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Dr. Shaunna Scott, Director of Graduate Studies

A DIGITAL DUD?
NEW MEDIA, PARTICIPATION, AND VOTING IN THE 2004 AND 2008 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Jeremy Dale Hickman
Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Thomas Janoski, Professor of Sociology
Lexington, Kentucky

2015

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A DIGITAL DUD?
NEW MEDIA, PARTICIPATION, AND VOTING IN THE
2004 AND 2008 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

This dissertation analyzes the linkages between new media and the possible emergence of the youngest members of the voting population (the "digital native" generation, who have grown up concurrently with the rise of the internet as a means of communication). The main question is whether this digital native generation will have more civic and political participation due to their use of online news sources and social media communication on news media websites and elsewhere on the internet. Regression analyses are used to explain civic and political participation, using American National Election Studies (ANES) from the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. The analysis is done in three components. In the first paper, looking at the 2008 election, the impact of the "new media" was important for all generations, but the oldest generations—rather than the digital natives—had the highest levels of civic and political participation. In other words, the digital native generation did not, in fact, have more civic or political participation. In the second paper on the 2008 ANES data set, the impact of urban and rural differences were also tested to determine whether a presumed lack of access to new media would impact civic and political participation. This also proved not to be the case. Connected to this, an examination of various regions of the country did not have a significant impact upon levels of participation. In the third paper on both the 2004 and 2008 ANES, the explanation of civic and political participation diverges. Although online news consumption may be important for civic participation, members of older generations still participate more. For political participation, the youngest generation in 2004 had a positive effect on participation, which was the opposite result of the study on the 2008 ANES. Education was more important in 2008 than in 2004. Generally, the overall investigation finds that while new technology does have a sizeable impact upon political and civic participation, the digital natives' more frequent use of these new media is not large enough to counteract the more traditional explanations of civic and political participation. Older generations of voters have higher incomes, more education, and more free time. These factors lead to higher levels of political and civic participation, compared to members of the youngest generation. As such, the "digital revolution" has been something of a "digital dud", with significantly less impact than has been previously suggested by journalists in the media and indeed by some academics. Nonetheless, the

impact of the new media affects all of the generations studied, and is thus still noteworthy and significant.

KEYWORDS: media, participation, voting, generation, election

_Jeremy Dale Hickman______________
Student's Signature

_May 4, 2015______________________
Date

A DIGITAL DUD?
NEW MEDIA, PARTICIPATION, AND VOTING IN THE
2004 AND 2008 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By

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Dr. Shaunna Scott__________________
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May 4, 2015_______________________
Date

This project is dedicated to my wife, Angie.

Thank you, and I love you more than I'll ever be able to express.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation, while the work of an individual author, could not have been accomplished alone. The first thanks must go to the chair of my dissertation committee, a man who truly became my mentor through this process, Dr. Thomas Janoski. For the many years it took to complete this dissertation, you knew when to prod me into activity, when to let me work in peace, and when to pester me to make sure I was accomplishing something, anything, at all. I truly don't think I could have chosen a better chair, and I'm eternally grateful you agreed to help me along this path. I also could not have succeeded without the rest of my committee: Dr. Gary Hansen, Dr. Ana Liberato, and Dr. James Hougland. You all brought your expertise and wisdom to my committee, and consistently pushed me to consider issues and topics that never would have occurred to me otherwise. Without you all, this dissertation truly could not exist. I also am grateful to my outside examiner, Dr. Paul Karan—thank you for being a key part of the end of this process. I also extend my gratitude and apologies to Dr. Seungahn Nah—while I'm still sorry it didn't work out having you on my committee, your knowledge and assistance was always welcome.

In addition to the faculty members I worked most closely with through the course of this dissertation, I am also thankful to the Department of Sociology as a whole. I realize that this dissertation took a while to complete, to put it mildly, but I was always treated warmly and collegially by the people I have come to see as colleagues in many ways. Thank you for all the moral support and financial support via the TA lines that

kept coming. I finally believe that I've found my calling in life, and it wouldn't have been possible without the classroom experience I've been so lucky to have received.

I want to take a moment to thank my friends and cohort members, both in the department and outside. Some have already moved on to bigger and better things, some are still in the middle of the dissertation process and will move on to bigger and better things, but they all had an impact on my life, and they all helped keep me grounded and sane during the long and arduous process of dissertating. Andy, Buddy, David, Erica, Fayin, Jess, Joe, Kaitlyne, Lisa, Megan, Sakin, Sara, Suzanne, and everyone else who's passed through my life and/or the halls of the 15th floor: thank you. Thank you for the laughs, the commiserations, the lunches, the dinners, the games, the understanding, for everything. You're awesome, all of you.

I want to thank my family for their patience, understanding, and financial support during this process. I know you didn't always understand what I was doing or why I was doing it (or why it was taking so long), but your support meant more than I could ever express. To my parents, Dale and Penny, thank you for bringing me into not only the world, but also the world of higher education. Thanks to you, I realized that it was actually possible to stay in school for a long, long time. To my sister, Amanda, thank you for always understanding and listening whenever I needed someone to talk to. You've grown up into an amazing woman—it's still hard for me to think about how the girl you were has become the woman you are now. To my grandmother, Ann, thank you for being you. Thank you for the bed and the food and the understanding and the love and everything else you've always given. Thank you all for always being there when I needed you, even if I didn't know I needed you. I love you all.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Angie. You've been there for the highs and the lows, and you've seen me at my best and my worst. (Though during the writing of this dissertation, I think the worst has been around more often than the best.) You've listened, you've loved, you've cajoled, you've let me be, but you've always been there, and I know you always will be. I don't know what I did to deserve you, but I'm so, so glad that you're a part of my life. (The best part.) Thank you for everything. Thank you for the life we've lived so far, and thank you for being a part of the upcoming undiscovered country we're about to explore together. The future is waiting, and I can't think of a better person to share it with. I love you, honey.

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Chapter 1: Civic and Electoral Participation in American Society in 2004 and 2008

A "landmark". (Kaid 2009) "The most important election since the Great Depression." (Crotty 2009) The result of "the most intense, expensive, exciting, and longest presidential campaign in modern history" (Harvard 2014). The United States presidential election of 2008 has been referred to as all of these things, and much more. What makes the 2008 election so significant, and so much different from past campaigns? To put it briefly, the impact of the internet and online media upon the campaign created a new type of campaign, specifically tailored to this new communications media. As illustrated in this dissertation, the 2008 election was the first major election in the United States in which online media and online news sources played a significant role. In fact, the Pew Center notes that approximately 46% of all Americans used the internet for political purposes specifically during the course of the 2008 election season (Smith and Rainie 2008).

Having posited that the impact of online media was first felt in a significant way in the 2008 election cycle, precisely how does media use, especially use of the so-called "new media", affect voting practices? The term "new media" can be used to refer to the internet in general (Graber 1996), but can also be used more specifically to refer to particularly interactive aspects of the internet, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which allow users to post their own self-created content, and share that content with the world at large (Panagopoulos 2009). The main argument of my dissertation, expressed in three parts, is that ultimately, both the interactivity and the widespread use of new media

(here referred to in the general sense of the internet itself, and online forms of traditional media) in general leads to:

(1) Increased political participation because:

(a) There is a greater variety of materials on one's specific political interests (i.e., candidate sites and party websites; individual political blogs; instantaneous videos of events; seeming direct contact via e-mail, twitter and Facebook) causing voters to spend more time searching and reading this information.

(b) This exposure to a wide variety of information in numerous differing formats causes individuals to spend more time focusing on politics, consequently causing them to increase their interaction with other people about politics and to increased political interest and political participation.

(c) These effects creating more political interest and political participation come from the people who use these technologies, and in current society these are strongly organized according to generational cohorts so this effect will be greatest among younger people, becoming less pronounced with each generation.

(2) High overall levels of political participation in 2008 because of: high levels of political interest overall, increased on-line activity, high levels of conventional political participation, especially among members of the youngest generation investigated. This effect may be affected by rural location and geographic region of residence. Finally,

(3) Greater political participation in 2004 as compared to 2008 among all generations, but especially the youngest generation, because of the increased availability of the internet in their everyday lives.

The older version of this topic—the connection between social and traditional media sources and the political spectrum—has been covered in some depth in previous research, but this topic has significantly renewed itself as society enters into the "new digital age" (Grindstaff and Turow, 2006). Some media research, to be described in some detail later in this research paper, has investigated the effect of media use by politicians and media consumption by the general public on political behaviors, but this research has traditionally been concerned with more traditional media sources, such as television and radio. Additionally, while the 2008 election has already been examined in a number of ways (including in terms of racial politics and frames (Hutchings, 2009; Greenwald et al., 2009), economic voting (Holbrook, 2009; Johnston et al. 2010), and the influence of the mass media (Boczkowski et al., 2012; Bennett and Iyengar, 2010), very little research has examined the effects of technological advancements on the election process. Similarly, very few studies have utilized the 2008 ANES data set, and those studies which have tend to align themselves with the previously mentioned topics of study, without taking into account the impact of technological advancements in the online realm (Hutchings, 2009; Holbrook, 2009; and Ansolabehere and Schnaffner, 2010).

While this previous research is certainly still useful, and can be an excellent starting point for modern investigations of political communications, technology has advanced at such a great pace over the past several years that new communications technology, including new social media, is rapidly becoming the dominant means of communication in nearly every way of life, and the ways in which this technology may be utilized in the political realm specifically has not yet been adequately examined.

Although some recent studies have begun to examine political communication in this new digital age, most of that research has focused primarily upon the ways in which politicians themselves are utilizing the new technology (Herrnson, Stokes-Brown, and Hindman, 2007). Understanding and examining the ways in which politicians themselves utilize the new communications technology are indeed important and worth studying and understanding, but understanding the practices of politicians themselves is only really understanding half the story of modern political communication—more research on the recipient of the communication, and the effectiveness (if any) of the communication is necessary.

When investigating participation in the political sphere, several questions regarding participation in the civic sphere also come to mind. Is participation in the civic sphere similarly affected by new media forces? Is there a noticeable difference between patterns of civic participation and patterns of political participation? Are consumers of new media more likely to participate in the civic sphere or the political sphere? Do these effects remain constant, or change over time?

In order to fully understand the impact of new social media on both civic and political participation, the best way to research the use of social media by the general public is to complete a trio of research papers pertaining to the general topic of politics and mass media. Guiding this research paper will be the general hypothesis that because of increases in new social media use, individuals have increased political interest, increased political involvement, and increased voting activity.

At this point, it may be necessary to address a potential issue with this research—namely, the issue of sociological significance. If the basic argument behind this paper is

that technology leads to change, it could be argued that the entire paper is at least somewhat technologically deterministic, and lacking in sociological import. To those criticisms, I argue that the point of the research paper is not merely to show that technology can lead to social change (although that is a significant part of it), but also to examine how and why technology can have such an impact on a society. It is through these theories and the research that has been done previously on the connections between technology and society that will allow the current research paper to examine the links between technological change and political behavior, and attempt to understand precisely how and why those changes occurred.

Literature Review

It is worth examining some of the ways in which research on political communication has been done in the past, and how the new media has expanded on this past research. As mentioned previously, much of this research deals with former dominant methods of mass communication—television, radio, and newspapers—and does not necessarily focus on the new social media landscape of the modern world—an oversight which I hope to amend with the current research. In this research, I will examine: (1) political participation, (2) civic participation, (3) the impact of the "old" media on political and civic participation, (4) the impact of "generations" on political and civic participation, (5) the impact of urban/rural location and regional residence on political and civic participation, and (6) the impact of the so-called "new" media on political and civic participation.[1]

[1] A note on terminology: this dissertation uses "political participation" instead of "political activity" because this term is used more frequently in previous research. In examining the various ways these

Political Participation

First, a general investigation into the phenomenon of political participation in general, and the antithesis of participation (apathy) serve to understand what participation in the political process generally entails, and why some citizens do not take part in the process. Frances Fox Piven (1989) points out that voting turnout tends to be lowest among the lowest classes of Americans. Here, a more economic model seems to suggest itself, and is something that has been suggested by other scholars in the past. (See Godbout and Bélanger (2007) for a discussion of the connection between economic concern and political sophistication in the voting process)

Marjorie Hershey (2008) also investigates the question of who votes, and comes to a similar conclusion. Most people, Hershey notes, are not intrinsically motivated to vote, and require some kind of incentive. This incentive typically involves direct communication and direct encouragement, lending support to the notion that a more connected populace would be more likely to vote—if individuals are connected to others in some kind of a social network, that encouragement to vote and participate is much more likely to occur, leading to a more involved voting public.

Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (1995) also attempt to understand the phenomenon of voter participation. Looking at individuals who already participate in the political process, the authors found that those who participate largely describe collectivist reasons for doing so. Logically, if a collection of individuals can meet online in a public space to discuss issues of common interest, it stands to reason that this increased awareness and

---

variables have been operationalized in previous research, there is generally little or no difference between the concepts.

collectivity afforded by the internet would lead to an increasingly politically active and aware electorate.

From the literature on the subject of political participation and apathy, the idea that voting is directly tied to individual standing in society begins to become apparent. Essentially, the more invested individuals are in society, the more likely they will be to vote. This, for the purposes of this study, suggests that the greater political interest individuals exhibit, the less likely they will be politically apathetic, and the more likely they will be to vote.

The Impact of the "Old" Media on Political Participation

Second, an investigation into the impact of traditional media in the 20th century, and the ways in which traditional media has revolutionized political participation in the past provides a foundation for the notion that a current trend of new media will ultimately lead to a concurrent revolution in political participation in the present day. Two presidential elections have traditionally been held up as examples of when politicians embraced a new medium in order to get their message out to an electorate like never before. The election of 1932 pitted incumbent Republican President Herbert Hoover against Franklin D. Roosevelt, Democratic Governor of New York. Roosevelt used the power of radio for the first time to make repeated appeals for votes over the airwaves. During the 1932 election campaign, in fact, President Hoover refused to make even a suggested ten minute radio address, believing that it was impossible to connect to the electorate over the radio, and that his focus could be better spent in dealing with actual political matters, not politicking. Roosevelt, however, was much more eager to capitalize on the potentiality of mass communication (something he had, in fact, been working on

since 1928), and was “determined to use the new medium of radio to establish a firm relationship with the public”. (Ryfe, 1999: 89) Ultimately, Roosevelt’s more direct communication practices paid off, and the 1932 election was very one-sided, as the unpopular Hoover lost 42 of the 48 states in the union at the time, and lost the popular vote by some 7 million votes (57.4%-39.7%), resulting in the largest-ever defeat of an incumbent President from either party (Boller, 2004: 236).

In 1960 another new technology changed the media and politics. John F. Kennedy, a young (43) Democratic Senator from Massachusetts faced off against the Republican Richard M. Nixon, Vice-President under the popular two-term President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The election turned out to be one of the closest of all time until that point (the closest since the election of 1916, some 44 years earlier), with Kennedy prevailing by a mere 112,827 popular votes (approximately 0.1% of the total number of voters at the time).

Each of these two elections also saw a new form of communications technology come into prominence for the first time. In 1932, the radio, already a part of most homes in the US, was widespread enough for both major presidential candidates to utilize its communications power in the campaign. In 1960, the importance of the television, and particularly the televised debates between Kennedy and Nixon, to the ultimate outcome of the election has been stated repeatedly (Druckman, 2003). Until the 2008 election of Barack Obama, these two elections were the most recent elections to feature some new form of widely available and accessible mass communications technology.

While it is impossible to fully ascertain what the turnout of the 1932 Presidential election might have been without the utilization of the radio as a means of

communication and the ability gained by the possibility of mass communicating with members of the general public, it is nevertheless clear that the radio served an important function in political communication. As Hollihan (2008) points out, the advent of the radio meant that for the first time, audiences could actually participate, to a limited extent, in the campaign process by receiving messages from politicians. While this was a rather one-sided means of communication, the electorate could for the first time actually hear speakers without leaving their homes, allowing citizens to be more informed about the issues and individuals in the campaign.

The 1960 presidential election was the first to feature televised debates between the two major nominees, and would be the last until 1976. While the 1952 election was the first to feature television advertisements, the televised debates of the 1960 election allowed television viewers (at that point a vast majority of the nation) to see the candidates live and (relatively) unrehearsed for the first time, without leaving their homes. Much has been made of the famous first Kennedy-Nixon debate, and how Kennedy's youthful, athletic appearance (compared to the sweaty and haggard Nixon) may have helped gain him supporters and propel him to the presidency.

James Druckman (2003) in reviewing this first Presidential debate conducts an empirical experiment in which he either shows participants a televised version of the debate or has them listen to an audio version of the debate. Druckman notes that until his study, "there exist[ed] *no* valid empirical evidence that images played any role in the debate" (Druckman, 2003: 563), discounting previous accounts of the difference as anecdotal and/or stemming from a single methodologically challenged survey. Perhaps unsurprisingly, and aligning with popular conceptions of the debate, television images

were shown to play a significant role in impression formation, with a significant impact on audience reactions to the debate.

Without the power of television, and the televised image, the election of 1960 might have been markedly different, and with a different outcome. With the nation in the midst of a time of relative economic well-being and prosperity, perhaps voters would have been more likely to stay with the incumbent party, had they not been able to see the languid visage of the Republican candidate, compared with the youth and healthy demeanor of the Democratic candidate. As anecdotal evidence (and Druckman's reconstruction) shows, individuals who listened to the debate, rather than viewing it, were more likely to have a favorable opinion of Nixon, while the reverse was true for those who watched the debate. Without the power of the image, perhaps Kennedy's youthfulness would have been seen as a liability instead of an asset, and perhaps Nixon's talent for public speaking would have carried him to victory. Clearly, the significance of the visual media was now more important and persuasive that that of the purely aural media of radio which had been the dominant media in the nation for so long.

Why did these new media technologies work seemingly more efficiently for the Democratic candidate and not the Republican candidate, if both had equal access to the technology and knew of the importance of the technology—all three of these "new technology" elections were won by the Democratic candidate who was perceived to utilize the communications technology more significantly and efficiently?

Perhaps the answer can be extrapolated from a note found in Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet's classic work *The People's Choice* (1960). They said that Democrats were more likely to be affected by Roosevelt's radio messages, while Republicans were more

likely to be affected by newspaper articles. Applying this demographic observation, and an understanding of general characteristics of Republicans and Democrats (see also Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1960), it is not difficult to imagine that in all cases, Democrats, being (as a group, generally) more liberal, younger, and more open to new ideas, would be more likely to embrace a new form of communications technology than would Republicans, being (as a group, generally) more conservative, older, and less open to new ideas. The importance of emergent or dominant technology in deciding the elections of 1932, 1960, and 2008 cannot be overstated. Whether the significance of the radio in 1932, the television in 1960, or the internet in 2008, the new technologies which were first used in these elections eventually became a part of everyday life in the US, and held great significance for all fields of society, not just the political world. With new communications media comes increased participation and interest in the political world. As such, understanding the ways in which new communication technologies may be used and understood in political communication and political campaigns allows for a greater understanding of these new communication practices in general, and a greater understanding of the social world.

Generational Theory and Imprinting

Third, an exploration of generational theory and the notion of imprinting makes clear the notion that in examining technology, generations matter. There is another somewhat overlapping explanation for the results of these elections, suggested by the generational theory of Karl Mannheim. According to Mannheim's generational theory, each generation is imprinted by some kind of major event, or the cultural zeitgeist into which they come of age (Mannheim 1970). For the elections examined here (1932, 1960,

and 2008), the events and cultural zeitgeists are not difficult to determine—for those who voted in the election of 1932, the economic events had led to the Great Depression would be at the forefront of their minds; for those who voted in the election of 1960, an almost antithetical set of economic events—prosperity and a post-war economic boom would be at the forefront of their minds; for those who voted in the election of 2008, ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the memory of the terror attacks of 9/11/2001 in their home country would be at the forefront of their minds. Clearly, these world-shaping events could potentially have at least as great an impact on the voting patterns and habits of individuals in these three seminal elections as any sort of technological innovation.

Mannheim's theory of generations, in a nutshell, argues that "[i]nherent in…every [social] location is a tendency pointing towards certain definite modes of behavior, feeling, and thought." (Mannheim, 1970: 381) This means that for every social group, or generational cohort of individuals born and passing through the various stages of the life cycle at roughly the same period of time, there are certain tendencies that point them toward particular behaviors. These tendencies typically come from shared events, particularly large social or international events such as economic situations in the 1932 and 1960 elections or wars in the 2008 election. Schuman and Corning, in "Generational Memory and the Critical Period: Evidence for National and World Events", write about this tendency for events faced by different groups of people at different point in their life course to affect their decision making and behaviors in subtle ways through the course of

their lives (Schuman and Corning 2012). Each generation is imprinted in a unique way[2], and these imprints continue to impact their lives in many ways.

The Current Impact of the So-Called "New" Media

Fourth, an exploration into the ways in which new media technologies can have a myriad of impacts upon the political landscape serves to explain why the difference between new media and traditional media is so significant and worth examining. Considering some of the examples of ways in which traditional media have influenced elections in the past, Richard Nixon's sweaty appearance during the televised debates of 1960 would likely never have made a difference in the radio age. Likewise, the election of 1932 may have shifted dramatically if candidates had to deal with the influence of a television camera—the illness of Franklin Roosevelt would most likely not have been kept secret, and would potentially have become a major campaign issue, if he had to appear on television, instead of speaking into a microphone for radio addresses. Correspondingly, the new media era of cable television and the internet tends to make television look like a totally one-way medium, with messages constantly being broadcast to individuals, who ultimately have no opportunity for feedback (with the partial exception of one way public opinion polls and television ratings). This section examines a number of scholars who investigate these new media technologies.

Examining research conducted concerning more modern means of communication, Jeffrey Cohen (2008) investigates the effect of new media on governance. Cohen's definition of the "age of new media" involves, among other things,

---

[2] For example, someone who lived through an economic recession as a child, likely living with parents to provide for them, would be affected by that recession to a much greater degree than someone who lived through it during their 20s, likely trying to start a life of their own under very adverse conditions.

audience fragmentation—for the first time, in the modern era of media consumption, the general public can choose what kind of content they wish to consume, and their choice has generally been for less “hard” news.

Thomas Meyer (2005) writes about the ways in which the mass media influence democracy and the political process in general. Using a colonization model, focused on the ways in which political elites can directly influence the media, Meyer argues that in media democracies, any sort of political power comes from the relationship between political actors, the media, and polling—essentially, political actors use the media to convey an image of themselves, get favorability rankings and tastes back from polling procedures, and adjust the image of themselves they convey, in a cyclical process.

Philip Howard (2005) writes specifically about the impact of online news consumption on the political realm, writing that political polarization appears to be increasing, as the number of people visiting multiple types of political websites (meaning websites of different parties and different philosophies) is declining. He calls this deep democracy with thin citizenship. Markus Prior (2007) also writes about the impact of online communication in the political world. According to Prior, generally speaking, people who are already interested in obtaining news will be more likely to get news from multiple sources, including online sources, but with this increased choice of source comes a correlated increase in the segmentation of the electorate (2007).

Along these lines, there has been a recent examination of the difference between active participation and passive participation in the online realm. In essence, active participation involves willingly seeking out information, while passive participation involves individuals merely allowing information to come to themselves. Expanding on

this notion, Koh, Kim, Butler, and Bock (2007) in trying to explain how virtual media encourages more participation, utilize social presence theory and social identity theory to investigate the ways in which offline meetings can strengthen online participation, noting that the more offline participation individuals exhibit, the more likely they are to participate actively in the online realm. There is another school of thought, however, that argues that traditional definitions of "passive" and "active" participation are falling by the wayside in the online world, and that in order to participate online at all ("actively" or "passively"), individuals must take some sort of active interest—enough to go online in the first place, at least (c.f. Krueger 2002).

The Impact of Residential Location

Fifth, the current research also investigates the impact of urban/rural location and regional residence of individuals upon regional and civic participation. Traditionally, the idea of a "digital divide" has been a major point in literature regarding internet access and residence, arguing that individuals in more rural locations were much less likely to have access to the internet. Connecting the notion of the digital divide to participation, it seems likely that after the growth in prominence of the internet, those in more rural locations—and thus less likely to have internet access at all—would also be less likely to participate, both in the civic realm and in the political realm.

While internet access in and of itself might explain some of the differences in civic and political participation among groups, this view assumes that the internet is equally available to all individuals. While previous research on the so-called "digital divide" (cf. Herrnson et al. 2007, Min 2010, Wei and Hindman 2011, etc.) has focused on many of the demographic variables examined in the first study, such as race (e.g. Jackson et al.

2001), gender (e.g Cooper 2006), income (e.g. Martin and Robinsom 2007), and age (e.g. Loges and Jung 2001), one of the major contributors to a digital divide that has been examined in previous literature is simple geography, or where in the nation an individual is located (cf. Hindman 2000, Torrens 2008, Arai and Naganuma 2010). As such, another major addition to the literature, via the current study, is geographic location, or where in the country individuals reside.

Looking at the effect of geography on the existence of a digital divide in the United States, Agarwal, Animesh, and Prasad (2009) note that geography may be the single most significant factor leading to a digital divide, finding a more significant correlation between internet use and geographic location than between internet use and any other variable examined (287). This suggests that a digital divide does indeed exist, and that basic geography is likely the single most significant factor in shaping this digital divide.

Looking at civic participation among residents of cities and smaller towns, J. Eric Oliver (2000) uses data from 1990 to investigate the differences in participation levels between residents of large cities and residents of smaller towns. Utilizing both the 1990 Census and the 1990 American Citizen Participation Study, Oliver finds that generally, participation rates decline in larger areas, noting specifically that metropolitan areas are particularly low in participation. Oliver also notes that while residents of more rural locations tend to also be low overall, participation does not decline as rural size grows. Instead, Oliver suggests that participation increases gradually as the population of a town increases, until dropping off significantly in the most urban areas. This finding suggests

that, at least in times before the rise of the internet as a means of mass communication, participation was significantly lower in urban areas than in more rural areas.

Kelleher and Lowery (2009), in contrast to Oliver's findings, find that city size positively influences political participation, such that larger cities tend to exhibit the greatest amounts of participation. Using a series of random telephone surveys conducted in 26 communities across the United States in 2002, and a multi-level modelling strategy, the researchers also found that in addition to political participation increasing as city size increased, "the likelihood of membership in a civic organization increases as well…[and] government satisfaction has a greater effect on predicting the odds of volunteering with a civic organization." (88) Instead of having a negative effect on participation, urban location now exhibits a significantly large effect on participation, both at the civic and political level.

Cho and Rudolph (2008) utilize the Social Capital Benchmark Survey, a dataset consisting of samples of 41 different subnational areas in the United States (typically cities, but also counties or other metropolitan areas), containing over 5,000 individuals in 18 states. The authors found that participation tends to be strongly geographically clustered, suggesting that regions tend to show significant differences when compared to each other, but that individuals within specific geographic regions tend to participate in a similar fashion to others in their region.

The Impact of New Media on Political Parties

Sixth, in addition to a general investigation of the impact of new media on communication practices, there has also been a recent wealth of literature concerning the impact of this new media upon the political parties themselves. The 2008 US presidential

election, as discussed at length above, was the first national election to seriously use the internet as a campaign tool, and few would argue that the more successful utilization of the internet was accomplished by the Democratic party. Rahaf Harfoush (2009) writes about his experience as a campaign volunteer, giving a behind-the-scenes view of the ways in which the Democratic party was able to utilize the power of the internet and social media. More than anything else, Harfoush points to the socialization powers of the internet, and the interpersonal communication the internet allows for as the key to engaging citizens and creating a sense of community in the online realm.

Morley Winograd (2008) writes specifically about the ways in which political campaigning has shifted with the rise of the new media. Writing about the spread of technology in modern society, Winograd notes that in the US, approximately 80% of the population is active online, suggesting that the online arena is going to become more and more significant as a realm for political communication and debate in the future. Concerning political parties specifically, Winograd points out that the Democratic party was the first party to embrace the new technology in the political field, as they were with the other forms of mass communication technology discussed above.

David Karpf (2012) focusing on MoveOn.org writes about the ways in which the internet, and the rise of online communications, have affected political organizing in recent years and elections. According to Karpf, and echoing previous research cited above, the Democratic Party tended to be early supporters and utilizers of these online spaces, leading to an increased Democratic presence in these spheres. Karpf also notes that while recently, a politically conservative presence has begun to manifest itself via

some of the same methods as the politically liberal contingent had previously, this conservative presence is not as strong, nor does it seem to be as robust.

With a growing awareness of the ways in which the internet, and online communications, can be used to engage the electorate and increase the likelihood of political participation among them, several studies have been conducted to determine the most effective ways of doing so, focusing on the ways in which political parties advertise. Arthur Lupia and Tasha Philpot (2005) examine the ways in which websites affect political interest. Lupia and Philpot note that "capturing their attention implies engaging them on their own terms" (Lupia and Philpot, 2005: 19), meaning that the most effective websites tended to be those sites that were perceived to be easiest to access and comprehend, and those that tended to engage individuals more personally (or with a perception of a personal connection).

Darrell M. West (2009) takes a more general overview of the ways in which political campaigns have advertised their platforms and candidates in the past. Taking a look at the history of online advertising specifically, West notes that the 1996 presidential campaign was the first to utilize the internet in any way at all—most advertisements in this early online campaign were positive, focusing on volunteerism and fundraising for certain candidates. As time passed, however, websites became more focused and more negative. By 2004 (the last campaign covered by the book), West notes that online ads were a reflection of television ads, but not substantively different—in fact, the author notes that the two presidential candidates spent less than a combined $2 million on online advertising. Online communication and participation has grown significantly since the

2004 election, however, and it is with a desire to understand the ways in which those changes have occurred that the current research proceeds.

Based on this literature review, it is clear that research has not been done on the impact of the new media on political participation, and in particular, on political participation in the major Presidential elections of 2004 and 2008 when the new media really became politically instrumental in activating and motivating the electorate. The theories developed in the current research paper were developed with these limitations in mind, going beyond these previous studies.

Major Theories and Research Questions

Using the previous research on the topic of online communication and political participation, and connecting that to Karl Mannheim's generational theory (1970), an idea about the effectiveness of online communication and political participation begins to form. According to Mannheim, generations are cohorts of individuals marked by their shared experience of some kind of historical event, which imprints on their lives. Some of these generational imprints were discussed above, but briefly, technological developments in communication patterns seem to come along approximately every 40 or so years (note the discussion above concerning the major changes in communications technologies aligning with presidential elections.

Similarly, Morley Winograd (2008) discusses the cyclical patterns of generational types in US history, and how they can align with what he identifies as the major eras of party dominance in the US. Briefly, and most significantly, Winograd identifies the most recent full generation to come to voting age (Millennials) as a "civic" generation, much like the WWII-era generation. (In other words, people have more in common with their

grandparents' generation than with their parents' generation.) This cyclical theory suggests that the Millennials are likely to be active voters, are likely to be optimistic about politics, and are likely to be genuinely interested in civic engagement and participation in the political world.

