Still, the fundamental grounds of this support may differ for each of the various groups holding different comprehensive doctrines, and from the public reasons provided for supporting the principles. That, in turn, distinguish his idea of an overlapping consensus from a mere *modus vivendi*, which is a strategic agreement entered into for practical purposes, and therefore potentially unprincipled and unstable (1993, p.134–49). After reasonable scrutiny, the group finally reach what he calls “reflexive equilibrium,” arriving at the much-needed set of principles of justice.

II.II Public Reason in Question

Notwithstanding his original contributions, John Rawls’ large focus on the search for perfectly just institutional arrangements is severely criticized, in particular, for the inherent difficulties in finding consensus about principles of perfect justice among citizens. Similarly, some authors also point to its innocuity in dealing pragmatically with real decisions, and the inability to reach the impartial political conception of justice achieved from the original position to consider those outside the focal group. As such, the idea of establishing a definitive basis of public deliberation on

a set of deeply specified principles of justice has accumulated antagonists over the years.

For instance, Sen (2004) refutes the “contractualist” endeavor to select principles that would delineate perfectly just institutions while being unanimously accepted by all reasonable citizens from the specific group. Even regarding general principles, he argues, there is no compelling reason to presume completeness of all binary relations of knowledge of normative judgment.

He criticizes “the shortcut” of pre-establishing a set of principles to decide upon political alternatives since often many conflicting principles can be impartial and reasonable argumentation can structure various opposing opinions about a subject. Setting principles without any actual public reason would not be desirable and be innocuous regarding real social decisions about alternative realizations. Similarly, some argue that Rawls’ idea of public reason is self-defeating because the idea itself cannot be justified to all those to whom the idea applies (Wall, 2002, from Stanford Encyclopedia). Others assert that people are naturally inclined, potentially in a reasonable way, to want to see the values they live by taking part in decisions that affect the culture in which they live (Herman, 2007). In fact, the idea of the emergence of a unique set of principles – for instance, the complete exclusion of comprehensive doctrines in public justification - is considerably softened in the latter works of Rawls’ theory (Sen, 2011, p.58)².

The broader sphere in which civil society engages with its many different comprehensive doctrines is where some central aspects of a democracy happen. In fact, Rawls himself highlights that “sometimes those who appear to reject the idea of public reason mean to assert the need for full and open discussion in the background culture” (Rawls, 1997, p.78). Larmore (2003) notes that, for Rawls, the ideal of public reason should be understood as governing only the reasoning by which citizens – as voters, legislators, or judges – take part in political decisions (about fundamentals) having the force of law. Nevertheless, he mentions, “it does not thwart the uninhibited political discussions which are the mark of a vigorous democracy” (p. 383).

One of the central aspects of divergence between Rawls and Sen lies in their respective understanding of the demands of objectivity in public reason. Rawls (1971) suggests that reasonable principles of justice emerge from the original position - in his

² In latter works on the subject, he suggests the acceptance of comprehensive doctrines as long as they hold, in addition what he calls “a proviso”, in which reason that can be accepted by all reasonable citizens are included.

theory of justice as fairness. Likewise, in defending how, through public reason, society has to identify and scrutinize cases of injustice, Sen (2011) invokes Adam Smith's approach of the impartial spectator and the notion of open impartiality. The necessity to test arguments by confronting them to different positions is common to Rawls' idea of objectivity. Since multiple divergent positions can survive this scrutiny, Sen, however, defends that this process will not render us with a unique set of principles, directing a unique path for institutional development (2011, p.75-76). Closed impartiality, a characteristic of Rawls' account, considers the interests of those who are members of the country, but only open impartiality, such as Smith's, recognizes the importance of subjecting issues to the view of those outside the focal group. For this reason, the latter enables a complete mapping of alternative perspectives by preventing parochialism - an alienation towards the interests and relevant perspectives of those who may be impacted by the decisions at hand and have new insightful considerations. Only by opening this appreciation to "foreigners" it is possible to consider the interest of those who, besides not being original members of the particular community, are indeed - and sometimes severely - affected by the decisions made inside of it. In turn, those who may have strong views, perhaps, for instance, more experienced one, may be incredibly helpful too. With this, similar to Smith, he emphasizes the need to "see through the eyes of humanity" as a necessary step to truly accost impartiality. For that reason, he underscores his preference for Scanlon's account of the idea of reasonable deliberation in democracy (Sen, 2011). Besides adhering to a similar mechanism to the veil of ignorance, Scanlon does not limit the reach of reasonable reasons, enabling all individuals of the community - and not only their representatives - and even those outside it to offer reasonable reasons. Moreover, he also takes into consideration the importance to recognize the effect on others from outside the particular group (e.g. nation, society). By distancing himself from the tight restraints of contractualism, Scanlon's model approaches the view of open impartiality that Sen is trying to defend through his interpretation of objectivity.

Rawls' account of objectivity, coming from the process of eliminating vested interests through original position (with the device of the veil of ignorance), contrasts with Sen's, which derives from that of open impartiality. As already noted, the distinction is made precisely by the recognition of outsiders - those who are not bounded by rules and institutions - that open impartiality adopts. Instead of Similarly, the approach of open impartiality is not confined only to institutional reform and

regulations; Instead, By being comparative and not transcendental, Sen's objectivism permits incompleteness in social evaluations, yet offering guidance on pressing problems of social justice - for instance, including the urgency of manifested cases of injustice. That is, a multitude of possible reasonable reasons to which assigning a definitive ranking is not feasible by reasonable argumentation on most issues. The coexistence of reasonable available options would, of course, be a product of the demands of objectivity and impartiality in public reason. (For a wider distinction between both views of impartiality, see Sen, 2002, p.445-469).

Moreover, Rawls' assumes compliant behavior on the part of all to advance the agreement of the original position. According to Sen, that move eschews some of the most important aspects of the pursuit of justice. By doing this, Rawls approach to justice remains silent, for instance, about the important cases of manifest injustice such as corruption of favoritism or sexism. A theory of justice, Sen continues, needs to address the challenge of thinking about the demands of justice in a world where institutional and behavioral response do not meet ideal compliant behavior. Such a challenge would be, in fact, one of the most important and challenging parts of actually pursuing justice in the real world. Departing from Rawls, Sen seeks not to portray precisely how we should behave; determining a priori which persons could participate in deliberation seems to him as too much. Therefore, he prefers not to exclude those deemed as unreasonable by Rawls' from attempting to convey reasons to meaningful discussions in public reason. Opting not to distinguish between reasonable persons and others, Sen then argues that everyone is capable of being reasonable:

“through being open minded about welcoming information and through reflecting on arguments coming from different quarters, along with undertaking interactive deliberations and debates on how the underlying issues should be seen” (Sen, 2011, p.43).

II.III A Broader Conception of Public Reason

Sen³ (2011) tries to bring attention to what is perhaps his biggest enterprise: stress the need to a much wider informational basis for social choices. With such aim in

³ It is worth mentioning that Sen's idea of justice - which encompasses his elaboration on public reason - has been criticized as being too vague (Journal of Economic Methodology (2012, 19(2)). Sen himself concede that connections “may be easy to miss” or “may not be adequately clear” (Sen 2012, p.173). Yet, here we believe that his approach to public reason is particularly relevant and feasible for our purpose, because it is indeed much broader than that of Rawls’; and, as much as it may pay the price of being too

mind, he elaborates on the problem of justice by addressing a more urgent demand for pragmatic constructivism; that is, the evaluation of institutions by looking carefully at what life is like within those institutions and, particularly, at the opportunities available for different contingents of the population through public reason. His idea of justice aims to advance a “capacious framework” of reasoning for thinking about social problems and surpass the mere examination of what the word means or even what it would take to reach perfect justice through the much-envisioned ideal arrangement of institutions.

Sen delineates objectivity as deriving from our evaluative language that gives us the ability to communicate our beliefs to others. In other words, our beliefs have to be committed to shared understanding (“objectivity basis”) so as to allow us to debate their correctness (“objectivity acceptability”) (2011). According to him, these standards are dependent upon linguistics and social conventions; we, therefore, have to use objective statements that are not solely reliant upon our subjectivity, providing a way of our ideas to be intelligible to others as well. Profiting from Gramsci's words, he quotes,

"In acquiring one's conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting. We are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man."
(Sen, 2011, p.119)

Sen (2011) asserts that the justification for reasoned scrutiny in ethical judgments “lie not on the sure-fire thing of getting things exactly right, but on being as objective as we reasonably can” (p.40). That is, thinking about issues of justice and injustice calls for objectivity - considering the essence of the real ethical question, which, besides valuing, may involve some mixture of philosophical beliefs, moral convictions, and factual beliefs. Social reformers, he continues, have to address two tasks: they must communicate using language, imagery while working within those boundaries - rules grounded in existing social practice and values.

By recognizing the established norms and concepts contingent to society is the first step necessary to question and put them to test against scrutinized argumentation in public reason. The main purpose here is not to seek an agreement on the nature of the perfectly just society or the characteristics of ideally just institutions; instead, it is to identify clear cases of injustice based on public reason - he provides the example of

“vague”, it has the virtue of enabling and emphasizing the unsurmountable and imperative dynamic aspect of social choices in democracy.

Adam Smith, Condorcet and Wollstonecraft were arguing for the abolishment of slavery. Rawls conception of public reason is seemingly too abstract to undertake this kind of endeavor. Sen (2011) states that we can agree on the manifested injustice of particular institutions and behavior patterns and the urgent need for their removal even without having the same view of an ideally just society of perfectly just institutions. For instance, he mentions, the fact that Smith and Wollstonecraft would probably diverge on the ideal place for market institutions have not to impede them from agreeing about the urgent need to forbear the despicable practice of slavery.

The social choice theory would then be an adequate way of interpreting possible alternatives a society has by recognizing the “voice” of each citizen. That is to say, citizens after considering others' reasons as well as theirs, rank all available options giving rise to their own ranking, supported by their own reasoned grounds. From these segmented choices, an aggregation of all individual valuational rankings generates a complete or partial collective ordering that can serve as the basis for social decisions. In the case of divergence between different personal reasoned partial orderings, public reasoning can be used to resolve differences as much as possible, using epistemic as well as evaluating arguments. Many times because of interactive reasoning, an agreement between the people involved on the ranking of any particular pair (e.g. (a) cake or (b) ice cream) emerges, and the agreed ranking can have then especially legitimacy. No particular problem would prevail if many pairs can remain unranked because “a partial ordering is an invitation to make choices guided by agreed parts of the partial order” (from Sen’s Annual Lecture, 2015; see also Chapter 17, 2011). He is saying that agreement on every pair of choice is not necessary to decide on whether to act by agreement or not. Let us suppose human error resulted in a catastrophe and now the parts (or society as a whole) have to decide on what to do with it. In this situation, waiting for an agreement on the exact penalty would counterproductive. Instead, Sen argues that it is precisely adequate for those in charge (a fee or many years in prison or capital punishment) to start working on the common ground, often associated with prevention of certifying that further damage will be minimized or eliminated. In the absence of social orderings that "completely" rank all political alternatives, partial agreements would be a viable and reasonable way to separate out acceptable options, and discard unacceptable ones, to form agreed social arrangements and adequate public policies. Therefore, the acceptance of particular provisions can help society devise workable solutions, despite inexistent complete social unanimity. (Sen, 2000, p.253)

Sen emphasizes the importance of public reasoning “coming from different quarters and divergent perspectives.” Moreover, for determining how to promote justice in society, he argues it is not plausible to expect resolution and unanimity in all cases, which “is not a requirement of a person’s own rationality, not it is a condition for reasonable social choice.” (2011, p.392)

For instance, in Adam Smith's Epoque, it was not expected that all slave-owners agreed that the world would be in a better social state without slavery. Nonetheless, Smith and Condorcet claimed that the force of arguments for abolition would “overwhelm” those for slavery, “given the requirements and the demands of impartiality” (2011, p.398-399). Sen states

“The basis of a partial ordering aims at comparisons of justice is the congruence of the conclusions of impartial reasonings, which is not the same thing as the requirement of complete agreement of the personal preferences entertained by different individuals.” (Sen, 2011, p.399)

By adopting this line of argumentation, he calls attention to the relevance of an imperfect, partial realization of justice that emerges from public reason. In this way, he clearly contrasts Rawls’ notion of an overlapping consensus about principles of justice. For Sen, rankings of social alternatives (or selected principles) can turn out to be incomplete when no complete definitive ordering exists. This irresolution could happen even if a committee of experts debates the pros and cons of each choice reaching a reflexive equilibrium - in Rawl’s terms. Reason has a major role yet to play. Also, he notes that this is a common phenomenon in all instances of society, whether it happens in groups, individuals, or the society as a whole.

