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Being Inside or Outside the Virtuous Circle: How News Media Repertoires Relate to Political Participation Repertoires

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To understand how youth act in the current media landscape and the growing opportunity structure for political participation, a more comprehensive approach in measuring news consumption and political participation is warranted. This study (1) examines the different types of political participation among youth based on engagement in various participatory activities, (2) examines how these different political participation repertoires are related to news media repertoires, and (3) explores the role of political knowledge, political efficacy, and personal background characteristics. Results from a survey of Dutch adolescents ($N = 1,084$; age 16–21 years) reveal four distinct repertoires of political participation, each largely overlapping with a similar news media repertoire. Findings suggest that youth are either inside the virtuous circle, with high levels of news consumption and political participation, or outside the virtuous circle, avoiding both news consumption and participatory activities. In the discussion we reflect on the importance of local news and community-based activities to draw youth into the virtuous circle.

Keywords: political participation, news consumption, survey, youth, Netherlands

As the media landscape continues to expand and the opportunities for political engagement continue to grow, people nowadays have the choice to fully engage with civic life or virtually withdraw from it. Scholars have discussed the implications of these developments for today's citizens, especially for the younger generations (Norris, 2000; Slater, 2007). From a pessimistic point of view, some scholars have foreseen growing gaps in civic competence and engagement (Prior, 2007). On a more optimistic note, other scholars believe that the digitalization of society has provided more opportunities to bridge these gaps, especially among younger citizens (Boulianne, 2009).

These opposing perspectives have led to an extensive number of studies aimed at disentangling the relationship between online media use and political engagement (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018b).

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Despite the growing literature, studies that focus on online *and* offline forms of both news media use *and* political participation are few (Edgerly, Vraga, Bode, Thorson, & Thorson, 2018; Strömbäck, Falasca, & Kruike-meier, 2018; Wolfsfeld, Yarchi, & Samuel-Azran, 2016), especially those taking a repertoire approach in measuring and studying news media use and political participation. Such a comprehensive approach is necessary to gain a better understanding of individualized patterns of news consumption and participatory behavior considering the hybridization of our information environment (Chadwick, 2013) and the expanding opportunity structure for political participation.

There is some research that has examined either the different types of political participation or the different types of news media use in a more comprehensive manner. For example, studies unravelling the current information environment by examining news media repertoires (e.g., Edgerly et al., 2018; Geers, 2020; Strömbäck et al., 2018; Wolfsfeld et al., 2016) or studies unravelling different types or repertoires of political participation (e.g., Hustinx, Meijs, Handy, & Cnaan, 2012; Keating & Melis, 2017; Ohme, De Vreese, & Albæk, 2018), have provided insight into the different forms of news media use and political participation. In the current study, we examine the dynamic between those news media repertoires and political participation repertoires in a society where both old and new media and old and new forms of participation have blended together.

The question on how both are linked is especially important for young people who are still socializing into citizenship (Sears, 1971). Does the new media environment encourage youth to partake in newer, online forms of political participation? Or are they mainly socialized by their parents and therefore follow more traditional forms of media use and participation similar to previous generations and thus are defined by “traditional” forms of political participation? Or do they not use media at all for gathering news and political information and therefore are not getting engaged in civic life? These are the guiding questions for this study on the relationship between news media repertoires and political participation repertoires among youth.

Based on a survey conducted among 16 to 21 years old Dutch students from secondary and tertiary education ($N = 1,117$) we will first empirically identify political participation types among them. Secondly, we will examine how the participatory repertoires can be explained by news media repertoires. Third, the mediating role of political knowledge and political efficacy and the social background characteristics of these different types of political participation are examined. We find that individuals’ news media and political participation are likely to be *congruent* in nature. Individuals that rely on traditional media are more likely to be involved in traditional forms of political participation, while those who use online and social media are also more active in political participation online. Finally, news avoidance is likely to co-occur with the absence of political participation.