In addition to these generational theories, one of the most significant schools of thought concerning about the ways in which the online realm may be utilized and understood by the general public has come from the works of Jürgen Habermas, and his descriptions of the "public sphere". Writing about the development of the public sphere, Habermas noted three critical conditions for the development and continued flourishing of the public sphere. First, the sphere must be an area that disregards social status—all individuals must be able to have a say, regardless of any sort of outside social standing. Second, the sphere must be organized around some sort of a domain of common concern—the individuals meeting in the public sphere must have some sort of common concern binding them together, which everyone cares about. Finally, Habermas noted the importance of inclusivity—everyone had to be able to have access to the public sphere, and feel like they could become a part of the sphere. (Habermas, 1989)

Using Habermas's typology of the three critical developments for the creation of a public sphere, it seems clear that the online realm meets the first characteristic easily—online, social status is essentially ignored, as has been illustrated in several references discussed above. Online, people can change or adapt their identities (for better or for worse), and whatever is presented online is generally accepted as reality at the time and in that setting. The second criterion of Habermas's public sphere, an organization around a domain of common concern, may also be understood as taking place online. Assuming

the internet is another world of sorts, individuals may find (or create) their own forums for discussing anything of interest to them, and doubtless find someone else, somewhere in the world, who's also interested in that matter. Habermas's final criterion of a public sphere, that everyone must be included in the public sphere, is a bit more problematic. As examined in the second research paper in this research plan, the digital divide does exist, and not everyone in society has access to the internet at all (and, within those concerns, not everyone has equal access—some have better or more rapid access than others, meaning the inequality does not stop at the simple issue of accessibility). Still, clearly, two out of the three conditions posed by Habermas for the creation of a public sphere seem to be met by the internet in general.

Looking at the political realm specifically, not all individuals interested in politics meet in online settings, but among those who do, there are a number of forums in which their voices may be heard, and everyone who participates has the ability to do so on equal terms. Having asserted that, it is important to note the development of moderation in online forums and discussion areas. Generally speaking, many sites (both political and non-political) allow users to express themselves freely, but may have some sort of monitoring position or ability to remove or silence individuals who are being disruptive or otherwise cruel to other participants in the forum (see, for example, Wright 2006). Does this censorship harm the notion of a public sphere? Perhaps the better question would be: could a truly open public space, with no censorship or protection of participants ever be successful?

The answer to those questions is a difficult one. Looking at Habermas's criteria for a public sphere, and taking them literally, no, the internet is not a public sphere.

However, taking Habermas's criteria literally, it is difficult to conceive of any type of public sphere ever existing at all for any length of time. In the bourgeois time, which Habermas was so fond of discussing, the public sphere disappeared because outside interests were able to come in and dominate the sphere. Perhaps the notion of a public sphere needs to be modified somewhat—in order to ensure an area of common domain, which cannot be taken over by outside interests, truly uninterested in the domain, at least some degree of control and regulation may be necessary. Habermas's notion of a public sphere was likely only an ideal type of phenomenon, and it would be very difficult to find any sort of continually successful and open public sphere in any sort of society. Philip N. Howard (2005) notes that in his research (conducted between 1996-2002), political polarization appears to be increasing in the online realm, and the public sphere appears to be at least somewhat fragmented, as the number of individuals who go to multiple types of political websites was decreasing. Instead of multiple opinions, Howard suggests, individuals are seeking out information that aligns with their previously-held beliefs—not much of a truly "public sphere". However, there is still something significant to be gained from an examination of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, and in researching online participation and involvement in the light of that ideal structure.

Participation in the public sphere has been a concern of theorists since Habermas first began theorizing about the existence of a public sphere at all, and those concerns have only intensified since the rise of the internet as a major means of communication. Writing in the early days of major online media, Warnick (1998) suggests that even by the late 1990s, participation online and participation in the outside world might be significantly different, noting that "browsers [of the internet] may take simulated

participation in the public sphere for real participation." (80) This somewhat pessimistic view suggests that instead of participating in the "real world", online users might simply assume that clicking a link or reading a website serves as a legitimate form of participation. (This tendency to participate online, without a corresponding offline activity, has somewhat derisively begun to be known as "clicktivism" (cf. Goodman and Boyd 2011: 107).) An investigation into the ways in which people participate in their society, both online and offline, would prove illuminating.

Applying the work of Mannheim to the work of Winograd, it becomes clear that the generation currently entering voting age in the United States (18 years old) is this "Millennial" category, marked by political activism, interest in politics and civic engagement, and increased political participation compared to other, previous generations. As such, this group of individuals should prove not only more technologically advanced than previous generations (due primarily to coming of age during a time of vast technological advancements), but should also be more politically active and involved than previous generations. While conflicting evidence has been found concerning the participation of younger generations compared to older generations in all areas of civic life, the change in participation among the younger generation from 2004 to 2008 should prove especially significant.

Traditionally, participation has been assumed to be the result of three general factors: age, income, and education. As each of these factors increases, according to the traditional models, participation also increases (cf. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995, Berinsky and Lenz 2011, et al.). The current study suggests, based on the literature described above, that this traditional model is somewhat lacking in regards to modern

participatory practices, and needs to be updated. As such, the primary contribution of this dissertation is the use of national-level ANES data to investigate the significance of technology upon participation (both politically and civically) among all generations, with the thought that the generations most affected by the new technology, and thus exhibiting much higher levels of participation in general, will be members of the youngest generation, according to the hypotheses.

Once again, it must be stressed that this model does not suggest that technology is some kind of "magic bullet", and that all generations now exhibit equal participation rates, because of the use of new technologies. The point of the research is not merely to show the importance of new technologies in affecting social change, but also to examine the various ways in which these new technologies can have such an impact on a society, particularly in terms of participation within the society. Through the theories and research on participation and the connections between primarily age and participation rates in society, the current research both complements and expands upon previous research, by examining the links between technological change and political and civic participation, with a focus on understanding precisely how and why any potential changes in avenues to participation have occurred.

General Hypotheses

With those ideas in mind, there are four major, overarching hypotheses guiding the current research, outlined here:

Hypothesis$_0$: Distinctive generations are imprinted with the events of their early lives before the age of 30, and members of these generations subsequently have distinctive ways of using the media, with those of the younger generations (aged 17 to 30) particularly embracing new media.

Hypothesis$_1$: Individuals who get their news from online sources will be more likely than those who get their news from offline sources to be politically active.

Hypothesis$_2$: The so-called "digital divide" plays a significant impact in political participation, such that individuals who live in rural locations will be less likely than individuals in more urban locations to be politically active and will be less likely to have the ability to access online information and communication sources.

Hypothesis$_3$: Online participation has shifted dramatically in recent years, such that more and more individuals are both going online and becoming politically active online.

In order to answer each of these questions fully and with proper enquiry, three individual research papers are combined into one larger study, examining the effects of the mass media on political participation. The first hypothesis described above serves as an overarching theme, touched on in each of the three individual research papers. In the first paper, the second hypothesis is addressed in depth, as the 2008 ANES is examined, in order to determine the impact of online media on political activity in the 2008 election. In the second paper, the third hypothesis is investigated, as the notion of the "digital divide" is considered, by examining the impact of rural vs. urban location on both online

news media use and political interest. Finally, the third paper addresses the final hypothesis, using both the 2008 and the 2004 ANES to study any sort of changes in both online news media use and political interest over time.

While the original hypotheses regarding these research papers were intended to highlight the significance of online media consumption in the participatory practices of the younger generation of digital natives, in reality these hypotheses were not supported. Instead, these research papers and this dissertation becomes an investigation into a explanation for why online media use does not have the impact that media analysts and the mass media themselves claim that it has on the young adults who use mass media the most. Instead of bringing in a whole new world of political and civic participation, media use instead proves to be muted, or even a façade, as the same old traditional means of participation – age, income and education – still prove to be the most significant factors leading to participation.

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Chapter 2: Data and Methods Used in These Analyses

The majority of the data for the research comes from the 2008 American National Election Study data set. Utilizing 2,322 pre-election and 2,102 post-election interviews (centered around the US election of November 4, 2008), this particular ANES study contains several questions about political behaviors, including questions about political behaviors connected with media use, of particular interest to this research. [3]

According to the user's guide for the data set, found on the ANES website (http://electionstudies.org/studypages/2008prepost/2008prepost_UsersGuide.pdf), respondents who participated in the study were not told they were participating in the National Election Study, in order to avoid any sort of self-selection bias on the part of the survey respondents. By not informing respondents what kind of study they were participating in, the survey ideally includes respondents from all backgrounds and political beliefs/value systems, thus allowing for a more generalizable analysis of results, with proper weighting.

A total of 2,102 post-election interviews were conducted. Additionally, only citizens of legal voting age in the US at the time of the 2008 election (specifically, of legal voting age a few days before the 2008 election) were considered to be the target population for the interviews. By limiting the population of respondents to only those members of the general population who were able to vote, the survey once again allows for greater generalizability, as age can be a confound when examining surveys regarding political behaviors—in this case, because everyone could vote in the 2008 election, the

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[3] For the purposes of this dissertation, only the post-election interviews will be examined. While there are some very interesting analyses to be done comparing pre-election interviews to post-election interviews (including examining potential reasons for vote/preference change), those are studies for the future.

post-election responses concerning voting habits are not affected by any sort of age bias in responses or survey questions.

Post-election interviews for the data set were conducted between November and December 2008, with each interview lasting approximately 91 minutes. The estimated response rate for the post-election survey was approximately 57.7%.

Interviews in the ANES study were conducted face-to-face, including a self-administered interview segment. As with their controls for self-selection, by doing this, the ANES study attempts to remove any sort of confound or selection complication from their data set, allowing for an increased sense of anonymity in responses, ensuring that the results of any sort of research done with the survey results would be useful and generalizable. For the purposes of this research paper, post-election interview responses are analyzed.

In addition to the 2008 ANES data, the 2004 ANES data was also used in the final part of this research paper, in order to conduct a number of comparisons between voters in the two elections. For this data set, pre-election interviews were conducted between September and November 2004, and post-election interviews between November and December 2004[4]. Interviews for the post-election period averaged approximately 65 minutes. A total of 1,066 post-election interviews were conducted.

The 2008 ANES data proves extremely useful in understanding the connection between political participation (in a number of forms) and communication practices. There are a multitude of questions regarding voting habits, participation in other forms of political behaviors (including attendance at political rallies and demonstrations), and

[4] Again, only post-election interviews will be examined at this point.

general interest in politics. By examining the responses to these questions, and by examining how these responses may potentially differ along a myriad of variables (including age and gender, to list two common demographic variables), insights into the process of political communication, and the ways in which new social media may be used in that process, may be obtained. The predominant form of analysis to be conducted with these data sets was regressions. While the 2008 (and certainly 2004) ANES data may have been used in a number of previous research papers, the current research proved to bring something new to the discussion of politics and new media—principally, a focus on changes and advancements in technology, and the ways in which individuals react to and interact with that technology, instead of focusing on the impact of static, basic demographic factors on political participation.

Because the ANES oversamples certain minority populations, the ANES handbook points out that any sort of analysis intended to generalize to the population should be weighted, because the unweighted data are not representative of the target population. As such, all data described in this dissertation were properly weighted back to represent the general population (using the weights given in the ANES and the svyset command in STATA) before any analyses were conducted, thus ensuring proper generalizability to the overall population.

Operationalization of Variables

This section reviews the operationalization of political participation and voting as a dependent variable, and then focuses on the independent variables including media use, political interest, internet access, generations, and the traditional demographic variables of race, sex, income, and education.

Political Participation and Voting

To determine the ways in which the variable "political participation" has been utilized by scholars in the past, a brief literature review, focusing on this variable, was conducted. In the studies examined in this cursory examination of the definition of "political participation", varying definitions (and data) were used by the scholars, but some common themes were evident, to be discussed at the end of this section. First, Andrews and Caren (2010) operationalized "political advocacy and lobbying" using scale of items measuring whether or not "a group engaged in selected activities over the past year"—13 activities in total, ranging from "contacting members of the state legislature, making presentations at advisory commissions, and monitoring debates and decisions of state or local legislators". Data for this study came from a survey conducted by the authors, consisting of a random sample of organizational leaders in North Carolina between October 2002 and August 2003.

Second, Best and Krueger (2005), in the political science field, investigated "political participation" by examining online and offline participation separately. Online participation was measured by responses to the following yes/no questions: (1) Have you used the internet to contact an elected official about a local, national, or international issue? (2) Have you signed an online petition about a local, national, or international issue? (3) Have you used the internet to persuade another person about your view on a local, national, or international issue? (4) Have you worked with others in an online community to try to deal with a local issue? Offline participation was measured by responses to the following yes/no questions: (1) Have you contacted an elected official or

political candidate about a local, national, or international issue? (2) Have you signed a written petition about a local, national, or international issue? (3) Have you contacted someone offline to persuade them about a local, national, or international issue? (4) Have you worked with others in your community to solve a local problem? Data for this study came from a 2003 telephone survey conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut, administered to a 1,003 person "RDD telephone sample of adult, non-institutionalized residents of the contiguous US".

Claggett and Pollock (2006), also working in the political science milieu, used data from the 1980-2004 ANES studies to operationalize "political participation". (Due to the use of multiple versions of the ANES, not every variable of interest was present in every study; nonetheless, each variable is listed here. Each variable listed fell under the general umbrella term "political participation" in the study.) The "Voting" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) voting in the presidential election, (2) voting in the congressional election, (3) being registered to vote, (4) voting in previous elections, and (5) how many times respondents had voted in the past. The "Campaigning" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) working for a candidate, (2) displaying a button/sticker/sign for a candidate, (3) attending a "campaign event", and (4) attending a campaign event to support a candidate, displaying a sign, and any other means of campaigning. The "Contributing" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) contributing to a candidate, (2) contributing to a political party, (3) contributing to "other election groups", or (4) contributing to a proposition campaign. The "Communal Activity" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) joining an organization or working with others on a community problem, (2) working with others on a community

problem, (3) working with neighbors on a community problem, (4) attending a meeting on a community/school issue, (5) working with others on governmental concerns, (6) contacting incumbent congress people to express an opinion, and (7) contacting a politician/government official on a public problem. The "particularized contact" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) contacting an incumbent congressperson for information and (2) contacting an incumbent congressperson for help. The "political discussion" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) the number of days individuals discussed politics with family or friends, (2) talking to others about candidates or campaigns, (3) the number of political discussion partners respondents have, and (4) whether or not respondents "talk about most important national government problem". The "Cooperative-passive" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) belonging to an organization that influences the government and (2) belonging to an organization that influences schools. The "Ambiguous" variable consisted of questions concerning (1) "vote persuasion", (2) whether or not respondents belong to political clubs or organizations, and (3) whether or not respondents are members of a political organization. The authors used confirmatory factor analysis (a type of structural equation modeling) to investigate the ways in which individuals participate in politics.

Neilson and Paxton (2010) investigated political consumerism in European countries using similar operationalizations. The researchers utilized two survey questions from 2002/2003 European Social Survey (covering 24,854 individuals in 20 European countries), asking if respondents (1) had boycotted any products in the last twelve months or (2) had deliberately bought products for political reasons. (Participants responded to the questions in yes/no fashion.)

Scholzman, Lehman, Verba, and Brady (2011) operationalized "political participation" using data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Two "participation" scales (one measuring offline political participation, one measuring online political participation) were constructed, based on survey questions about (1) contacting a national, state, or local government official, (2) signing a petition (3), sending a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine, (4) communicating with members of a political or community group, and (5) making a political contribution. Note that respondents were asked if they participated in each of the activities online or offline, giving a yes/no response.

Schur and Adya (2012) investigated voting in the 2008 US Presidential election and political participation separately. Voting in 2008 was measured by itself, with five other activities ((1) contacting a public official, (2) attending a political rally or meeting, (3), contributing money to a campaign, (4) working on a campaign, (5) joining an online political group) averaged together to create an "other political participation" variable. Data for this study came from the 2008 Current Population Survey, the 2006 General Social Survey, and the 2007 Maxwell Poll on Citizenship and Inequality. (The questions regarding political participation came from the Maxwell data.)

Stretesky, Huss, Lynch, Zahran, and Childs (2011) operationalized political - engagement somewhat uniquely. Looking at the 1988, 1992, and 2000 elections, the authors obtained county-level data from every county in the US to examine the percent of eligible county voters who voted in the 1992 and 2000 US presidential elections, and the ratio of reported Democrat to Republican votes in the 1988 and 2000 US presidential

elections. (Here, as in several other studies, voting and political participation were treated as essentially the same thing.)

Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, and Hutchings (2011) examined political participation using five questions from the ANES studies (1980-2004), dividing participation in general into “cheap participation” and “costly participation” variables. “Cheap participation” consisted of the questions regarding (1) talking to others about voting and (2) wearing a campaign button. “Costly participation” consisted of the questions regarding (1) attending a rally, (2) working for a campaign, and (3) donating money to a campaign. Respondents who had expressed an affirmative response to any of the questions were coded as 1, and respondents who had expressed a negative response to any of the questions were coded as 0.

Verba, Scholzman, Brady, and Nie (1993a) investigated political participation by creating an additive measure, based on all political acts covered in the survey (conducted by the Public Opinion Laboratory of Northern Illinois University and the NORC) used by the authors. This measure took into account each of following variables: (1) voting in presidential elections, (2) voting in the 1988 presidential election, (3) working as a volunteer for a candidate running for office, (4) contributing money to a candidate, group, PAC, or other political cohort, (5) identifying how much money respondents have given to candidates in total, (6) communicating with a campaign directly, (7) contacting an elected federal level official, (8) contacting a non-elected official at the federal level, (9) contacting a local elected official, (10) contacting a local non-elected official, (11) taking part in a protest about some issue, (12) serving as a volunteer for a local political organization, (13) attending a meeting of a local political organization, and (14) attending

an informal political meeting. In this study, the score for a given group (generally, ethnic groups were the focus of this research) representing the mean number of political acts for that group. Data for this study came from a study conducted by the Public Opinion Laboratory of Northern Illinois University and the NORC, involving 15,000 telephone interviews of a random sample of Americans in the NORC sampling frame.

Finally, in a separate study, Verba, Scholzman, Brady, and Nie (1993b) operationalized political participation using data from the Citizen Participation Survey. Respondents were asked if anyone had asked them to become active in any particular political participation (giving time/money to a campaign, contacting a public official, attending a protest, taking part on a local issue). Respondents "employed or active" in a non-political organization or church were also asked if they had been asked by the leader of that organization to take political action (see above for definition). As mentioned, data for this study came from the Citizen Participation Study, a telephone-based survey of 15,000 randomly sampled individuals, with a follow-up in-person interview with 2,517 of the original 15,000 respondents. (In-person interviews were weighted to produce "a disproportionate number of both activists as well as members of the two minority groups (African-Americans and Latinos)".

After investigating the various ways in which the initial concept of "political participation" has been operationalized in the past, it soon became clear that political participation and "voting" were often treated as two distinct phenomena. As such, for the current study, I created separate variables for "voting" and "political participation" (previously, "voting" had been included in the working definition of "political participation"). For the current study, a voting variable for 2008 ("vote08") and a voting

variable for 2004 and 2008 combined ("vote0408") was constructed. For each ANES, the question "Did you vote for president" is asked to all respondents—this became "vote08". (For "vote0408", responses were added, ranging from 2 (for voting in both elections) to 0 (for voting in neither election).) To separate any possible differential effects of political party on internet use, a dummy variable regarding party voting (Democratic) for each year was also constructed.

For political participation more generally, I constructed a behavior index for each of the studies investigated. The behavior index consists of the following components: (1) talking about voting (1,0), (2) contribute money to a specific candidate campaign (1,0), (3) work for a party or candidate (1,0), and (4) attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches (1,0). Taking these questions together produces an index ranging from 0 to 4. This index is similar to those studies above who used ANES data sets with two minor exceptions: first, I excluded "wearing a button", included in one of the past studies, because that specific question has dropped out of the more current ANES studies. Secondly, I eliminated "contacting a politician", because that is not necessarily directly connected to the presidential election and could have been about local issues (such as drainage or trash pick-up problems).

New and Old Media Use

To examine the ways in which the variable "media use" has been utilized by scholars in the past, a brief literature review, focusing on this variable, was conducted. In the studies examined in this cursory examination of the definition of "media use", varying definitions (and data) were used by scholars, but a number of common themes were evident, and will be discussed at the end of this section. First, Harbridge and

Malhotra (2011) investigated media use as part of a larger study examining voting practices. As such, their use of "media use" was as a control variable, measured on a 5 point scale, measuring how many media sources respondents report using (minimum zero media sources, maximum four media sources). Data came from a survey constructed by the authors.

Krupnikov (2011) examined exposure to negative campaign advertisements as a measure of media use. In this study, survey questions (from the 2000 ANES) which asked respondents about their television viewing habits were used to determine media use. As such. media use was part of a larger variable concerning exposure to negative advertisements. The exposure variable was calculated by taking the number of negative campaign advertisements aired during programs individuals reported watching. (The study utilized analyses of advertisements in television programs during the timeframe under investigation to determine exposure to negative advertisements specifically.)

Wei and Hindman (2011) used information from the 2008-2009 ANES panel study to investigate the ways in which respondents used media for informational purposes. Respondents were asked how many days in a typical week they (1) watch news on television, (2) listen to news on the radio, (3) watch or read news on the internet, and (4) read news in a printed newspaper (not including sports). Responses for each question were measured on a 0-7 scale, and each aspect of media use was examined individually.

Webster and Ksiazek (2012) investigated media use through the utilization of Nielsen data. The researchers used Nielsen panels, which tracked (1) viewing on television via People Meter, and (2) internet use via NetSight Meter. Exposure to a

program or advertisement was counted if respondents (1) watched a television program for one minute or more or (2) viewed a non-minimized webpage for one second or more.

Kim, Hsu, and de Zúñiga (2013) investigated social media use specifically, investigating the effects of websites like Facebook and Twitter on news gathering among respondents. The social media use variable was an averaged index of two items asking respondents about their online activity: (1) how often they used the internet for social networking sites (like Facebook) (2) how often they used micro-blogging sites like Twitter to get news. Items were measured on a Likert-type 10-point scale (1 = "never"; 10 = "very often"). Data for this study came from an online survey administered nationwide after the 2008 election by the Media Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin.

Shah, Kwak, and Holbert (2001) used the 1999 DDB Life Style Survey to investigate "media use". Respondents were asked: "How much time do you spend on each of the following [newspaper, TV, and the internet] on an average day?", with ratings made on a 6 point scale (ranging from "don't use" to "5+ hours"). (Each aspect was also further broken down—television into "overall television use" and "hard news"; newspaper into "overall newspaper use" and "hard news"; internet use into "overall internet use", "social recreation", "financial management", and "information exchange".)

Hwang, Schmierbach, Paek, and Shah (2006) used a survey of their own creation to examine television and newspaper use in regards to opinion about political matters. Respondents were asked about their use of television and newspapers with a single question asking about exposure to both forms of media. Participants indicated on a five

point scale (0 = not at all; 5 = every day) how often they encountered television and newspaper information about the war in Iraq.

Wang, Gabay, and Shah (2012) investigated three sources of media (TV, print media, and online media). Television exposure was measured by asking respondents how many days in a week they watched (1) national and (2) local news on television, then averaging those two items to create an index for TV exposure. The same questions were used for print media—respondents were asked how many days in a typical week they read a (1) national and a (2) local newspaper, then those items were averaged to create an index for print media. For internet use, respondents were asked how many days in a typical week they (1) used national newspaper websites, (2) local newspaper websites, and (3) TV news websites. Again, these three items were averaged to create a single online news exposure index. Data for this study came from the 2008 Future Voter Survey (administered to adolescents and their parents).

Lee, Shah, and McLeod (2012) investigated news media use specifically. Four sources of media were asked about: TV news ("How many days do you watch [national nightly news and local news (two questions)] in a typical week…?" (0-7 scale)); Newspapers ("How many days do you [read a print copy of a local newspaper] in a typical week…?" (0-7 scale)); Conventional online news (national newspaper websites, TV news websites, local newspaper websites; measured on a 0-1 (yes/no) scale); Nonconventional online political information (Conservative or liberal political blogs, candidate websites; measured on a 0-1 (yes/no) scale). (Each type of media use was treated separately, though they all fell under the general category of "news media use".) Data for this study came from the 2008 Future Voters Study.

Kwak, Shah, and Holbert (2004) examined media use through the use of the 1997 DDB Life Styles Study. The researchers investigated two aspects of media use— (1) local media use and (2) total television viewing. The local newspaper use variable was created by asking respondents which newspaper sections ((1)news, (2) business, (3) lifestyle, (4) editorial) they read "all or most" of the time, and creating an additive index based on those responses. Then, researchers asked respondents if they watched local television news, and weighted the responses for the newspaper index equally with the local television measure, and summed the two items to create a single measure for local media use. (The article was a bit less than clear on the details—sorry.) The researchers also created a "total television viewing variable" by summing respondents' reported viewing of 20 half-hour television programs (given a value of 1) and 8 two-hour long programs (given a value of 2), creating an index of total television watching ranging from 0 to 44.

Holbert (2005) examined media use in the aftermath of a political debate. Respondents were asked about exposure to broadcast television news (national network TV news) and cable news (both questions asked how many days in a week (0-7) respondents were exposed to news). These two items were combined to form a single measure, which was subsequently standardized and combined with an exposure measure ("How much attention did you pay to stories on national network or cable TV news…" on a scale of "none", "not too much", "some" and "a great deal"). A newspaper exposure variable was also constructed, standardizing and combining responses to questions about (1) how many times in the past week the respondent read a daily newspaper (0-7) and (2) how much attention they paid to campaign articles ("no attention at all", "not too much",

“some”, and “a great deal”). Data for this study came from the pre-post October 17 Bush-Gore panel debate set from the 2000 National Annenberg Election Study.

Finally, Moy, McCluskey, McCoy, and Spratt (2004) looked specifically at local media use. Respondents were asked how much attention they paid to (1) local news, (2) editorials, and (3) human interest stories in their local newspaper to create a measure of attention to local newspaper news. (Each question was measured on a 10 point scale (1 = very little attention; 10 = very close attention, and responses to each question were combined into a single measure.) Respondents were also asked about the attention they paid to local television news with similar questions. (The TV news questions concerned (1) local news stories and (2) human interest stories, both of which were measured on the same 10 point scale mentioned earlier and combined into a single measure of local TV news attention.) Data for this study came from a telephone survey of 456 adults in the greater Seattle metropolitan area.

Looking at the ways in which my conception of media use aligns with previous research, it appears that my definition of “media use” is very close to definitions of media use that have been used in previous research. A number of scholars use secondary analysis to investigate large-scale patterns of media use, and several scholars have used the ANES studies, which I am also using in the current research. Utilizing the questions from the 2008 (and 2004) ANES study, I constructed a variable designed to measure media use, based on the questions asking respondents about how often they had (1) watched national news on television, (2) watched local news on television, (3) read a daily newspaper (offline), (4) read a daily online newspaper, and (5) listened to radio news. The questions from the ANES study about these aspects of media use were

measured on a scale, ranging from 0-7 (representing how many days per week respondents participated in each activity). I combined these into a single "media use" variable, ranging from 0-35.

Political Interest

To examine the ways in which the variable "political interest" has been utilized by scholars in the past, a brief literature review, focusing on this variable, was conducted. In the studies examined in this cursory examination of the definition of "political interest", varying definitions (and data) were used by scholars, but a number of common themes were evident, and will be discussed at the end of this section. Boulianne (2011) investigated political interest by utilizing the ANES panel study from 2008-2009. Respondents were asked directly how interested they were in politics, on a scale of 0 (not at all interested) to 4 (extremely interested). Similarly, Min (2010) investigated political interest using the 2004 General Social Survey. In this survey, respondents were asked directly how interested they were in politics, on scale from 1 (not interested at all) to 4 (very interested).

Strömbäck and Shehata (2010) investigated political interest in Sweden, using a panel study they designed. Respondents were asked "Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?" Responses ranged on a scale from 1 (not at all interested) to 5 (very interested). As mentioned, data for this study came from a three-wave panel study completed by the Centre for Political Communication Research, in cooperation with IFS AB. Bakker and de Vreese (2011) also investigated political interest in Europe, this time in the Netherlands. Respondents were asked to measure the extent of their agreement to the statement "Politics is interesting" on a five point scale (ranging from "totally

disagree" to "totally agree"). Data for this study came from an online survey designed by the authors, administered to 10,000 people in the Netherlands between the ages of 16 and 24. (The survey was completed by 2,409 respondents.)

Prior (2010) investigated political interest using six different surveys for this study, each of which asked about political interest in a slightly different way. The British Election Study (BES) Panel, 1997-2001 asked respondents (a random sample, representative of the British voting population—2,138 respondents total) "How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics, a great deal, quite a lot, some, not very much, or, none at all?' ' The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), 1991-2005 (a panel study of 9,912 total respondents between 1991-2005) asked respondents "' 'How interested would you say you are in politics? Would you say you are very interested, fairly interested, not very interested, or not at all interested?' ' The Swiss Household Panel, 1999-2006 (a random sample of the Swiss population over 13 years of age—2,399 total respondents) asked respondents "Generally, how interested are you in politics, if 0 means 'not at all interested' and 10 'very interested'?" The German Socio-Economic Panel Study, 1984-2007 (approximately 16,000 households—members age 16 and over are eligible for interviews) asks respondents "Generally speaking, how strongly interested are you in politics: very strongly, strongly, not so strongly, or not at all?' ' The German Elections Panel 1994-2002 (a sample frame of all German residents over 15 living in private households) asked respondents "How strongly interested in politics are you? Very strongly, fairly strongly, average, not so strongly, or not strongly at all?" Finally, the Jennings Panel 1965-1997 (a sample of interviews with high school students in 1965 and follow ups with their parents in 1973 and 1982—931 youth responses and

895 parental) asked respondents "Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?". (Note: Prior's interest in this study was in comparing the surveys to each other, so each "political interest" variable was unique.)

Tilley and Hobolt (2011) investigated political interest in Great Britain. In this study, respondents were asked "How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics? A great deal, quite a lot, some, not very much/none at all?" This question was coded as an interval-level variable, "recoded in the opposite direction to make a 1-4 scale, with high values indicating high levels of interest". Data for this study came from four separate experiments, utilizing non-overlapping participant groups, using a sample of 1,500-2,000 individuals "representative of the British population over the age of 18" (drawn from a sample recruited by YouGov, "Britain's leading internet survey company").

Parsons (2010) examined political interest using the ANES. Respondents were asked how interested in government and politics they are, with responses ranging from "not interested at all" to "extremely interested" on a five point scale. Data for this study came from the 2008-2009 ANES Panel Study. Newman and Bartels (2011) investigated political interest using a 2005 survey, though their specific operationalization was not made explicit in the article. According to the article, "political interest is based upon respondents' reported level of interest in politics". Based on prior research into the operationalization of political interest, it is likely that political interest in this study was measured on some kind of scale (likely 1-4, or thereabouts). Data for this study came from the 2005 US Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy Survey, a national survey

comprised of 1,001 face-to-face interviews of adults throughout the continuous US, using a cluster sample design.