Additionally, one of the major ideas that Sen tries to put forward in his work is that no major change in politics can occur without a major shift in public opinion (Sen, 1999). He argues that understanding the real reach of public reason is important for considering the way in which alternatives resolutions to political matters are conceptualized and ranked in democracy. That is to say; open discussion is not contained only in the higher stances of democratic institutions and the democratic spirit probably would not regard any citizens' view as irrelevant.

Similarly, Sen’s approach to public reason comes also as a continuation of his defence of democracy as a universal value, in which he claims “that the central issues in a broader understanding of democracy are political participation, dialogue and public interaction” (Sen, 2009, p.326).

Refuting arguments that democracy has never flourished outside the west, Sen distinguishes between the “institutional structure of the contemporary practice of democracy” which is “largely the product of European and American experience over the last few centuries” (2009, p.322-323), and the political ideals that underlie it. Democracy described in mere organizational terms, he says, cannot possibly grasp the real potency of political freedoms and civil rights.

In turn, he emphasizes the importance of realizing public reason as a core and a manifestation of democracy. The public space, in which public reasoning occurs, he continues, is broader than that of democratic forms of government. As such, the narrowly defined interpretation of democracy restricted to reinforcing ballots and elections, eschew the most important virtues that permit and qualify the defense for this type of political system- against authoritarian regimes - even in poor developing countries. Concluding, he argues that has no incident of a major famine in a functioning democracy, with a regular election and opposition parties, basic freedom of speech and a relatively free media:

“The direct penalties of famine [in authoritarian political systems] are borne only by the suffering public and not by the ruling government. The rulers never starve. However, when a government is accountable to the public, and when there is free news-reporting and uncensored public criticism, then the government too has an excellent incentive to do its best to eradicate famines.”
(Sen, 2009, p.343)

As a famine itself almost always do not affect more than 10 percent of the population (often a lot less) - he maintains- and only the disaffected famine victims voted against the ruling government of democracy, then the government would still be relatively safe. What makes it “such a devastating force against the ruling government” is the reach of public reasoning, by which a large proportion of the public is galvanized into “protest and shout about the uncaring’ government and try to bring it down.” Therefore, public reason is a central mechanism to hold representatives accountable because it diminishes the possibility of inaction in front of such cases. Even if a membrane of skeptical reasoning, for instance, by crediting the catastrophe to an inability to produce enough food for all, initially supports such lack of initiative to confront injustice, sentiments of sympathy and commitment erase any possibility of inaction. Public reason exists then, not only in specific spheres such as those Rawls' idea stipulates; have the reach of communication and the power of civic participation allowed, a vital part of the process of public discussion about political matters takes place in the core structure of society.

“there is particular need in this context to examine value formation that result from public discussion of miserable events, in generating sympathy and commitment on the part of citizens to do something to prevent their occurrence.” (Sen, 2012, p.288)

In fact, one of the most distinct characteristics of democracy, when compared to authoritarian forms of government, is that it requires political and judiciary leaders to justify their actions to the public. Even without political consensus on a decision, representatives feel the necessity to justify their positions. Accordingly, the ideal of democratic society dwells on a set of conditions that enables a person to express her ideas as she wants, insofar as respecting others' liberties - a major component being that of political freedoms such as freedom of speech and dissent. As a consequence, Sen posits that a full democracy will have certain “discursive features” that create a climate of open public discussion: freedom of information and speech, independent media, basic civil rights, opportunities to participate in politics, and the possibility of political dissent (Sen, 2009, p.327). Free media, he argues, have then a crucial for making government officials accountable to public demands. As citizens become better-informed politicians' cost and benefits become more responsiveness towards public interest. Similarly, the media is capable of making representatives and the public better informed about urgent social needs where reporters provide extensive coverage of news stories about humanitarian crisis and natural disasters, such as problems of local crop failure, drought or floods, health emergencies, or environmental challenges.

As long as political liberties exist, government actions are subject to criticism, and an open possibility exists for avoiding that obvious mistakes occur. Institutions and the opportunity they provide for individuals to discuss public issues are often responsible to a large extent for the quality of practices of public reason. Sen defends that censorship, regulation of the press, suppression of dissent, banning of opposition parties and the incarceration (or worse) of dissidents -

Characteristics of modern authoritarianism - “very often” do a much better work in providing a robust explanation to the problems of public discussion in a particular country than “the allegedly age-old and unshiftable” cultural parameters of historically inherited traditions and beliefs (2009, p.337). He is trying to prove the point that the accountability of political leaders via public criticism is a primary source of pressure to protect vulnerable populations, for instance, to support minority rights, to increase gender equity, and to provide basic education, health care, and child nutrition. Public reason is therefore not only procedural but refers to a practice of open discussion that

leads in the direction of substantive justice and states need elections plus other democratic mechanisms to ensure leadership accountability and government responsiveness to social priorities.

Threats faced by a society call not only for coordinated international action and changes in national policies. They also rely on value formation, which is “related to the public discussion, both for their influence on individual behavior and for bringing about policy changes through the political process” (Sen, 2002, p.289). Similarly, while the need for specific behavior by all entails something that Sen does not want to advance, he is sure in emphasizing the need for us to understand that we are not detached from all the suffering that happens in the world.

Not denying the irreplaceable role of individual responsibility - since certain things related to motivation, involvement, and self-knowledge can only exist by a consequence of one's force - he stresses the importance of realizing the nature of freedom itself. Moreover, as the fundamental substantive freedoms for individual achievement are extremely contingent on personal, social, and environmental circumstances, social support for expanding people's freedom have to be understood as concomitant with it and not opposed. Fundamentally, that implies a need for recognizing the relevance of our shared humanity in making the choices we face; perceiving the importance of social support for expanding individual's freedom goes being for particular social policies and entail accepting a shared responsibility with the freedom of others. (Sen, 1999, p.283-285). For Sen, public deliberation and open debate are vital for the emergence of rules of behavior in society and the rise of shared values and commitments is of particular importance to the role of public discussions and interactions (Sen, 2000, p.253). In a democracy, deliberation implies interaction, which, by consequence, results on the conceptualization of values that individual understand as necessary. These values, when resulting in ‘commitment’ to the welfare of other fellow citizens, translate into practical actions to fight injustice.

Human behavior is at the core of public deliberation and open debate. To further investigate its instrumental role for public reason in society, we now associate concepts contemplated in this dialogue of ideas of public reason with concepts of rationality, reasonableness, and a broader understanding of human behavior. It will be possible to perceive that commitment and also parochialism is manifested broadly through natural human behavioral tendencies.

III. Rationality, Reasonableness and Human Behaviour

Authors frequently use the concepts of reason and rationality as synonyms. However, for the particular study of deliberation and public reason (moral and political philosophy), they do have quite distinct features. For instance, the characterization of a reasonable person is more strict in Rawls's theory than in Sen's, who does not cut out from the process those who are not perfectly reasonable.

Furthermore, according to Sen (2002, p.4), rationality can be seen in general terms as "the need to subject one's choices – of actions, as well as objectives, values, and priorities – to reasoned scrutiny." Through rationality, people have to balance their various ends and estimate their proper place in their way of life. Also, he adds, two aspects of rationality need to be differentiated. First, the comprehension that comes from analyzing an issue deeply enough to reach a rational assessment of it. Moreover, the real communication of this understanding to turn it public. One does not have to consider, such as, that understanding The Third Reich as an abominable regime implies that, to be rational, one has to communicate that publicly immediately. The rationality of analyzing an issue and assessing the rightness of reasons addressed to it does not imply an immediate manifestation of it. In fact, in dictatorships, these two features are often dissociated. In this situations, a citizen often faces the dilemma of subjecting his life to a high risk or shutting down all his political urges to manifest his opinions about, for instance, cases of declared injustice - such as all the abusive measures that characterize most authoritarian regimes.

Accordingly, Sen (2002, p.238-239) distinguishes the problem of rational choice into two different types of problems. First, "correspondence irrationality" when "a failure of correspondence between the person's reasoned reflection and his actual choices," having various causes such as: "acting without thinking"; "lazy reflection"; and "weakness of will." Second, "reflection irrationality" that is a failure of careful reflection caused by intellectual limitations. In other words, even after a careful examination, a person might commit mistakes, possibly due to lack of training.

As we have seen in the first section, for Rawls, to be reasonable, in respect of others, is to be willing to act according to principles he and others can reason in common and "reasonable people consider the consequences of their actions on other's well-being" (Sibley, 1953, p.554-560). According to Rawls (1993), to be reasonable is not to go against rationality; rather is to deny with egoism, having the disposition to act morally.

Loosely defined, reasonableness is to act on a notion of common good that considers all humans equally, with a capacity to care for moral principles even at the cost of one's preference satisfaction. Rationality, by contrast, applies to "a single, unified agent (either a person or a corporate person) with the powers of judgment and deliberation in seeking ends peculiar to its own" (Rawls, 1996, p.50-51).

As Sen (2011) argues (see the previous section), in the context of social decisions through deliberation about common political issues, subjecting one's view to the scrutiny of reasonable reasons emerging either from fellow citizens' or foreigners' impartial perspectives is particularly relevant for objectively reaching just judgments as a consequence impartiality. When we know that a person is acting rationally, we are not aware of the ends he or she is pursuing. Rationality does not allude necessarily to the recognition of others' relevant impartial considerations. If one focus only on his personal goals that are, in turn, totally attached (by choice) to his personal welfare, then, sufficient motivation for him to consider the effects of his actions on others in his rational decision-making process may not exist. Hence, rationality and reasonableness are not one in the same.