Repertoires of Political Participation

To enhance our understanding of political participation, scholars have developed a theory-driven conceptual map with decision rules to identify to which type of participation certain activities belong (for a more detailed explanation, see Ohme et al., 2018; Theocharis, 2015; Theocharis & Van Deth, 2018; Van Deth, 2014). The classification of participatory activities in this conceptualization relies on three aspects of participation: the sphere (e.g., Is the activity located in the political sphere?), the target (e.g., Is the activity

targeted at the political sphere or the community?) and the motivation of an activity (e.g., Is it a politically motivated activity or a nonpolitical activity?). Based on these aspects an operational definition of political participation is presented in the conceptual map which distinguishes between four types of political participation: (1) participation taking place in the political sphere, (2) participation targeted at the political sphere, (3) participation targeted at community issues, (4) nonpolitical, but politically motivated participation (Van Deth, 2014). Whereas the original version of the operational definition only accounted for offline political participation (Van Deth, 2014), newer versions have also included digitally networked and other newly unconventional participatory activities (Theocharis, 2015; Theocharis & Van Deth, 2018). The refinement of the conceptual framework has advanced our understanding of political participation as a comprehensive concept. However, studies that have put the proposed conceptual framework to an empirical test are limited (e.g., Miranda, Castillo, & Sandoval-Hernandez, 2017; Ohme et al., 2018).

A study that did empirically test the conceptualization by Van Deth (2014) demonstrated the existence of four different types of political participation related to the sphere, the target, and the motivation of activities (Ohme et al., 2018). The findings suggested that the distinction between online and offline activities is becoming less relevant, and that newly unconventional participatory activities can also be classified along the lines of the conceptual map. A study focused on young citizens' participation criticized Van Deth's (2014) model for not taking into account that young people cannot meet the requirements for formal political participation as they, for example, do not yet have voting rights (Miranda et al., 2017). They proposed a conceptual model for young citizenship with two main dimensions, community and civic participation, in which formal participation and activism were considered subdimensions of civic participation; and found empirical support for the model across various countries.

These conceptual frameworks are helpful in identifying which type of activity belongs to which type of participation. However, the implicit assumption in these models is that citizens actually participate, and they do not account for disengaged citizens as a possible group of citizens within society; while the rise of digital and social media has sparked the question whether citizens are civically engaged at all, or whether they are withdrawing from civic life (Boulianne, 2009; Prior, 2007). This question is even more vital for the younger citizens in society. The perspective that civic engagement is declining, especially among youth, is mainly based on work that focuses on traditional forms of participation, such as voting and party membership (Putnam, 2000). Instead, scholars argue that participation is transforming, in which established forms of participation are blending with newly emerging ones (Dalton, 2008; Hustinx et al., 2012).

From this second perspective, scholars have identified individualized repertoires of political participation among young people based on various old and new participatory activities, both online and offline (Hustinx et al., 2012). They identified five types among Dutch and Belgian university students: disengaged students, classical volunteers, humanitarian citizens, monitorial citizens, and civic omnivores. Another study that solely focused on online activities, identified three different types or civic repertoires among young adults ages 22–29 in Britain (Keating & Melis, 2017): nonengagers, highly engaged, and responders (individuals who respond to other's initiative by "liking" and "reposting" social media posts).

The current study involves high school students and students from tertiary education in The Netherlands, of whom most are between 16 and 18 years old. This sample is even younger than the samples

in the previous repertoire studies among youth. These young citizens are raised in a world in which social media has spread through every part of society (Jenkins, Ito, & Boyd, 2016; Poindexter, 2012). This raises questions like: Do young people only focus on online participatory activities, or are they also interested in offline participatory activities? Are they mainly focused on community-targeted activities, or politically targeted activities? Or are they completely disengaged with civic life?

To provide a more clear-cut answer to these questions, we employ an exploratory latent class analysis (LCA) to find a classifying model that best fits our empirical data. This model shows which individual repertoires of political participation can be identified based on observed response patterns among the set of participatory activities (Finch & Bronk, 2011; Hagenaars & McCutcheon, 2002). Findings will reveal to what extent the empirical observations are in line with the conceptual definitions discussed and correspond to the previous identified repertoires among older youth.