McAtee and Woak (2011) investigated political interest by looking at the ways in which respondents expressed (1) their interest in local affairs and (2) their interests in national politics (each measured on a four point scale from "very interested" to "not at all interested"). Both questions were included as unique variables. Data for this study came from the American Citizen Participation Study, conducted in 1990, involving 2,517 interviews. Finally, MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus (2010) examined political interest among college students. Respondents were asked how much interest they had in following governmental affairs, with responses measured on a four point scale, which was then "rescaled 0-1". Data for this study came from a questionnaire designed by the authors, conducted in the spring of 2001 and the spring of 2002. The 215 total participants in the study came from "a participant pool of students in introductory American government classes at a public university in the South who received course credit for their participation".

The third major variable of interest is political interest. Utilizing the questions from the 2008 (and 2004) ANES study, I constructed a variable designed to measure political interest, based on the questions asking respondents about (1) how much they have thought about the election for president, (2) whether or not they viewed/heard information about the campaign from online sources, (3) how often they saw internet information about the presidential campaign, and (4) how much attention they paid to information about the presidential campaign. To accurately utilize all these questions into one variable, I first standardized the responses (the first and last questions are

measured on a scale from 1-5, the third questions is measured in categories, and the second question is a yes/no question). Looking at the ways in which my conception of political interest aligns with previous research, it appears that my definition of "political interest" is somewhat broader than the typical definition of "political interest". While a number of scholars have used secondary analysis to investigate patterns of political interest, and several scholars have used the ANES studies (which I am also using), many of the previous studies have looked at political interest as a discrete variable, looking only at the question(s) which directly asked how interested individuals were in politics, instead of adding in more variables. My broader definition of "political interest" should result in more robust results than these previous studies, as "interest" itself is a relatively general term, and should not be classified as something specific when it is, in fact, a general term.

Internet Access

To examine the ways in which the variable "internet access" has been utilized by scholars in the past, a very brief literature review, focusing on this variable, was conducted. In the studies examined in this cursory examination of the definition of "internet access", varying definitions (and data) were used by scholars, but a number of common themes were evident, and will be discussed at the end of this section.

First, Best and Krueger (2005) treat "internet access" as a dummy variable, with 1 representing home internet access. Broadband access was measured by another dummy variable, with 1 representing anyone using either (1) a cable modem, (2) a DSL line, or (3) any other high-capacity connection. Data for this study came from a 2003 telephone survey conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of

Connecticut, administered to a 1,003 person “RDD telephone sample of adult, non-institutionalized residents of the contiguous US”.

Second, Prior (2005) looks at internet access by asking respondents whether or not they connect to the internet using their home computers. If respondents did connect to the internet via a home computer, they were subsequently coded as having internet access. Data for this study came from Prior’s News & Entertainment Survey, a panel survey of 2,358 randomly selected US residents in 2002 and 2003.

Finally, Tolbert and McNeal (2003) utilized two questions from the ANES, used individually, asking if respondents (1) had internet access and (2) had seen information about the election on the internet. Data for this study came from ANES studies in 1996, 1998, and 2000.

For the “internet access” variable, there seems to be only one logical way to measure the concept—simply put, “do individuals have access to the internet”? As such, I investigated fewer previous studies than usual, simply to confirm that internet access was a relatively straightforward variable. The findings in previous studies confirm this suspicion, as “internet access” is typically defined very narrowly, and looks solely at whether or not individuals can access the internet or not. (Other studies, looking at more in-depth aspects of the internet, may delve into differences between fiber optic, DSL, and cable internet access (for example), but utilizing the questions actually found on the ANES questionnaires, internet access was coded using the yes/no question, “Do you have internet access at home?”.)

Civic Participation

To determine the ways in which the variable "civic participation" has been utilized by scholars in the past, a brief literature review, focusing on this variable, was conducted. In the studies examined in this cursory examination of the definition of "civic participation", varying definitions (and data) were used by the scholars, but some common themes were evident, to be discussed at the end of this section. First, Jeong (2012) operationalized "civic engagement" using data from the 2005-2006 wave of the World Values Survey. Here, civic engagement was measured by a direct measure of the total number of organizations respondents self-reported belonging to, measured on a scale ranging from 0-8. The types of organizations in this measure were quite myriad, ranging from labor unions to church organizations to environmental organizations.

Second, Stoll and Wong (2007), investigated "civic participation" by examining data from the 1992-1994 Los Angeles Survey of Urban Equality, focusing primarily on the experiences of immigrants in the realm of civic participation. In this study, researchrs added the total number of organizations to which respondents belonged in order to create a measure of civic participation. Seven specific types of organizations were specifically asked about in this survey: (1) neighborhood associations, (2) Parent-Teacher Associations, (3) sports teams, (4) political organizations, (5) business organizations, (6) church groups, and (7) cultural organizations.

Klofstad (2010) examined civic participation through the use of a panel study of freshman college students. Using information from the Collegiate Social Networ Interaction Project Panel Survey (C-SNIP), respondents were asked both if they were affiliated with seven types of civic organizations, and how active they were in those

organizations, on a four point scale. Total scores for civic participation were obtained by adding the total of all participation scores together (1-4 for each type of civic organization).

Lewis and Noguchi (2006) investigated civic participation by using data from the Social Capital Community Benchmark (2000) survey, designed through Harvard University. A random sample of 5,800 full or part-time workers were contacted through random-digit-dialing, and asked to respond to an approximately 26-minute survey. For the purposes of this study, civic participation was measured by the number of times a respondent reported volunteering in a community project over the past 12 months, on a scale of 0-60.

Blanchard and Matthews (2006) utilized the 2000 Social Capital Benchmark Survey National Adult Sample, developed through Harvard University, to investigate civic participation. Random-digit-dialing was utilized to obtain a sample of 3,003 households. The authors measure two very different types of civic participation in this study: "electoral politics" and "protest politics". Their conceptualization of electoral politics consists of voting registration, past voting habits, interest in politics and current events, and newspaper readership, combined into a 0-5 scale. Their second component of civic participation, protest politics, consists of "respondents' participation in local reform activities, boycotts, protests and petitions, and membership in labor unions, civil rights organizations, and public interest groups." Each of these individual components of participation are coded 0-1, and examined independently.

Klofstad (2004) investigated civic participation using data from the 2003-2004 Collegiate Social Network Interaction Project (C-SNIP), which consisted of two surveys

administered to undergraduate students at a Midwestern university, with the first survey given at the beginning of a school year, and the second survey administered at the end of the school year. Participation was defined in this study using measures of participation in eight types of civic organizations: (1) charitable and voluntary service, (2) leadership and civic training, (3) groups focused directly on single political issues or current events, (4) partisan groups, (5) student government, (6) groups of individuals of the same ethnic/racial groups, (7) student publications, and (8) speech clubs and teams. Activity in each type of group was rated on a 0-3 scale, with totals combined to create a 0-24 scale for total civic participation.

A concept that is generally similar to the idea of civic participation, and which appears frequently in the literature on civic participation, is the term "volunteering". Janoski and Wilson (1995), utilizing data from the Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study, conducted by the University of Michigan, first defined participation in organizations as self-reported levels of activity in a variety of different types of organizations. Civic ("community-oriented") organizations were later defined as "church-related, fraternal, neighborhood (and youth related and political), and service organizations." Levels of activity and membership were measured on a 0-3 scale (0=not a member; 1=member, but inactive; 2=member, fairly active; and 3=member, very active).

After examining the various ways in which the concept of "civic participation" and "volunteering" have been operationalized in the past, it soon became clear that there was one dominant trend in the definitions of civic participation: counting the number of civic organizations to which an individual belongs. In order to measure civic

participation, I constructed an index combining three particular elements of civic participation: (1) attending a city or school board meeting (1=yes, 0=no); (2) doing any volunteer work in the past 12 months (1=yes, 0=no); and (3) contributing to a church or charity within the past 12 months (1=yes, 0=no). The responses to these three individual questions were then combined into a collective measure for civic participation, scored 0-3. This index is very similar to those studies discussed above, taking individuals' self-reported membership in civic organizations and participation within those organizations as a measure of civic participation.

Total Participation

In order to obtain a measure for total participation, the measures for political participation (0-6) and civic participation (0-3) were combined into one total, overall measure representing total participation, scored on a scale ranging from 0 to 9. This total participation measure, therefore, represents a direct combination of the two individual types of participation (civic and political).

Generations

To examine the ways in which the various generations utilize media sources and participate in society (both civically and politically), a generations variable was constructed using the ANES question asking individuals their age, measured in years. Generation was divided into four main groups: 17-30 year olds (N=240 in 2008; N=254 in 2004), 31-44 year olds (N=277 in 2008; N=293 in 2004), 45-59 year olds (N=343 in 2008; N=354 in 2004), and 60+ year olds (N=279 in 2008; N=311 in 2004). The groups were divided in this manner both so that there would be an approximately equivalent distribution of respondents in each group, but also so that each generational group would

generally correspond with one of the traditional "generations" in contemporary society: the Millennial Generation corresponding to the youngest generation in the study, Generation X corresponding with the next oldest generation, the Baby Boomer generation corresponding with the next oldest generation, and the Silent/Greatest Generation corresponding with the oldest generation examined[5].

Demographic Variables

For the remaining variables (sex, race, income, and education), the responses from the ANES were used directly. To construct a variable for sex, respondents' stated genders were coded as 1=male and 0=female. For race, 1=white, and 0=non-white[6]. For income, five categories were developed, and respondents were coded into one of the five groups, based on their reported income. For education, five categories were developed, and respondents were coded into one of the five groups, based on their reported highest level of educational attainment.

Methods of Analysis

Fixed effects models are utilized in these analyses. Because certain variables were constructed in a categorical manner, at least one of those categories had to be dropped, in order to serve as a reference group for the rest of the categories of that variable. For the purposes of these analyses, the lowest income category and education category were dropped, to serve as a comparison group. The oldest generation category was dropped as well—this allows comparisons to be made across generations, such that a

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[5] While these generational divisions correspond neatly with the 2008 ANES, there is enough ambiguity with the exact dates marking the arrival of each new social generation (cf. Dziuban et al. 2005) that the division also works well for the 2004 ANES.

[6] "Non-white" = African-American and mixed-race individuals

negative result for the youngest generation does not mean that generation is actively avoiding participation, just that they are participating at a lower rate than members of the oldest generation.

Basic regressions serve as the primary focal point for each of these papers. The basic interactions of each variable used in this paper can be seen in the correlation matrices for each chapter, provided in individual tables. Several correlations appear to be robust (particularly among the variables concerning various online activities in the matrix for the 2008 ANES), but there do not appear to be any major issues with multicollinearity. Examining the variables from the 2004 ANES, similar results may be found—most correlations here appear to be particularly strong, and there do not appear to be any major multicollinearity issues.

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Chapter 3: Do Younger People Participate More Because They are Digital Natives? The Impact of Technology and Generations on Civic and Political Participation in 2008

The significance of participating in society cannot be overstated. It is through participation in the civic world that individuals form connections with the world and the people around them, and ultimately become fully-formed members of the society in which they live. Participation in the political world is arguably even more important in democratic societies, as it is only through the various interactions with their government and leadership that citizens can fully become part of a democratic society. As Jan W. van Deth writes, "participation is the *elixir of life* for democracy". (350) Participation is a vital part of life in any society.

Traditionally, one of the major factors in determining whether or not a member of society participates in that society has been age. Related to age, the generations in which individuals are members also plays a role in their participatory activities. The age of individuals directly determines the generation in which they are a member, which in turn has an impact on their use of online media, and their involvement in society, both civically and politically. Demographic variables, including income, race, gender, and education, also have a direct impact on participation. The goal of this research will be to show that ultimately, generation will have a negative effect on participation in both the civic and political spheres, such that the older an individual becomes, the less likely they will be to participate in society, due to the influence of these new communications technologies.

The theoretical background for this research comes from the notion of the public sphere of Jürgen Habermas, in addition to the examinations of both Karl Mannheim

(1970) and Morley Winograd (2008) regarding generations. A common thread of the research on the connections between online participation and politics suggests that the party without power is the party most likely to adopt any sort or new advancement in technology (Esterling et al. 2011), so it stands to reason that the higher the participation of individuals in online communities, the more likely a shift in political power would occur (and, indeed, this is what did occur in the election of 2008: the incumbent political party lost the Presidential election). Manza and Brooks (1999) in their work on social cleavages write at some length about shifting party alignments in the US since the mid-1970s, and find that past voter cleavages have included splits along gender and racial lines. My study seeks to understand the impact of technology and generational lines on voter cleavages as well.

Sonia Livingstone (2007) investigated the online political tendencies and interests of (primarily) teenagers. Livingstone found a number of individuals otherwise active online with little exhibited interest in politics, online or offline. Generally speaking, the teenagers exhibited high degree of skepticism about the political world, and a sense that politics in general is not of tremendous interest to the surveyed individuals. However, while politics in general may not have caused much interest in the teenagers, the prospect of online participation did pique their interest, as Livingstone writes "[t]hey are positive about the process of online participation, even if a little unclear about the goal" (Livingstone, 2007). In essence, this seems to suggest that even if politics in general doesn't interest the generation most likely to be online, the simple act of being online does interest them, and their political participation should be high. This high

participation in general should in turn lead to high more specific types of political participation.

Larry Bartels and Simon Jackman, in "A Generational Model of Political Learning", note the significance of age cohorts in shaping participation. The authors note that "[t]here is clearly a sustaines period of heightened sensitivity to political events during adolescence" (16), suggesting support for the imprinting phenomenon, whereby certain salient events—such as the rise of a new technology—stick with groups throughout their lives, and affect their participation. Kaat Smets and Anja Nuendorf, in "The Hierarchies of Age-Period-Cohort Research" find a similar result, but note that instead of an instantaneous change, "it takes the collective experiences of at least two elections to form a pattern". (42) In this paper, the effects of media use and generations on participation in both the civic and political realms will be examined.

Going into this research paper, I expected to find a strong connection between online media consumption and participation. As such, I expected the strongest link between participation and age to exist with the youngest age group, such that the youngest generation would be the most participatory. In reality, however, this did not prove to be the case, as the more traditional models of participation held firm, with age, education, and income proving to have a more direct impact upon participation.

Theory

Examining previous research regarding communication and political participation, and connecting that to Karl Mannheim's generational theory (1970), a pattern about the effectiveness of online communication and political participation begins to form. According to Mannheim, generations are cohorts of individuals marked by their shared

experience of some kind of historical event, which imprints on their lives. Some of these generational imprints were discussed above, but briefly, technological developments in communication patterns seem to come along approximately every 40 or so years (note the discussion above concerning the major changes in communications technologies aligning with presidential elections.

Similarly, Morley Winograd (2008) discusses the cyclical patterns of generational types in US history, and how they can align with what he identifies as the major eras of party dominance in the US. Briefly, and most significantly, Winograd identifies the most recent full generation to come to voting age (Millennials) as a “civic” generation, much like the WWII-era generation. (In other words, people have more in common with their grandparents’ generation than with their parents’ generation.) This cyclical theory suggests that the Millennials are likely to be active voters, are likely to be optimistic about politics, and are likely to be genuinely interested in civic engagement and participation in the political world.

In addition to these generational theories, one of the most significant schools of thought concerning about the ways in which the online realm may be utilized and understood by the general public has come from the works of Jürgen Habermas, and his descriptions of the “public sphere”. Writing about the development of the public sphere, Habermas noted three critical conditions for the development and continued flourishing of the public sphere. First, the sphere must be an area that disregards social status—all individuals must be able to have a say, regardless of any sort of outside social standing. Second, the sphere must be organized around some sort of a domain of common concern—the individuals meeting in the public sphere must have some sort of common

concern binding them together, which everyone cares about. Finally, Habermas noted the importance of inclusivity—everyone had to be able to have access to the public sphere, and feel like they could become a part of the sphere. (Habermas, 1989)

Using Habermas's typology of the three critical developments for the creation of a public sphere, it seems clear that the online realm meets the first characteristic easily—online, social status is essentially ignored, as has been illustrated in several references discussed above. Online, people can change or adapt their identities (for better or for worse), and whatever is presented online is generally accepted as reality at the time and in that setting. The second criterion of Habermas's public sphere, an organization around a domain of common concern, may also be understood as taking place online. Assuming the internet is another world of sorts, individuals may find (or create) their own forums for discussing anything of interest to them, and doubtless find someone else, somewhere in the world, who's also interested in that matter. Habermas's final criterion of a public sphere, that everyone must be included in the public sphere, is a bit more problematic. As examined in the second research paper in this research plan, the digital divide does exist, and not everyone in society has access to the internet at all (and, within those concerns, not everyone has equal access—some have better or more rapid access than others, meaning the inequality does not stop at the simple issue of accessibility). Still, clearly, two out of the three conditions posed by Habermas for the creation of a public sphere seem to be met by the internet in general.

Looking at the political realm specifically, not all individuals interested in politics meet in online settings, but among those who do, there are a number of forums in which their voices may be heard, and everyone who participates has the ability to do so on equal

terms. Having asserted that, it is important to note the development of moderation in online forums and discussion areas. Generally speaking, many sites (both political and non-political) allow users to express themselves freely, but may have some sort of monitoring position or ability to remove or silence individuals who are being disruptive or otherwise cruel to other participants in the forum (see, for example, Wright 2006). Does this censorship harm the notion of a public sphere? Perhaps the better question would be: could a truly open public space, with no censorship or protection of participants ever be successful?

The answer to those questions is a difficult one. Looking at Habermas's criteria for a public sphere, and taking them literally, no, the internet is not a public sphere. However, taking Habermas's criteria literally, it is difficult to conceive of any type of public sphere ever existing at all for any length of time. In the bourgeois time, which Habermas was so fond of discussing, the public sphere disappeared because outside interests were able to come in and dominate the sphere. Perhaps the notion of a public sphere needs to be modified somewhat—in order to ensure an area of common domain, which cannot be taken over by outside interests, truly uninterested in the domain, at least some degree of control and regulation may be necessary. Habermas's notion of a public sphere was likely only an ideal type of phenomenon, and it would be very difficult to find any sort of continually successful and open public sphere in any sort of society. Philip N. Howard (2005) notes that in his research (conducted between 1996-2002), political polarization appears to be increasing in the online realm, and the public sphere appears to be at least somewhat fragmented, as the number of individuals who go to multiple types of political websites was decreasing. Instead of multiple opinions, Howard suggests,

individuals are seeking out information that aligns with their previously-held beliefs—not much of a truly "public sphere". However, there is still something significant to be gained from an examination of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, and in researching online participation and involvement in the light of that ideal structure.

Participation in the public sphere has been a concern of theorists since Habermas first began theorizing about the existence of a public sphere at all, and those concerns have only intensified since the rise of the internet as a major means of communication. Writing in the early days of major online media, Warnick (1998) suggests that even by the late 1990s, participation online and participation in the outside world might be significantly different, noting that "browsers [of the internet] may take simulated participation in the public sphere for real participation." (80) This somewhat pessimistic view suggests that instead of participating in the "real world", online users might simply assume that clicking a link or reading a website serves as a legitimate form of participation. (This tendency to participate online, without a corresponding offline activity, has somewhat derisively begun to be known as "clicktivism" (cf. Goodman and Boyd 2011: 107).) An investigation into the ways in which people participate in their society, both online and offline, would prove illuminating.

Applying the work of Mannheim to the work of Winograd, it becomes clear that the generation currently entering voting age in the United States (18 years old) is this "Millennial" category, marked by political activism, interest in politics and civic engagement, and increased political participation compared to other, previous generations. As such, this group of individuals should prove not only more technologically advanced than previous generations (due primarily to coming of age

during a time of vast technological advancements), but should also be more politically active and involved than previous generations. While conflicting evidence has been found concerning the participation of younger generations compared to older generations in all areas of civic life, the change in participation among the younger generation from 2004 to 2008 should prove especially significant.

Traditionally, participation has been assumed to be the result of three general factors: age, income, and education. As each of these factors increases, according to the traditional models, participation also increases (cf. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995, Berinsky and Lenz 2011, et al.). The current study suggests, based on the literature described above, that this traditional model is somewhat lacking in regards to modern participatory practices, and needs to be updated. As such, the primary contribution of this dissertation is the use of national-level ANES data to investigate the significance of technology upon participation (both politically and civically) among all generations, with the thought that the generations most affected by the new technology, and thus exhibiting much higher levels of participation in general, will be members of the youngest generation. In this paper, the traditional SES theory of participation, suggesting that as individuals' socioeconomic status increases, their participation also increases, is compared to the new, generational theory (suggesting that technology and age are the most significant factors leading one towards participation).

In *Generations and Work* (2014), Eric Bolland and Carlo Lopes suggest that while different generations begin with differing outlooks and attitudes about life, eventually, "[y]ounger people become more like the previous generations…[t]his is a kind of regression to norm in which youthful ambition becomes consrained by life

circumstances. Realities set in." (32) Taking participation as a part of life, this argument suggests that even if some differences among age groups regarding participation rates are apparent, these differences are only temporary, with time eventually turning each generation essentially into the previous generation, at least in terms of their participation rates.

Pippa Norris (2000) identified two major theses regarding the effect of the internet in general on participation: mobilization, which argues that the internet serves to allow previously disadvantaged and non-participatory groups access to the political world, and reinforcement, which argues that the internet serves at best to reinforce existing gaps in participation, and at worst to widen the gap between those who participate and those who do not. While Norris's work examined political participation specifically, this research paper examines the effect of internet use and specifically online media use on both forms of participation (political and civic). This way, multiple forms of participation are examined, giving a better picture of the true effect of internet use (measured by online media use) upon participatory activities.

According to data gathered by the Pew Center (2014a) on those who do not participate in politics, the more traditional models of political participation seem to remain strongest. The data suggest that the registered voters least likely to participate in the 2014 midterm elections tend to be younger, tend to be members of minority groups, tend to have lower levels of educational attainment, and tend to have lower levels of income. While this data was gathered prior to a midterm election, which traditionally has a lower voter turnout than a presidential election, the authors of the study point out that similar gaps have been apparent over time (specifically referring to studies conducted in

2010 and 2012). These findings seem to indicate some support for the reinforcement model of the internet's effect on participation, suggesting that traditional differences in participation (age, race, educational attainment, and income levels) do not appear to have suddenly vanished due to the influence of the internet and online news media consumption.

It must be stressed that the current research model does not suggest that technology is some kind of "magic bullet", and that all generations now exhibit equal participation rates because of the use of new technologies. The point of the current research paper is not merely to show the importance of new technologies in affecting social change, but also to examine the various ways in which these new technologies can have such an impact on a society, particularly in terms of participation within the society. Through the theories and research on participation and the connections between primarily age and participation rates in society, the current research both complements and expands upon previous research, by examining the links between technological change and both political and civic participation, with a focus on understanding precisely how and why any potential changes in avenues to participation have occurred.

Hypotheses

This paper has two sets of hypotheses because it has two different sets of dependent variables: (1) political interest and media use, and (2) political and civic participation. For the first set of variables, there is one hypothesis.

Paper 1 Hypothesis$_1$– Digital Natives have Differential Media use and Political Interest: Members of digital native generation (aged 17-30) will have more on-line activity, political interest and more off-line media use

than members of older generations, controlling for past voting, income, education, race and gender.

The major dependent variables in this analysis (online activity, political interest, and offline news media use (ONNEWS08, INTEREST08, and OFFNEWS08, respectively)) are projected to be influenced by a combination of: voting in past elections (PASTVOTE08), the generation of the respondent (GENERATE081, GENERATE082, GENERATE083, GENERATE084), and the control variables of gender (GENDER08), race (RACE08), income (INCOME08), and education (EDUCATE08). The intersections of these variables ultimately determine the civic and political participation rates of respondents in the 2008 ANES. These hypotheses can be expressed in the following equations:

$$ONNEWS08 = \alpha + \beta_1 PASTVOTE08 + \beta_2 GENERATE081 + \beta_3 GENERATE082 + \beta_4 GENERATE083 + \beta_5 GENERATE084 + \beta_6 GENDER08 + \beta_7 RACE08 + \beta_8 INCOME08 + \beta_9 EDUCATE08 + e$$

$$INTEREST08 = \alpha + \beta_1 PASTVOTE08 + \beta_2 GENERATE081 + \beta_3 GENERATE082 + \beta_4 GENERATE083 + \beta_5 GENERATE084 + \beta_6 GENDER08 + \beta_7 RACE08 + \beta_8 INCOME08 + \beta_9 EDUCATE08 + e$$

$$OFFNEWS08 = \alpha + \beta_1 PASTVOTE08 + \beta_2 GENERATE081 + \beta_3 GENERATE082 + \beta_4 GENERATE083 + \beta_5 GENERATE084 + \beta_6 GENDER08 + \beta_7 RACE08 + \beta_8 INCOME08 + \beta_9 EDUCATE08 + e$$

In this set of equations, the hypothesis concerning generation suggests that generation has an indirect effect on participation, as opposed to the direct effect suggested by the following hypotheses, because different generations use media in different ways, thus leading to differing levels of participation. The aim of these equations is to determine the

indirect effects of generation on participation and media use, before investigating any direct effects.

The next three hypotheses utilize political, civic and total participation as the dependent variables.

Paper 1 Hypothesis$_2$ – Causes of Civic Participation: The older generations (i.e., not digital natives), who exhibit greater online news media use, conventional media use (i.e., newspapers and TV) will exhibit greater civic participation than members of the digital native generation, controlling for past voting, income, race and gender,

Paper 1 Hypothesis$_3$ – Causes of Political Participation: The older generations (i.e., not digital natives), who exhibit greater online news media use, conventional media use (i.e., newspapers and TV), and greater political interest, will exhibit greater political participation than members of the digital native generation, controlling for past voting, income, race and gender,

Paper 1 Hypothesis$_4$ – Combined Model predicting Total Political Participation: The older generations (i.e., not digital natives), who exhibit greater online news media use, conventional media use (i.e., newspapers and TV), and greater political interest, will exhibit greater total participation than members of the digital native generation, controlling for past voting, income, race and gender.

Once the sources of online news consumption, offline news consumption, and political interest have been examined, these three variables are then examined in

conjunction with the rest of the demographic variables, in order to determine the root sources of political, civic, and total participation. For a more explicit view of the ways in which these variables interact, the variables and an estimate of relevant equations are listed below (see Table 3.1 for a description of each variable). The major dependent variables in this paper, civic, political, and total participation (CIVPART08, POLPART08 and TOTPART08, respectively) are projected to be influenced by a combination of voting in past elections (PASTVOTE08), use of online news sources (ONNEWS08), offline news use (OFFNEWS08), the interest in the election (INTEREST08), and the generation of the respondent (GENERATE08). These variables, in addition to the control variables of gender (GENDER08), race (RACE08), income (INCOME08), and education (EDUCATE08), will determine the online and offline political participation of respondents in the 2008 ANES. This can be expressed in the following equations:

$$\text{CIVPART08} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{ OFFNEWS08} + \beta_2 \text{ GENERATE08} + \beta_3 \text{ ONNEWS08} + \beta_4 \text{ INTEREST08} + \beta_5 \text{ PASTVOTE08} + \beta_6 \text{ GENDER08} + \beta_7 \text{ RACE08} + \beta_8 \text{ INCOME08} + \beta_9 \text{ EDUCATE08} + e$$

$$\text{POLPART08} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{ OFFNEWS08} + \beta_2 \text{ GENERATE08} + \beta_3 \text{ ONNEWS08} + \beta_4 \text{ INTEREST08} + \beta_5 \text{ PASTVOTE08} + \beta_6 \text{ GENDER08} + \beta_7 \text{ RACE08} + \beta_8 \text{ INCOME08} + \beta_9 \text{ EDUCATE08} + e$$

$$\text{TOTPART08} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{ OFFNEWS08} + \beta_2 \text{ GENERATE08} + \beta_3 \text{ ONNEWS08} + \beta_4 \text{ INTEREST08} + \beta_5 \text{ PASTVOTE08} + \beta_6 \text{ GENDER08} + \beta_7 \text{ RACE08} + \beta_8 \text{ INCOME08} + \beta_9 \text{ EDUCATE08} + e$$

Data and Methods

The data for the current research comes from the 2008 American National Election Study data set. Utilizing 2,102 post-election interviews[7] (centered around the US election of November 4, 2008), this particular ANES study contains several questions about political behaviors, including questions about political behaviors connected with media use, of particular interest to this research. Post-election interviews for the data set were conducted between November and December 2008. Interviews for the post-election interviews averaged approximately 91 minutes. The estimated response rate for the survey was approximately 57.7% for the post-election interviews.

According to the user's guide for the data set, found on the ANES website (http://electionstudies.org/studypages/2008prepost/2008prepost_UsersGuide.pdf), respondents who participated in the study were not told they were participating in the National Election Study, in order to avoid any sort of self-selection bias on the part of the survey respondents. By not informing respondents what kind of study they were participating in, the survey includes respondents from all backgrounds and political beliefs/value systems, allowing for a more generalizable analysis of results.

Only citizens of legal voting age in the United States at the time of the 2008 election (specifically, of legal voting age a few days before the 2008 election) were considered to be the target population for the interviews. By limiting the population of respondents to only those members of the general population who were able to vote, the

[7] While the ANES survey utilized both pre-election and post-election interviews, the current research focuses on post-election results only.

survey once again allows for greater generalizability, as age can be a confound when examining surveys regarding political behaviors—in this case, because everyone could vote in the 2008 election, the post-election responses concerning voting habits are not affected by any sort of age bias in responses or survey questions.

Interviews in the ANES study were conducted face-to-face, including a self-administered interview segment. As with their controls for self-selection, by doing this, the ANES study attempts to remove any sort of confound or selection complication from their data set, allowing for an increased sense of anonymity in responses, ensuring that the results of any sort of research done with the survey results would be useful and generalizable, with proper weighting.

There are a multitude of questions in the 2008 ANES data set regarding participation in various forms of political behaviors, both online and offline. By examining the responses to these questions, and by examining how these responses may potentially differ along a myriad of variables (including age and gender, to list two common demographic variables), insights into the process of political communication, and the ways in which new social media may be used in that process, may be obtained. For the present research, there is one major dependent variable of interest: specifically, political participation, measured three different ways (online, offline, and combined online and offline).