Furthermore, for Rawls - as seen in section II.I - in political life an individual needs to have two key features. First, he or she "should stand ready to offer fair terms of social cooperation between equals, and abide by these terms if others do also, even should it be to his advantage not to." Second, a reasonable individual "recognizes and accepts the consequences of the burdens of judgment, which leads to the idea of reasonable toleration in a democratic society" (Rawls, 1997, p.805). Moreover, he or she "recognizes and accepts the consequences of the burdens of judgment, which leads to the idea of reasonable toleration in a democratic society" (Rawls, 1997, p.805). Then, by accepting these burdens, individual's behavior, as they act according to the ideal of public reason, qualifies to engage public deliberation in the public sphere by expression of active citizenship - whether by voting or any other action that in itself is characterized as political. They derive from the fact that sometimes in discussions about political issues disagreement is ubiquitous, not necessarily because of misunderstandings or superficiality but because of their intrinsic complexity. The concepts of burdens are important to illustrate the complexities of political debates in society; they can be synthesized, from Rawls (1993, p.56 – 57), on their more obvious sources as follows:

“a. The evidence - empirical and scientific - bearing on the case is conflicting and complex, and thus hard to assess and evaluate.”,

“b. Even where we agree fully about the kinds of considerations that are relevant, we may disagree about their weight, and so arrive at different judgments.”,

“c. To some extent all our concepts, and not only moral and political concepts, are vague and subject to hard cases; and this indeterminacy means that we must rely on judgment and interpretation (and on judgments about interpretations) within some range (not sharply specifiable) where reasonable persons may differ.”,

“d. To some extent (how great we cannot tell) the way we assess evidence and weigh moral and political values is shaped by our total experience, our whole course of life up to now; and our total experiences must always differ.”,

“e. Often there are different kinds of normative considerations both sides of an issue and it is difficult to make an overall assessment”,

“f. System of social institutions is limited in the values it can admit so that some selection must be made from the full range of moral and political values that might be realized... Many hard decisions may seem to have no clear answer.”

These burdens can arguably be considered the most important factors of reasonable disagreement between citizens on political matters of basic justice. A key question is whether citizens can manage these complexities and make reasonable decisions (how they argue about/justify their policy decisions, such voting in a referendum and elections, and demands on government and others in general) even in the face of ongoing disagreement. By themselves, the burdens of judgment illustrate why complete resolution (total consensus, sometimes also referred to as unanimity) from competitive views might not always be feasible. Of course, this is not necessarily an insurmountable obstacle especially when we accept the strength of Sen’s arguments about impartial orderings and how they can be effectively resolved by, among other things, a pragmatic focus on social realizations and consensus on manifested cases of injustice. Still, common behavioral tendencies consist of an additional potential source of adversity for reasonably resolving collective choices of social realizations from individuals' deliberation about political matters as they interact in public reason.

III.I Heuristics and Biases

Behavioral scientists (see, for instance, Kahneman, 2003; RR Lau, DP Redlawsk, 2001) define the “automatic system” (system 1) and the “deliberative system” (system 2) as the two alternative cognitive “mechanisms” through which individuals act and judge. That is, humans think in two ways. One is slow, effortful, based on reasoning and considers a broad set of relevant factors (wide frame) reflective

– the so-called “deliberative system, the other, is effortless, associative, intuitive and considers what automatically comes to mind (narrow frame) – the automatic system.

Heuristics then provide shortcuts and fast, intuitive answers even when problems are not so straightforward. They include tendencies towards other errors such as stereotyping, selective information review, drawing premature conclusions, and constructing erroneous causal explanations (Baron, 2000; Gilovich; Griffin; Kahneman, 2002; Kahneman, 2011).

At most occasions, a heuristic attribute serves as a way to answer a complex question with an obvious one, and this process of selecting an attribute value occurs mostly in the automatic system (Kahneman, 2003). This pattern can lead to errors, particularly when situations of uncertainty arise, even under more thoughtful reflections are being made, studies indicate that the human mind relies on some simplifying ‘heuristics’ (De Martino et al., 2006; Kahneman; Tversky, 1974). That is, all heuristics - some of which we discuss here -, are mental shortcuts that people use to make quick and efficient decisions, that serve them well in many occasions, but not so much in others. In fact, these process draws a series of consistent typical occurrences of errors called biases.

i) Availability Heuristic

The heuristic of “availability” (Reber, 2004; Tversky; Kahneman, 1973) is a particular characteristic to devise judgments and take actions using the most immediately disposable information. The automatic system use available information, even information that is not relevant to the particular task or judgment. When confronted with a decision, whether to act, access or evaluate something, the "automatic system" immediately gives an intuitive answer by using information that easily accessed in our minds. Simultaneously, the “deliberative system” - which is slow, effortful and deliberate - might check and eventually replace the automatic, intuitive response. However, this search can quickly end when memory easily identifies a plausible value or a recent associated event. In most judgments, the automatic system decides without any "supervision." In other words, this heuristic describes when decision making aided by memories of similar cases that easily come to mind (Schwarz; Vaughn, 2002),

Consequently, the circumstances within which judgments occur inhibit people’s ability to devise sound judgments and observation shapes choices in ways that are inappropriate in certain situations (Sen, 2002, p.463). That is availability results in the

prevalence of narrow mind frames that reflect the structure of the environment, whether physical or biological.

ii) Attribute Substitution

In cases where the relevant information is not readily available, the search will bring out other values (memories) conceptually and associatively related with the problem. So vacuums left by questions not answered are automatically filled by tracking related attributes. This substitution occurs when the search for a reply ends up assisted by the mapping of various factors linked to the main element. This mapping takes place when the target in question (answer) is relatively inaccessible, a semantically associated attribute highly available and critical operations not reflexively (deliberatively) reject the replacement of the heuristic attribute (Kahneman; Frederick, 2002). Heuristic judgments, which lead to biases associated with System 1 and analytic reasoning which may “intervene” and improve them, is linked to System 2. Tversky and Kahneman (1973) assert that when making predictions and judgments under uncertainty – which may be the case, for example, for many political judgments -, people “rely on a limited number of heuristics which sometimes yield reasonable judgments and sometimes lead to severe and systematic errors.”

iii) Representativeness

Representativeness (Kahneman; Tversky, 1972; Teigen et al., 2004), another important heuristics, conceptualizes the common behavior of individuals using an existing prototype of what they think is the most relevant or typical example of a particular event, object, or group member. Kahneman and Tversky (1972) define it as "the degree to which [an event] (i) is similar in essential characteristics to its parent population, and (ii) reflects the salient features of the process by which it is generated." In other words, representativeness heuristic is the tendency to judge the frequency or odds of an event by the extent to which it resembles the typical case (Baumeister; Bushman, 2010). That is, in such situations, a particular feature that characterizes a prototype (stereotype) is assumed to imply another of the same prototype (stereotype) - because they have a deep connection in one's mind-frame - even when in fact, it does not. (Gilovich; Griffin 2002; Kahneman; Tversky, 1974). For instance, the bias of Illusory correlations is a manifestation of representativeness.

iv) Affect Heuristic

Emotions naturally also play a major role on how the process of deliberation. In various occasions, judgments are influenced by existing positive and negative

(‘affective’) feelings, being guided by what is known as the affect heuristic (Finuncane et al., 2000). Indeed, Kahneman (2003) notes that the majority of judgment questions (such as evaluating the cost and benefits of various technologies, the safe concentration of chemicals, and the predicted economic performance of different industries) are answered not by “reasoned scrutiny” (using Sen’s terminology). Instead, individuals tend to use the heuristics of attribute substitutions, often replacing the stated question by simpler ones to which the answers are easier, automatically computed and always accessible – for instance, the basic evaluative attribute (good/bad; like/dislike; approach/avoid) (Kahneman, 2003). For example, the “effect attribute” (liking or disliking) (Slovic et al., 2002) was shown to be particularly relevant in people’s judgments about public goods (Kahneman et al., 1997) and cost benefits of various technologies (Finuncane et al., 2000).

Heuristics potentially generate biases, which are tendencies to think in certain ways that can lead to systematic deviations from standards of rationality or sound judgment. For instance, many experiments show that persons disproportionately choose to stay with the status quo option, meaning that decision-makers exhibit a significant status quo bias (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1998). Individuals have a “strong tendency to remain at the status quo because the disadvantages of leaving it to loom larger than advantages” (Kahneman et al. 2000, p.163). That is, humans are loss averse; they prefer avoiding losses to acquiring gains, and this implies a preference for stability over change - the preference for the present, which is a tendency to more heavily weight temporally proximate events. In turn, this all relates to endowment effect, which is the ‘reluctance of people to part from assets that belong to their endowment’ (Kahneman; Tversky, 2000). Loss aversion also implies a negativity effect ‘the greater weight given to negative information about equally extreme and equally likely positive information’ (Lau 1985, p.119).

Also, humans are often present the bias of ‘cognitive dissonance aversion’, and unconsciously avoid or reduce situations of ‘dissonance’ that emerge when people face information that leads to a conflict or contradiction between valued outcomes or ideas (Festinger, 1962; Wicklund; Brehm, 1976). Essentially, people are naturally prone to be attached to the mind-frames they use to interpret the world, for many reasons among which perhaps the most relevant are survival and, as a consequence, social relations and stability (see next subsection).

Biases, by definition, diverge from impartiality and objectivity and make it less possible the consideration of impartial reasons, particularly, by common citizens (but also representatives, and even qualified specialists) in their judgments about political issues. That is to say; all the above cited behavioral tendencies can make people more prone to refrain from thoughtful deliberation and avoid public reason altogether. For example, a bias derived from a parochial view that girls' right to education can make even women prefer to stay in the same social position - accepting boys' privilege to education -, given the narrow-minded frames from which they interpret the world around them (See, for instance, Nussbaum, 2001). Consequently, this bias may have immediate effects on the performance of government policies to address cases of clear injustice such as the provision of basic educational rights.

Similarly, citizens tend to seek or interpret evidence 'in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectations, or a hypothesis in hand' (Nickerson, 1998, p.175). In fact, experiments have shown that voters who initially supported a candidate, after being presented with a small amount of negative information, came to have an even greater preference - until reaching a tipping point. In more technical terms, "Motivated Reasoners strive to maintain existing evaluative affect, even in the face of countervailing information" (Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson, 2010, p.589). Similarly, another study indicated that individuals respond differently to information about nanotechnology (an obscure field, about which they supposedly had little knowledge) depending on the source (Yeo et al., 2015). Coming either from Fox News ("conservative") or MSNBC ("liberal"), both sides of the liberal-conservative spectrum reacted in a biased way, avoiding information or searching for - manifesting a confirmatory bias - if the source was congruent with their pre-existing attitudes.

It is important to notice that all these behavioral tendencies fundamentally relate to people's values which, in turn, are driven mostly by their social relations with other members of society. Not a trivial detail, the social aspect of citizens actions and choices is, by definition, a major component of deliberation itself and, as a consequence, of the outcome of the public reason for social choices and, generally, performance of democracy. Advancing a dialogue between Sen's account of the matter and cognitive scientists may lead us to conceptualize a more accurate appraisal of this entanglement of political freedom, behavioral tendencies, and social outcomes. Furthermore, before

entering the more nuanced field of the objectivity of policy assessments (perception), it is important to clarify the essence of human behavior and how it deviate from the traditional model of rational choice.

III.II Social Behaviour and the Objectivity of Judgements

A fact about humans often underestimated by traditional economic theory is that man is a social being. His choices are not rightly bound to his own preferences only; an act of choice is always a social act and generally “behavior is more than a mere translation of personal preferences” (Sen, 1973, p.253).

The view that individuals are single-minded steered solely by self-interest sometimes comes from the work of Adam Smith. He understood indeed that individuals are guided predominantly by self-interest in some spheres of activities, such as exchange and war. However, he (Smith, 1776 and 1790) also advance a much broader investigation on the motivations that drive humans in general and examine elements such as “self-love,” “prudence,” “sympathy,” “generosity,” and “public interest.” Moreover, he discusses further their “instrumental role in the success of society and their practical influence on actual behavior” (Sen, 2002, p.285).

Self-interest is an important motivation for human action, but it is not the only one. Understanding decisions as isolated solely self-interest acts of choice is probably an artless simplification since most people are willing to sacrifice at least a little of self-interest to morality. Maximization of one’s own set objectives is not necessarily enough of an explanation to clarify the path the person chooses and, more specifically, the reason of why she takes the actions she takes.