RQ1: Which types of political participation can be distinguished among young people?

The Relationship Between Media and Participatory Repertoires

The central question in this study is how young people's participation in civic life is related to their news media consumption. How is their political behavior formed, and what role do both traditional and digital media play in the formation of this behavior? From a socialization perspective, young people are at a critical stage in life where their political attitudes, norms, and behavior are formed that will last throughout the life course (Norris, 2000; Sears, 1971; Slater, 2007). On the one hand, as digital media are so integrated in their daily lives, we can expect that these media are interrelated with their formation of political behavior, and thus with their participation in civic life (Jenkins et al., 2016; Kahne et al., 2013; Kruikemeier & Shehata, 2017). On the other hand, youth might also still be primarily socialized by their parents (Vaala & Bleakley, 2015), resulting in both news consumption patterns and political behavior that are similar to previous generations, including traditional media use and traditional forms of political participation in which people rely on institutionalized media and institutionalized forms of political action (Edgerly et al., 2018). A meta-analysis of research on youth, digital media use and civic engagement showed that there are positive correlations between political digital media use and civic engagement, and a strong relationship between online and offline forms of participation, which undermines claims of slacktivism among youth (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018b). The notion of slacktivism refers to youth not engaging in offline activities, but only in low-effort online activities, such as liking a Facebook post with political content. It is even argued that engagement in low-effort online activities provides youth with the illusion of having done enough effort and, therefore, reduces the likelihood of engaging in offline activities. However, the meta-analysis by Boulianne and Theocharis (2018b) shows otherwise. Yet this meta-analysis only focused on the impact of social media on online and offline engagement, while recent studies into news media repertoires showed that large shares of youth still have traditional news diets (Edgerly et al., 2018; Geers, 2020).

In this study, we take a repertoire approach in measuring media exposure, political participation and how the two relate. For media use people nowadays select a combination of platforms to consume news, which can include both online and offline platforms from both traditional and nontraditional news media (Geers, 2020). For political participation, established forms of participation are blending with newly

emerging participatory activities (Hustinx et al., 2012) and citizens might be involved with one or more of those activities. Due to the hybridization of our information environment (Chadwick, 2013) and the expanding opportunity structure for political participation, a more comprehensive approach is warranted in measuring both media use and political participation. The repertoire approach focuses on the combined use of different media platforms (e.g., Edgerly et al., 2018; Geers, 2020), and on the combined use of different participatory activities (e.g., Hustinx et al., 2012; Keating & Melis, 2017), as such it provides a better understanding of the individualized patterns of media use and participation among citizens.

A study that examined the relationship between media repertoires and political participation among adults found that media repertoires were largely congruent with the type of participatory activities adults engaged with (Wolfsfeld et al., 2016)—for example, people with a social media repertoire were more likely to carry out digital participation than people with a traditional media repertoire. The theoretical rationale here is straightforward: Familiarity with a medium fosters participation. If someone is used to getting news online and on social media, online forms are also a more natural form of participation (Wolfsfeld et al., 2016). Furthermore, online and offline platforms provide different motivational and mobilizing structures for the consumption and creation of information and for the mode of participation. For gaining information and participating in politically motivated actions, people are no longer only reliant on traditional institutionalized media and politics that are characterized by their one-way interaction. Young citizens might feel less attracted to highly institutionalized organizations and turn to social networks for both the consumption and creation of politically motivated content which have a higher mobilizing potential (Hustinx et al., 2012; Keating & Melis, 2017). This can translate into a media repertoire and a congruent participatory repertoire in which the level of institutionalization is the underlying defining element, rather than the online/offline dimension. In this study, we do not formulate hypotheses on the exact composition of the media repertoires and the participatory repertoires. However, we do expect congruency between media repertoires and participatory activities.