Political participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had ever (1) joined a protest march or rally, (2) contributed money to a political candidate, (3) voted in a presidential primary/caucus, (4) talked to anyone else about voting for a particular candidate, (5) attended any political rallies or speeches, and

(6) done any other work for a campaign. Civic participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had ever (1) attended a city or school board meeting, (2) done any volunteer work in the past 12 months, and (3) contributed to a church or other charity in the last 12 months. The original two participation variables (CIVPART08 and POLPART08) were then combined into a total participation variable (TOTPART08)

To measure offline news media use (OFFNEWS08), questions about how many days in the past week respondents (1) read an offline newspaper, (2) watched local and (3) national TV news broadcasts, and (4) listened to radio news. These four measures were combined into one additive scale, measuring 0-35[8]. To measure online news media use (ONNEWS08), questions about how often respondents read an online newspaper was utilized. (This variable is coded 0-7, based on days per week an online newspaper was read.) To measure voting in past elections (PASTVOTE08), the corresponding question on the ANES was coded into a dummy variable: voting in previous elections was coded as 1 (N = 731), while not voting in previous elections was coded as 0 (N = 400). Political interest (INTEREST08) was determined using the ANES question asking respondents how interested they were in following the campaign, on a 1-5 scale (1 = extremely interested; 5 = not interested at all; N = 1150). This was then recoded into a dummy variable, such that a score of 1 represented being either extremely interested or very interested, and a score of 0 represented being moderately interested, slightly interested, or not interested at all.

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[8] Each of the original scales is measured 0-7, with local TV broadcasts being asked about at both an afternoon and evening airing.

To construct a "generation" variable for this analysis, respondents were divided into four groups, according to their reported ages. The groups utilized were the 17-30 age range (coded as 1, N = 240), the 31-44 age range (coded as 2, N = 277), the 45-59 age range (coded as 3, N = 343), and the 60 and above age range (coded as 4, N = 279)[9]. Each of these age ranges were then coded into individual dummy variables (GENERATE081 (for the 17-30 age range), GENERATE082 (31-44), GENERATE083 (45-59), and GENERATE084 (60 and above)). The variable concerning gender (GENDER08) was coded 0, 1: males were coded as 1 (N = 492), and females were coded as 0 (N = 658). The variable concerning race (RACE08) was also coded 0, 1: whites were coded as 1 (N = 699), and nonwhites were coded as 0 (N = 447). Income (INCOME08) was divided into six categories, based on the divisions made in the original data set: $0-$29,999 (N = 416), $30,000-$59,999 (N = 306), $60,000-$89,999 (N = 170), $90,000-$119,999 (N = 88), $120,000-$149,999 (N = 34), and $150,000 and above (N = 48). Education (EDUCATE08) was coded into six categories: no high school diploma or equivalency (N = 156), high school diploma or equivalency (N = 406), some college, but no degree (N = 219), a junior or community college degree or a bachelor's degree or equivalency (N = 294), and more than a bachelor's degree (N = 72). As with the generation variable, both the income and education variables were further divided into individual dummy variables, representing each of the categories.

[9] There were 234 cases of missing data, involving people who did report their age. Also, for the purposes of this analysis and all subsequent analyses, the oldest generational group will be intentionally left out of the analyses, to serve as a reference group in the equations.

Results

First, to simply get an idea of what the variable looked like by themselves, I constructed a table of descriptives for the variables used in this analysis (Table 3.1). According to this table of descriptives, it appears that on average, survey respondents participate in the civic world a moderate amount (mean 1.58 on a 0-3 scale), participate in the political world somewhat less (mean 1.23 on a 0-6 scale), and participate overall at a somewhat low rate (mean 2.82 on a 0-9 scale). Respondents do seem to be somewhat voracious in their news consumption, however, with the average respondent consuming an average of just over two forms of offline news media per day each week (mean 14.44 on a 0-35 scale). Online news consumption, however, is significantly lower than this, with the average respondent consuming news online only slightly over one day per week (mean 1.01 on a 0-7 scale).

Respondents in this study exhibited very slightly higher than average political interest (mean .52 on a 0-1 scale), but voted more frequently than would be expected (mean .65 on a 0-1 scale[10]). Respondents also appear to skew slightly older than average (mean 2.58 on a 1-4 scale) and slightly higher in educational attainment than average (mean 2.64 on a 1-5 scale), but a slightly lower than average in terms of income (mean 2.17 on a 1-5 scale). Demographically speaking, respondents were predominantly female, with a mean of .43 on a 0-1 scale[11], and were predominantly Caucasian, with a mean of .69 on a 0-1 scale).[12]

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[10] 65% of the total sample voted in the 2004 election, above the 60.1% voter turnout in that election.

[11] Gender was measured as 0=female, 1=male.

[12] Race was measured as 0=non-white, 1=white.

Secondly, I compared the means of each of the categorical variables in terms of civic participation, total participation, online news media consumption, and offline news media consumption (Table 3.2)[13]. According to the information presented in the table, political participation is consistently lower than civic participation. Generally speaking, participation of each kind tends to increase with age (though political participation remains steady from the second-oldest group to the oldest group), with educational attainment, and with increased income levels (though again, political participation drops slightly from the lowest category to the next highest).

Interestingly, online news media use increases with educational attainment and generally with income level (though online news media use peaks in the middle income category), but not with age—the two younger generations are by far more likely to utilize online news media than are the two oldest generations. As might be expected, the inverse was true when examining the results for offline news media consumption—while offline news media consumption rates were uniformly high, consumption of offline news media rose dramatically as age increased, from 9.86 times per week for the youngest generation to 17.97 times per week for the highest generation. There did not appear of be any sort of relationship between offline news media consumption and income, though offline news media use did appear to generally decrease as education increases (with the exception of the middle category). While offline news media consumption rates varied somewhat between various educational attainment levels, there was very little difference between the offline news media consumption rates of the various income levels (the lowest rate of

[13] These data were weighted, in order to generalize to the general population.

consumption was 13.12 times per week, while the highest rate of consumption was 14.43 times per week, for a total difference of only 1.31)

I also computed Cronbach's alpha for the dependent variables and the independent variables used in the investigation, in order to examine the internal consistency of the variables. The alpha score for the three forms of participation was .86, indicating high internal consistency, as would be expected. The alpha score for all other variables used in this analysis (offline news consumption, online news consumption, political interest, voting in the previous election, gender, race, generation, and income) was .17, indicating a low level of overlap between the variables.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.1 AND TABLE 3.2 HERE**********

A summary of all the variables used in this analysis can be found in Appendix 1, along with a correlation matrix for all dependent variables in this analysis in Table 3.3, and a correlation matrix for all independent variables in Table 3.4. The correlation matrices do not indicate any potential multicollinearity issues. The total participation variable is highly correlated with both civic participation (.82) and political participation (.87), which signifies that both forms of participation are well represented in the total participation measure. Regarding the correlation matrix for independent variables, the strongest correlations are between offline news consumption and political interest (.30) and between offline news consumption and generation (.35). This indicates that as offline news consumption increases, political interest also increases, and as offline news consumption increases, age of the respondent also increases. These correlations seem to suggest some support for traditional models of participation, with participation appearing

to be directly and positively correlated with offline news consumption, age of the respondent, and initial political interest.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.3 AND TABLE 3.4 HERE**********

Examining the first hypothesis, concerning generational effects on news media consumption and political interest, I ran a number of regressions to determine what, if any relationship existed between generation and these constructs. Using questions from the ANES focusing on online news media consumption first, I regressed this variable across voting in the 2004 election, generation of the individual, gender, race, income level, and educational attainment. Looking at the results of this regression (Table 3.5), it becomes very apparent that younger generations do indeed utilize online news media at much greater rates than older generations—in fact, the oldest generation demonstrates a sharp drop-off in online media consumption, compared to the immediately preceding generations. Each of these generations shows significance for online media use, with members of the two youngest generations exhibiting both the highest levels of online news media use and the most significant findings.

A similar pattern holds for educational attainment, such that as education levels increase, online news consumption also increases (and significance also generally increases), while income level appears to actually be negatively correlated with online media use, though these findings do not achieve significance.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.5 HERE**********

Next, using questions from the ANES focusing on political interest, I regressed this variable across voting in the 2004 election, generation of the individual, gender, race, income level, and educational attainment. Looking at the results of this regression (Table

3.6), it becomes clear that traditional models of participation seem to hold true, at least somewhat, for political interest—as age and education level increases, political interest also increases. For age, only the two youngest generations showed any sort of significance, with members of the two youngest generations exhibiting the lowest levels of political interest.

For educational attainment, no educational level exhibited significance, though political interest did rise with each successive level of educational attainment. For income level, individuals at the second-lowest level of income displayed the second-highest political interest, behind those with the highest incomes, but only the second-highest income level showed any statistical significance. Political interest exhibited the strongest relationship with the highest income level and the second-lowest income levels.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.6 HERE**********

Finally for the first hypothesis, I regressed the variable representing offline news media consumption across voting in the 2004 election, generation of the individual, gender, race, income level, and educational attainment. Looking at the results of this regression (Table 3.7), some stark patterns begin to emerge. Much like younger generations shows a much higher online news media consumption rate, older generations display strongly higher levels of offline news media consumption. Interestingly, the highest levels of significance appear for the youngest generational groups—as groups age, significance decreases, while offline news media consumption increases.

There seems to be no strong, clear pattern for income levels—members of the population at the highest income levels demonstrate the highest rates of offline news media use, but there appears to be no steady relationship between income levels and

offline news media use (there also is no significance for income, at any level). Educational attainment appears to have an effect on offline news media consumption, such that as educational level increases, with the exception of the second-highest educational attainment level, individuals become much less likely to consume any forms of offline news media. Once again, however, there is no apparent significance for educational attainment and offline news media consumption at any level of educational attainment.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.7 HERE**********

To address the second hypothesis, I examined the ways in which civic participation can be influenced by online news consumption, generation of an individual, offline news consumption, interest in politics, voting in past elections, gender, race, income, and education. Utilizing questions from the survey focused on civic participation of individuals, I regressed this variable across a number of demographic variables (including gender, race, educational attainment, and income), online news consumption, generation of the individual, offline news consumption, stated interest in the election, and whether or not the individual voted in previous elections. Using these variables, any effect of internet use and media consumption habits specifically on civic participation should become apparent. .

After running the regression on these variables (Table 3.8), it appears that the strongest correlation with civic participation, in terms of the variables of interest, is with educational attainment. Education is strongly positively correlated with civic engagement, with higher levels of education exhibiting very strong positive correlations with civic engagement. This suggests that the more education one has obtained, the more

likely one is to be engaged in one's community. Education also exhibits a great deal of significance at the highest levels of educational attainment, with the top three levels of educational attainment in particular exhibiting the most significance of any variable in this regression.

Generation does not appear to be correlated with civic participation, suggesting some support for the notion that older individuals feel a stronger sense of connection to their community than do younger individuals. In fact, no significance for generation appeared at any level in the study. Income, as has been typical in the other analyses, exhibits no apparent correlation with civic participation, and there is no significance at any level of income.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.8 HERE**********

To examine the third hypothesis, concerning political participation, I performed some basic regressions across the same demographic variables described above (gender, race, income, and education), online participation, online news consumption, generation of the respondent, offline news consumption, interest in the election, and voting in past elections. The regression on these variables (Table 3.9) shows the most positive relationship with political interest and voting in previous elections, and the strongest negative relationships with income (though at the highest and lowest levels only).

Generation appears to have a positive effect on participation, such that members of older generations are more likely to participate than members of younger generations, though these findings do not exhibit any significance. Income levels again do not demonstrate any steady correlation with political participation, though significance appears at the highest and lowest levels of income. Educational attainment does not

display significance at any level, but does appear to be somewhat positively correlated with political participation.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.9 HERE**********

Finally, to address the fourth hypothesis, I examined the combined participation (civic and political), and how total participation related to each variable of interest. As such, the new variable representing total participation (constructed by combining the variables for civic participation and political participation) was regressed across the demographic variables mentioned above (gender, race, income, and education), online participation, online news consumption, generation of the respondent, offline news consumption, interest in the election, and voting in past elections. According to this regression (Table 3.10), political interest and voting in previous elections again have a significant impact on participation, but perhaps most interestingly, education seems to have a very strong impact on total participation, such that as education levels increase, individuals generally become much more likely to participate. Significance in this regression was found at the highest levels of educational attainment. Income levels once again illustrated no clear pattern, with mild significance at only the lowest level. Generation displayed a pattern, such that as generation increased, political participation also increased, but there was no significance at any generational level.

**********INSERT TABLE 3.10 HERE**********

Discussion

The R^2 values for the regressions appear to be moderate. This seems to indicate that all the factors in the analysis explain a reasonable amount of the variation in voting patterns, and this makes an amount of sense—all of these factors, when considered

together, likely lead to a confluence of various factors in explaining the difference in voting patterns. To get a more robust R^2 for these equations, it would be interesting to examine the news media variables specifically more closely in a future series of regressions.

The first hypothesis, regarding generational differences in terms of online media use, political interest, and offline media use, was somewhat supported. While members of the digital native generation had demonstrably higher levels of online activity than older generations, they displayed far lower levels of offline news media consumption, and moderately lower levels of political interest than those older generations. The second hypothesis, investigating the effect of age upon the causes of civic participation, was supported. There did not appear to be any significant difference in civic participation between those who exhibited high offline news media use and those who did not, but members of older generations did exhibit higher levels of participation than did members of younger generations.

The third hypothesis examined in this study, focused on the causes of political participation, was also unsupported. Instead of greater political participation resulting from all forms of media use and political interest, there does not appear to be any significant connection between these factors. Similarly, the fourth hypothesis, concerning generational effects on participation levels, was also not supported. Instead of younger generations exhibiting higher levels of participation, their levels of participation in each area (civic, political, and total) were lower than the levels of older generations, suggesting that the more traditional models of participation (focusing on age, income, and education) still hold true.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the results from this study affirm that members of older generations tend to have higher levels of participation than members of younger generations, across all forms of participation. This finding holds true despite the fact that members of the oldest generation typically exhibited the lowest levels of online media use. Taken together, these two findings suggest that online media use does not have a large impact on participation, as those age groups with the highest rates of online media use exhibited typically the lowest rates of participation, in all three realms (civic, political, and total).

The results of this study indicate that online media use alone does not form the major factor in increasing participation among groups of differential resources, thus allowing groups with previously low levels of participation to become more participatory members of their society, as has been suggested by a number of contemporary scholars (cf. Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010, and Harfoush 2009). Instead, it appears as if traditional models of participation still have the largest impact upon participation rates, regardless of online media use. Going back to the distinction between the internet as a potential mobilizing factor or a potential reinforcing factor, it appears that the internet, at least in this study, can be seen as a means of reinforcing existing patterns of participation, rather than mobilizing those who do not normally participate into participation.

The research discussed above analyzed the impact of a number of variables on engagement and interest, in both the civic and political spheres. According to the information presented, it appears that the generational theory seems to be refuted, and

more traditional models of participation supported—not only do individuals generally become more likely to participate as they get older, but the newest generation in the political world appears to be the least participatory generation. While being online may interest members of the youngest generation, this paper finds that the youngest generation is actually less politically active than older generations. As seen in Table 3.2, age appears to be strongly negatively correlated with online news consumption and strongly positively correlated with offline news consumption, such that older individuals, who are both the least likely to utilize online media sources and the most likely to get their news from offline sources, also appear to be the most likely to participate in both the civic and political worlds.

There are a few limitations to the study that should be addressed, and potentially ameliorated or addressed by any potential future research on the topic. One of the major limitations of this study is its reliance on secondary data. While the ANES is an invaluable resource for determining nationwide trends and large-scale social developments, there were several times during the course of this research paper when questions were raised which the ANES simply did not provide any answers for. A future research paper addressing some of the specific components of new media (components such as Facebook, Twitter, and so-called "clicktivism"[14]) would be a welcome addition to the current research. If the youngest generation is most likely to utilize these social media platforms, it would be interesting to examine any possible links between these new media platforms and participation.

[14] This term is a portmanteau of "click" and "activism", implying a form of activism with little expended effort.

According to data from the Pew Center (2014b) on social media networking usage among Americans, 74 percent of all internet users use some kind of social networking site, with the percentage of members of the youngest generation (18-29) using social networking sites reaching up to 89. Of all adults who are online, 19 percent of online users use Twitter, and 71 percent use Facebook. Again, members of the youngest generation use social networking sites at a much higher rate than members of older generations. These specific social networking sites were not asked about in the 2008 ANES—only general questions about online news media, and online access at all, were included in the survey. Indeed, Facebook only came into existence in February of 2004 (and did not become widely available or hugely popular until several years after that), and Twitter only came into existence in March 2006 (and took a while to become widely accepted/popular). Because the nature of online communication and participation is changing so rapidly, it is difficult to fully cover every aspect of participation (or online media use) in a periodical, large-scale survey with many more areas of focus than just online media use. As such, any sort of future research into the linkages between online media use and participation would definitely have to take into account the myriad ways in which individuals can possibly consume online media in the modern technological age.

The concept of clicktivism in particular has been a topic of much recent research regarding the potentially changing nature not only of what participation is, but also what participation is not. In a nutshell, clicktivism, or digital activism may be defined as "the expanding use of digital technologies—mobile phones and Internet-enabled devices, for example—in campaigns for social and political change". (Joyce 2010: vii) In other

words, clicktivism refers to participation which takes place online, with (critics would argue) very little effort expended.

At this point in the history of research on the subject, critical consensus has yet to be achieved—several scholars (cf. Halupka 2014) suggest that clicktivism is a legitimate political act in and of itself, while others (cf. Rojas and Puig-i-Abril 2009) posit that while clicktivism is not necessarily the same as participation, clicktivism may help point the way towards more traditional forms of participation. Still others see digital activism as "slacktivism"[15], defining the action as nothing more than "a willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause, with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change". (Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2014: 1149)

Marc Hooghe, Bengü Hosch-Dayican, and Jan W. van Deth examine the changing nature of political participation in general, and the act of clicktivism in particular, in their dialogue "Conceptualizing Political Participation" (2014). Hosch-Dayican notes that "it is hard to draw a line between political participation and communication as these [online] activities are by definition communicative" (344). Throughout the dialogue, the authors note the perils in understanding online political participation as being equivalent to traditional, offline political participation, with Hooghe in particular questioning whether or not online methods of participation are purposefully conducted, or are simply done thoughtlessly, without any sort of actual political intent. Hooghe ends his section of the dialogue by noting that the definition of political participation has changed, and "the

[15] This term is a portmanteau of "slacker" and "activism", implying a form of activism with virtually no expended effort.

study of political participation…will become more complicated than ever before." (341) Conducting some sort of investigation into the connection between actual online activism, more traditional means of participation, and age would prove particularly enlightening.

A potential addition to this study would be to update the research presented here. The most recent election investigated in this analysis was the 2008 election, an election that has already faded largely into memory by the time this analysis was completed. Future research could build on the work done here, bringing the 2012 (and beyond) elections into the study to see whether the trends described here have continued (or have halted).

Writing about generational differences concerning the then-upcoming 2012 election cycle, the Pew Center (2011) notes that participation and political interest have declined sharply since the 2008 election among members of the youngest generation. Are more traditional methods of participation becoming the only means of participating once again? Is any effect of new media on participation disappearing completely? Any sort of updated research on the connections between media use and participation could potentially help shed some light on the question of why younger voters appear to be less politically inclined than they have been in the past, and could serve to compare the election examined here with the most recent presidential election—the three presidential elections since the dawn of the online era.

Generally, this research paper has investigated two of the main forces impacting participation, in all forms: new media and old media. New media continually increases, and is continually adopted and adapted by members of the youngest generations

(primarily), leading to increased participation. This seems to be, however, generally counteracted somewhat by the tendency of members of older generations to be more aligned with traditional avenues to participation—available money to spend, more time to devote to causes[16], and higher educational attainment. Younger people tend to be less politically (and civically) organized than older people—as mentioned, formal organization tends to take time, money, and education. New technology is definitely bridging the participatory gap between younger generations and older generations: political participation among the youngest generation has increased in the elections investigated here, but this increase has not been enough to outweigh the traditional avenues to participation. While the impact of technology has been somewhat overblown by previous scholars, the present research suggests that the impact is still present, and still noteworthy.

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[16] Free time was not asked about in the ANES.

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter 3

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Civic Participation	1.58	1.05	0	3
Political Participation	1.23	1.24	0	6
Total Participation	2.82	1.93	0	9
Offline News Consumption	14.44	7.88	0	35
Online News Consumption	1.01	2.05	0	7
Political Interest	.52	.50	0	1
Voting in 2004 Election	.65	.48	0	1
Male	.43	.49	0	1
White	.69	.46	0	1
Generation	2.58	1.08	1	4
Income	2.17	1.25	1	5
Education	2.64	1.08	1	5

Table 3.2: Comparison of Means for Chapter 3

Variable	Civic Participation	Political Participation	Online Media Use	Offline Media Use
Generation				
17-30	1.32	.81	1.44	9.86
31-44	1.72	1.23	1.62	12.24
45-49	1.76	1.38	.90	15.27
60 And Over	1.79	1.38	.34	17.97
Education				
No HS Diploma	.96	.79	.09	15.55
HS Diploma or Equivalency	1.33	.85	.62	14.01
Some College	1.79	1.27	1.22	13.46
BA or Equivalency	2.17	1.78	1.81	13.77
MA or Equivalency	2.34	1.85	1.88	13.76
Income				
$0-$29,999	1.45	1.14	.65	14.21
$30,000-$59,999	1.47	.95	1.14	13.53
$60,000-$89,999	1.91	1.38	1.40	14.43
$90,000-$119,999	2.02	1.47	1.26	13.12
$120,000 and above	2.07	1.55	1.39	13.66

Table 3.3: Correlation Matrix of Dependent Variables Used In Chapter 3

	CIVPART08	POLPART08	TOTPART08
CIVPART08	1.00		
POLPART08	.43	1.00	
TOTPART08	.82	.87	1.00

Table 3.4: Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables Used In Chapter 3

	OFFNEWS08	ONNEWS08	INTEREST08	PASTVOTE08	GENDER08	RACE08	GENERATE08	INCOME08	EDUCATE08
OFFNEWS08	1.00								
ONNEWS08	-.01	1.00							
INTEREST08	.30	.06	1.00						
PASTVOTE08	.22	.10	.22	1.00					
GENDER08	.12	.02	.04	-.03	1.00				
RACE08	-.12	.12	-.06	.09	.02	1.00			
GENERATE08	.35	-.21	.18	.29	.06	.07	1.00		
INCOME08	-.03	.21	.08	.17	.11	.24	-.03	1.00	
EDUCATE08	-.09	.28	.15	.29	.03	.18	-.08	.41	1.00

Table 3.5: Regression of Online News Media Use in 2008

Online News Media Use	
Voting in 2004 Election	.48*
	(.21)
Generation	
17-30	1.25***
	(.23)
31-44	1.27***
	(.23)
45-59	.47**
	(.17)
Male	-.14
	(.17)
White	.19
	(.17)
Income	
$30,000-$59,999	.23
	(.21)
$60,000-$89,999	.10
	(.29)
$90,000-$119,999	.01
	(.29)
$120,000 and above	-.01
	(.37)
Education	
HS or equivalency	.19
	(.13)
Some college	.78**
	(.22)
Bachelor's degree	1.10***
	(.22)
More than Bachelor's	1.14**
	(.41)
Prob >F=.00; R^2=.14	

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Table 3.6: Regression of Political Interest in 2008

Political Interest	
Voting in 2004 Election	.28***
	(.06)
Generation	
17-30	-.25**
	(.08)
31-44	-.17*
	(.07)
45-59	-.05
	(.09)
Male	.04
	(.05)
White	-.05
	(.06)
Income	
$30,000-$59,999	-.03
	(.08)
$60,000-$89,999	.02
	(.08)
$90,000-$119,999	-.19*
	(.09)
$120,000 and above	.11
	(.09)
Education	
HS or equivalency	-.25
	(.10)
Some college	-.12
	(.10)
Bachelor's degree	-.06
	(.12)
More than Bachelor's	.07
	(.12)
Prob >F=.00; R^2=.19	

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Table 3.7: Regression of Offline News Media Use in 2008

Offline News Media Use	
Voting in 2004 Election	3.64***
	(.82)
Generation	
17-30	-6.60***
	(.93)
31-44	-4.78***
	(.87)
45-59	-1.96*
	(.85)
Male	1.15*
	(.54)
White	-2.76***
	(.81)
Income	
$30,000-$59,999	-.37
	(.71)
$60,000-$89,999	.40
	(.91)
$90,000-$119,999	-.52
	(1.11)
$120,000 and above	.53
	(1.12)
Education	
HS or equivalency	-.84
	(.93)
Some college	-1.89
	(1.13)
Bachelor's degree	-1.57
	(1.27)
More than Bachelor's	-3.09
	(1.55)
Prob >F=.00; R^2=.21	

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Table 3.8: Regression of Civic Participation in 2008

Civic Participation	
Offline News Consumption	.01
	(.01)
Online News Consumption	-.01
	(.03)
Political Interest	.29**
	(.10)
Voting in 2004 Election	.01
	(.13)
Male	-.28*
	(.11)
White	.22*
	(.11)
Generation	
17-30	-.22
	(.17)
31-44	-.10
	(.17)
45-59	-.14
	(.14)
Income	
$30,000-$59,999	-.11
	(.15)
$60,000-$89,999	-.06
	(.19)
$90,000-$119,999	.02
	(.21)
$120,000 and above	-.00
	(.20)
Education	
HS or equivalency	.23
	(.24)
Some college	.73**
	(.22)
Bachelor's degree	1.08***
	(.25)
More than Bachelor's	1.27***
	(.24)
Prob >F=.00; R^2=.26	

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Table 3.9: Regression of Political Participation in 2008

Political Participation	
Offline News Consumption	.00
	(.01)
Online News Consumption	.06
	(.04)
Political Interest	.69***
	(.15)
Voting in 2004 Election	.55***
	(.13)
Male	-.16
	(.10)
White	.01
	(.12)
Generation	
17-30	-.09
	(.20)
31-44	.06
	(.19)
45-59	.13
	(.17)
Income	
$30,000-$59,999	-.49**
	(.15)
$60,000-$89,999	-.32
	(.25)
$90,000-$119,999	-.04
	(.29)
$120,000 and above	-.52*
	(.25)
Education	
HS or equivalency	-.12
	(.15)
Some college	.09
	(.17)
Bachelor's degree	.48
	(.26)
More than Bachelor's	.26
	(.26)

Prob >F=.00; R^2=.31

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Table 3.10: Regression of Total Participation in 2008

Total Participation	
Offline News Consumption	.02
	(.01)
Online News Consumption	.06
	(.06)
Political Interest	.97***
	(.20)
Voting in 2004 Election	.57**
	(.21)
Male	-.44*
	(.18)
White	.23
	(.18)
Generation	
17-30	-.31
	(.31)
31-44	-.05
	(.30)
45-59	-.01
	(.24)
Income	
$30,000-$59,999	-.59*
	(.25)
$60,000-$89,999	-.37
	(.33)
$90,000-$119,999	-.02
	(.44)
$120,000 and above	-.49
	(.36)
Education	
HS or equivalency	.09
	(.34)
Some college	.80**
	(.34)
Bachelor's degree	1.54***
	(.40)
More than Bachelor's	1.50***
	(.37)

Prob >F=.00; R^2=.36

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Chapter 4: Are Rural Citizens Less Connected to the Internet, and do They Participate Less? The Impact of Regional Location on Civic and Political Participation in 2008

The significance of participating in society cannot be overstated. It is through participation in the civic world that individuals form connections with the world and the people around them, and ultimately become fully-formed members of the society in which they live. Participation in the political world is arguably even more important in democratic societies, as it is only through the various interactions with their government and leadership that citizens can fully become part of a democratic society. As Jan W. van Deth writes, "participation is the *elixir of life* for democracy". (350) Participation is a vital part of life in any society.

Examining the political and civic world of the United States in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* serves as a useful guide to the importance of participation in societies. Focused mostly on the political world, de Tocqueville noted the importance of a free press, and the potential of politicians using newspapers (the dominant form of mass media at the time) to gain favor in the political realm (204-214). Noting that "[C]ensorship and universal suffrage are contradictory and cannot coexist for long" (207), de Tocqueville discounted the importance of individual media sources, stating that only as an institution does the press have any power in the nation (212) Although the forms of mass media and mass communication have evolved since the time of *Democracy in America*, their uses have not significantly changed. Studying de Tocqueville allows one to see the relative beginnings of the democratic process in America, before modern communication processes, and indeed before a great deal of what we recognize as politics in modern America came into being. By studying de

Tocqueville's work, one can not only gain a sense of perspective, but also a more fully-formed understanding of the processes of participation in general, and the origins of democracy in America.

There are many factors that can influence an individual's ability to participate in society, however, regardless of their desire to participate. One of the most significant factors affecting participation is residential location. Not everyone has the same opportunity to participate, and rural or urban location can have a strong impact on these routes to participation. Daniel Lichter and David Brown, in "Rural America in an Urban Society: Changing Spatial and Social Boundaries" suggest that the division between urban America and rural America is shrinking, and the ways of life in rural communities and urban areas are becoming more similar with each passing year. Sharon Strover, in "The US Digital Divide: A Call for a New Philosophy" suggests that while internet availability may be more open than ever before, practical home use of the internet is not: "many rural areas lack broadband connections…access and connection quality issues are more significant to rural populations than to urban. When it comes to higher speeds, rural areas are far behind their urban counterparts." (117) Even if internet access itself is becoming more commonplace, regular and reliable internet access is still leading to a digital divide in the United States. If online media use leads to participation, as suggested by this research paper, then the digital divide will play a significant role in determining not only online media usage, but also in determining participation rates in the United States.

While it is useful to examine the effects of civic and political participation on the electoral process, and to consider each form of participation in and of itself, one of the major focuses of this research is on the impact of the internet on civic and political participation, and ultimately on the electoral process in the United States. As such, this paper examines the impact of internet access on the civic and political participation examined previously, with a particular focus on the "digital divide", comparing not only geographic regions of the United States, but also urban/rural locations of the ANES respondents.

While one of the major hypotheses of this paper was that rural citizens would exhibit less participation than their urban counterparts, this did not prove to be the case. In fact, urban residents were shown to participate consistently less than did residents of rural areas. As such, the major focus of this research is on the impact of internet use on those participatory practices—with increased internet usage and online news media consumption, the difference between urban rates of participation and rural rates of participation should decrease dramatically.

Theory

Traditionally, participation has been assumed to be the result of three general factors: age, income, and education. As each of these factors increases, according to the traditional models, participation also increases (cf. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995, Berinsky and Lenz 2011, et al.). The current study suggests, based on the literature described above, that this traditional model is somewhat lacking in regards to modern participatory practices, and needs to be updated. As such, the primary contribution of

this dissertation is the use of national-level ANES data to investigate the significance of technology upon participation (both politically and civically) among all generations, with the thought that the generations most affected by the new technology, and thus exhibiting much higher levels of participation in general, will be members of the youngest generation.