Various examples of human action illustrate how people act according to factors that go beyond self-centered behavior. Humans have a natural capacity to think from others’ perspective. As we surely regard our own objectives, we can also think about our family members, neighbors, fellow citizens and about other people in the world. That is, we can naturally think about justice or fairness, therefore having the possibility to revise judgments and devise reasonable considerations about political matters that extends beyond our own self-interest (Sen, 2000, p.261-262). The demands of rationality exceed the conformity to any particular set of goals or values. Instead, it consists of one’s aims and values being “supportable through careful assessment and scrutiny” (Sen, 2004, p.41). Equally, in some occasions, reflecting and using the

“powers of judgment and deliberation” result in reasonable actions; and the rational agent’s judgment path can help him “act better towards others” (Sen, 2011, p.21).

A person can qualify her actions concerning values that can be either individual or collective. Sometimes people act primarily thinking of their own interest (and thinking primarily of their own welfare) and others as identifying themselves as members of a group. The range of agency can be much broader than that of the individual action, whether it results in reasonable behavior or not (take for example mass voluntary acts to help victims of tragedies; or, by contrast, the collective and excluding drive of fascism or communism). If someone faces the possibility of voting for a candidate in elections, for example, he or she may be more motivated to vote, if he or she feels that the act of voting is not “alone,” individually, but together, as a part of a group. (Sen, 2004). Similarly, if people understand that voting has only a minuscule effect on their lives, they will tend to vote out of a sense of moral obligation, voting according to their moral beliefs (which may coincide with their actual self-interest). In fact,

“the low cost of voting and the lack of significant effect on the voter’s interests suggest that voting will typically be motivated by moral beliefs, or by expressive concerns, rather than by rational calculation of self-interest”
(from Baron (2010); indirect quote of Brennan; Hamlin, 2000; Brennan; Lomasky, 1993).

Throughout history, group membership has been crucial for humans to survive and reproduce (Brewer, 1997; Caporael, 1997; Hibbing; Alford, 2004) and, as a consequence, humans must cooperate with others to obtain sustenance and protect themselves against external threats. Equally, as social beings, individuals are influenced by social preferences, social networks, social identities, and social norms (World Bank, 2015). Most people care about what those around them are doing and how they fit into their groups, and they imitate the behavior of others almost automatically. According to Tomasello (2014), they are “group-minded individuals” who see the world from a social as well as an individual perspective. In between a broad sense of social responsibility and the aims of oneself, lie the claims of a variety of other groups (for instance, families, friends, local communities, peer groups, social and economic classes). Is in this broader space that the ideas of family responsibility, business ethics, class consciousness, and so on, dwells (Sen, 1977, p.318). That is why, for example, the reason of why improving the participation of parents in a child’s education - when, for instance, she is recurrently getting bad grades - is perhaps the most efficient way to

resolve a pupil's particular educational performance problems. A parent, in many cases, can even be willing to sacrifice his health to save his children. For him, similarly, individual well-being is different from the individual agency. The second can encompass a much broader range of goals, including everything a person has reasons to value. The scope of agency is then contingent on a person's capabilities - what he or she can do.

Sen (1977) refers to the drive of a person's agency surpassing the mere pursuit of self-centered well-being as commitment. Commitment is a condition in which a person is ready to choose an act "that he believes will yield a lower level of personal welfare to him than an alternative that is also available to him"(p.332-333). He argues that commitment is also an important factor in social actions such as voting and work. Political psychology present evidence for this phenomenon as

"lots of evidence indicates that people generally do not simply vote their economic self-interest. Political behavior in general is determined more by ideological commitments—by moral intuitions. People vote on behalf of property rights, aid for the poor, tax reduction, economic nationalism, or whatever, when it is consistent with their moral view of the world"
(Baron, 2010, p.14-15)

Furthermore, Sen (1977) differentiates commitment from sympathy (and antipathy when it is negative). Sympathy, as he states, is when a person's welfare depend on someone else's welfare "(e.g. feeling depressed at the sight of misery)". By contrast, commitment "is concerned with breaking the tight link between individual welfare (with or without sympathy) and the action of choice" (p.326-328). The problem of people's relationship to others has a close relationship with "identity," which, in turn, in some ways can be a driver of social responsibility in particular and agency in general.

"Community, nationality, class, race, sex, union membership, the fellowship of oligopolists, revolutionary solidarity, and so on, all provide identities that can be, depending on the context, crucial to our view of ourselves, and thus to the way we view our welfare, goals, or behavioral obligations"
(Sen, 2002, p.215)

In collective decisions, individuals are often better off if they agree to certain rules of behavior. In these situations, the failure of individualistic behavior would support a collective contract - something much argued by Rawls, for instance, when he says that all reasonable persons would want to live in a society in which they can cooperate with their fellow citizens in terms that every one of them can reasonably support. In some circumstances, however, these social contracts cannot be imposed, and social values can be decisive for the success of various forms of social organization such as the market mechanism, democratic politics, elementary civil and political rights, provision of essential public goods, and institutions for public action and protest. The

prisoner's dilemma, in which two individuals are better off when if both agree in not confessing each other's crimes, exemplifies these circumstances. Various situations of this type "occur in many ways in our lives and some of the traditional rules of good behavior take the form of demanding suspension of calculations geared to individual rationality." (Sen, 1973, p.250) The new area of evolutionary games (see, for instance, Gaus, 2012, Chapter 7), explores some interesting features of how rule-following mechanisms develop as individuals reason regarding their social relations. Some might see Christian and Buddhist ethics as "arisen in particular social and economic formations," to address such social problems through the establishment of moral norms (Sen, 1973, p.250). Scientific studies indicate that the human brain was designed, evolving throughout the years to cooperate with others within groups and not in the circumstances that modern life now demands, that is, between groups. "Morality is a set of psychological adaptations that allow otherwise selfish individuals to reap the benefits of social co-operation." (Greene, 2013)

Indeed, in some cases, the problem of completely selfish behavior, in which one does not consider the effects of his actions on the welfare of others, can be resolved by common sense morality and groups of people become bounded by moral standards that guarantee stability (Greene, 2013). To identify those who are more likely to be trustworthy, human evolution selected, among others, the psychological mechanism of social differentiation (Insko, Schopler, and Sedikides 1998; Navarrete, Fessler, and Eng 2007). By restraining empathic behavior to "to mutually acknowledged ingroup members," total costs and risks of not being reattributed reduce (Brewer, 1999, p.433). Therefore, a rational decision-making process can affect can result in reasonableness and commitment for in-group behavior, but at same time, present parochialism, ignoring the preferences and well-being of outsiders.

Individuals, in the act of striving for better social position, what could mean survivor especially in prehistoric times, desire to be accepted in groups; so they are willing to "follow the herd," adopting the same behavior patterns, belief systems as others do. This pattern can manifest in riots, sporting events, religious gatherings, collective acts of violence, everyday decision-making, judgment, and opinion-forming. For instance, a study suggests that herd behavior also influences the decision to adopt new vote in the direction that the poll predicts will win (Cukierman, 1989).

By contrast, often trouble arises when these bounds lead to parochialism, benefiting groups but ignoring or even being hostile towards other groups or outsiders.

Indeed, individuals have a tendency to mimic the actions, rational or irrational, of a larger group many times - that choice of action not being the same if it were individual. In other words, instead of using the information they have, people can simply copy other's behavior (see, for example, Banerjee, 1992). Sometimes this can be the rational thing to do, when people, for instance, believe others have valuable information and are choosing from a better standpoint. Others, however, the emulation will characterize merely an instinctive reaction, which can lead to terrible outcomes. This behavioral bias can have atrocious results turning, for example, odious sectarians into powerful leaders. The stigmatization of identities without reasoned choice "has played an awesome role in fomenting violence" as Sen (2006) argues, exemplified by Hindu-Muslim riots in India in the 1940s, in which a rapid identity shift resulted in "a carnage that had much to do with elementary herd behavior" (p.10). Many ethnic and religious wars occur because of this same unreasoned acceptance of mass beliefs.

Representativeness (iii) has direct effects to the ideas individuals hold about other in their social sphere. Members of different groups that also happens to be from the Muslim religion, for example, may trigger an automatic association with some idealization of "the common muslim." Equally, recent news about a terrorist attack by a particular extremist group may solidify the idea that person holds about all those that share a common characteristic (such as having the same religion) as "dangerous people," or as "terrorists." As much as a person can and, in most cases, does identify with various identities (e.g. muslim, a human, a libertarian), this is not what comes to mind when representativeness maps others through a pre-conceived notion of member of group x or y. Sen (2006) emphasizes the role of recognizing the plurality of our identities, their various implications, and the role of choice for every individual choosing the criterion by which he makes his decisions. He stresses that "we are all constantly making choices, if only implicitly, about the priorities to be attached to our different affiliations and associations." (p. 5) Collective prejudice based on a definite idea of individuals as only a smaller part of a broader group tied by the same character marked by the most salient characteristics is a common phenomenon of human society that has led to horrendous collective acts of prejudice and persecution. Sen argues that "the foundation of degradation include not only descriptive misrepresentation but also the illusion of a singular identity that others must attribute to the person to be demeaned." (2006, p.8)

Accordingly, in communities and groups that are linked by a common identity, appropriate moral standards command intuitive assent and functions as a bond between members but are insufficient to resolve problems of a pluralistic society. Greene refers to this phenomenon as “tragedy of common-sense morality” (Greene, 2013). When a group is strongly bounded, its members can be lead to be willingness to sacrifice self-interest for in-group members while neglecting or underweight unfavorable effects on outsiders, so that an out-group could lose more than the in-group gains from the sacrifice (Schwartz-Shea; Simmons, 1991). Parochialism has been referred by Sen in his theory of justice as an undesired effect of Rawls’ conception of objectivity (see section 2).

Evidence suggests that parochialism also comes from cognitive biases that make patterns of behavior that promote prejudice over outsiders or are alien of the impact on their well-being go unquestioned (Baron, 2009). Nationalism, racism, and sexism are examples. Also, this pattern can affect clear and rational judgments about politics, and, as a consequence, impact government’s accountability in a negative way. Notably, Baron suggests parochialism is almost always involved in “rent seeking” by groups that lobby governments for special privileges, to the general detriment of others even generally not in each one's interest to contribute to this team effort (Baron, 2009). We see this in strikes, and in international, ethnic, and religious conflict, when people even put their lives on the line for the sake of their group, and at the expense of another group. This type of behavior can lead people to be unreasonable towards others from a different group, dissuading their peers to engage even about the most seemingly consensual important topic. Social polarization can reduce the effectiveness of public policies by drastically hindering the possibilities for open public reason. Equally, this effect can be drawn from politicians not keeping their promises or being constantly involved in corruption scandals, supporting the image of the always corrupt politicians. The representatives can then impede good political initiatives and move people away from politics in general.

On the other hand, some intuitive judgments and emotions can be quite desirable – such as a sense of revulsion about cruelty. Sen argues that resistance to injustice may be driven by reasoned discussions, but also by strong emotions such as ire and frustration (Sen, 2011, p.50). These emotions can motivate action, but we must still rely on reasoned scrutiny to reach fair and sustainable judgments about the problems and what are the possible alternatives for addressing them. Even acts of pure indignation, for

instance, of women's protesting against gender violence, can contribute to rational reason when accompanied by the exam (maybe from third parties) of any reasonable base for the respective indignation (2011, p.390-392). Some events can frequently evoke common responses in persons with different worldviews. Cruelty, unless in extreme cases such as damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, triggers emotional responses that augment the probability of commitment in individuals. In the same way, in front of cases of explicit misery and famines, society tends to collectively commit to proactively act to address the problem. This initiative is something emphasized in Sen's argument that it is possible to distinguish between moral issues that are subjective to the person's own particular set of ideas that constitute his mind frame, and those that automatically triggers emotional responses in a rather uniform way across groups. Nevertheless, the importance of conflicting moral dilemmas that are not so consensual demands a fight against parochialism.