Additionally, the relation between media use and political participation can be mediated by political knowledge and political efficacy in such a way that those individuals that have the most diverse media repertoires (i.e., consume both offline and online news) will increase both knowledge and efficacy (Wolfsfeld et al., 2016). These people experience more diverse political information and get engaged in the political world, yielding higher levels of both knowledge and efficacy. These two, on their turn, are likely to foster political participation, since those individuals feel most empowered to participate (Wolfsfeld et al., 2016). Another news media repertoire study showed that users of newer media (i.e., Internet, mobile, and SNS) do not differ in their level of acquired political knowledge with news avoiders, implying that digitalized information sources do not contribute to higher levels of political knowledge (H. Lee & Yang, 2014). For people with a news avoiding or new online media repertoire, lower levels of acquired political knowledge might relate to lower levels of political participation.

Other studies have indeed demonstrated that the different levels of political participation are indeed related to political knowledge (e.g., Cho & McLeod, 2007; Prior, 2005; Yoo & Gil de Zúñiga, 2014)—citizens with higher political knowledge are more likely to participate in political and civic participation—and internal political efficacy (e.g., Chen, Bai, & Wang, 2019; Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014; McCluskey,

Deshpande, Shah, & McLeod, 2004; Möller, De Vreese, Esser, & Kunz, 2014)—the more confidence people have in their own political capacities, the more likely they are to get politically involved.

We follow the assumption by Wolfsfeld and colleagues (2016), that news media repertoires and participatory repertoires are clearly linked, meaning that the repertoires are congruent with each other. The news media repertoires in the sample of this study were already established in a previous study (Geers, 2020), in which four types of news users were identified: online news users, traditionalists, news minimalists and news omnivores. From the assumption that the repertoires are congruent—people use the same mode for news consumption as for participation—we would expect traditionalists to engage in more traditional forms of participation based in institutionalized organizations, online news users to engage in digitalized form of participation, news omnivores to engage in the different modes of participation, and news minimalist to be disengaged citizens. However, based on previous findings in adult samples (Strömbäck et al., 2018; Wolfsfeld et al., 2016), we could, alternatively, expect online news users to be involved in both online and offline participatory activities. It remains the question whether this pattern can also be found among youth. As they grew up in a digitalized age, it is well possible that the youth who have an online news repertoire are only or mainly involved in online participatory activities. Additionally, in line with Wolfsfeld and associates (2016), we expect that the relation between media repertoires and political repertoires is mediated by political knowledge and efficacy. As S. Lee and Matsuo (2018) demonstrate political knowledge is related to political engagement. They distinguish between retrieval accuracy and confidence. The first is conceptually close to how we operationalize knowledge, while the latter can be considered closely related efficacy. Both positively relate to political engagement, though the latter more strongly than the first as confidence increases motivation and the recognition of political opportunities to engage.

H1: News media repertoires are congruent with political participation repertoires.

H2: The relation between news media repertoires and political participation repertoires is mediated by (a) political knowledge and (b) political efficacy.

Differential Social Backgrounds

For a better understanding of the different participatory repertoires, we examine their sociodemographic characteristics and individual predispositions. Previous studies have looked into the different explanations for levels of engagement, as well as the characteristics of online participation versus formal and offline participation. The main arguments for explaining a political participation gap have been related to the following sociodemographic divides. First of all, an educational divide, suggesting that higher educated citizens are more likely to get politically involved than lower educated citizens, with regard to online participation and their overall participation (Correa, 2016; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014). Secondly, a generational divide, suggesting that older generations turn to more traditional offline forms of participation, while younger generations are more politically active online (Albacete, 2014; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). Thirdly, a gender gap, arguing that the online participatory opportunities reinforce the higher political involvement of men compared with women (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008; Ono & Zavodny, 2003), although studies have also noted a decrease in this gender gap (Bode, 2017; Christensen & Bengtsson, 2011; Fallows, 2005; Oser, Hooghe, & Marien, 2013).