Larry Bartels and Simon Jackman, in "A Generational Model of Political Learning", note the significance of age cohorts in shaping participation. The authors note that "[t]here is clearly a sustaines period of heightened sensitivity to political events during adolescence" (16), suggesting support for the imprinting phenomenon, whereby certain salient events—such as the rise of a new technology—stick with groups throughout their lives, and affect their participation. Kaat Smets and Anja Nuendorf, in "The Hierarchies of Age-Period-Cohort Research" find a similar result, but note that instead of an instantaneous change, "it takes the collective experiences of at least two elections to form a pattern". (42)

While internet access in and of itself might explain some of the differences in civic and political participation among groups, this view assumes that the internet is equally available to all individuals. While previous research on the so-called "digital divide" (cf. Herrnson et al. 2007, Min 2010, Wei and Hindman 2011, etc.) has focused on many of the demographic variables examined in the first study, such as race (e.g. Jackson et al. 2001), gender (e.g Cooper 2006), income (e.g. Martin and Robinsom 2007), and age (e.g. Loges and Jung 2001), one of the major contributors to a digital divide that has been examined in previous literature is simple geography, or where in the nation an individual is located (cf. Hindman 2000, Torrens 2008, Arai and Naganuma 2010). As such,

another major addition to the current study is geographic location, or where in the country individuals reside.

Geography has long been assumed to play the most significant role in the formation of the so-called “digital divide”, separating those with the internet from those without. Agarwal, Animesh, and Prasad (2009) note that geography may be the single most significant factor leading to a digital divide, finding a more significant correlation between internet use and geographic location than between internet use and any other variable examined (287). This paper examines the effect of geographic location on internet use, and ultimately on civic and political participation, by dividing the responses from the 2008 American National Election Study into four geographic regions, based on the location of each respondent[17]. In this paper, the traditional SES theory of participation, suggesting that as individuals' socioeconomic status increases, their participation also increases, is compared both to the new, generational theory (suggesting that technology and age are the most significant factors leading one towards participation) and also a regional theory, suggesting that regional location and urbanicity play a significant role in political and civic participation. In this paper, the traditional SES theory of participation, suggesting that as individuals' socioeconomic status increases, their participation also increases, is compared to the new, generational theory (suggesting that technology and age are the most significant factors leading one towards participation).

[17] Regions were coded according to U.S. Census Bureau definitions, with the exception of moving Delaware and Washington, DC into a newly-created East region.

Connecting previous research regarding communication and political participation to Karl Mannheim's generational theory (1970), a pattern about the effectiveness of online communication and political participation begins to form. According to Mannheim, generations are cohorts of individuals marked by their shared experience of some kind of historical event, which imprints on their lives. Some of these generational imprints were discussed above, but briefly, technological developments in communication patterns seem to come along approximately every 40 or so years (note the discussion above concerning the major changes in communications technologies aligning with presidential elections.

Similarly, Morley Winograd (2008) discusses the cyclical patterns of generational types in US history, and how they can align with what he identifies as the major eras of party dominance in the US. Briefly, and most significantly, Winograd identifies the most recent full generation to come to voting age (Millennials) as a "civic" generation, much like the WWII-era generation. (In other words, people have more in common with their grandparents' generation than with their parents' generation.) This cyclical theory suggests that the Millennials are likely to be active voters, are likely to be optimistic about politics, and are likely to be genuinely interested in civic engagement and participation in the political world.

In addition to these generational theories, one of the most significant schools of thought concerning about the ways in which the online realm may be utilized and understood by the general public has come from the works of Jürgen Habermas, and his descriptions of the "public sphere". Writing about the development of the public sphere, Habermas noted three critical conditions for the development and continued flourishing

of the public sphere. First, the sphere must be an area that disregards social status—all individuals must be able to have a say, regardless of any sort of outside social standing. Second, the sphere must be organized around some sort of a domain of common concern—the individuals meeting in the public sphere must have some sort of common concern binding them together, which everyone cares about. Finally, Habermas noted the importance of inclusivity—everyone had to be able to have access to the public sphere, and feel like they could become a part of the sphere. (Habermas, 1989)

Using Habermas's typology of the three critical developments for the creation of a public sphere, it seems clear that the online realm meets the first characteristic easily—online, social status is essentially ignored, as has been illustrated in several references discussed above. Online, people can change or adapt their identities (for better or for worse), and whatever is presented online is generally accepted as reality at the time and in that setting. The second criterion of Habermas's public sphere, an organization around a domain of common concern, may also be understood as taking place online. Assuming the internet is another world of sorts, individuals may find (or create) their own forums for discussing anything of interest to them, and doubtless find someone else, somewhere in the world, who's also interested in that matter. Habermas's final criterion of a public sphere, that everyone must be included in the public sphere, is a bit more problematic. As shown in the second research paper in this research plan, the digital divide does exist, and not everyone in society has access to the internet at all (and, within those concerns, not everyone has equal access—some have better or more rapid access than others, meaning the inequality does not stop at the simple issue of accessibility). Still, clearly, two out of

the three conditions posed by Habermas for the creation of a public sphere seem to be met by the internet in general.

Looking at the political realm specifically, not all individuals interested in politics meet in online settings, but among those who do, there are a number of forums in which their voices may be heard, and everyone who participates has the ability to do so on equal terms. Having asserted that, it is important to note the development of moderation in online forums and discussion areas. Generally speaking, many sites (both political and non-political) allow users to express themselves freely, but may have some sort of monitoring position or ability to remove or silence individuals who are being disruptive or otherwise cruel to other participants in the forum (see, for example, Wright 2006). Does this censorship harm the notion of a public sphere? Perhaps the better question would be: could a truly open public space, with no censorship or protection of participants ever be successful?

The answer to those questions is a difficult one. Looking at Habermas's criteria for a public sphere, and taking them literally, no, the internet is not a public sphere. However, taking Habermas's criteria literally, it is difficult to conceive of any type of public sphere ever existing at all for any length of time. In the bourgeois time, which Habermas was so fond of discussing, the public sphere disappeared because outside interests were able to come in and dominate the sphere. Perhaps the notion of a public sphere needs to be modified somewhat—in order to ensure an area of common domain, which cannot be taken over by outside interests, truly uninterested in the domain, at least some degree of control and regulation may be necessary. Habermas's notion of a public sphere was likely only an ideal type of phenomenon, and it would be very difficult to find

any sort of continually successful and open public sphere in any sort of society. Philip N. Howard (2005) notes that in his research (conducted between 1996-2002), political polarization appears to be increasing in the online realm, and the public sphere appears to be at least somewhat fragmented, as the number of individuals who go to multiple types of political websites was decreasing. Instead of multiple opinions, Howard suggests, individuals are seeking out information that aligns with their previously-held beliefs—not much of a truly "public sphere". However, there is still something significant to be gained from an examination of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, and in researching online participation and involvement in the light of that ideal structure.

Participation in the public sphere has been a concern of theorists since Habermas first began theorizing about the existence of a public sphere at all, and those concerns have only intensified since the rise of the internet as a major means of communication. Writing in the early days of major online media, Warnick (1998) suggests that even by the late 1990s, participation online and participation in the outside world might be significantly different, noting that "browsers [of the internet] may take simulated participation in the public sphere for real participation." (80) This somewhat pessimistic view suggests that instead of participating in the "real world", online users might simply assume that clicking a link or reading a website serves as a legitimate form of participation. (This tendency to participate online, without a corresponding offline activity, has somewhat derisively begun to be known as "clicktivism" (cf. Goodman and Boyd 2011: 107).) An investigation into the ways in which people participate in their society, both online and offline, would prove illuminating.

Applying the work of Mannheim to the work of Winograd, it becomes clear that the generation currently entering voting age in the United States (18 years old) is this "Millennial" category, marked by political activism, interest in politics and civic engagement, and increased political participation compared to other, previous generations. As such, this group of individuals should prove not only more technologically advanced than previous generations (due primarily to coming of age during a time of vast technological advancements), but should also be more politically active and involved than previous generations.

In *Generations and Work* (2014), Eric Bolland and Carlo Lopes suggest that while different generations begin with differing outlooks and attitudes about life, eventually, "[y]ounger people become more like the previous generations…[t]his is a kind of regression to norm in which youthful ambition becomes consrained by life circumstances. Realities set in." (32) Taking participation as a part of life, this argument suggests that even if some differences among age groups regarding participation rates are apparent, these differences are only temporary, with time eventually turning each generation essentially into the previous generation, at least in terms of their participation rates.

Pippa Norris (2000) identified two major theses regarding the effect of the internet in general on participation: mobilization, which argues that the internet serves to allow previously disadvantaged and non-participatory groups access to the political world, and reinforcement, which argues that the internet serves at best to reinforce existing gaps in participation, and at worst to widen the gap between those who participate and those who do not. While Norris's work examined political participation

specifically, this research paper examines the effect of internet use and specifically online media use on both forms of participation (political and civic). This way, multiple forms of participation are examined, giving a better picture of the true effect of internet use (measured by online media use) upon participatory activities.

It must be stressed that this model does not suggest that technology is some kind of "magic bullet", and that all generations now exhibit equal participation rates, because of the use of new technologies. The point of the current research paper is not merely to show the importance of new technologies in affecting social change, but also to examine the various ways in which these new technologies can have such an impact on a society, particularly in terms of participation within the society. Through the theories and research on participation and the connections between primarily age and participation rates in society, the current research paper complements and expands upon previous research, by examining the links between technological change and political and civic participation, with a focus on understanding precisely how and why any potential changes in avenues to participation have occurred.

Hypotheses

Paper 2 $Hypothesis_1$ — Urban Regions have More Internet Access:

Individuals living in more urban areas of the United States will exhibit more on-line internet use for their news than individuals living in rural areas, controlling for income, race, gender, and political party.

Paper 2 $Hypothesis_2$— Urban Regions have More Civic Participation:

Because individuals living in more urban areas of the United States will exhibit more on-line internet use for their news than individuals living in

rural areas, urban citizens will have greater civic participation than rural citizens, controlling for income, race, gender, and political party.

Paper 2 Hypothesis$_3$ — Urban Regions have More Political Participation:

Because individuals living in more urban areas of the United States will exhibit more on-line internet use for their news than individuals living in rural areas, urban citizens will have greater political participation than rural citizens, controlling for income, race, gender, and political party.

Paper 2 Hypothesis$_4$ — Urban Regions have More Total Participation:

Because individuals living in more urban areas of the United States will exhibit more on-line internet use for their news than individuals living in rural areas, urban citizens will have greater total participation than rural citizens, controlling for income, race, gender, and political party.

For a more explicit view of the ways in which these variables interact, the variables and an estimate of relevant equations are listed below (see Table 4.1 for a more detailed description of the new variables used in this analysis). The major dependent variables in this paper, civic, political, and total participation (CIVPART08, POLPART08 and TOTPART08, respectively) are projected to be influenced by a combination of use of urban location (URBAN08), online news sources (ONNEWS08), offline news use (OFFNEWS08), the generation of the respondent (GENERATE08), and the region of the United States in which an individual resides. These variables, in addition to the control variables of gender (GENDER08), race (RACE08), income

(INCOME08), and education (EDUCATE08), will determine the political and civic participation of respondents in the 2008 ANES. This can be expressed in the following equations:

$$CIVPART08 = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{ URBAN08} + \beta_2 \text{ GENERATE08} + \beta_3 \text{ OFFNEWS08} + \beta_4 \text{ ONNEWS08} + \beta_5 \text{ GENDER08} + \beta_6 \text{ RACE08} + \beta_7 \text{ INCOME08} + \beta_8 \text{ EDUCATE08} + \beta_9 \text{ ACCESS08} + \beta_{10} \text{ REGION} + e$$

$$POLPART08 = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{ URBAN08} + \beta_2 \text{ GENERATE08} + \beta_3 \text{ OFFNEWS08} + \beta_4 \text{ ONNEWS08} + \beta_5 \text{ GENDER08} + \beta_6 \text{ RACE08} + \beta_7 \text{ INCOME08} + \beta_8 \text{ EDUCATE08} + \beta_9 \text{ ACCESS08} + \beta_{10} \text{ REGION} + e$$

$$TOTPART08 = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{ URBAN08} + \beta_2 \text{ GENERATE08} + \beta_3 \text{ OFFNEWS08} + \beta_4 \text{ ONNEWS08} + \beta_5 \text{ GENDER08} + \beta_6 \text{ RACE08} + \beta_7 \text{ INCOME08} + \beta_8 \text{ EDUCATE08} + \beta_9 \text{ ACCESS08} + \beta_{10} \text{ REGION} + e$$

Data and Methods

The data for the current research comes from the 2008 American National Election Study data set. Utilizing 2,102 post-election interviews[18] (centered around the US election of November 4, 2008), this particular ANES study contains several questions about political behaviors, including questions about political behaviors connected with media use, of particular interest to this research. Post-election interviews for the data set were conducted between November and December 2008. Interviews for the post-election interviews averaged approximately 91 minutes. The estimated response rate for the survey was approximately 57.7% for the post-election interviews.

[18] While the ANES survey utilized both pre-election and post-election interviews, the current research focuses on post-election results only.

According to the user's guide for the data set, found on the ANES website (http://electionstudies.org/studypages/2008prepost/2008prepost_UsersGuide.pdf), respondents who participated in the study were not told they were participating in the National Election Study, in order to avoid any sort of self-selection bias on the part of the survey respondents. By not informing respondents what kind of study they were participating in, the survey includes respondents from all backgrounds and political beliefs/value systems, allowing for a more generalizable analysis of results, with proper weighting.

Only citizens of legal voting age in the United States at the time of the 2008 election (specifically, of legal voting age a few days before the 2008 election) were considered to be the target population for the interviews. By limiting the population of respondents to only those members of the general population who were able to vote, the survey once again allows for greater generalizability, as age can be a confound when examining surveys regarding political behaviors—in this case, because everyone could vote in the 2008 election, the post-election responses concerning voting habits are not affected by any sort of age bias in responses or survey questions.

Interviews in the ANES study were conducted face-to-face, including a self-administered interview segment. As with their controls for self-selection, by doing this, the ANES study attempts to remove any sort of confound or selection complication from their data set, allowing for an increased sense of anonymity in responses, ensuring that the results of any sort of research done with the survey results would be useful and generalizable.

There are a multitude of questions in the 2008 ANES data set regarding participation in both the civic and political spheres. By examining the responses to these questions, and by examining how these responses may potentially differ along a myriad of variables (including age and gender, to list two common demographic variables), insights into the process of political communication, and the ways in which new social media may be used in that process, may be obtained. For the present research paper, there is one major dependent variable of interest: specifically, participation, measured three different ways (civic, political, and combined civic and political).

Political participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had ever (1) joined a protest march or rally, (2) contributed money to a political candidate, (3) voted in a presidential primary/caucus, (4) talked to anyone else about voting for a particular candidate, (5) attended any political rallies or speeches, and (6) done any other work for a campaign. Civic participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had ever (1) attended a city or school board meeting, (2) done any volunteer work in the past 12 months, and (3) contributed to a church or other charity in the last 12 months. The original two participation variables (CIVPART08 and POLPART08) were then combined into a total participation variable (TOTPART08)

To measure offline news media use (OFFNEWS08), questions about how many days in the past week respondents (1) read an offline newspaper, (2) watched local and (3) national TV news broadcasts, and (4) listened to radio news. These four measures

were combined into one additive scale, measuring 0-35[19]. To measure online news media use (ONNEWS08), questions about how often respondents read an online newspaper was utilized. (This variable is coded 0-7, based on days per week an online newspaper was read.)

Urban location was measured using the interviewer's impression of the location of the respondent's dwelling. These responses were then grouped into two categories: 0=Urban (N=901) and 1=Rural (N=226). To construct a "generation" variable for this analysis, respondents were divided into four groups, according to their reported ages. The groups utilized were the 17-30 age range (coded as 1, N = 240), the 31-44 age range (coded as 2, N = 277), the 45-59 age range (coded as 3, N = 343), and the 60 and above age range (coded as 4, N = 279)[20]. Each of these age ranges were then coded into individual dummy variables (INTEREST081 (for the 17-30 age range), INTEREST082 (31-44), INTEREST083 (45-59), and INTREST084 (60 and above)). The variable concerning gender (GENDER08) was coded 0, 1: males were coded as 1 (N = 492), and females were coded as 0 (N = 658). The variable concerning race (RACE08) was also coded 0, 1: whites were coded as 1 (N = 699), and nonwhites were coded as 0 (N = 447). Income (INCOME08) was divided into six categories, based on the divisions made in the original data set: $0-$29,999 (N = 416), $30,000-$59,999 (N = 306), $60,000-$89,999 (N = 170), $90,000-$119,999 (N = 88), $120,000-$149,999 (N = 34), and $150,000 and above (N = 48). Education (EDUCATE08) was coded into six categories: no high school

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[19] The current scales are on a scale of 0-7, with local TV broadcasts being asked about at both an afternoon and evening airing.

[20] There were 234 cases of missing data, involving people who did report their age.

diploma or equivalency (N = 156), high school diploma or equivalency (N = 406), some college, but no degree (N = 219), a junior or community college degree or a bachelor's degree or equivalency (N = 294), and more than a bachelor's degree (N = 72). As with the generation variable, both the income and education variables were further divided into individual dummy variables, representing each of the categories.

For this research paper, variables concerning internet access and region of residence were also constructed. These variables were all dummy variables, with the variable concerning internet access (ACCESS08) coded 0, 1: those with internet access were coded as 1 (N=804); those without were coded as 0 (N=346). For each region, a dummy variable was created such that individuals living in that region were coded as 1, and individuals not in that region were coded as 0. The created regions were Western states[21] (WEST; 0=879, 1=271), Midwestern states[22] (MIDWEST; 0=943, 1=207), Southern states[23] (SOUTH; 0=622, 1=528), and Eastern states[24] (EAST; 0=1006, 1=144). These groupings were determined based on the definitions used by the United States Census Bureau, with the exception of moving Delaware and Washington, DC into the northeastern region, creating a newly-designated East region. A summary of all variables

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[21] Washington (N=11), Oregon (N=13), California (N=135), Nevada (N=16), Colorado (N=46), Arizona (N=21), and New Mexico (N=29)

[22] North Dakota (N=18), Kansas (N=15), Minnesota (N=16), Wisconsin (N=7), Michigan (N=56), Ohio (N=50), Indiana (N=26), and Illinois (N=19).

[23]Texas (N=170), Oklahoma (N=17), Virginia (N=14), North Carolina (N=31), South Carolina (N=32), Georgia (N=41), Florida (N=91), Alabama (N=16), Mississippi (N=36), Tennessee (N=38), and Louisiana (N=42).

[24] Washington DC (N=6), Delaware (N=10), New York (N=65), Pennsylvania (N=23), New Jersey (N=9), Massachusetts (N=8), Connecticut (N=12), and Rhode Island (N=11).

used in this analysis can be found in Appendix 1, along with a table of descriptive statistics in Table 4.1.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, it appears that on average, individuals participate in the civic world a moderate amount (mean 1.58 on a 0-3 scale), participate in the political world somewhat less (mean 1.23 on a 0-6 scale), and participate overall at a somewhat low rate (mean 2.82 on a 0-9 scale). Respondents do seem to be somewhat voracious in their news consumption, however, with the average respondent consuming an average of just over two forms of offline news media per day each week (mean 14.44 on a 0-35 scale). Online news consumption, however, is significantly lower than this, with the average respondent consuming news online only slightly over one day per week (mean 1.01 on a 0-7 scale). Respondents also displayed higher than average rates of internet access (mean .70 on a 0-1 scale).

Respondents reside predominantly in urban areas of the country (mean .20 on a scale of 0=rural, 1=urban). Regarding geographic location specifically, the majority of respondents in this survey reside in the South region (.46), followed by the West region (.24), the Midwest region (.18), and the East region (.13). Respondents also appear to skew slightly older than average (mean 2.58 on a 1-4 scale) and slightly higher in educational attainment than average (mean 2.64 on a 1-5 scale), but a slightly lower than average in terms of income (mean 2.17 on a 1-5 scale). Demographically speaking, respondents were predominantly female (mean .43 on a 0-1 scale)[25], and were predominantly Caucasian (mean .69 on a 0-1 scale).[26]

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[25] Gender was measured as 0=female, 1=male.

[26] Race was measured as 0=non-white, 1=white.

**********INSERT TABLE 4.1 HERE**********

A comparison of means for the major variables of interest (income, education, age, urbanicity, and regional location) in terms of participation can be found in Table 4.2. In Table 4.3, regions are compared to each other in terms of education, income, and generation. Beginning by examining Table 4.2, some marked differences in participation rates become apparent. According to the information presented in the table, political participation is consistently lower than civic participation, across all age groups, income levels, and levels of educational attainment. Generally speaking, participation of each kind tends to increase with age, with educational attainment, and with increased income levels (though political participation drops slightly from the lowest income group to the next highest income group). Individuals without access to the internet (Civic Participation = 1.77; Political Participation = 1.29) tend to participate in both the civic and political realms more than individuals with internet access (Civic Participation = 1.27; Political Participation = .96). There do not appear to be any strong urbanicity or regional differences in civic participation, though the West region exhibits much higher levels of political participation than any other region (West = 1.47; South = 1.21; Midwest = 1.05; East = 1.11), and residents who live in rural locations (1.28) exhibit moderately greater political participation than residents who live in urban locations (1.01).

Interestingly, online news media use increases with educational attainment, but not with age (there does not appear to be any relationship with income level)—the two younger generations are by far more likely to utilize online news media than are older generations. As would likely be expected, respondents with access to the internet

exhibited far greater rates of online news media consumption (1.36) than those without access to the internet (.03).

As can be seen in Table 4.3, there are marked differences between the regions in each category. The West and the East are high in educational level (West = 2.90; East = 2.94)[27] and income level (West = 2.45; East = 2.50), but the West as a region is, in fact, home to the youngest population, by some margin (West = 2.37; South = 2.60; East = 2.56; Midwest = 2.62). The Midwest and South, in comparison, are low in terms of educational attainment (Midwest = 2.46; South = 2.83) and income level (Midwest = 2.33; South = 2.40), but high in generation. This means that the Midwest and South are home to older individuals (though the South and East are equivalent in terms of generational standing), with lower incomes and lower levels of education attainment. Looking at each variable on its own, the East has the highest education (2.94) and the highest income (2.50), the Midwest has the lowest level of educational attainment (2.46) and the oldest population (2.62), the Midwest has the lowest income (2.33), and the West has the youngest population (2.37). The regions are relatively similar in terms of internet access, with the West exhibiting the highest rates of internet access (.81 on a 0-1 scale), and the other three regions exhibiting similar, and lower, rates of internet access (South = .77; Midwest = .75; East = .72).

**********INSERT TABLES 4.2 AND 4.3 HERE**********

A correlation matrix for the dependent variables can be found in Table 4.4, and a correlation matrix for all independent variables can be found in Table 4.5. There do not appear to be any issues with multicollinearity in this analysis. The correlation matrices

[27] Income and Education are measured on a 0-5 scale; Generation is measured on a 0-4 scale.

do not indicate any potential multicollinearity issues. The total participation variable is highly correlated with both civic participation (.82) and political participation (.87), which signifies that both forms of participation are well represented in the total participation measure. Fortunately, there is a low correlation between the two individual components of the total participation variable, political participation and civic participation (.43).

Regarding the correlation matrix for independent variables, the strongest positive correlations[28] are between education and online news consumption (.42), between income and internet access (.41), and between generation and offline news consumption (.31). This indicates that as offline news consumption increases, age of the respondent also increases; internet access is highly related to income levels; and that as education increases, online news media consumption generally increases as well. The strongest negative correlations were found to exist between online news consumption and generation (-.24) and between offline news consumption and race (-.17). These correlations seem to suggest some support for traditional models of participation, with participation appearing to be directly and positively correlated with offline news consumption, age of the respondent, and initial political interest.

I also computed Cronbach's alpha for the dependent variables and the independent variables used in the investigation, in order to examine the internal consistency of the variables. The alpha score for the three forms of participation was .86, indicating high internal consistency, as would be expected. The alpha score for all other variables used in this analysis (urban location, generation, offline news consumption,

[28] There was also a strong positive correlation between education and income (.41).

online news consumption, gender, race, income, education, internet access, and regional location) was .20, indicating a low level of overlap between the variables.

**********INSERT TABLES 4.4 AND 4.5 HERE**********

Results

As mentioned above, I first compared the means of participation and online news consumption among the various regions and urbanicity of the respondents in this analysis. (Table 4.2) According to the data, individuals in all regions and levels of urbanicity are much more likely to participate in the civic realm than in the political. The West exhibits the most political participation (1.47) by a large margin, but only the second-highest level of civic participation (though the range for civic participation is much smaller (.24, compared to a range of .42 for political participation). Interestingly, rural residents were more likely to participate in both the civic and political sphere, though the difference was much greater for political participation. Regarding regional differences in participation, the Midwest was the least likely region to participate in both the civic realm (1.51) and the political realm (1.05). Looking at online media consumption, urban residents were far more likely than rural residents to read news online. There were some clear regional differences in online media consumption as well—once again, the Midwest exhibited the lowest levels of consumption (.61), while the West exhibited the highest levels of online media consumption (1.52).

Next, in order to investigate civic participation among voting age respondents in 2008, I ran a series of regressions of urban/rural location, generation, offline news consumption, online news consumption, gender, race, income, educational attainment, internet access, and each region of the country across each area of participation (civic,

political, and total). These regressions utilized the fixed-effects model, with the East region being removed from the analyses to serve as a comparison for the other regions. East was removed primarily because that region consistently displayed among the lowest means for each variable, when comparing across regions. The East region also contained by far the fewest respondents of any region in the analysis. According to Table 4.6, the most significant findings, across regions, were for generation, offline news consumption, gender, internet access, and all levels of education.

These findings suggest that while income does not have a significant impact on civic participation at any level, education, in fact, has more of an impact on civic participation than any other single contributing factor, at nearly every level of educational attainment. This seems to suggest that, instead of the other major factors contributing to the digital divide discussed in the introduction, educational attainment is actually the most significant differential between those who do participate and those who do not. Generation was also strongly significant, in that each generation is shown to participate less than the next oldest generation (with the oldest generation being left out of this equation, to serve as a reference group). Somewhat surprisingly, regional differences did not seem to exist, though all regions in the analysis exhibited a lower level of participation when compared to the omitted East region.

Analyzing the results of this regression, it appears that traditional models of participation seem to hold true for civic participation—as age, income, and education level increases, civic participation also increases. Each generation exhibited statistical significance.

For educational attainment, the opposite was true—as educational attainment increased, the statistical significance of the relationship between educational attainment and civic participation also increased. For income level, no statistical significance was achieved, though civic participation did increase with almost each successive income level. Rural location was not significantly correlated with civic participation, nor was regional location. Looking at regional influences on civic participation, however, the omitted East region exhibits the highest levels of civic participation, though there is no large difference between the regions (range = .08). Internet access was strongly, and significantly, correlated with civic participation (.29). Online news consumption was not significantly correlated with civic participation, but offline news consumption exhibited a very strong correlation.

**********INSERT TABLE 4.6 HERE**********

Next, in order to investigate political participation among voting age respondents in 2008, I ran a regression of urban/rural location, generation, offline news consumption, online news consumption, gender, race, income, educational attainment, internet access, and region across political participation. According to Table 4.7, the most significant findings in each region were for generations, both online and offline news consumption, race, almost all levels of education (once again, as education increased, significance also increased), the lowest level of income, internet access, and Western location.

The regression for political participation suggests similar tendencies as the regression for civic participation, though the impact of education appears to be both decreased and only significant at the highest levels. Again, however, educational attainment appears to be more significant than nearly any other contributing factor, with

only age/generational membership playing a comparably significant role. This makes some logical sense, given the history of scholarship examining the link between increasing age and increasing political participation (e.g. Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010; de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Whiteley 2011). Comparing the results for each region, no region exhibits lower levels of participation than the excluded East, while the West exhibits by far the highest levels of participation for any region (and is the only significant regional finding).

Analyzing the results of this regression, it appears that once again, the more traditional models of participation seem to hold true for political participation—as age, income, and education level increase, political participation also increases. Each generation exhibited statistical significance, with the two youngest generations exhibiting the strongest statistical significance.

For educational attainment, the opposite was true—as educational attainment increased, the statistical significance of the relationship between educational attainment and political participation also increased. (The lowest level of education was the only level not to attain statistical significance.) For income level, statistical significance was achieved at only the lowest level, though political participation did increase with each successive income level. Rural location was not significantly correlated with political participation, though regional location was in the West region. Looking at regional influences on civic participation specifically, the West region exhibits the highest levels of civic participation, and there is a tremendous difference between the regions (range = .48), with the West region exhibiting strong statistical significance. Internet access was

also significantly correlated with political participation (.30), as were both online and offline news consumption.

**********INSERT TABLE 4.7 HERE**********

Finally, in order to investigate total participation among voting age respondents in 2008, I ran a regression of urban/rural location, generation, offline news consumption, online news consumption, gender, race, income, educational attainment, internet access, and region of the country across total participation. According to Table 4.8, the most significant findings were for generations, offline and online news consumption, gender, race, internet access, and all levels of education (as usual, and most dramatically, as education increased, significance also increased).

For total participation, education exhibits a strong correlation with participation, higher than with either civic participation or political participation individually. This makes some sense, as the effects of educational attainment on civic participation and the effects of educational attainment on political participation are essentially combined, and those combined effects exhibit great strength and significance concerning total participation. Interestingly, both online and offline news consumption exhibit strong significance for total participation, indicating that those who consume the most information, from any source, are most likely to participate both in the civic sphere and in the political sphere.

Analyzing the results of this regression, it appears that once again, the more traditional models of participation seem to hold true for total participation—as age, income, and education level increase, total participation also increases. Each generation exhibited very strong statistical significance. For educational attainment, a similar

pattern held, but as educational attainment increased, the statistical significance of the relationship between educational attainment and total participation also increased. For income level, mild statistical significance was achieved only at the lowest level, though total participation did increase with each successive income level.

Rural location was not significantly correlated with civic participation, nor was regional location. Looking at regional influences on total participation, however, the West region once again exhibits the highest levels of total participation, with another substantial difference between the regions (range = .56). This seems to indicate that in the total participation variable, political participation holds significantly more weight than civic participation. Internet access was strongly, and significantly, correlated with total participation (.57). Both offline and online news media consumption were strongly correlated with total participation, though the total effect was small (offline = .04; online = .09).

The R^2 values for the models utilized in this paper appear to be robust. This seems to indicate that all the factors in the analyses serve to explain most of the variation in participatory patterns, and this seems to make logical sense—as discussed in the introduction, the factors examined in this study seem to be at least among the most studied and examined variables in previous studies of the digital divide and its effect on participatory actions.

**********INSERT TABLE 4.8 HERE**********

Discussion

These analyses have examined the impact of the digital divide and internet access on participatory activities during the time of the 2008 United States presidential election.

Regarding differences between civic participation and political participation, this analysis suggests that while political participation and civic participation are significantly different concepts, the significance of civic participation tends to disappear somewhat when looking at total participation, suggesting that political participation tends to overwhelm the effects of civic participation, suggesting that political participation is generally much more significant than civic participation.