Sen (2002; 2011) has dealt with the issue of personal assessment in his account of objectivity (introduced in section 2.2). By contrasting traditional ways of seeing objectivity with his notion of positional objectivity, he highlights the "structural consequences" of a particular positional perspective for an individual's devised judgments. That is, the specificities of a particular position (that need not to be only locational and can include any condition) could be indeed objective as long as different persons reach the same assessments within it. Sen's concept of illusional objectivity illustrates the importance of grasping the relevance of people's particular circumstances for their perception and judgments. As such, he defines that objectivity of observations is a positional-dependent characteristic "from a delineated somewhere."

He exemplifies this by explaining the dissonance between the quality of health and self-perceived morbidity in the Indian states. In some of the poorer States, such as Bihar, both with low longevity with woeful medical and educational facilities have the lowest rates of reported morbidity in India. In contrast, in the State of Kerala, people, besides having the highest level of longevity (a life expectancy of about 74 years) in the country, presents by far a higher self-perceived morbidity than those less developed states. According to him, the levels of literacy (nearly universal for the young in Kerala) and the exposure to the procedures of health were responsible for this contradiction (Sen, 2009). The perception of low morbidity in the least developed Indian states highlights the fact that sometimes the diagnoses of the population may mislead them

into ignoring valuable information that might help them pressure representatives for improvement in relevant areas.

“There is a strong need for scrutinising the statistics on self perception of illness in a social context by taking note of levels of education, availability of health facilities, and public information on illness and remedy.”

(Sen, 2002, p.860–861)

These different assessments are not, however, entirely subjective. Given the respective endowment of each of the group’s position (for instance, their ideas about health in general and the importance of health prevention in particular), any person could reach much the same view with much the same reasons. Hence, their conclusion could not be deemed an unreasonable mistake as long as the person did in fact reason, whether with the appropriate conceptual frameworks and ancillary knowledge or not. Therefore, the truthfulness of belief cannot be mistaken for the objectivity of how it happens. On the other hand, it is clear that the population of the poorer States was wrong in their assessment of morbidity. Considering the standards and quality of health they experienced in comparison to other more developed states, their situation needs much to be improved for those low level of perception of morbidity to be in synch with reality. The positional objective belief ends up leaving the populations of those poorer states comfortable where they do not see the necessity to call for better public services as they do not contemplate their real health care status (an objective illusion). The opposite could be said of the state of Kerala, where having by a long margin the highest life expectancy at birth, presented by far the highest self-perceived morbidity. Sen attributes this to the also remarkably higher rate of literacy and also a much more extensive public health service of the State in comparison to the rest of India, which enhance the awareness of possible illness and of the need to seek medical remedies and to undertake preventive measures. Sen argues then that the divergences between regions, being not solely on the actual medical service provision but also on citizens’ capacities to perceive and process the issue of health, influences the self-assessment of morbidity largely. (Sen, 2002)

Sen emphasizes the positional nature of ethical reasoning and rationality (2002, p.481). Positionality bias, for instance, particularly influences public opinion in a way that can systematically widely affect social understanding and evaluation of public issues. Therefore, Sen argues that the phenomenon of positional illusion often obscures citizens’ comprehension of problems and by not recognizing social problems they cannot hold government accountable (at least in respect to the particular issue at hand).

Here, he seems to be counterpointing the idea of preferences set forward in welfarist (such as utilitarianism, and, similarly, in social choice, Arrow's concept of values) approaches, as reliable and fixed since they are contingent on the individual's position, as well as, not fixed. Moreover, he continues to suggest the improvement of these positional views through incorporations and recognition of other positional perspectives, which would result in what he calls a transpositional view. This more comprehensive observation, as an evolution towards a more impartial and strict sense objective view, can contribute to public reasoning in a substantial not-biased way. In consonance with the idea of embodying a multitude of impartial reasons on the process of public reason, he advocates for considering individual's values and reason as potential rooms for better evaluations of social states, primarily through deliberation and interaction. This synergy can mean mobility in term of the positional parameters (e.g. observing the relation of moon's size in comparison to sun's, a person from Ancient Egypt will reach a drastically different viewpoint by becoming acquainted with the laws of physics and more specifically with the knowledge of the solar system's order).

Also, Sen claims that injustice can be obscured behind positionally-dependent observation and understanding, creating the false beliefs of Marxian "objective illusion." What is "objective" about the false beliefs that reinforce the sorts of injustices is that they are, he suggests, positionally objective in that any person in some position may view some state of affairs as similarly not unjust, but its injustice becomes lucid by viewing the same phenomenon from other perspectives. Open impartiality, as a kind of "transpositional scrutiny," might provide a sort of remedy to positionally-obscured injustice when as diagnoses of injustice are transpositional, requiring the corroboration in the judgment of other Smithian disinterested spectator. (Sen, 2011, Chapter 7)

This phenomenon occurs in many different social problems such as gender inequality, particularly, in developing countries but also in developed nations. As for the perception of morbidity, more generally, the broad range of opportunities that are available for men can be perceived as natural to males, while the right of, for instance, education, health services to females might be subject to illusional objectivity from their perspective. This perception might translate into what is called an adaptive preference - a person adapting her personal interests and behavior to the option she has available and not to what she would desire if a broader set of opportunities were accessible to her. Cultural constraints can limit the positional circumstances of a particular group so as to

make them accept status quo of injustice as the natural order of things or even adapt their desires and expectations to what they happen to have. That is why sometimes a general measure of life satisfaction may not be enough to access the real substantive freedom a person truly have. (Sen, 2002)

Sen (2002) argues that recognizing how parametric specifications can invoke special mental tendencies, particular types of inexperience, or constraints features of reasoning, is of particular importance for identifying if the problem of misleading judgment about manifested injustice. This situation applies in particular when erroneous judgments are only subjective to a specific group or individual, or it has (too) a particular kind of positional objectivity that obscures people's "visions. It may be the case that positional objectivity and subjectivity overlap, proving that antagonistic definitions have in fact some shared elements.

This possibility does not mean that a particular assessment is culturally dependent, or particular to a given country as a whole, he adds. The practices of persecution in authoritarian regimes indicate that resistance of divergence from the actual objective norm, often supported by the majority, exist. That is why positional parameters do in fact diverge within the same society and as a consequence demand a thinner distinction for truly accessing different points of view, distinct observations, and different conclusions of any society.

In parallel, from availability heuristic, we know that the scope of the domain of information needed to have a clear and robust understanding of the particularities of a political problem is almost always not satisfied. In fact, most decisions occur in a very restricted informational domain, and people often take a stand on a particular issue with a very limited set of information. In most decisions, the circumstances, within which an individual is confined to, limit her ability to devise sound judgments. In scientific realms, a superposition of ideas assembled in a critical and synthesized manner would then be a way of reducing the positional bias from a particular perspective taken from a specific position. Nevertheless, the previously conceived knowledge and the type of reasoning the researcher can use defines this so-called "trans-positional" rationalization. Albeit, the imminent threat of emergence and display of competing lines of reasoning has the potential to supplement a particular hegemonic established understanding, characterizing a process that can be self-correcting over time (Sen, 2002). However, sometimes different normative considerations will considerably reduce the possibility of a dialectic turn out from divergent perspectives. Even when there is no proper normative

issue, the various approaches may happen in such a different way as to reduce the likelihood of complementation between them or superposition of one over another for a matter of practicality. On the other hand, other times the results of studies begin, at a certain point, to conciliate, arriving, ultimately, at similar conclusions. As consensus becomes increasingly evident, public pressure that reflects in public action becomes a matter of reasonableness and "availability" of information for citizens and government representatives.

The concept of positional views goes against the view that individual's preferences are completely inaccessible to one another. This view comes from a Lionel Robbins's (1953) famous argument of the impossibility of interpersonal comparison of utility, which then became a standard of economic theory: "as individuals are really individuals, each an autonomous end in himself [...] they must be somewhat mysterious and inaccessible to each other" (Arrow 1973, p.263). Instead, Sen's take seeks to facilitate the understanding of why particular assessments of social realization are particular to a person's perspective (Sen, 1982, p.37). Thus, a person should search for her positional parameters that make her support the view she has, not settling then for a conceptualized idea of pure subjectivity or person-dependent views.

Assessments on the quality of public services, the trustworthiness of institutions, economic situation, and many other factors, whether or not they could be deemed completely positional, are important for assessing the deepness of Sen's argument for open public reasoning that incorporates various impartial perspectives from different positional instances. When thinking about deliberation and what drives citizens into a debate about political matters, it is relevant to try to understand the determinants, which encompass what could indicate the focus of public reason in its most organic nature.

IV - Investigating Assessments of Political Issues Impact on Informal Political Deliberation in Brazil

This section aims to investigate the determinants of a particular type of non-institutionalized form of political action and deliberation, that is, informal political discussions. The link between observation and debate is an important aspect of democracy and can help us understand how public reason occurs in the larger sphere of society. Discovering which assessments and dispositions are more associated with

people's frequency of political talk, we believe, is a first step in understanding this link better.

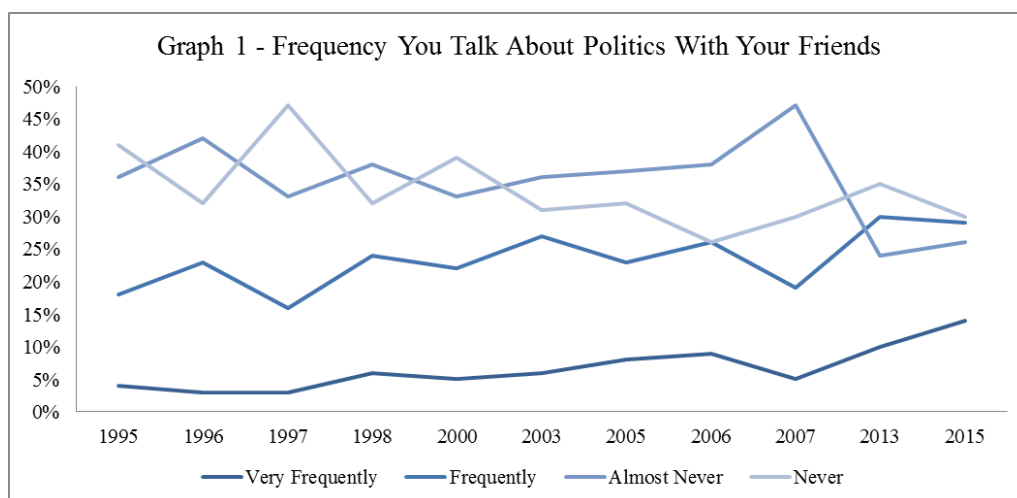
The political abilities of the public remain one of the “major controversies of political behavior research” (Dalton; Klingemann, 2009). In the past, this has led some scholars to argue that given the apparent unsophisticated political behavior of the general public, it would be better if it would remain uninvolved, especially in less developed countries (Huntington, 1968). On the other hand, a more recent revisionist approach defend that the public now is much more sophisticated than early studies demonstrated (for a summary of the discussion, see Kuklinski; Peyton, 2009). Others attribute to the environment a great importance in defining the political sophistication of the public as, for instance, cross-national studies indicate that political sophistication varies widely across countries (Klingemann, 1979; Stacy; Segura, 1997). Furthermore, contemporary research has shown that social pressure and conformity play a significant role in political conversations in social networks, instead than objective information seeking and processing (Sinclair, 2012).