Examining each hypothesis individually reveals the most basic findings about this investigation into political and civic participation. The first hypothesis, arguing that urban regions of the United States would exhibit higher rates of online news consumption, has been supported by the data presented in Table 4.2, showing that individuals in urban areas exhibit higher levels of online media use than do individuals in rural areas. The second hypothesis, stating that individuals in more urban areas of the United States would exhibit greater civic participation than individuals in rural areas of the United States, was not supported, as according to the regression shown in Table 4.6, rural residents were more likely to participate in the civic realm, with internet access exhibiting a particularly strong influence.

The third hypothesis investigated in this study, arguing that urban areas would exhibit higher levels of political participation than rural areas, was also not supported. According to Table 4.7, rural location did not exhibit as strong an influence on political participation as it did on civic participation, but rural location was still slightly stronger than civic location. Interestingly, internet access did not exhibit as significant an impact on political participation as it did on civic participation. The fourth and final hypothesis being investigated in this analysis argues that individuals living in more urban areas of

the United States will ultimately exhibit greater total participation than individuals living in more rural areas. As with the other hypotheses, this hypothesis was also unsupported. As can be seen in Table 4.8, rural location was still a stronger predictor of participation than was urban location, though the difference never achieved statistical significance. While there were several factors that did achieve statistical significant in the analyses, internet access was among the most commonly significant factors.

Conclusion

Generally, the analyses presented here seem to suggest that a digital divide was clearly present during the 2008 United States election season, such that individuals with internet access were significantly more likely to participate in their society, especially politically speaking. While no clear, consistent urban/rural division was observed regarding participation, education (individuals with greater educational attainment were more likely to participate in any sphere) and generation (older generations were the most likely to participate in any sphere) were both shown to exhibit a strong impact on participation in both the civic and political spheres, and also on overall participation in general.

While this study has proven noteworthy and has led to some very intriguing results, there are a few limitations to the study that should be addressed, and potentially ameliorated or addressed by any potential future research on the topic. One of the major limitations of this study is its reliance on secondary data. While the ANES is an invaluable resource for determining nationwide trends and large-scale social developments, there were several times during the course of this research paper when questions were raised which the ANES simply did not provide any answers for. A future

research paper addressing some of the specific components of new media (components such as Facebook, Twitter, and so-called "clicktivism"[29]) would be a welcome addition to the current research.

According to data from the Pew Center (2014b) on social media networking usage among Americans, 74 percent of all internet users use some kind of social networking site, with the percentage of members of the youngest generation (18-29) using social networking sites reaching up to 89. Of all adults who are online, 19 percent of online users use Twitter, and 71 percent use Facebook. Again, members of the youngest generation use social networking sites at a much higher rate than members of older generations. These specific social networking sites were not asked about in the 2008 ANES—only general questions about online news media, and online access at all, were included in the survey. Indeed, Facebook only came into existence in February of 2004 (and did not become widely available or hugely popular until several years after that), and Twitter only came into existence in March 2006 (and took a while to become widely accepted/popular). Because the nature of online communication and participation is changing so rapidly, it is difficult to fully cover every aspect of participation (or online media use) in a periodical, large-scale survey with many more areas of focus than just online media use. As such, any sort of future research into the linkages between online media use and participation would definitely have to take into account the myriad ways in which individuals can possibly consume online media in the modern technological age.

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[29] This term is a portmanteau of "click" and "activism", implying a form of activism with little expended effort.

The concept of clicktivism in particular has been a topic of much recent research regarding the potentially changing nature not only of what participation is, but also what participation is not. In a nutshell, clicktivism, or digital activism may be defined as "the expanding use of digital technologies—mobile phones and Internet-enabled devices, for example—in campaigns for social and political change". (Joyce 2010: vii) In other words, clicktivism refers to participation which takes place online, with (critics would argue) very little effort expended.

At this point in the history of research on the subject, critical consensus has yet to be achieved—several scholars (cf. Halupka 2014) suggest that clicktivism is a legitimate political act in and of itself, while others (cf. Rojas and Puig-i-Abril 2009) posit that while clicktivism is not necessarily the same as participation, clicktivism may help point the way towards more traditional forms of participation. Still others see digital activism as "slacktivism"[30], defining the action as nothing more than "a willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause, with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change". (Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2014: 1149)

Marc Hooghe, Bengü Hosch-Dayican, and Jan W. van Deth examine the changing nature of political participation in general, and the act of clicktivism in particular, in their dialogue "Conceptualizing Political Participation" (2014). Hosch-Dayican notes that "it is hard to draw a line between political participation and communication as these [online] activities are by definition communicative" (344). Throughout the dialogue, the authors

[30] This term is a portmanteau of "slacker" and "activism", implying a form of activism with virtually no expended effort.

note the perils in understanding online political participation as being equivalent to traditional, offline political participation, with Hooghe in particular questioning whether or not online methods of participation are purposefully conducted, or are simply done thoughtlessly, without any sort of actual political intent. Hooghe ends his section of the dialogue by noting that the definition of political participation has changed, and "the study of political participation…will become more complicated than ever before." (341) Conducting some sort of investigation into the connection between actual online activism, more traditional means of participation, and age would prove particularly enlightening.

A potential addition to this study would be to update the research presented here. The most recent election investigated in this analysis was the 2008 election, an election that has already faded largely into memory by the time this analysis was completed. Future research could build on the work done here, bringing the 2012 (and beyond) elections into the study to see whether the trends described here have continued (or have halted).

Writing about generational differences concerning the then-upcoming 2012 election cycle, the Pew Center (2011) notes that participation and political interest have declined sharply since the 2008 election among members of the youngest generation. Are more traditional methods of participation becoming the only means of participating once again? Is any effect of new media on participation disappearing completely? Any sort of updated research on the connections between media use and participation could potentially help shed some light on the question of why younger voters appear to be less politically inclined than they have been in the past, and could serve to compare the

election examined here with the most recent presidential election—the three presidential elections since the dawn of the online era.

This research paper has investigated two of the main forces impacting participation, in all forms: new media and old media. New media continually increases, and is continually adopted and adapted by members of the youngest generations (primarily), leading to increased participation. This seems to be, however, generally counteracted somewhat by the tendency of members of older generations to be more aligned with traditional avenues to participation—available money to spend, more time to devote to causes[31], and higher educational attainment. Younger people tend to be less politically (and civically) organized than older people—as mentioned, formal organization tends to take time, money, and education. New technology is bridging the participatory gap between younger generations and older generations: political participation among the youngest generation has increased in the elections investigated here, but this increase has not been enough to outweigh the traditional avenues to participation. While the impact of technology has been somewhat overblown by previous scholars, the present research suggests that the impact is present, and noteworthy.

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[31] Free time was not asked about in the ANES.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter 4

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Civic Participation	1.58	1.05	0	3
Political Participation	1.23	1.24	0	6
Total Participation	2.82	1.93	0	9
Urban Location	.20	.40	0	1
Generation	2.58	1.08	1	4
Offline News Consumption	14.44	7.88	0	35
Online News Consumption	1.01	2.05	0	7
Male	.43	.49	0	1
White	.69	.46	0	1
Income	2.17	1.25	1	5
Education	2.64	1.08	1	5
Internet Access	.70	.46	0	1
Midwest Location	.18	.38	0	1
West Location	.24	.42	0	1
South Location	.46	.50	0	1
East Location	.13	.33	0	1

Table 4.2: Comparison of Means for Chapter 4

Variable	Civic Participation	Political Participation	Online Media Use
Generation			
17-30	1.32	.81	1.44
31-44	1.72	1.23	1.62
45-49	1.77	1.38	.90
60 And Over	1.79	1.38	.34
Education			
No HS Diploma	.96	.79	.09
HS Diploma or Equivalency	1.33	.85	.62
Some College	1.79	1.27	1.22
BA or Equivalency	2.17	1.78	1.81
MA or Equivalency	2.34	1.85	1.88
Income			
$0-$29,999	1.45	1.14	.65
$30,000-$59,999	1.47	.95	1.14
$60,000-$89,999	1.91	1.38	1.40
$90,000-$119,999	2.02	1.47	1.26
$120,000 and above	2.07	1.55	1.39
Internet Access			
Access to Internet	1.77	1.29	.03
No Internet Access	1.27	.96	1.36
Urbanicity			
Urban	1.63	1.01	1.17
Rural	1.65	1.28	.65
Region			
Midwest	1.51	1.05	.61
West	1.70	1.47	1.52
South	1.67	1.21	1.10
East	1.75	1.11	.92

Table 4.3: Comparison of Regional Means

Variable	Education	Income	Generation	Online Access
Region				
Midwest	2.46	2.33	2.62	.75
West	2.90	2.45	2.37	.81
South	2.83	2.40	2.60	.77
East	2.94	2.50	2.56	.72

Table 4.4: Correlation Matrix of Dependent Variables Used in Chapter 4

	CIVPART	POLPART	TOTPART
CIVPART08	1.00		
POLPART08	.43	1.00	
TOTPART08	.82	.87	1.00

Table 4.5: Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables Used in Chapter 4

	URBAN08	GENERATE08	OFFNEWS08	ONNEWS08	GENDER08	RACE08	INCOME08	EDUCATE08	ACCESS08
URBAN08	1.00								
GENERATE08	.03	1.00							
OFFNEWS08	-.03	.31	1.00						
ONNEWS08	-.07	-.24	.00	1.00					
GENDER08	-.03	.01	.06	-.00	1.00				
RACE08	.13	.06	-.17	.06	.04	1.00			
INCOME08	.00	-.05	-.01	.16	.12	.20	1.00		
EDUCATE08	-.08	-.09	-.04	.28	-.01	.13	.41	1.00	
ACCESS08	.01	-.34	-.12	.30	.02	.13	.37	.42	1.00

Table 4.6: Regression of Civic Participation, Regional Analysis

Civic Participation	
Rural Location	.13 (.08)
Generation: 17-30	-.58*** (.12)
31-44	-.31* (.12)
45-59	-.28** (.10)
Offline News Consumption	.02*** (.00)
Online News Consumption	.02 (.02)
Male	-.30*** (.08)
White	.00 (.07)
Income: $30,000-$59,999	-.11 (.10)
$60,000-$89,999	.00 (.13)
$90,000-$119,999	.14 (.15)
$120,000 and above	.09 (.15)
Education: HS or equivalency	.36* (.16)
Some college	.71*** (.17)
Bachelor's degree	1.18*** (.21)
More than Bachelor's	1.38*** (.21)
Internet Access	.29* (.12)
Midwestern Location	-.11 (.11)
Western Location	-.03 (.13)
Southern Location	-.11 (.09)

Prob >F=.00; R^2=.29

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Table 4.7: Regression of Political Participation, Regional Analysis

Political Participation	
Rural Location	-.04
	(.10)
Generation: 17-30	-.75***
	(.12)
31-44	-.44***
	(.12)
45-59	-.28**
	(.12)
Offline News Consumption	.02***
	(.01)
Online News Consumption	.07*
	(.03)
Male	-.18
	(.08)
White	-.29*
	(.11)
Income: $30,000-$59,999	-.30*
	(.12)
$60,000-$89,999	-.10
	(.13)
$90,000-$119,999	-.07
	(.18)
$120,000 and above	-.07
	(.20)
Education: HS or equivalency	.17
	(.12)
Some college	.37*
	(.15)
Bachelor's degree	.92***
	(.15)
More than Bachelor's	1.06***
	(.25)
Internet Access	.30**
	(.11)
Midwestern Location	.04
	(.18)
Western Location	.49*
	(.21)
Southern Location	.01
	(.15)

Prob >F=.00; R^2=.24

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Table 4.8: Regression of Total Participation, Regional Analysis

Total Participation	
Rural Location	.08
	(.12)
Generation: 17-30	-1.33***
	(.20)
31-44	-.75***
	(.20)
45-59	-.57**
	(.18)
Offline News Consumption	.04***
	(.01)
Online News Consumption	.09*
	(.04)
Male	-.48**
	(.14)
White	-.29*
	(.14)
Income: $30,000-$59,999	-.40*
	(.20)
$60,000-$89,999	-.09
	(.20)
$90,000-$119,999	.07
	(.30)
$120,000 and above	.03
	(.28)
Education: HS or equivalency	.54**
	(.25)
Some college	1.09***
	(.28)
Bachelor's degree	2.10***
	(.30)
More than Bachelor's	2.45***
	(.36)
Internet Access	.57**
	(.21)
Midwestern Location	-.07
	(.21)
Western Location	.47
	(.27)
Southern Location	-.09
	(.19)
Prob >F=.00; R^2=.35	

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

Chapter 5: Two Internet Myths Exploded: The Impact of Technology and Generations on Civic and Political Participation in 2004 and 2008

The significance of participating in society and politics cannot be overstated. It is through participation in the civic world that individuals form connections with the world and the people around them, and ultimately become fully-formed members of the society in which they live. Participation in the political world is arguably even more important in democratic societies, as it is only through the various interactions with their government and leadership that citizens can fully become part of a democratic society. As Jan W. van Deth writes, "participation is the *elixir of life* for democracy". (350) Participation is a vital part of life in any society.

Examining the political and civic world of the United States in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* serves as a useful guide to the importance of participation in societies. Focused mostly on the political world, de Tocqueville noted the importance of a free press, and the potential of politicians using newspapers (the dominant form of mass media at the time) to gain favor in the political realm (204-214). Noting that "[C]ensorship and universal suffrage are contradictory and cannot coexist for long" (207), de Tocqueville discounted the importance of individual media sources, stating that only as an institution does the press have any power in the nation (212) Although the forms of mass media and mass communication have evolved since the time of *Democracy in America*, their uses have not significantly changed. Studying de Tocqueville allows one to see the relative beginnings of the democratic process in America, before modern communication processes, and indeed before a great deal of what we recognize as politics in modern America came into being. By studying de

Tocqueville's work, one can not only gain a sense of perspective, but also a more fully-formed understanding of the processes of participation in general, and the origins of democracy in America.

Like de Tocqueville, Jürgen Habermas also highlights the significance of the media to a participatory society with his discussion of the civic sphere. In recent years, the internet and online media have been suggested to be an exemplar of this Habermasian public sphere, allowing for the free and open exchange of idea in society. The legitimacy of the internet as a true public sphere has been called into question by a number of scholars, however, including Philip N. Howard (2005), who notes that political polarization appears to be increasing in the online realm, and the so-called "public sphere" appears to be at least somewhat fragmented, as the number of individuals who go to multiple types of political websites was decreasing. Instead of multiple opinions, Howard suggests, individuals are seeking out information that aligns with their previously-held beliefs. Regardless of the true effect of online media usage upon participation, it is clear that the impact of online media usage on participation can be very strong, in both the civic and political realms.

Technology can shift very suddenly, and these shifts can be seen in many aspects of life. Often, these shifts simply alter a familiar part of life, changing the way people do something—for instance, the invention and popularization of the automobile created a new means of traveling. Where people once rode horses down streets, automobiles became the primary mode of transportation. People didn't suddenly start moving from place to place, they just changed the way in which they traveled. Occasionally, however, large-scale social changes do take place, and alter everything about a society. One of

these major technological paradigm shifts was the development and popularization of the internet.

Going into this paper, I expected to find results similar to those expounded by mass media and media analysts, highlighting the importance of online communication and online media in increasing participation, especially among the youngest segments of the population. In reality, however, these claims appeared to be very overstated, in regards to both of the presidential elections traditionally associated with the rise of the internet (2004 and 2008). Instead, it was the more traditional in-roads to communication (age, income, and education) that proved most significant.

Theory

Using the previous research on the topic of online communication and political participation, and connecting that to Karl Mannheim's generational theory (1970), an idea about the effectiveness of online communication and political participation begins to form. According to Mannheim, generations are cohorts of individuals marked by their shared experience of some kind of historical event, which imprints on their lives. Some of these generational imprints were discussed above, but briefly, technological developments in communication patterns seem to come along approximately every 40 or so years (note the discussion above concerning the major changes in communications technologies aligning with presidential elections.

Similarly, Morley Winograd (2008) discusses the cyclical patterns of generational types in US history, and how they can align with what he identifies as the major eras of party dominance in the US. Briefly, and most significantly, Winograd identifies the most recent full generation to come to voting age (Millennials) as a "civic" generation, much

like the WWII-era generation. (In other words, people have more in common with their grandparents' generation than with their parents' generation.) This cyclical theory suggests that the Millennials are likely to be active voters, are likely to be optimistic about politics, and are likely to be genuinely interested in civic engagement and participation in the political world.

Larry Bartels and Simon Jackman, in "A Generational Model of Political Learning", note the significance of age cohorts in shaping participation. The authors note that "[t]here is clearly a sustaines period of heightened sensitivity to political events during adolescence" (16), suggesting support for the imprinting phenomenon, whereby certain salient events—such as the rise of a new technology—stick with groups throughout their lives, and affect their participation. Kaat Smets and Anja Nuendorf, in "The Hierarchies of Age-Period-Cohort Research" find a similar result, but note that instead of an instantaneous change, "it takes the collective experiences of at least two elections to form a pattern". (42)

In addition to these generational theories, one of the most significant schools of thought concerning about the ways in which the online realm may be utilized and understood by the general public has come from the works of Jürgen Habermas, and his descriptions of the "public sphere". Writing about the development of the public sphere, Habermas noted three critical conditions for the development and continued flourishing of the public sphere. First, the sphere must be an area that disregards social status—all individuals must be able to have a say, regardless of any sort of outside social standing. Second, the sphere must be organized around some sort of a domain of common concern—the individuals meeting in the public sphere must have some sort of common

concern binding them together, which everyone cares about. Finally, Habermas noted the importance of inclusivity—everyone had to be able to have access to the public sphere, and feel like they could become a part of the sphere. (Habermas, 1989)

Using Habermas's typology of the three critical developments for the creation of a public sphere, it seems clear that the online realm meets the first characteristic easily—online, social status is essentially ignored, as has been illustrated in several references discussed above. Online, people can change or adapt their identities (for better or for worse), and whatever is presented online is generally accepted as reality at the time and in that setting. The second criterion of Habermas's public sphere, an organization around a domain of common concern, may also be understood as taking place online. Assuming the internet is another world of sorts, individuals may find (or create) their own forums for discussing anything of interest to them, and doubtless find someone else, somewhere in the world, who's also interested in that matter. Habermas's final criterion of a public sphere, that everyone must be included in the public sphere, is a bit more problematic. As illustrated in the second research paper in this research plan, the digital divide does exist, and not everyone in society has access to the internet at all (and, within those concerns, not everyone has equal access—some have better or more rapid access than others, meaning the inequality does not stop at the simple issue of accessibility). Still, clearly, two out of the three conditions posed by Habermas for the creation of a public sphere seem to be met by the internet in general.

Looking at the political realm specifically, not all individuals interested in politics meet in online settings, but among those who do, there are a number of forums in which their voices may be heard, and everyone who participates has the ability to do so on equal

terms. Having asserted that, it is important to note the development of moderation in online forums and discussion areas. Generally speaking, many sites (both political and non-political) allow users to express themselves freely, but may have some sort of monitoring position or ability to remove or silence individuals who are being disruptive or otherwise cruel to other participants in the forum (see, for example, Wright 2006). Does this censorship harm the notion of a public sphere? Perhaps the better question would be: could a truly open public space, with no censorship or protection of participants ever be successful?

The answer to those questions is a difficult one. Looking at Habermas's criteria for a public sphere, and taking them literally, no, the internet is not a public sphere. However, taking Habermas's criteria literally, it is difficult to conceive of any type of public sphere ever existing at all for any length of time. In the bourgeois time, which Habermas was so fond of discussing, the public sphere disappeared because outside interests were able to come in and dominate the sphere. Perhaps the notion of a public sphere needs to be modified somewhat—in order to ensure an area of common domain, which cannot be taken over by outside interests, truly uninterested in the domain, at least some degree of control and regulation may be necessary. Habermas's notion of a public sphere was likely only an ideal type of phenomenon, and it would be very difficult to find any sort of continually successful and open public sphere in any sort of society. Philip N. Howard (2005) notes that in his research (conducted between 1996-2002), political polarization appears to be increasing in the online realm, and the public sphere appears to be at least somewhat fragmented, as the number of individuals who go to multiple types of political websites was decreasing. Instead of multiple opinions, Howard suggests,

individuals are seeking out information that aligns with their previously-held beliefs—not much of a truly "public sphere". However, there is still something significant to be gained from an examination of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, and in researching online participation and involvement in the light of that ideal structure.

Participation in the public sphere has been a concern of theorists since Habermas first began theorizing about the existence of a public sphere at all, and those concerns have only intensified since the rise of the internet as a major means of communication. Writing in the early days of major online media, Warnick (1998) suggests that even by the late 1990s, participation online and participation in the outside world might be significantly different, noting that "browsers [of the internet] may take simulated participation in the public sphere for real participation." (80) This somewhat pessimistic view suggests that instead of participating in the "real world", online users might simply assume that clicking a link or reading a website is a legitimate form of participation. (This tendency to participate online, without a corresponding offline activity, has somewhat derisively begun to be known as "clicktivism" (cf. Goodman and Boyd 2011: 107).) An investigation into the ways in which people participate in their society, both online and offline, would prove illuminating.

Applying the work of Mannheim to the work of Winograd, it becomes clear that the generation currently entering voting age in the United States (18 years old) is this "Millennial" category, marked by political activism, interest in politics and civic engagement, and increased political participation compared to other, previous generations. As such, this group of individuals should prove not only more technologically advanced than previous generations (due primarily to coming of age

during a time of vast technological advancements), but should also be more politically active and involved than previous generations. While conflicting evidence has been found concerning the participation of younger generations compared to older generations in all areas of civic life, the change in participation among the younger generation from 2004 to 2008 should prove especially significant.

Traditionally, participation has been assumed to be the result of three general factors: age, income, and education. As each of these factors increases, according to the traditional models, participation also increases (cf. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995, Berinsky and Lenz 2011, et al.). The current study suggests, based on the literature described above, that this traditional model is somewhat lacking in regards to modern participatory practices, and needs to be updated. As such, the primary contribution of this dissertation is the use of national-level ANES data to investigate the significance of technology upon participation (both politically and civically) among all generations, with the thought that the generations most affected by the new technology, and thus exhibiting much higher levels of participation in general, will be members of the youngest generation.

While the world wide web was first developed in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee, the internet as we know it today is much younger, especially in terms of communication and participatory opportunities. The first scholarly paper to investigate internet political participation, in those terms, appears to have been published only in 2005 (Best and Krueger 2005), with the first investigation of online civic participation also being published that year (Bruszt, Vedres, and Stark 2005). With the 2004 election coming before these initial publications, and the 2008 election being the first election after the

advent of scholarly research on political and civic participation in the online realm, an examination of the difference in these types of participation, and the effect of these differences on voting practices, proves to be illuminating.

The 1996 presidential campaign was the first to utilize online advertising, though it was only with the 2004 campaign that modern campaigning truly began (West 2009), including the so-called “first digital campaign” (Hindman 2005). With digital campaigning in its relative infancy in 2004, the 2008 election, which has been the major focus of this dissertation, became the first election to be waged online in abundance, with a majority (55%) of voters claiming the internet as a source for news and campaign information during the 2008 campaign season. In addition to all major candidates having an online presence during the 2008 campaign, candidates also spent a great deal of money on online campaigning during 2008, with the victorious Democratic candidate Barack Obama spending approximately $16 million in online campaigning, and the defeated Republican candidate John McCain spending approximately $3.6 million (Williamson 2010). In order to investigate the changes in online activity and participation between 2004 and 2008, the focus of this chapter is a comparison of the 2004 and 2008 elections, to determine what impact of the rise of the internet had on participation in 2008 as compared to participation in 2004, in both the civic and political spheres.

Once again, it must be stressed that this model does not suggest that technology is some kind of “magic bullet”, and that all generations now exhibit equal participation rates, because of the use of new technologies. The point of the research paper is not merely to show the importance of new technologies in affecting social change, but also to

examine the various ways in which these new technologies can have such an impact on a society, particularly in terms of participation within the society. Through the theories and research on participation and the connections between primarily age and participation rates in society, the current research paper complements and expands upon previous research, by examining the links between technological change and political and civic participation, with a focus on understanding precisely how and why any potential changes in avenues to participation have occurred.

Hypotheses

Paper 3, Hypothesis$_1$: On-line and Offline Media Consumption in 2004 and 2008.

Digital natives (i.e., members of the youngest generation aged 17-30) will exhibit more online media consumption than members of other age cohorts. This effect should be greater in 2008 than 2004, controlling for income, race, gender, and education.

Paper 3, Hypothesis$_2$: Digital Natives and Civic Participation in 2004 and 2008.

The digital native generation (17-30) in 2008 will exhibit greater civic participation than members of the equivalent generation in 2004, controlling for income, race, gender, and education.

Paper 3, Hypothesis$_3$: Digital Natives and Political Participation in 2004 and 2008.

The digital native generation (17-30) in 2008 will exhibit greater civic participation than members of the equivalent generation in 2004, controlling for income, race, gender, and education.

Paper 3, Hypothesis$_4$: Digital Natives and Total Participation in 2004 and 2008.

The digital native generation (17-30) in 2008 will exhibit greater total participation than members of the equivalent generation in 2004, controlling for income, race, gender, and education.

$$\begin{aligned} TOTPART04 = {} & \alpha + \beta_1\ GENERATE041 + \beta_2\ GENERATE042 + \beta_3\ GENERATE043 + \\ & \beta_4 GENERATE044 + \beta_5\ ONNEWS04 + \beta_6\ OFFNEWS04 + \\ & \beta_7\ CIVPART04 + \beta_8\ POLPART04 + \beta_9\ INTEREST04 + \\ & \beta_{10}\ PARTY04 + \beta_{11}\ GENDER04 + \beta_{12}\ RACE04 + \\ & \beta_{13}\ INCOME041 + \beta_{14}\ INCOME042 + \beta_{15}\ INCOME043 + \\ & \beta_{16}\ INCOME044 + \beta_{17}\ INCOME045 + \beta_{18}\ EDUCATE041 + \\ & \beta_{19}\ EDUCATE042 + \beta_{20}\ EDUCATE043 + \beta_{21}\ EDUCATE044 + \\ & \beta_{22}\ EDUCATE045 + e \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} TOTPART08 = {} & \alpha + \beta_1\ GENERATE081 + \beta_2\ GENERATE082 + \beta_3\ GENERATE083 + \\ & \beta_4 GENERATE084 + \beta_5\ ONNEWS08 + \beta_6\ OFFNEWS08 + \\ & \beta_7\ CIVPART08 + \beta_8\ POLPART08 + \beta_9\ INTEREST08 + \\ & \beta_{10}\ PARTY08 + \beta_{11}\ GENDER08 + \beta_{12}\ RACE08 + \\ & \beta_{13}\ INCOME081 + \beta_{14}\ INCOME082 + \beta_{15}\ INCOME083 + \\ & \beta_{16}\ INCOME084 + \beta_{17}\ INCOME085 + \beta_{18}\ EDUCATE081 + \\ & \beta_{19}\ EDUCATE082 + \beta_{20}\ EDUCATE083 + \beta_{21}\ EDUCATE084 + \\ & \beta_{22}\ EDUCATE085 + e \end{aligned}$$

Data and Methods

The data for the current research comes from both the 2008 American National Election Study data set and the 2004 American National Election Study data set. Utilizing

2,102 post-election interviews[32] (centered around the US election of November 4, 2008), the 2008 ANES study contains several questions about political behaviors, including questions about the connection between media use and participation. Post-election interviews for the data set were conducted between November and December 2008. Interviews for the post-election interviews averaged approximately 91 minutes. The estimated response rate for the survey was approximately 57.7% for the post-election interviews in 2008.

According to the user's guide for the data set (found on the ANES website), respondents who participated in the study were not told they were participating in the National Election Study, in order to avoid any sort of self-selection bias on the part of the survey respondents. By not informing respondents what kind of study they were participating in, the survey includes respondents from all backgrounds and political beliefs/value systems, allowing for a more generalizable analysis of results, with proper weighting.

Only citizens of legal voting age in the United States at the time of the 2008 election (specifically, of legal voting age a few days before the 2008 election) were considered to be the target population for the interviews. By limiting the population of respondents to only those members of the general population who were able to vote, the survey once again allows for greater generalizability, as age can be a confound when examining surveys regarding political behaviors—in this case, because everyone could

[32] While the ANES survey utilized both pre-election and post-election interviews, the current research focuses on post-election results only.

vote in the 2008 election, the post-election responses concerning voting habits are not affected by any sort of age bias in responses or survey questions.

The 2004 ANES study features 1,066 post-election interviews[33] (centered around the US election of November 2, 2004), containing several questions about political behaviors, including questions about participatory behaviors connected with media use, of particular interest to this research. Post-election interviews for the data set, averaging approximately 65 minutes in length, were conducted between November 3 and December 20, 2004. The post-election survey had a response rate of 88%. Respondents who participated in the study received a hand-signed envelope in the mail, offering a $20 incentive to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted face-to-face.

The population of the 2004 ANES contained all citizens of the 48 contiguous United States of legal voting age on or before November 2, 2004 (Election Day). By limiting the population of respondents to only those members of the general population who were able to vote, the survey once again allows for greater generalizability, as age can be a confound when examining surveys regarding political behaviors—in this case, because everyone interviewed could vote in the upcoming election, the post-election responses concerning voting habits are not affected by any sort of age bias in responses or survey questions.

Interviews in the ANES studies were conducted face-to-face, including a self-administered interview segment. By doing this, the ANES study attempts to remove any sort of confound or selection complication from their data set, allowing for an increased

[33] While the ANES survey utilized both pre-election and post-election interviews, the current research focuses on post-election results only.

sense of anonymity in responses, ensuring that the results of any sort of research done with the survey results would be useful and generalizable, with weights.

There are a multitude of questions in the 2008 and 2004 ANES data sets regarding both civic and political participation. By examining the responses to these questions on the two major types of participation, and by examining how these responses may potentially differ along a myriad of variables, insights into the process of political communication, and the ways in which media may influence that process, may be obtained. For the present research paper, there is one major dependent variable of interest: participation, measured two different ways (civic and political).

For the 2008 survey, political participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had ever (1) joined a protest march or rally, (2) contributed money to a political candidate, (3) voted in a presidential primary/caucus, (4) talked to anyone else about voting for a particular candidate, (5) attended any political rallies or speeches, or (6) done any other work for a campaign. Civic participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had ever (1) attended a city or school board meeting, (2) done any volunteer work in the past 12 months, or (3) contributed to a church or other charity in the last 12 months. The original two participation variables (CIVPART08 and POLPART08) were then combined into a total participation variable (TOTPART08).

For the 2004 survey, political participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had (1) talked to another person to persuade their voting practice, (2) taken part in a protest or march during the last 12 months, (3) displayed a campaign button, sticker, or sign in a visible location, (4) giver any money to

a political party, or (5) done any other work for a campaign. Civic participation was measured by combining responses to questions asking if respondents had (1) done any volunteer work in the past 12 months, (2) attended any community meetings about an issue, or (3) attended any church or religions meetings in the last 12 months. These two participation variables (CIVPART04 and POLPART04) were then combined into a total participation variable (TOTPART04).