Nevertheless, the extent to which governments are accountable is a product of the way citizens access information, their observations of relevant political facts and their political dispositions.

Political information, in particular, plays a key role for citizens holding governments accountable and expressing their preferences over policies and deliberation has been shown to increase public political ability. Analyzing data over the 1950s and 1990s in Great Britain and the United States, Bennett, Flickinger, and Rhine (2000) found empirical evidence that “discussing politics enhances citizens' knowledge of public affairs”. Equally important, the organic problem of public reason that involves, for example, the conceptualization of government performance, connects to political issues and dispositions more frequently frame informal talks. These patterns might be traceable across societies; some of them might associate with a higher frequency of political discussion. That is, as public's ability to recognize and process relevant information is important to hold government officials accountable once their observations and dispositions can frame their perspective on political issues, affecting the quality and content of public reason as they shape public debate. Also, these patterns can change the frequency of deliberation about politics differently.

In the last decades, we have an increase in the frequency of political talk with friends in Brazil from 2007 to 2015. The number of people that never answer or almost

never fell, while more answered frequently or very frequently. This pattern evokes a simple yet difficult question: Which political issues are more related to this shift in political behavior?



Source: Latinobarometro 1995-2015

If some political dimensions are more associated with the practice of political talk, we may have an indication that they might also monopolize the dialogue and everyday practices of public reason. This relationship the literature has yet to look further. Therefore, our purpose in this chapter is to investigate dimensions of relevant political information and dispositions that impact frequency of ordinary deliberation. Our hypothesis is that

H1: Assessments of relevant political information and dispositions associates significantly with the incidence of informal political deliberation.

Next, we present the data source, the methodology, the regressions, results and final analysis with a recommendation for further research.

IV.I - Data and Method

We use data collected through a survey conducted by Latinobarometer in 2015 that followed international public opinion parameters such as Eurobarometer and the World Values Survey. It provides a multitude of variables that allows the development of an analysis of possible determinants of political engagement, by considering the primary respondent socio-demographic characteristics to opinions and values orientations. Moreover, the Latinobarometer data set is dedicated to the features of Latin American countries, and thus allows a focused and refined comparison of Brazilian individuals. The annual wave of 2015 of the Latinobarometer has a representative

sample of 1,250 citizens in Brazil. Focusing on a single country can help us see sharper distinctions, particularly in countries with deep socioeconomic inequalities such as Brazil, rather than risk falling into the trap of generalizing for the role continent (see Marien; Hooghe; Quintelier, 2010).

From the sample, we chose to remove all variables with more than 6,5% missing values and handle missing data using principal component analysis to replace missings in the remaining variables.⁴

As a proxy for informal political deliberation, we use “frequency of political talk with friends.” Furthermore, we use two kinds of independent variables: individual variables and dimension extracted from principal component analysis (PCA) performed on specific groups of variables organized according to domains. We select as (i) positional parameters some relevant categorical and quantitative variables according to Sen's definition (see next subsection). Also, we opt to use (ii) interpersonal trust by itself. To capture relevant (iii) dimensions associated with assessments of relevant political information and dispositions we perform PCA on groups of variables classified according to categories appropriate according to the literature.

PCA allows us to spot patterns more easily, and therefore help us see what dimensions exist in these groups. As variables are aggregated into components according to their correlation and represent a model of the data regarding the distribution of observations, the results are standardized across the country as a whole. These components then can help us understand better the particular difference on assessments of those who present political habits of deliberating about political issues. We select some variable groups⁵ and perform the following steps: 1) perform a parallel analysis to get suggested some components; 2) perform principal component analysis (PCA), extracting the number of recommended components on the parallel analysis for further investigation⁶; 3) select robust components for further investigation. That is, after analyzing the components indicated by parallel analysis, our criterion for keeping components is their interpretability. We used the extracted components as independent variables in an ordinal logit on our dependent variables. Additionally, we pick a

⁴ We choose the first 50 components since we have a large dataset we use the method “kfold” where percentage of missing values is inserted at random in the data matrix and predicted with a FAMD (Factor Analysis of Mixed Data) (for a more detailed explanation see Josee, 2016).

⁵ For each group we estimated Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin coefficient to check their suitability for PCA, which was confirmed – all coefficients were above 0.76.

⁶ We also standardize the variables to not overweight those with a wider range.

threshold of 0.3 of correlation to consider which variables characterize the dimensions. Table 4 lists the variables used in the models as predictors.

Since our dependent variable of "frequency of political deliberation" is ordinal, we use ordinal logistic regression with proportional odds model analysis to examine the effects of relevant political assessments and dispositions, and positional parameters on "frequency of talk about politics with friends." Outcome of dependent variable consist of 4 ordered categories, represented by the integers 1, 2, 3, 4 (1 = never; 2 = almost never; 3 = frequently; 4 = very frequently) . Ordered logistic regression models the cumulative probability of being above a given category, as a linear function of the predictors. If β is the vector of ordered-logit regression coefficients, then $\exp[\beta K]$ is a vector of odds ratios, or proportionate changes associated with a one-unit increase in χ_{ik} , the k th explanatory variable, in the odds of being above category j (see, for instance, A Agresti; M Kateri, 2011). Ordinal logistic regression with proportional odds model was used to analyze the association assessment of relevant political information with the ordinal outcome of "frequency of political talk with friends."

We used the chi-squared (χ^2) test for linear trends and heterogeneity among the categories of independent variables. Initially, we performed a variance inflation factor test (VIF) in our independent variables, which rejected the hypothesis of multicollinearity ($VIF < 0.10$). All the variables were considered for inclusion in the multiple regression models, however, only the variables with $p < 0.1$ remained in the final model – model (2). We choose the final model according to Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) (Akaike, 1973). To see if there is an intergenerational change in gender patterns of political deliberation, we use a mix effect variable of sex and age. Also, for analyzing the differences between genders, we perform the final model for observation separated by gender. Analyses were performed using R.

IV. II – Model

The ordinal categorical response model, also called the Proportional Risk Model, is a class of generalized linear models used to model the dependence of an ordered dependent variable on discrete or continuous covariables. Let Y be the dependent variable with the possible events 1, 2, ..., k , with $k > 2$ (that is, k is the number of

categories of Y), and let the cumulative probability of Y be the class j when x is fixed. We then use the following proportionate odds model⁷:

$$\text{logit } \gamma_j(x_i) = \theta_j - \beta^T x_i, j = 1 \dots J - 1$$

where Y is our response variable is “frequency of talking about politics with friends” with outcomes as ordered categories ranging from 1 to 4 (= J) (Never - Very frequently). Our matrix of covariates consists of the following types of variables. Part of our independent variables is categorical and quantitative variables - that we consider as positional parameters - in addition to interpersonal trust. The other part is a set of dimensions derived from principal component analysis on specific groups of questions.

i) Positional Parameters

For Sen positional parameters are a question of “any general, particularly non-mental condition that may both influence observation, and that can systematically apply to different observers and observations” (Sen 2009, p.158). As such, we choose the following variables (see Table X) as the positional parameters of our analysis: gender (1 = male; 2 = female); nationality (“Are you a citizen of Brazil?”; 1 = yes; 2 = no); education (from 1 to 7); parents’ education (from 1 to 7), size of town (from 1 to 8); and age (from 16 to 92).

ii) Interpersonal Trust – Interpersonal Distrust

Many scholars have explored the importance of interpersonal trust the process of deliberation (Wondolleck; Yaffee, 1994; Moorey et al., 2012). Some argue that confidence among representatives and citizens, and among citizens themselves is a reliable measurement of successful public deliberation (Lachapelle; McCool; Patterson, 2003; McCool; Guthrie, 2001; Shindler; Neburka, 1997).

The answer here is binary (1 = can trust; 2 = cannot trust; therefore we call it interpersonal distrust). We opted to separate interpersonal trust from other types of confidence to see if it has some dissociated effect on the frequency of political deliberation, speculating that it indeed does have an adverse effect, which we believe it does as the literature already indicates (*h1*).

iii) Relevant Political Assessments and Dispositions

⁷ For a complete explanation see O’Connell, 2006

There are numerous assessments of political information and tendencies that could be potential drivers of political talk. We chose dimensions that are justified by the literature as possible drivers of political deliberation. Variables used to interpret each dimension are in Table 4 (for a detailed explanation of the principal components analysis in each group, see Appendix 1). We now present these dimensions and their expected effect on the frequency of political talk with friends.

Table 1 - Dimensions		
Dimensions	Variable	Correlation
Economic Perception	Current economic situation of the country	0.68
	Perception of progress of the country	0.64
	Past personal economic situation	0.64
	Past economic situation of the country	0.64
	Personal future economic situation	0.61
	Personal current economic situation	0.61
Government Distrust	Confidence in the government	0.51
	Confidence in National Congress / Parliament	0.45
	Confidence in political parties	0.45
	Confidence in the judiciary	0.32
	Country governed for the benefit of the powerful	-0.35
Media Distrust	Confidence in television	0.53
	Confidence in newspapers	0.50
	Confidence in radios	0.46
	Confidence: Media	0.39
(1) Dissatisfaction	Satisfaction with services: Sewerage services	0.49
	Satisfaction with services: Public transport	0.48
	Agreement with these services: Roads and paving	0.46
	Satisfaction with services: Garbage collection	0.43
(2) Dissatisfaction	Satisfaction with the way it works: public education	0.58
	Satisfaction with the way it works: public hospitals	0.53
	Satisfaction with the way it works: police	0.53
(3) Dissatisfaction	Agreement with these services: Gas	0.63
	Agreement with these services: Light/electricity	0.54
	Agreement with these services: Mobile phone signal	0.38
	Agreement with these services: Potable water	0.31
(1) Inactivism	Political action: Taking part in authorized demonstrations	0.48
	Actions which have done: Make a claim through social networks	0.47
	Actions which have done: Make a claim through the media	0.46
	Political action: Signing a petition	0.42
	Political action: Taking part in unauthorized demonstrations	0.40
(2) Activism	Willing to demonstrate and protest about: Exploitation of natural resources	0.59
	Willing to demonstrate and protest about: To defend democratic rights	0.59
	Willing to demonstrate and protest about: Higher wages and better working conditions	0.55
(1) Guarantees	Guarantees: Just and fair distribution of wealth	0.53
	Guarantees: Protection against crime	0.51
	Guarantees: Solidarity with the poor and needy	0.46
	Guarantees: Protection of the environment	0.33
(2) Guarantees	Guarantees: Freedom of religion/faith	0.61
	Guarantees: Freedom to chose one's occupation	0.61
	Guarantees: Equality of men and women	0.32
	Guarantees: Chance to get a job	0.30
(1) Citizenship	What it takes to be a good citizen: Participate in social organizations	0.53
	What it takes to be a good citizen: Participate in political organizations	0.52
	What it takes to be a good citizen: Choose products environmentally	0.51
	What it takes to be a good citizen: Help people in (country)who are worse off than yourself	0.37
(2) Lack of Citizenship	What it takes to be a good citizen: Don't know / No answer	0.51
	What it takes to be a good citizen: Be willing to serve in the military at a time of need	-0.32
	What it takes to be a good citizen: Always obey laws and regulations	-0.33
	What it takes to be a good citizen: Pay taxes	-0.48
	What it takes to be a good citizen: Vote in elections	-0.52

1) Perception of economic situation and progress - (1) Economic Perception

Many studies indicate that governments may be rewarded or sanctioned by voters by their economic performance (Alt et al., 2016; Anderson, 2007; Lewis-Beck; Paldam, 2000; Lewis-Beck; Stegmaier, 2000). Similarly, Norris (2011, p.215) argues that “the way people experience democratic governance leads them to express negative or positive assessments of the way the regime works in their country.”