To measure offline news media use in 2008 (OFFNEWS08), questions about how many days in the past week respondents (1) read an offline newspaper, (2) watched local and (3) national TV news broadcasts, and (4) listened to radio news were examined. These four measures were combined into one additive scale, measuring 0-35[34]. To measure online news media use in 2008 (ONNEWS08), a question about how often respondents read an online newspaper was utilized. (This variable is coded 0-7, based on days per week respondents reported reading an online newspaper.) To measure offline news media use in 2004, questions about how many days in the past week respondents (1) read a daily newspaper, (2) watched late afternoon/early evening local news broadcasts on television, (3) watched late evening local news, and (4) watched national television news were utilized. These four measures were combined into an additive scale (0-28). Online news media use in 2004 was measured using a question about how many days per week respondents read an online newspaper (0-7).

Political interest in 2008 (INTEREST08) was determined using the ANES question asking respondents how interested they were in following the campaign, on a 1-

[34] The current scales are on a scale of 0-7, with local TV broadcasts being asked about at both an afternoon and evening airing.

5 scale (1 = extremely interested; 5 = not interested at all; N = 1150). This variable was dichotomized such that participants expressing high levels of interest (4 and 5) were recoded as 1, while participants expressing low levels of interest (3, 2, and 1) were recoded as 0. Political interest in 2004 (INTEREST04) was determined using a similar question asking respondents how interested they were in following the campaign, but on a 1-3 scale (1 = not much interested; 3 = very much interested; N = 1212). This variable was dichotomized such that participants expressing high levels of interest (3) were recoded as 1, while participants expressing low levels of interest (2 and 1) were recoded as 0. Political party in 2008 (PARTY08) was constructed using the respondent's ranking of each political party on the ANES party thermometer, forcing respondents to choose one party or the other. For 2008, political party was coded as 1=Democratic and 0=Republican (due to the Democratic party's victory in that election). Political party in 2004 (PARTY04) measures political party directly, according to the respondent's self-reported identification with one of the two major parties. For 2004, political party was coded as 1=Republican and 0=Democratic.

To construct a generation variable for this analysis, respondents were divided into four groups, according to their reported ages. The groups utilized were the 17-30 age range (coded as 1, N = 240 (2008) and 254 (2004)), the 31-44 age range (coded as 2, N = 277 (2008) and 293 (2004)), the 45-59 age range (coded as 3, N = 343 (2008) and 354 (2004)), and the 60 and above age range (coded as 4, N = 279 (2008 and 311 (2004))[35].

[35] There were 234 cases of missing data in 2008 (0 in 2004), involving people who did report their age. Also, while the individual generations do change somewhat from 2004 to 2008 (such that individuals may change age groups from 2004 to 2008, going from the 17-30 age group to the 31-44 age group, for example, these shifts are not large enough to be significant. Additionally, the interest for this research is on the groups themselves, not necessarily the individuals who comprise the groups.

The variables concerning gender (GENDER08 and GENDER04) were coded 0, 1: males were coded as 1 (N = 492 (2008) and 566 (2004)), and females were coded as 0 (N = 658 (2008) and 646 (2004)). The variables concerning race (RACE08 and RACE04) was also coded 0, 1: whites were coded as 1 (N = 699 (2008) and 861 (2004)), and nonwhites were coded as 0 (N = 447 (2008) and 176 (2004)).

Income (INCOME08 and INCOME04) was divided into five categories, based on the divisions made in the original data sets: $0-$29,999 (N = 416 (2008) and 335 (2004)), $30,000-$59,999 (N = 306 (2008) and 304 (2004)), $60,000-$89,999 (N = 170 (2008) and 158 (2004)), $90,000-$119,999 (N = 88 (2008) and 156 (2004)), and $120,000 and above (N = 82 (2008) and 117 (2004)). Education (EDUCATE08 and EDUCATE04) was coded into five categories: no high school diploma or equivalency (N = 156 (2008) and 111 (2004)), high school diploma or equivalency (N = 406 (2008) and 355 (2004)), some college, but no degree or a junior college degree (N = 348 (2008) and 384 (2004)), a bachelor's degree or equivalency (N = 165 (2008) and 223 (2004)), and more than a bachelor's degree (N = 72 (2008) and 139 (2004)).

Results

First, I constructed a descriptives table in order to directly compare the means of all variables of interest in 2004 and 2008. As can be seen in Table 5.1, among the variables with higher means in 2004 than in 2008 are generation, income, and education, meaning that on average, ANES participants in 2004 were older, had higher incomes, and were more educated than were participants in 2008. Demographically speaking, participants in the survey were also more likely to be male and more likely to be white in 2004 than in 2008.

Participation, in every measure (civic, political, and total) was higher in 2008 than in 2004, as were political interest and political party. (Because political party was measured differently in 2004 and 2008, this illustrates the fact that political divisions were stronger in 2008 than in 2004.) Interestingly, both forms of news consumption (online and offline) were also higher in 2008 than in 2004. While this makes intuitive sense for online news consumption (logically, there would be more online news sources available in 2008 than there were in 2004), offline news media consumption rose almost two full points from 2004 to 2008 (mean of 12.69 in 2004; mean of 14.44 in 2008)—a more dramatic increase than offline news consumption (mean of .93 in 2004; mean of 1.01 in 2008).

**********INSERT TABLE 5.1 HERE**********

To examine the general differences between individuals in the various generational, educational, and income categories in 2004 and 2008, I then constructed a table of means for each group, directly comparing them in terms of civic participation, political participation, online news media use, and political interest[36]. (Table 5.2) Examining differences between the generational groupings first, it appears that participation in both forms increased from 2004 to 2008 for each generation, with the interesting exception of the youngest generation, who exhibited more political activity in 2004 than in 2008. Online media use increased from 2004 to 2008 in the two youngest age cohorts, but interestingly decreased among the two oldest groups. Political interest increased for each age group from 2004 to 2008.

[36] This analysis and each of the following analyses were conducted after properly weighting the data.

Looking at differences among levels of educational attainment, similar differences can be seen between 2004 and 2008, with another notable exception—individuals at the lowest levels of educational attainment were more participatory in the civic sphere in 2004 than in 2008. The only educational category to exhibit more online media use in 2004 compared to 2008 was the category of respondents with less than a high school education—at each other level of educational attainment, there was a dramatic jump in online media use from 2004 to 2008. The political interest of each group also grew from 2004 to 2008.

Examining differences in groups with different levels of income, again, every level except one showed gains in both types of participation from 2004 to 2008—this time, individuals at the second-lowest level of income were slightly more participatory in the civic realm in 2004 than in 2008. Generally, online media use and political interest levels increased at each level of income from 2004 to 2008 with the exception of the online media use and the political interest of the second-highest income level, both of which decreased slightly from 2004 to 2008.

Generally speaking, almost every relationship examined increased between 2004 and 2008. The only instances of a decrease from 2004 to 2008 were seen in: civic participation among participants at the second-highest income level, civic participation among participants at the lowest level of educational attainment, online media use among participants in the two oldest age cohorts, online media use at the two highest income levels, online media use among participants at the lowest level of educational attainment, and perhaps most intriguingly, political participation among respondents in the youngest age cohort.

I also computed Cronbach's alpha for the dependent variables and the independent variables used in the investigation, in order to examine the internal consistency of the variables. The alpha score for the three forms of participation in 2008 was .86, indicating high internal consistency, as would be expected. The alpha score for all other variables used in the 2008 analysis (offline news consumption, online news consumption, political interest, political party, gender, race, generation, income, and education) was .17, indicating a low level of overlap between the variables. The alpha score for the three levels of participation in 2004 was .90, indicating very high internal consistency. The alpha score for all other variables used in the 2004 analysis (offline news consumption, online news consumption, political interest, political party, gender, race, generation, income, and education) was .04, indicating a very low level of overlap between the variables.

**********INSERT TABLE 5.2 HERE**********

I constructed two sets correlation matrices for this analysis—first, a matrix for the dependent variables used in the 2004 section of the analysis (Table 5.3), and a matrix for the independent variables used in the 2004 section of the analysis (Table 5.4). Each of the two components of the total participation variable have relatively high correlations with the total participation variable (.79 for civic participation; .81 for political participation), which illustrates the general relationship between those variables. Fortunately, the relationship between civic participation and political participation is rather low (.28).

Looking at the correlations among the independent variables, the highest correlations appear to be between race and political party (.35), which aligns with

traditional understandings of the relationship between race and political party, and between offline news consumption and generation (.38), which makes sense, given the previously described connection between age and offline news media consumption. Examining the two matrices, there does not appear to be any sort of issue with collinearity.

**********INSERT TABLES 5.3 AND 5.4 HERE**********

The second pair of correlation matrices constructed for this study focused on the 2008 section of the analysis—one for the dependent variables examined (Table 5.5), and one for the independent variables examined (Table 5.6). As before, each of the two components of the total participation variable have relatively high correlations with the total participation variable (.82 for civic participation; .87 for political participation), which illustrates the general relationship between those variables. The relationship between civic participation and political participation is higher than it was for the 2004 variables (.43), but is still rather low.

Looking at the correlations among the independent variables, the highest correlations this time appear to be between offline news media consumption and political interest (.30), which seems to suggest that more traditional models of participation that suggest that participation and interest both increase with age are true, and once again between offline news consumption and generation (.35), which makes sense, given the previously described connection between age and offline news media consumption. Once again, according to the correlation matrices, there does not appear to be any sort of collinearity issue, and all variables appear to be unique.

**********INSERT TABLES 5.5 AND 5.6 HERE**********

In order to examine civic participation among voting age respondents in 2004 and 2008, I first ran a regression involving online news consumption, offline news consumption, political interest, political party affiliation, gender, race, age, income, and education. According to Table 5.7, online media consumption was higher in 2004 than in 2008, likely due to both the increased number of online news sources available in 2008 as compared to 2004, and also due to the increased presence of the internet as an everyday part of peoples' lives. In 2004, civic participation was shown to be higher than in 2008 among males, members of the oldest generation, every level of income, and those at the lowest level of education. Statistical significance was only present, however, with gender (though only in 2008). In 2008, civic participation was shown to be higher than it had been in 2004 among those with a strong party affiliation, whites, members of the two youngest age groups, and at the three highest levels of educational attainment. Statistical significance was achieved with party affiliation (in 2008), and at the three highest levels of educational attainment.

The Pew Center's 2004 State of the News Media report shows that as of 2004, most online media sources were simply parroting traditional media, getting most of their reports from wire sources, or a combination of wire and staff reporting. The report also stated that, even in 2004, "[t]he Web is the only part of the mainstream news business that generally is seeing audiences grow, especially among the young" (Pew 2004). By 2008, the Pew Center's State of the News Media noted that "[t]he news industry now appears to be taking to new technology in earnest…More media site are taking the reader away from [their own content,] linking to once-taboo outside sources or even inviting in third-party content". By 2008, online news media had become their own content

controllers, with the majority of all content coming from internal staff, and little (if any) content coming from wire sources or a combination of wire and staff (Pew 2008a). By 2008, digital media sources had become the primary source for consumers to get their news. In other words, getting information online in 2004 was similar to getting information from a more traditional source.

This supposition is supported by the fact that political interest was more significant in 2008 than in 2004. By 2008, everyone was going online, not just those who were already interested in participation. Also, as seen above, online content in 2008 was beginning to be more specialized, and more separated from traditional news media sources. Instead of individuals going online for the same kind of news they could get from an offline source, people were now getting online because they were interested enough to seek out information for themselves. Online news media use was now more motivated, and based on intrinsic factors.

**********INSERT TABLE 5.7 HERE**********

Next, political participation was investigated, again using a regression involving offline news consumption, online news consumption, political interest, gender, race, age, income, and education. According to Table 5.8, online news consumption is greater in 2008 than in 2004, political interest is strongly significant in both 2004 and 2008 (though more so in 2008), and generational effects were more positive and significant in 2004 than in 2008. Again, this seems to suggest a more egalitarian society in 2008 as compared to 2004—in the past, only those most interested in political participation were able to participate, while participation has opened up in more recent years, and the only generational significance for political participation in 2008 comes from the oldest

generation (and even that significance is mild). Party membership seems, intriguingly, to be related to political participation such that the party which does not ultimately win the election exhibits more participation than the party which does, ultimately, win the election, suggesting perhaps that if a party senses victory, they are less likely to actively pursue participation, while the party less sure of victory is more likely to encourage participation (though it must be noted the effects for party are very small).

Comparing rates of political participation, in 2004, political participation was shown to be higher than it would be in 2008 among those with a higher level of identification with a political party, males, whites, members of each generation, and those at all levels of income. Statistical significance was present with political interest (though this was lower in 2004 than in 2008), race, the youngest generation, and the highest income level. In 2008, political participation was shown to be higher than in 2004 among those who consumed more online news, those with greater political interest, and individuals at every level of educational attainment. Statistical significance was achieved with political interest, membership in the youngest generation (though participation was shown to be quite lower in 2008 than it was in 2004), at both the highest and lowest income levels, and at the second-highest level of educational attainment.

Interestingly, this particular regression is somewhat unique, in that in this case only, generation has a negative effect initially, suggesting that participation in the political sphere at first decreases with age, holding other variables constant. This finding seems to support the notion that young people tend to be more politically active when less technology is present. This also seems to suggest that when there is less technology in a society, those who are already most interested in a field the technology may augment

will be the most likely to utilize that technology for specific purposes. Over time, as seen in the 2008 analyses, the effect of the technological advances becomes diluted, and essentially trickles down to everyone in society, not just those most interested in a specific topic. Similarly, technology seems to have made more of an impact in the political realm in 2004 (as illustrated by a significantly higher number of younger voters—those most likely to adapt new technology) than in the civic participatory realm or in the total participatory realm.

**********INSERT TABLE 5.8 HERE**********

Finally, combined political and civic participation for both 2004 and 2008 were examined using a regression involving offline news consumption, online news consumption, political interest, gender, race, age, income, and education. As can be seen in Table 5.9, when looking at total participation, instead of only civic or only political participation, income shows significance for both 2004 and 2008 (but then only at the lowest (for 2008) and two highest (for 2004) income levels); generation exhibits no significance for either 2004 or 2008; political interest exhibits high significance for 2008 (but not 2004); and online news consumption shows moderate significance for 2004 (but no significance for 2008). Interestingly, this analysis shows 2004 as being unique, in that the party which ultimately won the election exhibits a higher degree of participation than the party which did not win the election.

Comparing rates of participation, in 2004, total participation was shown to be higher than it would be in 2008 among those with a higher level of online news consumption, a stronger identification with their political party, males, members of the youngest and oldest generations observed, those at all levels of income, and those at the

lowest level of education attainment. Statistical significance was present with online news media consumption, and the two highest income levels. In 2008, total participation was shown to be higher than in 2004 among those who consumed more offline news, those with a higher level of political interest, whites, members of the second-oldest age group observed, and individuals at the three highest levels of educational attainment. Statistical significance was achieved with political interest and at the three highest levels of educational attainment.

As before, these results seem to support the hypothesis that the internet has led to a more egalitarian society, such that only those who could afford to go online did so in 2004, before more people had the chance to get internet access in 2008, more people of all generations could go online in 2008 as compared to 2004, and as mentioned above, online news consumption being more significant in 2004 than 2008 signifies the more egalitarian nature of the internet in 2004—almost anyone who wanted to could go online to enjoy media, instead of only those who were specifically and especially interested in doing so.

**********INSERT TABLE 5.9 HERE**********

The R^2 values for the three models discussed in this paper appear to be robust. This seems to indicate that all the factors in the analyses serve to explain most of the variation in voting patterns, and this makes logical sense—the factors examined in this study seem to be at least among the most studied and examined variables in previous studies of participatory actions.

Discussion

The R^2 values for the regressions appear to be moderate. This seems to indicate that all the factors in the analysis explain a reasonable amount of the variation in voting patterns, and this stands to reason—all of these factors, when considered together, likely explain a majority of the difference in voting patterns. To get a more robust R^2 for these equations, it would be interesting to examine the news media variables specifically more closely in a future series of regressions.

These analyses have compared voting and participation during the 2004 United States presidential election to voting and participation during the 2008 United States presidential election. According to the analyses run, and the information presented, the generational theory of Mannheim seems to not be supported. In fact, looking at the coefficients for political participation in 2004 compared to 2008, it appears that members of younger generations actually participated in politics more in 2004 than in 2008, contrary to popular belief.

The first hypothesis, regarding generational differences in terms of online and offline media use in 2004 and 2008, was not supported. While members of the digital native generation had demonstrably higher levels of online activity than older generations, they displayed far lower levels of offline news media consumption, and moderately lower levels of political interest than those older generations. The second hypothesis, investigating the civic participation levels of members of the digital native generation in 2004 and 2008, was not supported. Table 5.7 illustrates this difference—compared to members of other generations, members of the youngest generation in 2008 exhibited lower participation than members of the youngest generation in 2004 (though

their participation in 2008 did exhibit statistical significance). The third hypothesis examined in this study, focused on the political participation of members of the youngest generation, was unsupported. Instead of greater political participation in 2008, political participation was actually moderately higher in 2004 than in 2008 among members of the youngest generation.

The fourth hypothesis, concerning generational effects on total participation levels, was also not supported. Instead of younger generations exhibiting higher levels of participation, their levels of total participation in 2008 were lower than the levels of older generations (much more so, and significantly so, in 2008), suggesting that the more traditional models of participation (focusing on age, income, and education) still hold true.

Additionally, the highest income level, which had a significant impact on participation in 2004, does not have that significant impact in 2008. Instead of the internet being the purview of only a portion of the population in 2004, by 2008, the internet had moved into a more egalitarian state, and was now much more readily available for individuals of all economic backgrounds.

Conclusion

The research paper discussed above analyzed the impact of a number of variables on engagement and interest, in both the civic and political spheres. According to the information presented, it appears that the more traditional models of participation are supported—not only do individuals generally become more likely to participate as they get older, but the newest generation in the political world appears to be the least participatory generation.

While this study has proven noteworthy and has led to some very intriguing results, there are a few limitations to the study that should be addressed, and potentially ameliorated or addressed by any potential future research on the topic. One of the major limitations of this study is its reliance on secondary data. While the ANES is an invaluable resource for determining nationwide trends and large-scale social developments, there were several times during the course of this research paper when questions were raised which the ANES simply did not provide any answers for. A future research paper addressing some of the specific components of new media (components such as Facebook, Twitter, and so-called "clicktivism"[37]) would be a welcome addition to the current research.

According to data from the Pew Center (2014b) on social media networking usage among Americans, 74 percent of all internet users use some kind of social networking site, with the percentage of members of the youngest generation (18-29) using social networking sites reaching up to 89. Of all adults who are online, 19 percent of online users use Twitter, and 71 percent use Facebook. Again, members of the youngest generation use social networking sites at a much higher rate than members of older generations. These specific social networking sites were not asked about in either the 2004 ANES or the 2008 ANES—only general questions about online news media, and online access at all, were included in the survey. Indeed, Facebook only came into existence in February of 2004 (and did not become widely available or hugely popular until several years after that), and Twitter only came into existence in March 2006 (and

[37] This term is a portmanteau of "click" and "activism", implying a form of activism with little expended effort.

took a while to become widely accepted/popular). Because the nature of online communication and participation is changing so rapidly, it is difficult to fully cover every aspect of participation (or online media use) in a periodical, large-scale survey with many more areas of focus than just online media use. As such, any sort of future research into the linkages between online media use and participation would definitely have to take into account the myriad ways in which individuals can possibly consume online media in the modern technological age.

The concept of clicktivism in particular has been a topic of much recent research regarding the potentially changing nature not only of what participation is, but also what participation is not. In a nutshell, clicktivism, or digital activism may be defined as "the expanding use of digital technologies—mobile phones and Internet-enabled devices, for example—in campaigns for social and political change". (Joyce 2010: vii) In other words, clicktivism refers to participation which takes place online, with (critics would argue) very little effort expended.

At this point in the history of research on the subject, critical consensus has yet to be achieved—several scholars (cf. Halupka 2014) suggest that clicktivism is a legitimate political act in and of itself, while others (cf. Rojas and Puig-i-Abril 2009) posit that while clicktivism is not necessarily the same as participation, clicktivism may help point the way towards more traditional forms of participation. Still others see digital activism as "slacktivism"[38], defining the action as nothing more than "a willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause, with an accompanying lack

[38] This term is a portmanteau of "slacker" and "activism", implying a form of activism with virtually no expended effort.

of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change". (Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2014: 1149)

Marc Hooghe, Bengü Hosch-Dayican, and Jan W. van Deth examine the changing nature of political participation in general, and the act of clicktivism in particular, in their dialogue "Conceptualizing Political Participation" (2014). Hosch-Dayican notes that "it is hard to draw a line between political participation and communication as these [online] activities are by definition communicative" (344). Throughout the dialogue, the authors note the perils in understanding online political participation as being equivalent to traditional, offline political participation, with Hooghe in particular questioning whether or not online methods of participation are purposefully conducted, or are simply done thoughtlessly, without any sort of actual political intent. Hooghe ends his section of the dialogue by noting that the definition of political participation has changed, and "the study of political participation…will become more complicated than ever before." (341) Conducting some sort of investigation into the connection between actual online activism, more traditional means of participation, and age would prove particularly enlightening.

A potential addition to this study would be to update the research presented here. The most recent election investigated in this analysis was the 2008 election, an election that has already faded largely into memory by the time this analysis was completed. Future research could build on the work done here, bringing the 2012 (and beyond) elections into the study to see whether the trends described here have continued (or have halted).

Writing about generational differences concerning the then-upcoming 2012 election cycle, the Pew Center (2011) notes that participation and political interest have declined sharply since the 2008 election among members of the youngest generation. Are more traditional methods of participation becoming the only means of participating once again? Is any effect of new media on participation disappearing completely? Any sort of updated research on the connections between media use and participation could potentially help shed some light on the question of why younger voters appear to be less politically inclined than they have been in the past, and could serve to compare the election examined here with the most recent presidential election—the three presidential elections since the dawn of the online era.

Generally, this research paper has investigated two of the main forces impacting participation, in all forms: new media and old media. New media continually increases, and is continually adopted and adapted by members of the youngest generations (primarily), leading to increased participation. This seems to be, however, generally counteracted somewhat by the tendency of members of older generations to be more aligned with traditional avenues to participation—available money to spend, more time to devote to causes[39], and higher educational attainment. Younger people tend to be less politically (and civically) organized than older people—as mentioned, formal organization tends to take time, money, and education. New technology is definitely bridging the participatory gap between younger generations and older generations: political participation among the youngest generation has increased in the elections

[39] Free time was not asked about in the ANES.

investigated here, but this increase has not been enough to outweigh the traditional avenues to participation. While the impact of technology has been somewhat overblown by previous scholars, the present research suggests that the impact is still present, and still noteworthy.

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Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter 5

Variable	2008 Mean	2008 SE	2004 Mean	2004 SE
Civic Participation	1.65	.04	1.50	.05
Political Participation	1.21	.06	.80	.02
Total Participation	2.87	.08	2.41	.11
Offline News Consumption	13.99	.34	12.46	.34
Online News Consumption	1.05	.09	.89	.10
Political Interest	.51	.03	.40	.02
Political Party	.50	.02	.47	.01
Male	.46	.02	.49	.02
White	.85	.02	.83	.07
Generation	2.55	.05	2.54	.07
Income	2.41	.09	2.42	.09
Education	2.78	.07	2.75	.07

Table 5.2: Comparison of Means for Chapter 5

Variable	Civic Participation		Political Participation		Online Media Use		Political Interest	
	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008
Generation								
17-30	1.23	1.32	.89	.81	1.17	1.44	.30	.31
31-44	1.54	1.71	.74	1.23	.90	1.62	.37	.50
45-59	1.65	1.76	.86	1.38	1.03	.90	.45	.58
60 and over	1.44	1.79	.72	1.38	.45	.34	.49	.65
Education								
No HS Diploma	1.28	.96	.56	.79	.36	.09	.30	.54
HS Diploma Equivalency	1.29	1.33	.70	.85	.48	.62	.39	.38
Some College	1.50	1.79	.86	1.27	1.07	1.22	.35	.55
BA	1.76	2.17	.85	1.78	1.67	1.81	.47	.59
MA	1.84	2.34	1.23	1.85	1.18	1.88	.63	.77
Income								
$0-$29,999	1.09	1.45	.68	1.14	.58	.65	.36	.47
$30,000-$59,999	1.53	1.47	.73	.95	.81	1.14	.39	.48
$60,000-$99,999	1.48	1.91	.87	1.38	1.09	1.40	.46	.57
$100,000-$119,999	1.69	2.02	1.16	1.47	1.35	1.26	.53	.46
$120,000 and above	1.93	2.07	1.12	1.55	1.67	1.39	.52	.65

Table 5.3: Correlation Matrix of 2004 Dependent Variables Used In Chapter 5

	CIVPART04	POLPART04	TOTPART04
CIVPART04	1.00		
POLPART04	.28	1.00	
TOTPART04	.79	.81	1.00

Table 5.4: Correlation Matrix of 2004 Independent Variables Used In Chapter 5

	OFFNEWS04	ONNEWS04	INTEREST04	PARTY04	GENDER04	RACE04	GENERATE04	INCOME04	EDUCATE04
OFFNEWS04	1.00								
ONNEWS04	-.05	1.00							
INTEREST04	.20	.08	1.00						
PARTY04	-.07	-.03	.04	1.00					
GENDER04	-.02	.06	.10	.09	1.00				
RACE04	-.11	.04	.08	.35	.02	1.00			
GENERATE04	.38	-.13	.18	.04	-.00	.08	1.00		
INCOME04	-.02	.15	.11	.15	.13	.17	.05	1.00	
EDUCATE04	-.05	.17	.13	.04	-.01	.10	-.03	.41	1.00

Table 5.5: Correlation Matrix of 2008 Dependent Variables Used In Chapter 5

	CIVPART08	POLPART08	TOTPART08
CIVPART08	1.00		
POLPART08	.43	1.00	
TOTPART08	.82	.87	1.00

Table 5.6: Correlation Matrix of 2008 Independent Variables Used In Chapter 5

	OFFNEWS08	ONNEWS08	INTEREST08	PARTY08	GENDER08	RACE08	GENERATE08	INCOME08	EDUCATE08
OFFNEWS08	1.00								
ONNEWS08	-.01	1.00							
INTEREST08	.30	.06	1.00						
PARTY08	.04	.01	-.01	1.00					
GENDER08	.12	.02	.04	.01	1.00				
RACE08	-.12	.12	-.06	-.02	.02	1.00			
GENERATE08	.35	-.21	.18	.02	.05	.08	1.00		
INCOME08	-.03	.21	.08	.06	.12	.24	-.04	1.00	
EDUCATE08	-.08	.28	.15	-.00	.04	.18	-.09	.42	1.00

Table 5.7: Regression of Civic Participation in 2004 and 2008

Civic Participation	2004	2008
Offline News Consumption	.00	.01
	(.01)	(.01)
Online News Consumption	.13	-.01
	(.05)	(.03)
Political Interest	.28	.29**
	(.18)	(.10)
Political Party[40]	.08	-.07
	(.15)	(.09)
Male	-.13	-.28*
	(.12)	(.11)
White	-.17	.22
	(.27)	(.11)
Generation		
17-30	-.32	-.22
	(.13)	(.17)
31-44	-.27	-.10
	(.09)	(.16)
45-59	-.04	-.14
	(.11)	(.14)
Income		
$30,000-$59,999	.09	-.11
	(.20)	(.15)
$60,000-$89,999	.09	-.05
	(.28)	(.18)
$90,000-$119,999	.17	.03
	(.22)	(.21)
$120,000 and above	.43	.01
	(.19)	(.20)
Education		
HS or equivalency	.25	.23
	(.29)	(.23)
Some college	.39	.73***
	(.22)	(.21)
Bachelor's degree	.48	1.08***
	(.17)	(.24)
More than Bachelor's	.58	1.26***
	(.46)	(.23)

Prob.>F=.00, R^2=.16 (2004); Prob.>F=.00, R^2=.26 (2008)

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001] `

[40] 2008: 1=Democrat, 0=Republican; 2004: 1= Republican, 0=Democrat

Table 5.8: Regression of Political Participation in 2004 and 2008

Political Participation		2004	2008
Offline News Consumption		.01	.01
		(.00)	(.01)
Online News Consumption		.02	.08
		(.01)	(.05)
Political Interest		.64**	.77***
		(.10)	(.16)
Political Party[41]		-.00	-.06
		(.04)	(.13)
Male		.00	-.18
		(.08)	(.11)
White		.23**	.02
		(.03)	(.12)
Generation:	17-30	.27**	-.28*
		(.03)	(.19)
	31-44	.12	-.03
		(.07)	(.17)
	45-59	.08	.07
		(.05)	(.17)
Income:	$30,000-$59,999	.03	-.45**
		(.09)	(.16)
	$60,000-$89,999	-.01	-.23
		(.08)	(.24)
	$90,000-$119,999	.30	.04
		(.10)	(.28)
	$120,000 and above	.25*	-.52*
		(.07)	(.25)
Education:	HS or equivalency	-.07	.01
		(.16)	(.15)
	Some college	.16	.28
		(.16)	(.17)
	Bachelor's degree	.00	.68*
		(.21)	(.26)
	More than Bachelor's	.22**	.46
		(.04)	(.28)

Prob.>F=.00, R^2=.17 (2004); Prob.>F=.00, R^2=.28 (2008)

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

[41] 2004: 1= Republican, 0=Democrat; 2008: 1=Democrat, 0=Republican

Table 5.9: Regression of Total Participation- in 2004 and 2008

Total Participation		2004	2008
Offline News Consumption		-.00	.02
		(.02)	(.01)
Online News Consumption		.14**	.07
		(.03)	(.06)
Political Interest		.83	1.06***
		(.33)	(.22)
Political Party[42]		.22	-.12
		(.11)	(.17)
Male		-.18	-.46*
		(.36)	(.17)
White		.08	.24
		(.38)	(.18)
Generation:	17-30	-.35	-.51
		(.27)	(.29)
	31-44	-.43	-.15
		(.18)	(.28)
	45-59	.08	-.07
		(.38)	(.23)
Income:	$30,000-$59,999	.27	-.55*
		(.29)	(.25)
	$60,000-$89,999	-.08	-.27
		(.26)	(.32)
	$90,000-$119,999	.64*	.08
		(.15)	(.42)
	$120,000 and above	1.02**	-.49
		(.17)	(.35)
Education:	HS or equivalency	.38	.23
		(.27)	(.32)
	Some college	.76*	.99**
		(.23)	(.32)
	Bachelor's degree	.39	1.75***
		(.40)	(.39)
	More than Bachelor's	.70	1.71***
		(.54)	(.37)

Prob.>F=.00, R^2=.24 (2004); Prob.>F=.00, R^2=.35 (2008)

[Table presents 95% confidence intervals; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001]

[42] 2004: 1= Republican, 0=Democrat; 2008: 1=Democrat, 0=Republican

Chapter 6: Digital Natives or a Digital Delay? Surprising Results about Youth and Rural Citizens Regarding Online Media Use and Participation

The preceding investigation has examined the impact of new media on different types of participation in three very unique and most enlightening ways. First, the impact of new media as a means of impacting participation in 2008 was investigated, utilizing the 2008 American National Election Study. Next, the digital divide was added to the analysis, and differences in urbanicity were investigated alongside other ways in which individuals' access to new types of media might be hindered. Finally, data from the 2004 ANES was used alongside data from the 2008 ANES in order to determine what differences in participation could be seen in the span of four years, or one American election cycle. The results in each case are counterintuitive, based on mainstream thinking on the impact of the new media.

The younger generation does not have more participation, rural areas do not have less participation, and 2008 does not have more online participation. Generation also does not work to explain participation in either 2004 or 2008. Finally, participation in 2004 is stronger than participation in 2008. Nearly all the hypotheses in this dissertation did not work, with one exception: younger generations did actually exhibit higher internet use than did members of older generations. As such, this dissertation is titled "A Digital Dud", reflecting the lack of significant impact of the internet on participation.

Paper 1 (Chapter 3)

In the first paper, the 2008 ANES is used to determine the impact of generation and new media on three types of participation: civic, political, and total. Using the ANES, and running regressions involving the variables of interest, it appears that the

generational theory seems to be unsupported. Individuals consistently tend to become more likely to participate as they get older, with nearly every generation analyzed showing lower participation rates when compared with the oldest generation. Generation of the respondents appears to be negatively correlated with online news consumption and positively correlated with offline news consumption, suggesting that younger individuals, who are more likely to get their news from online sources, are also less likely to participate in the civic and political worlds.

Looking at the specific hypotheses investigated in the first part of the current investigation, only one of the four major hypotheses stated at the beginning of the research paper was supported at all. There was some small support for the hypothesis that members of the digital native generation (those aged 17-30) would exhibit more online activity, political interest, and offline media use than individuals in other, older age groups. The second hypothesis investigated was not supported by the data. Members of older generations were shown to exhibit higher levels of civic participation than members of younger generations, but these higher levels of participation did not correspond to higher levels of online media use (though members of older generations were shown to exhibit higher levels of traditional media use).

The third hypothesis for the first paper, suggesting that members of older generations would exhibit higher levels of offline media use, online media use, and political interest, thus leading to increased political participation, was not supported. The main reason this hypothesis was not supported, however, was because members of older generations did not exhibit higher levels of online media use. In fact, members of the youngest generation exhibited the highest levels of online media use, though members of

older generations exhibited greater levels of conventional media use and political participation. The final hypothesis in the first paper, regarding levels of total participation, was also not supported. Once again, members of older generations did exhibit higher levels of total participation and higher levels of conventional media use, but their levels of online media use were once again lower than members of the youngest generation.

Overall, the results from the first study indicate that generally speaking, members of older generations tend to have higher levels of participation than members of younger generations. This holds true across all forms of participation, even though members of the oldest generation typically exhibited the lowest levels of online media use. Taken together, these two general findings suggest that online media use does not have a large impact on participation, as those age groups with the highest rates of online media use exhibited typically the lowest rates of participation both civically and politically. In fact, the notion of a more active younger generation is simply not supported by the data.

Paper 2 (Chapter 4)

In the second paper, the impact of the digital divide upon technology use and participation was the major focus. According to the analyses run, it seems that political participation and civic participation are significantly different concepts. The significance of civic participation tends to disappear somewhat when looking at total participation, suggesting that political participation tends to overwhelm the effects of civic participation. This suggests that at least in this case, political participation is generally much more significant than civic participation. This analysis supports the notion that a digital divide was clearly present during the 2008 United States election season, such that

individuals with internet access were significantly more likely to participate in their society, especially in terms of political participation. Additionally, income and education were both shown to exhibit a strong impact on participation in both the civic and political spheres.

Considering the specific hypotheses investigated in the second component of the second investigation, only one of the four hypotheses suggested at the start of the research paper was supported. The first hypothesis stated that individuals who lived in more urban regions in the United States would exhibit more online media use than individuals living in more rural areas. This hypothesis was ultimately supported by the data. The second hypothesis, however, was not supported by the data. While the hypothesis stated that individuals living in more urban areas of the United States would exhibit more online internet use than individuals living in rural areas, leading to increased civic participation among residents of urban areas, this did not turn out to be the case. Instead, individuals living in more urban areas of the United States actually displayed less civic participation than individuals living in rural regions of the United States.

The third hypothesis for the second study, suggesting that individuals living in more urban areas of the United States would exhibit more online internet use than individuals living in rural areas, leading to increased political participation among residents of urban areas, was also not supported. While there was not a large difference in the levels of political participation between urban residents and rural residents, residents of rural areas did exhibit higher levels of political participation than individuals living in urban areas. Finally, the fourth hypothesis in the second study, regarding levels of total participation, was also not supported. Once again, residents of urban locations

exhibited lower overall levels of participation than did residents of rural locations, despite exhibiting greater levels of online media use.

The results from this second study indicate first that individuals who live in more urban areas of the United States do indeed exhibit higher rates of online media use than do individuals who live in more rural areas of the United States. However, regarding participation rates specifically, the results of these analyses indicate that overall, individuals who live in more rural areas of the United States tend to participate at a higher rate than individuals who live in more urban areas of the United States.

Paper 3 (Chapter 5)

In the final paper, the elections of 2004 and 2008 were examined concurrently. Once more, the generational theory appears to be dramatically unsupported. This finding suggests that once again, older individuals were more likely to exhibit all kinds of participatory behavior examined, with the curious exception of political activity in 2004. More surprising was the fact that the internet had more effect in 2004 than in 2008, which is quite the opposite of the generally accepted understanding of the media's impact on participation. The highest income level, which had a significant impact on participation in 2004, did not have that significant impact in 2008. This result implies that instead of the internet being the purview of only a portion of the population in 2004, by 2008, the internet had moved into a more egalitarian state, and was now much more readily available for individuals of all economic backgrounds.

Looking at the specific hypotheses investigated in the third and final part of the final paper individually, none of the four hypotheses proposed at the beginning of this study were supported. The first hypothesis stated that members of the youngest

generation would exhibit the highest levels of online media consumption and the highest levels of offline media consumption, and that the effect would be more pronounced in 2008 than in 2004. This hypothesis was ultimately not supported by the data, as members of the youngest generation did not exhibit the highest levels of media use in 2008 or in 2004. The second hypothesis was also not supported by the data. While the hypothesis stated that members of the digital native (youngest) generation would exhibit greater levels of civic participation in 2008 than members of the same age group exhibited in 2004, this was shown to not be the case. Instead, when compared to members of the other age ranges, members of the youngest generation in 2008 actually exhibited significantly lower rates of participation than did the same age group in 2004, compared to the other age groups.

The third hypothesis was also not supported by the data. While the hypothesis stated that members of the digital native (youngest) generation would exhibit greater levels of political participation in 2008 than members of the same age group exhibited in 2004, this was shown to not be the case. Instead, when compared to members of the other age ranges, members of the youngest generation in 2008 actually exhibited significantly lower rates of participation than did the same age group in 2004, compared to the other age groups. Interestingly, members of the youngest generation in 2004 actually exhibited the most political participation of any age range examined during that election year. The fourth and final hypothesis also remained unsupported by the data. While the hypothesis stated that members of the digital native (youngest) generation would exhibit greater levels of total participation (civic participation plus political participation) in 2008 than members of the same age group exhibited in 2004, this was

once again shown to not be the case. In fact, members of the youngest generation were the least participatory group in 2008 (and significantly so). (While participation rates were low among members of the youngest generation in 2004, they were not shown to be the least participatory group in that analysis.)

The results from this final part of the study indicate that members of the youngest generation not only do not exhibit the highest levels of media use, they also almost always exhibit the lowest participation rates of any age range examined in the study. These findings seem to support the more traditional models of participation, which suggest that participation tends to increase as people grow older, thus increasing their educational attainment and income. These results seem to be consistent for the election years of both 2004 and 2008, with only political participation in 2004 appearing to exhibit any sort of high point for participation among members of the youngest age groups.

Combined Effect of All Three Papers

When taken together, the results from this investigation, when looked at in its entirety, seem to suggest that the more traditional models of participation (to be described in some detail in the following paragraphs) still works to explain participation. While more contemporary research on the intersection of internet use and participation has suggested that the internet serves as a sort of mediator for participation, allowing those who have been less participatory in the past to increase their participation levels (cf. Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010, and Harfoush 2009), the current research indicates that the internet's effect on actual participation—in any of the three realms examined in this study—has been dramatically overstated.

The current research paper indicates that instead of changing the face of participation, the internet's effect on participation rates has been minimal at best; non-existent at worst. These findings led to a number of the hypotheses suggested at the beginning of this research paper to prove unsupported. While this could be perceived as a downside to this overall investigation, I believe that the lack of support for the hypotheses proves intriguing in and of itself, and begs for further research into the connections between media use and participation.

When I began this dissertation, I expected that online media use would be strongly correlated with participation, and that the youngest members of society would be both more likely to utilize online media and more likely to participate in all three realms examined here. As has been seen, these expectations were largely unmet. Instead, the more traditional models of participation were supported—instead of youth and media use proving to lead to increased participation, the results from the 2004 and 2008 ANES suggest that while media use may be useful as a method to lead to participation, media use by itself does not necessarily lead to any sort of dramatic increase in participation among those who do not already participate in great numbers.

Limitations

The American National Election Study proved to be a particularly useful tool in investigating the connections between media use and participation. While there were some issues that arose with the data, these were all personal grievances about the questions asked on the surveys, not any sort of problem with the data collected or the ways in which the surveys were administered. In the future, some more in-depth questions about types of media used and frequency of different types of media use would

be welcome, but the 2004 and 2008 ANES proved to be very illuminating in examining the linkages between participation and media use.

While this study has proven noteworthy and has led to some very intriguing results, there are a few limitations to the study that should be addressed, and potentially ameliorated or addressed by any potential future research on the topic. First and foremost, one of the major limitations of this study is its reliance on secondary data. While the ANES is an invaluable resource for determining nationwide trends and large-scale social developments, there were several times during the course of this dissertation when questions were raised which the ANES simply did not provide any answers for. These questions ranged from the effect of social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter to more general questions regarding specific attitudes and feelings of respondents about media in general. A future research paper addressing some of the specific components of new media (components such as Facebook, Twitter, and so-called "clicktivism"[43]) would be a welcome addition to the current research.

Second, data from the ANES is somewhat limited, in only looking at voters in the United States, and overlooking several groups in the population (notably those who are not registered to vote). While this likely would not affect the findings regarding political participation to any great degree, it likely would affect the findings on civic participation. Perhaps those who do not vote find other routes to participation in the civic realm. Additionally, the ANES data are limited by the questions asked on the ANES itself. In the early days of any technology, it is not likely that large-scale surveys like the ANES

[43] This term is a portmanteau of "click" and "activism", implying a form of activism with little expended effort.

would spend time asking questions about a technology used by a relatively small percentage of the overall population. Future research could focus more specifically on participation, and not be beholden to the questions asked by the ANES.

Third, according to data from the Pew Center (2014b) on social media networking usage among Americans, 74 percent of all internet users use some kind of social networking site, with the percentage of members of the youngest generation (18-29) using social networking sites reaching up to 89. Of all adults who are online, 19 percent of online users use Twitter, and 71 percent use Facebook. Again, members of the youngest generation use social networking sites at a much higher rate than members of older generations. These specific social networking sites were not asked about in either the 2004 ANES or the 2008 ANES—only general questions about online news media, and online access at all, were included in the survey. Indeed, Facebook only came into existence in February of 2004 (and did not become widely available or hugely popular until several years after that), and Twitter only came into existence in March 2006 (and took a while to become widely accepted/popular). Because the nature of online communication and participation is changing so rapidly, it is difficult to fully cover every aspect of participation (or online media use) in a periodical, large-scale survey with many more areas of focus than just online media use. As such, any sort of future research into the linkages between online media use and participation would definitely have to take into account the myriad ways in which individuals can possibly consume online media in the modern technological age.

Fourth, the concept of clicktivism in particular has been a topic of much recent research regarding the potentially changing nature not only of what participation is, but

also what participation is not. In a nutshell, clicktivism, or digital activism may be defined as "the expanding use of digital technologies—mobile phones and Internet-enabled devices, for example—in campaigns for social and political change" (Joyce 2010: vii). In other words, clicktivism refers to participation which takes place online, with (critics would argue) very little effort expended.

At this point in the history of research on the subject, critical consensus has yet to be achieved—several scholars (cf. Halupka 2014) suggest that clicktivism is a legitimate political act in and of itself, while others (cf. Rojas and Puig-i-Abril 2009) posit that while clicktivism is not necessarily the same as participation, clicktivism may help point the way towards more traditional forms of participation. Still others see digital activism as "slacktivism"[44], defining the action as nothing more than "a willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause, with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change" (Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2014: 1149).

Marc Hooghe, Bengü Hosch-Dayican, and Jan W. van Deth examine the changing nature of political participation in general, and the act of clicktivism in particular, in their dialogue "Conceptualizing Political Participation" (2014). Hosch-Dayican notes that "it is hard to draw a line between political participation and communication as these [online] activities are by definition communicative" (344). Throughout the dialogue, the authors note the perils in understanding online political participation as being equivalent to traditional, offline political participation, with Hooghe in particular questioning whether

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[44] This term is a portmanteau of "slacker" and "activism", implying a form of activism with virtually no expended effort.

or not online methods of participation are purposefully conducted, or are simply done thoughtlessly, without any sort of actual political intent. Hooghe ends his section of the dialogue by noting that the definition of political participation has changed, and “the study of political participation…will become more complicated than ever before.” (341) Conducting some sort of investigation into the connection between actual online activism, more traditional means of participation, and age would prove particularly enlightening.

Larry Bartels and Simon Jackman, in “A Generational Model of Political Learning”, note the significance of age cohorts in shaping participation. The authors note that “[t]here is clearly a sustaines period of heightened sensitivity to political events during adolescence” (16), suggesting support for the imprinting phenomenon, whereby certain salient events—such as the rise of a new technology—stick with groups throughout their lives, and affect their participation. Kaat Smets and Anja Nuendorf, in “The Hierarchies of Age-Period-Cohort Research” find a similar result, but note that instead of an instantaneous change, “it takes the collective experiences of at least two elections to form a pattern” (42).

Future Research

A potential addition to this study would be to update the research presented here. The most recent election investigated in this analysis was the 2008 election, an election that has already faded largely into memory by the time this analysis was completed. Future research could build on the work done here, bringing the 2012 (and beyond) elections into the study to see whether the trends described here have continued (or have halted). Midterm elections would be particularly interesting to examine—in these

elections, where younger voters are typically outnumbered dramatically by older voters, any effect of online media use would likely be much more dramatic.

Writing about generational differences concerning the then-upcoming 2012 election cycle, the Pew Center (2011) notes that participation and political interest have declined sharply since the 2008 election among members of the youngest generation. Are more traditional methods of participation becoming the only means of participating once again? Is any effect of new media on participation disappearing completely? Any sort of updated research on the connections between media use and participation could potentially help shed some light on the question of why younger voters appear to be less politically inclined than they have been in the past, and could serve to compare the election examined here with the most recent presidential election—the three presidential elections since the dawn of the online era.

It would also be enlightening to focus more directly on the media's role in crafting the narrative about media use and participation. Clearly, the significance of online media usage has been overstated and wrongly emphasized in the past, but why? Future research looking more broadly at the changing media landscape and shifting definitions of what is and is not "news" would lead to an intriguing examination of bias in journalism and narrative crafting.

Generally, this research paper has investigated two of the main forces impacting participation, in all forms: new media and old media. New media continually increases, and is continually adopted and adapted by members of the youngest generations (primarily), leading to increased participation. This seems to be, however, generally counteracted somewhat by the tendency of members of older generations to be more

aligned with traditional avenues to participation—available money to spend, more time to devote to causes[45], and higher educational attainment. Younger people tend to be less politically (and civically) organized than older people—as mentioned, formal organization tends to take time, money, and education. New technology is definitely bridging the participatory gap between younger generations and older generations: political participation among the youngest generation has increased in the elections investigated here, but this increase has not been enough to outweigh the traditional avenues to participation. While the impact of technology has been somewhat overblown by previous scholars (and the reflexive media themselves), the present research suggests that the impact is still present, and still noteworthy.

Overall, there is a clear correlation between media use and participation, both civically and politically (and overall). While this correlation may have been somewhat overstated or exaggerated in previous research, suggesting some kind of "magic bullet" theory of technology, it is nonetheless evident that the correlation between new media and participation does indeed exist. More significantly, however, and building on the findings of the third research paper described here, is the fact that the correlation between technology and participation is undeniably increasing, and that this correlation undoubtedly become only more pronounced as more and more generations who have grown up with the technology become older voters (with more resources), and eventually become fully participatory members of their societies.

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[45] Free time was not asked about in the ANES.

Appendix 1: Variables used in 2008 Analysis

To measure civic participation, a variable named CIVPART08 was created, combining three elements of civic participation into one collective measure. The three individual components (BOARDMTG08: Has the respondent ever attended a city or school board meeting?; VOLWORK08: Has the respondent done any volunteer work in the past 12 months?; and CHARITY08: Has the respondent contributed to any church or charity in the past 12 months?) were scored 1 or 0 (1=yes; 0=no), and were then combined into CIVPART08, scored 0-3.

To measure political participation, a variable named POLPART08 was created, combining six elements of political participation into one collective measure. The six individual components (MARCH08: Has the respondent ever joined a protest march or rally?; OTHERPOLWORK08: Did the respondent do any "other" work for a party or a political candidate?; POLMONEY08: Did the respondent contribute money to a specific candidate's campaign?; PRIMARY08: Did the respondent vote in the presidential primary or caucus?; POLTALK08: Did the respondent talk to anyone about voting for or against a candidate?; and POLMEET08: Did the respondent go to any political meetings, rallies, or speeches?) were scored 1 or 0 (1=yes; 0=no), and were then combined into POLPART08, scored 0-6. The measures for political participation (POLPART08) and civic participation (CIVPART08) were then combined into a measure representing total participation (TOTPART08), scored 0-9.

Online news was measured directly, using a question from the survey which asked respondents how many days in the past week they read a daily online newspaper (the variable was scored 0-7). This variable was renamed ONNEWS08. Offline news

was measured with a created variable (OFFNEWS08), which was a combination of responses to questions about five individual types of offline news consumption (RADIO08: How many days in the past week did you listen to radio news?; NEWSPAPER08: How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper?; AFTERNOONTV08: How many days in the past week did you watch local television news in the afternoon or early evening?; LATETV08: How many days in the past week did you watch local television news in the late evening?; and NATNEWS08: How many days in the past week did you watch national news on television). Each of the individual questions was measured on a 0-7 scale, and scores on the combined OFFNEWS08 measure ranged from 0-35.

The generations variable (GENERATE08) was constructed by dividing the respondents of the survey into approximately equivalent groups according to their age. These divisions also aligned nicely with the generations of interest in the analyses. The four generations categories, measured by age, were: GENERATE081 (17-30)[46], GENERATE082 (31-44), GENERATE083 (45-59), and GENERATE084 (60 and over). The combined generations variable was measured 1-4, with each generation represented as a unique value.

Political interest (INTEREST08) was measured using the question asking if respondents were interested in following political campaigns. The responses to this question were originally coded on a 5-point Likert-type scale, which was then recoded to a 0-1 value (0=moderately, slightly, or not interested at all; 1=extremely or very

[46] There was one individual aged 17 in this study; that individual turned 18 (voting age in the US) by the time of the 2008 election.

interested) for the purposes of this analysis. Voting in previous elections (PASTVOTE08) was measured using the corresponding question on the ANES, with a value of 1 representing a respondent who had voted in previous elections, and a value of 0 representing a respondent who had not done so.

The values for gender (GENDER08) were coded such that 1=male and 0=female. Race (RACE08) was coded as 1=white and 0=nonwhite[47]. Income (INCOME08) was divided into five distinct categories, based on the respondent's reported annual household income. The five income categories, evenly divided, are: INCOME081 ($0-$29,999), INCOME082 ($30,000-$59,999), INCOME083 ($60,000-$89,999), INCOME084 ($90,000-$119,999), and INCOME085 ($120,000 and above). The combined income category (INCOME08) was measured 1-5, with each income range represented as a unique value. Education (EDUCATE08) was divided into five unique categories, based on the respondent's reported highest level of education attained. The five education categories are: EDUCATE081 (no high school diploma), EDUCATE082 (high school diploma or equivalency), EDUCATE083 (some college but no degree OR a junior college degree), EDUCATE084 (Bachelor's degree or equivalency), and EDUCATE085 (Master's degree or equivalency). The combined education category (EDUCATE08) was measured 1-5, with each level of education represented as a unique value.

Three variables were unique to the second analysis—urban location, internet access and geographic region. Urban location (URBAN08) was measured using the interviewer's observation of the respondents' dwelling units. This measure seems to be

[47] Nonwhite here includes the categories "Black/African American", "White and another race", "Black and another race", and "White, black, and another race".

the most accurate, objective measurement of urban or rural location possible, coming as it does from outside the respondent, from an unbiased observer. Rural location was coded as 1, while urban location was coded as 0. Internet access (ACCESS08) was measured using responses to the question “Does the respondent have access to the internet?”, with 0 representing no access to the internet, and 1 representing a respondent with access to the internet.

Four geographic regions were created, based on United States Census Bureau definitions, with the exception of a shift of Delaware and Washington, DC into a newly created East region. The regions created were MIDWEST (North Dakota (N=18), Kansas (N=15), Minnesota (N=16), Wisconsin (N=7), Michigan (N=56), Ohio (N=50), Indiana (N=26), and Illinois (N=19)), WEST (Washington (N=11), Oregon (N=13), California (N=135), Nevada (N=16), Arizona (N=21), New Mexico (N=29), and Colorado (N=46)), SOUTH (Texas (N=170), Oklahoma (N=17), Virginia (N=14), North Carolina (N=31), South Carolina (N=32), Georgia (N=41), Florida (N=91), Alabama (N=16), Mississippi (N=36), Tennessee (N=38), and Louisiana (N=42)), and EAST (Delaware (N=10), Washington DC (N=6), New York (N=65), Pennsylvania (N=23), New Jersey (N=9), Massachusetts (N=8), Connecticut (N=12), and Rhode Island (N=11)). Each of these regions was a 0-1 variable, where 1 represented respondents who resided in the region, and 0 represented respondents who did not.

The variable PARTY08, used in the third analysis, measures political party, according to respondent's rankings of the parties on the ANES party thermometer[48]. For the purposes of the 2008 analysis, the Democratic party has a value of 1, and the Republican party has a value of 0.

[48] This survey question was used to represent political party because respondents were forced to rank one of the two parties higher than the other, and there were no independents in the results.

Appendix 2: Variables used in 2004 Analysis

The 2004 ANES was utilized only in the third analysis, and thus did not have as many unique variables utilized in these analyses as did the 2008 ANES. To measure civic participation, a variable named CIVPART04 was created, combining three elements of civic participation into one collective measure. The three individual components (CMEET04: Has the respondent attended a community meeting about an issue in the past 12 months?; VOL04: Has the respondent done any volunteer work in the past 12 months?; and RELMEET04: Has the respondent been active at a church meeting in the past 12 months?) were scored 1 or 0 (1=yes; 0=no), and were then combined into CIVPART04, scored 0-3.

To measure political participation, a variable named POLPART04 was created, combining five elements of political participation into one collective measure. The five individual components (PROTEST04: Has the respondent taken part in a protest or march in the past 12 months?; POLWORK04: Did the respondent do any "other" work for a party or campaign in the past 12 months?; POLMONEY04: Did the respondent give money to a party in the past 12 months?; POLBUTTON04: Did the respondent display a campaign button, sticker, or sign in the past 12 months?; and POLTALK04: Did the respondent talk to anyone to persuade them to vote?) were scored 1 or 0 (1=yes; 0=no), and were then combined into POLPART04, scored 0-5. The measures for political participation (POLPART04) and civic participation (CIVPART04) were then combined into a measure representing total participation (TOTPART04), scored 0-8.

Online news was measured directly, using a question from the survey which asked respondents how many days in the past week they read a daily online newspaper (the variable was scored 0-7). This variable was renamed ONNEWS04. Offline news was measured with a created variable (OFFNEWS04), which was a combination of responses to questions about four individual types of offline news consumption (NEWSPAPER: How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper?; AFTTVLOCAL: How many days in the past week did you watch local television news in the late afternoon or early evening?; LATETVLOCAL: How many days in the past week did you watch local television news in the late evening?; and NATNEWSTV: How many days in the past week did you watch national news on television). Each of the individual questions was measured on a 0-7 scale, and scores on the combined OFFNEWS04 measure ranged from 0-28.

The generations variable (GENERATE04) was constructed by dividing the respondents of the survey into approximately equivalent groups according to their age, and to create a parallel with the 2008 division. The four generations categories, measured by age, were: GENERATE041 (17-30)[49], GENERATE042 (31-44), GENERATE043 (45-59), and GENERATE044 (60 and over). The combined generations variable was measured 1-4, with each generation represented as a unique value.

Political interest (INTEREST04) was measured using the question asking if respondents were interested in following political campaigns. The responses to this question were originally coded on a 3-point Likert-type scale, which was then recoded to a 0-1 value (0=somewhat interested or not much interested; 1=very interested) for the

[49] All individuals in the study were 18 (voting age) by the time of the 2004 election.

purposes of this analysis. The variable PARTY04 measures political party, according to the respondent's self-reported identification. For the purposes of the 2004 analysis, the Republican party has a value of 1, and the Democratic party has a value of 0.

The values for gender (GENDER04) were coded such that 1=male and 0=female. Race (RACE04) was coded as 1=white and 0=nonwhite[50]. Income (INCOME04) was divided into five distinct categories, based on the respondent's reported annual household income. The five income categories, evenly divided and parallel to the corresponding categories for 2008, are: INCOME041 ($0-$29,999), INCOME042 ($30,000-$59,999), INCOME043 ($60,000-$89,999), INCOME044 ($90,000-$119,999), and INCOME045 ($120,000 and above). The combined income category (INCOME04) was measured 1-5, with each income range represented as a unique value.

Education (EDUCATE04) was divided into five unique categories, based on the respondent's reported highest level of education attained. The five education categories are: EDUCATE041 (no high school diploma), EDUCATE042 (high school diploma or equivalency), EDUCATE043 (some college but no degree OR a junior college degree), EDUCATE044 (Bachelor's degree or equivalency), and EDUCATE045 (Master's degree or equivalency). The combined education category (EDUCATE04) was measured 1-5, with each level of education represented as a unique value.

[50] Nonwhite here includes only the category "Black", in order to remain equivalency with the 2008 analysis.

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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Sociology, University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY)
Proposal passed 10/23/2013; Defense passed 4/8/2015
Title: *A Digital Dud? New Media, Participation, and Voting in the 2004 and 2008 United States Presidential Elections*
Chair: Professor Thomas Janoski
Committee Members:
Professor Gary Hansen
Professor James Hougland
Associate Professor, Ana Liberato

M.A., Sociology, Morehead State University (Morehead, KY), 2007
B.A., Psychology and Sociology, University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY), 2005

AREAS OF INTEREST

Political Sociology, Sociology of Media and Communications, Social Inequalities, Survey Research and Quantitative Methodology, Teaching Methodologies.

TEACHING

Solo Instructor Experience:

Sociology 235: Social Inequalities, University of Kentucky

Spring and Fall 2012
Summer 2012 (online)
Spring and Fall 2011
Fall 2010

Sociology 101: Introduction to Sociology, University of Kentucky

Spring 2015
Spring 2010
Fall 2009

Sociology 101: Introduction to Sociology, Maysville Community and Technical College:

Spring 2015 (online)
Spring, Summer, and Fall 2014 (online)
Spring, Summer, and Fall 2013 (online, 3 sections in Spring 2013)

Spring, Summer, and Fall 2012 (online, 3 sections in Fall 2012)
Spring, Summer, and Fall 2011 (online in Summer and Fall, 2 sections in Fall 2011)
Summer 2010 (online)
Summer 2009

Teaching Assistant Experience

Sociology 342: Organizations and Work in Society, University of Kentucky
Spring 2013
Sociology 302: Sociological Research Methods, University of Kentucky
Spring 2013
Sociology 101: Introduction to Sociology, University of Kentucky
Fall 2014 (3 sections)
Spring 2009 (3 sections)
Fall 2008 (3 sections)

Teaching Professional Development

Fall 2007: Seminar in Teaching Sociology (Sociology 603), taken at University of Kentucky (3 credit hours)
Numerous departmental and graduate school presentations and workshops attended.

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Bluegrass Scholarship
Fleming-Mason Energy Scholarship
Hayswood Foundation Scholarship
Horatio Alger Scholarship
Inland Container Scholarship
Limestone Academic League Scholarship
Mason County Homemakers Scholarship
Robert C. Byrd Scholarship
Salutatorian, 2001, Mason County High School (148 in class)
Graduate Teaching Award, Department of Sociology (UK)

PUBLICATIONS:

2013. "Income Inequality" Pp. 427-431 in Vicki Smith (ed.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA. (with Thomas Janoski).

PAPERS IN PROGRESS:

Paper 1 "The Impact of Technology and Generations on Civic and Political Participation in 2008" being prepared for *American Journal of Sociology*

Paper 2: “The Impact of Regional Location on Civic and Political Participation in 2008” being prepared for *Social Problems*

Paper 3: “The Impact of Technology and Generations on Civic and Political Participation in 2004 and 2008” being prepared for *American Sociological Review*

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Accepted: “The Impact of Technology and Generations on Civic and Political Participation in 2004 and 2008” at the 78th Annual Meeting of the Southern Sociological Society. New Orleans, Louisiana. March 28, 2015.

Oral Moderator: two sessions at NCUR 2014. Lexington, Kentucky.

Session Chair: “Community Development and the Rural Economy: Considering the Contributions and Impacts of Local Agriculture, Biofuel Production, and Cooperatives” at the 73rd Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society . Atlanta, Georgia. August 14, 2010.

Co-presenter: “Green Acres Gone Reality: Celebrity Farmers in the US—A Grad Student Led Research Project” at the Southern Rural Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Orlando, Florida. February 7, 2010.

SERVICE

University of Kentucky:

- Graduate Student Representative, Undergraduate Committee: Fall 2008-Spring 2009
- Cohort Representative, Chair’s Committee On Graduate Student Life: Fall 2009-Spring 2010
- Co-founder, First Vice-President, Chair of Social Events Committee, Graduate Sociological Organization: Fall 2009-Fall 2010
- Graduate Student Representative, Job Search Committee: Spring 2010
- Graduate Student Representative, Professional Development and Research Grants Committee: Fall 2010-Spring 2011

Morehead State University:

- Co-Founder and first President, Graduate Sociological Society, Fall 2006-Spring 2007.