We use one component - (1) Economic Perception – which strongly correlates with a negative perception of the current economic situation of the country, the progress of the country, past personal economic situation, past economic situation of the country, personal future economic situation, and personal current economic situation.

We expect this dimension of economic and progress perception to be a positive predictor of informal political deliberation (*h2*).

2) Confidence on Institutions: (1) Government Distrust + (2) Media Distrust

Recent research on the topic of political trust suggests a global distrust syndrome on traditional institutions (Warren, 1999; Dalton, 1999, 2004; Catterberg; Moreno, 2006). Norris suggests that the low level of trust on political institutions may be an indication of a political culture of critical citizens (1999, 2011). In consonance, distrust is sometimes interpreted as a manifestation of a critical stance towards traditional institutions, based on a reliable option for participation and freedom of expression, signaling a potentially positive effect on the process of democratic deepening (Mishler; Rose, 2001; Inglehart, 1999). Another research also showed a positive effect on political legitimacy, indicating that people that often talk about politics are “more [...] likely to see their government as accountable, attentive and legitimate” (Searing et al., 2007, p.601). Mann and Klobstad (2011) found evidence that civic talk is unrelated to trust in government and Catterberg and Moreno (2006, p.1) claim that decline in confidence reflects “the post-honeymoon disillusionment rather than the emergence of a more critical citizenry” and suggest that “political trust responds to government performance.”

In parallel, media plays a crucial role in democracy by making relevant political information available for citizens holding government accountable and, therefore, its reliability is essential for democracy. Studies demonstrate that audience trust in the news media potentially impacts peoples’ perceptions of the political system at large and

people distrust of mainstream news media moderates the influence of media on the audience (Druckman, 2001; Ladd, 2012; Miller; Krosnick, 2000; Tsfati, 2003).

We use two components. The first - (1) Government Distrust - is strongly correlated of variables related to confidence in governmental institutions (the higher the score, lower is trust in these institutions). The second - (2) Media Distrust - correlates to the media in general (television, newspapers, radio and media).

We speculate that distrust in governmental institutions led to more frequent political deliberation (*h3*) because citizens become more critical of government performance, and distrust in media institutions resulted in less frequent political deliberation (*h4*) since citizens become less informed.

3) Dissatisfaction with Services - (1) *Dissatisfaction with services (provided by the municipality)* + (2) *Dissatisfaction with services (provided by gov.federal)*
+ (3) *Dissatisfaction with services (regulated by the government)*

Dissatisfaction with services is something often associated with low government capacity, and it directly affects citizens' well-being. Citizen collective voice is recognized as a potential mechanism for improving public services, especially when triggered by perceived low performance and dissatisfaction (Hirschman 1970; Lyons and Lowery, 1989; Lyons; Lowery; DeHoog, 1992; Dowding; John, 2008, 2012; Gofen, 2012). However, James and Moseley (2014, p.1) find evidence that "information about low performance did not trigger collective voice protest behavior."

We use three components that capture dissatisfaction with: 1) Sewerage services, Public Transport, Roads and pavements, and Garbage Collection - (1) Dissatisfaction; 2) Public Education, Public Hospitals, and Police - (2) Dissatisfaction; 3) Gas, Light, and Electricity - (3) Dissatisfaction.

By James and Moseley (2014), we hypothesize that dissatisfaction with services is not a significant predictor of frequency of political talk with friends (*h5*).

4) Activism - (1) *Inactive* + (2) *Activism*

The importance of new forms of governance, which surpass State authorities, have been increasing in the last decades (Hale; Held, 2011). Arbache (2014) mentions that non-institutionalized forms of political action, such as demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts, has gained the attention of political scientists. That is because they are

now more frequent than traditional forms of action like party activism and voting (Norris, 2002; Dalton, 2008; Marien; Hooghe; Quintelier, 2010).

We keep two components that capture activism in terms of 1) indisposition for making a claim through media, through social networks, signing a petition, taking part in authorized demonstrations, and in unauthorized demonstrations - (1) Inactive; 2) willingness to demonstrate and protest about exploitation of natural resources, to defend democratic rights, and about higher wages and better working conditions – (2) Activism.

We speculate that both dimensions of activism have significant effects on frequency of political talk (*h6*) because they entail conceptualization of political issues that commonly draw from and a source for political discussions.

5) Guarantees of Rights and Freedoms - (1) *Absent Guarantees* + (2) *Absent Guarantees*

Sen (2011) argues that human rights are global imperatives that survive public reasoning and therefore are not exclusive to a particular society, but common to all humanity. With this in mind, it is likely that guarantees of rights and freedoms when not met would drive public reasoning and be a source for political talk. In our regression we use two dimensions associated with perception of not having: 1) just and fair distribution of wealth; protection against crime, solidarity with the poor and needy, and protection of the environment; 2) freedom of religion/ faith, freedom to choose one's occupation, equality of men and women, and chance to get a job.

We speculate that a high level of perception of not having guarantees led to a higher frequency of political deliberation (*h7*).

6) Sense of Citizenship - (1) *Citizenship* + (2) *Lack of Citizenship*

Scholars argue that political information and engagement remains limited in western democracies (Delli Carpini; Keeter, 1991; Wattenberg, 2006), or are even in decline due to modernization that atomizes and alienates citizens who refrain from the responsibilities of democratic citizenship by further disengaging from politics (Putnam, 2000; Hibbing; Theiss- Morse, 2002). On the other hand, Searing et al. (2007) found political talk accompanies a stronger community identity and more public-spiritedness.

We use two components which capture: 1) a sense of citizenship that recognizes participation in social and political organizations, as well as choosing products environmentally and helping those who are in a worse situation as things one cannot stop doing in order to be a good citizen - (1) Citizenship; 2) a seemingly lack of concern and general unwilling to vote, pay taxes, obey laws and regulations, and serve in the military at a time of need - (2) Lack of Citizenship.

We believe that participation in social and political organizations, sense of environmental and social responsibility towards those that are worse off will have a positive effect on the frequency of political deliberation (*h8*). Whereas a disregard for citizen responsibilities will not have a significant impact on political talk (*h9*) as a sign of modernization and individuals that refrain from their responsibilities of democratic citizenship and politics altogether.

7) Gender and Age

Lastly, as previous research found that males and people in the middle ranges of the age distribution who appear more likely to engage in political conversations (Beck; Lup, 2013), we speculate that a gender effects will be minimized with age (*h10*) and there are differences between dimensions that impact men and women frequency of political talk with friends (*h11*).

Table 2 - Expected Effects on "Frequency of Political Talk with Friends" Summarized	
Variable	<i>h</i>
Interpersonal Distrust	-
Economic Perception	+
Government Distrust	+
Media Distrust	-
(1) Dissatisfaction (2) Dissatisfaction (3) Dissatisfaction	Null
(1) Inactive (2) Activism	- +
(1) Absent Guarantees (2) Absent Guarantees	+
(1) Citizenship	+
(2) Lack of Citizenship	-
Gender:Age	-
Male vs Female	≠

IV.III Results

Coefficients in Table 2 mean that, for a given significant variable, an increase in 1 point increase (or decrease) the probability of being in a higher (or lower) category - depending if the coefficient is above or below 1. That is, from proportional odds ratio, the interpretations follow a pattern. For instance, for one unit increase in Interpersonal Distrust (see Model (2) – Table 2) going from 0 (Low) to 1 (High), the odds of going from a lower frequency rate to a higher one decreases by 0.522 (1 – 0.478). Simultaneously the odds of moving to a lower frequency rate increases by the same value, given that all of the other variables in the model are held constant.

In both models, 1 and 2, nationality, absent guarantees, dissatisfactions, and government distrust were significant. The result for the dimensions of guarantees, dissatisfaction, and government distrust contradict our expectations.

In our final model, model (2) (see Table 2), which presented the lowest AIC score of all models tested, economic perception (of a negative situation) is significant and has an increase of 10 % in the frequency of political talk. Dimensions of (2) activism, (1) citizenship, and (2) Lack of Citizenship are also significant and have positive effects of 14.3 %, 15.5 %, and 16%, respectively, on our dependent variable outcomes, being by our assumptions. Age, parents' education and especially education are significant with positive impacts of 6.4 %, 13.3 %, and 29.4 %. On the other hand, Media distrust, (1) Activism, Interpersonal Distrust, city size, and gender: age, have adverse effects on the outcome variable of, respectively, 8.1%, 24 %, 52.2 %, 8.7 %, 2.7 %.

Finally, from our stratified models for men and women, evidence that the dimension of economic perception and city size are significant for women alone but not for man. Similarly, age is important for men but not for women. Table 6, in appendix, summarizes the effects of independent variables.

Table 3- Ordered Logit Models - Odds Ratios

Political Talk with Friends					
	Model (1)	Model (2)	Men (2)	Women (2)	
`Economic Perception`	1.121*** (0.039)	1.101*** (0.035)	1.071 (0.052)	1.127** (0.049)	
`Media Distrust`	0.935** (0.034)	0.919*** (0.028)	0.938* (0.038)	0.896** (0.043)	
(1) Inactivism	0.755*** (0.040)	0.760*** (0.040)	0.734*** (0.055)	0.785*** (0.057)	
`(2) Activism`	1.147*** (0.039)	1.143*** (0.039)	1.140** (0.054)	1.138** -0.056	
`(1) Citizenship`	1.171*** (0.040)	1.165*** (0.039)	1.211*** (0.055)	1.119** (0.056)	
`(2) Lack of Citizenship`	1.166*** (0.042)	1.160*** (0.041)	1.141** (0.058)	1.179*** (0.058)	
Interpersonal Distrust	0.471*** (0.206)	0.478*** (0.203)	0.368*** (0.314)	0.571** (0.270)	
Age	1.064*** (0.011)	1.293*** (0.035)	1.035*** (0.006)	1.008 (0.006)	
Educ	1.294*** (0.036)	1.293*** (0.035)	1.282*** (0.051)	1.307*** (0.050)	
ParEduc	1.133*** (0.037)	1.134*** (0.036)	1.100* (0.051)	1.171*** (0.052)	
City Size	0.919*** (0.031)	0.913*** (0.030)	0.880*** (0.042)	0.947 (0.042)	
Gender:Age	0.973*** (0.007)	0.973*** (0.007)			
Observations	1,250	1,250	618	632	

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

IV.IV Discussion

To interpret our results and investigate the relationship between assessments of relevant political information and political deliberation through the form of informal talk about politics, we must think about what it means for a person the idea of “talking about politics.” Surely one can see that the economy is not going well, and even talk about economics in general, without actually understanding this action as a “talk about politics.” The concept individuals hold about the idea of “talking about politics” is in itself an important issue to reflect about beforehand.

Political talk does not always equal political discussion. A person can simply talk about politics, but in no way act and think by the democratic spirit of public reason as her political judgments might be subject to a wide range of restrictions, which possibly result in parochialism or partiality. For instance, several studies have discovered the degree of disagreement to be exceptionally low in intimate relationships (Schmitt Beck, 2000; Richardson; Beck, 2007). Nevertheless, our model shows some interesting results that may provide us with interesting insights into this vital relationship. Interpersonal distrust presented an adverse effect on the odds of a higher frequency of political talk with friends as we expected (h1) and in accordance previous studies authors such as Moorey and al. (2012) already indicated. Similarly, the dimension of (1) economic perception presented the expected association, as from Norris (2011), with our dependent variables (h2), as previous studies already suggest, emphasizing the connection between economic performance and government evaluation. In consonance with Mann and Klofstad (2011) findings, government distrust, however, was not significant in our regression (h3). That show evidence against Norris (2011) thesis that distrust in the political organization would signal a rise of critical citizens. Media distrust presented the expected according to authors like (Tsfati, 2003) association of reducing the odds of a higher frequency of deliberation (h4). As James and Moseley (2014) suggests, dissatisfaction with services was not significant, confirming the suggestion that evidence of bad government performance in the provision of goods is not a driver o political action (h5). As the rise in new forms of political participation pondered by Norris (2002) and Dalton (2008) indicates, the dimensions of political action, inactive (1) and activism (2) confirm our hypothesis (h6), as activism increase the odds of this type of deliberation (h6).

Contrary to what Sen (2011) would expect, all three dimensions of absent guarantees were not significant, contradicting our hypothesis that they might evoke political talk (h7). As Searing et al. (2007) indicate, (1) Citizenship enhance the odds of more constant political talk with friends, supporting our hypothesis (h8). On the other hand, in accordance to Delli Carpini and Keeter (1991), (2) Lack of Citizenship challenged it by also being positively associated with our dependent variable (h9). Moreover, economic perception being significant for women but not for men confirmed our hypothesis (h10), suggesting that men's political talk habits are less susceptible to changes in the economy. Similarly, the interaction variables between gender and age affecting the frequency of political talk with friends negatively confirmed hypothesis (h11).

Finally, from our stratified models for men and women, evidence that the dimension of economic perception and city size are significant for women alone but not for man. Similarly, age is important for men but not for women who can qualify (Beck and Lup, 2013) findings of the importance of age for political deliberation. Table 6 summarizes the effects of independent variables.

V Conclusion

In this dissertation, we investigated the instrumental role of behavior in a democracy. First, we counterpointed Rawls' idea of public reason with that of Sen, afterward analyzing actual human political behavior in the light of behavioral science insights and the concept of positional objectivity. Furthermore, we made an empirical inquiry on the determinants of political talk with friends focusing on dimensions of relevant political information and dispositions. We saw these three parts as complementary to each other and sought here to bring attention to the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary approach to the study of public reason.

We have seen in section II that the idea of public reason entails individuals thinking about political problems of basic justice - ideally in an impartial manner. In section III, however, we saw that citizens' political deliberation is particularly affected by heuristics - which are mental shortcuts that typically involve focusing on one aspect of highly complex problems and ignoring others -, namely: availability, attribute substitution, representativeness, and affect heuristic. These heuristics generate behavioral tendencies that pattern into biases - such as illusory correlations, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance aversion - which affect political behavior. These biases draw mostly from social values, which in turn characterize a structured mind frame from which individuals interpret political issues, to a large extent, anchored in values common to a group or groups of people. This social phenomenon results counter-productive behavior as citizens become parochial as a consequence of natural behavioral tendencies. Linked to it, the idea of positional objectivity then goes on to extend the traditional notion of objectivity as a view from nowhere by explaining how an everyday observations product of given endowments of positional parameters within which citizens dwell.

Our fourth section investigated the relation between relevant political information and dispositions and frequency of political talk with friends. Our result further supported already known associations from the literature of political engagement but also helped to clarify or even cast doubt on others, revealing remarkable results. In particular, government distrust, dissatisfaction with services and perception of absent guarantees were not significant in our prediction model. Moreover, we also found that both dimensions of political activism appear to increase the odds of political talk with friends, while, a lack of sense of citizenship impacted negatively on the frequency of

this same political habit. Also, the dimension of perception of the economic situation was significant for women but not for men.

We introduce a new way of understanding public participation in democracy, by associating the idea of public reason with behavior sciences insights about political deliberation. Preliminary as it may be, we believe it can help flourish a fruitful dialogue between these areas of research. Furthermore, an empirical analysis of political behavior hardly generates uncontroversial results. Our findings indicate that political perceptions and dispositions can provide us with directions that can strength our knowledge about political talk and open public reason. Therefore, it is important to further investigate the nature of political talk regarding sensibility to information and dispositions.

APPENDIX

A. PCA

1. Perception of economic situation and Progress

(1) Economic Perception

We select 6 variables in which answers vary from 1 to 3 (country is 1 = progressing; is 3 = in decline), and from 1 to 5 (economic situation is (will be) 1 = very good (much better); 5 = very bad (much worse). From our PCA we select the first component according the parallel analysis. The component is strongly correlated with perception of: current economic situation of the country, perception of progress of the country, past personal economic situation, past economic situation of the country, personal future economic situation, and personal current economic situation. . We believe that perceptions of economic situation and progress are strong predictor of deliberation about political issues because of economic motivation of voters and how it affects the way they evaluate government performance.

2. Confidence on Institutions

(1) Government Distrust + (2) Media Distrust

Here we select 15 variables in which answers vary from 1 to 4 (“would you say you have (in government/the state there is) 1= a lot (much); 4= no trust (no transparency)”), and 1 to 2 (“Generally speaking, would you say that (country) is governed for a few powerful groups in their own interest? Or is it governed for the good of all?” 1=“Powerful groups in their own interest”; 2 = “for the good of all”). Parallel analysis suggests four components⁸ but we opt to keep only 2 because they were robust enough for interpretation. The first is strongly correlated of variables related to confidence on governmental institutions (the higher the score, lower is trust on these institutions). And the second correlates to the media in general (television, newspapers, radio and media).

3. Satisfaction with services

(1) Dissatisfaction + (2) Dissatisfaction + (3) Dissatisfaction

We use 12 variables in which answers vary from 1 to 5 (1 = very satisfied; 4 = not satisfied at all; 5 = don't have these services where lives). From our PCA we opt to keep three components that capture dissatisfaction with: 1) Sewerage services, Public transport, Roads and pavements, and Garbage collection; 2) Public Education, Public Hospitals, and Police; 3) Gas, Light and Electricity.

4. Activism

(1) Activism + (2) Activism

We use 8 variables in which answers range from 1 to 10 (1 = “not at all willing”; 10 = “very willing”) and 1 to 3 (1 = “have done”; 2 = “would do”; 3 = “would never do”). From our PCA, we keep two components that capture activism in terms of: 1) indisposition to make a claim through media, make a claim through social networks, sign a petition, take part in

⁸ To facilitate interpretation we perform Varimax rotation, reducing the number of variables with high or low loadings on each component; also once the range of variables differs, we scale the data prior to PCA, in order to give an equal weight to all variables.

authorized demonstrations, and take part in unauthorized demonstrations; 2) willingness to demonstrate and protest about exploitation of natural resources, willingness to demonstrate and protest to defend democratic rights, willingness to demonstrate and protest about higher wages and better working conditions.

5. Guarantees of Rights and Freedoms

(1) Absent Guarantees + (2) Absent Guarantees

We select 8 variables in which answers vary from 1 to 4 (1 = fully; 4 = not at all)⁹. From our PCA we use two dimensions associated with perception of not having: 1) just and fair distribution of wealth; protection against crime, solidarity with the poor and needy, and protection of the environment; 2) freedom of religion/ faith, freedom to choose one's occupation, equality of men and women, and chance to get a job.

6. Sense of Citizenship

(1) Citizenship + (2) Lack of Citizenship

We select variables derived from a question of things one cannot stop doing for being a good citizen, in which answers vary from 0 to 1 (0 = not mentioned; 1 = mentioned). From our PCA we keep 2 components according to parallel analysis. One captures a sense of citizenship that recognizes participation in social and political organizations, as well as choosing products environmentally and helping those who are in a worsen situation as things one cannot stop doing in order to be a good citizen. The other captures a seemingly lack of concern and general unwilling to vote, pay taxes, obey laws and regulations, and serve in the military at a time of need.

⁹ "To what extent do the following freedoms, rights, life chances and guarantees apply in Brazil?"

2. Tables

Table 4 - Ordered Logit Models

Political Talk with Friends					
	Model (1)	Model (2)	Men (2)	Women (2)	
`Economic Perception`	0.115*** (0.039)	0.096*** (0.035)	0.069 (0.052)	0.119** (0.049)	
`Media Distrust`	-0.067** (0.034)	-0.085*** (0.028)	-0.064* (0.038)	-0.110** (0.043)	
(1) Inactivism	-0.281*** (0.040)	-0.274*** (0.040)	-0.309*** (0.055)	-0.241*** (0.057)	
`(2) Activism`	0.137*** (0.039)	0.133*** (0.039)	0.131** (0.054)	0.129** (0.056)	
`(1) Citizenship`	0.158*** (0.040)	0.153*** (0.039)	0.192*** (0.055)	0.113** (0.056)	
`(2) Lack of Citizenship`	0.153*** (0.042)	0.148*** (0.041)	0.132** (0.058)	0.165*** (0.058)	
Interpersonal Distrust	-0.753*** (0.206)	-0.738*** (0.203)	-1.000*** (0.314)	-0.561** (0.270)	
Age	0.062*** (0.011)	0.063*** (0.011)	0.035*** (0.006)	0.008 (0.006)	
Educ	0.258*** (0.036)	0.257*** (0.035)	0.248*** (0.051)	0.267*** (0.050)	
ParEduc	0.125*** (0.037)	0.126*** (0.036)	0.096* (0.051)	0.158*** (0.052)	
City Size	-0.084*** (0.031)	-0.091*** (0.030)	-0.127*** (0.042)	-0.055 (0.042)	
Gender:Age	-0.028*** (0.007)	-0.028*** (0.007)			
Observations	1,250	1,250	618	632	

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5 - Descriptive statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Economic Perception	1,250	0	1.6	-4.6	5.2
Government Distrust	1,250	0	2	-7.5	3.5
Media Distrust	1,250	0	2	-5.5	5.6
(1) Dissatisfaction	1,250	0	1.6	-4.5	5.5
(2) Dissatisfaction	1,250	0	1.5	-5.5	2.6
(3) Dissatisfaction	1,250	0	1.4	-4	4.4
(1) Inactivism	1,250	0	1.7	-4.4	3
(2) Activism	1,250	0	1.6	-3	2.3
(1) Absent Guarantees	1,250	0	1.6	-6.3	3
(2) Absent Guarantees	1,250	0	1.4	-3.9	3.9
(1) Citizenship	1,250	0	1.5	-1.8	3.1
(2) Lack of Citizenship	1,250	0	1.4	-1.6	4.6
InterpersonalTrust	1,250	1.9	0.3	1	2.2
Gender	1,250	1.5	0.5	1	2
Age	1,250	40.5	16.3	16	92
Nationality	1,250	1	0.2	1	2
Educ	1,250	4	1.8	1	7
ParEduc	1,250	2.6	1.7	1	7
City Size	1,250	6.4	1.8	1	8

Table 6 - Effects on "Frequency of Political Talk with Friends" - Summarized

Variable	Effects on Frequency of Political Talk with Friends	Variable	Effects on Frequency of Political Talk with Friends
`Economic Perception`	+	Interpersonal Distrust	-
`Media Distrust`	-	Age	+
(1) Inactivism	-	Educ	+
`(2) Activism`	+	ParEduc	+
`(1) Citizenship`	+	City Size	-
`(2) Lack of Citizenship`	+	Gender:Age	-

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