Most studies exploring the antecedents of participatory behavior have focused on one specific component of political participation, e.g., online participation or offline participation, or civic engagement in general. In this study, we first disentangle the individual repertoires of political participation, which might be characterized by highly engaged or disengaged patterns of participation or might have a primarily online or offline component. In a second step, we can examine how the different social background characteristics relate to the observed participatory repertoires with an approach that allows for a more nuanced perspective instead of a two-dimensional divide between social groups.

RQ2: How do the social backgrounds of the different participatory repertoires differ?

Methods

Data

A survey has been conducted among students from secondary and tertiary education (16 years or older) in The Netherlands ($N = 1,117$). Respondents were recruited in two ways: (1) by asking students to fill out an online survey at the start of their political educational excursion to the Dutch parliament² (90% of the sample), (2) via a call in the ProDemos newsletter, requesting teachers to let students take an online survey in class (10% of the sample). The survey data were collected between October and December 2018. For the students that were invited by their teachers via the newsletter, the response rate could not be calculated. For the students that were recruited during the excursion, the response rate is 95.1%.³ Although this sample is not representative and self-selected, we assume the bias in the sample to be limited in the Dutch context due to the nature of the excursion in which the students were recruited.⁴

Sample

Exclusion of nonvalid responses resulted in a final sample of 1,084 students.⁵ The percentage of females in the sample was 54.2%, the percentage of males was 45.8%, and less than 1% indicated a nonbinary gender or preferred not to share their gender. The age ranged from 16 to 21 years or older (44.5% were 16 years old, 29.2% were 17 years old, 13.8% were 18 years old, 12.5% were 19 years old

² The data were collected in cooperation with ProDemos, which organizes excursions to the Dutch parliament.

³ Teacher reports indicated that 1,060 students were invited to take part in the online survey during the excursion, of which 1,008 students responded and filled out the survey. The total ProDemos panel of visiting students between October and December 2018 consisted of 9,980 students, but only a limited sample was approached due to practical constraints.

⁴ In 2018, the Dutch government decided that every high school student should be able to visit the House of Representatives and has subsidized the political excursion to enable this (see Ollongren, van Engelshoven, & Slob, 2018). Although there might be some selection effect on a meso level—in that more active schools are more likely to arrange this excursion—the individual students do not show any distinctive characteristics, and therefore the bias in the sample is likely to be limited.

⁵ Survey completion time under two minutes, straight-liners, and nonserious answers to open questions were considered nonvalid responses.

or older). With regard to educational level, 55.8% were high school students (16.6% VMBO/MAVO, 12.5% HAVO, 26.7% VWO), 41.8% of the students were enrolled in vocational education (MBO), and 2.4% of the students were enrolled in higher profession education (HBO).

Dependent Variable

The selection of indicators for the confirmatory latent profile analysis is based on previous literature on political participation (Miranda et al., 2017; Ohme et al., 2018; Theocharis & Van Deth, 2018). The specific indicators and corresponding means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics for Political Participation Items.

Below various activities are listed that have to do with political or social problems. Have you done any of the following activities in the last 12 months?	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Signed an online petition about a political problem	0.19	0.39
Joined a demonstration, strike, or other protest	0.04	0.20
Signed a written petition (on paper) about a political problem	0.08	0.26
"Liked" a social media update about a political or societal problem	0.50	0.50
Shared a social media update of others about a societal problem	0.21	0.41
Volunteered in your neighborhood	0.28	0.45
Used social media to inform about matters in your neighborhood	0.27	0.45
Boycotted products for societal reasons	0.16	0.36
Intentionally bought products for societal reasons	0.15	0.36
On social media changed your personal information or photo for political reasons	0.10	0.29
On social media expressed your opinion on a political or societal matter	0.15	0.36

Note. Items were answered with either "no" (0) or "yes" (1). *N* = 1,084.

Independent Variables

The independent variable is based on a typology of young news users of the same sample (Geers, 2020). Using a confirmatory latent profile analysis (CLPA), four different types of young news users were identified.⁶ The different types of news users were classified based on their response to the question how often they use 13 types of offline, online, and social media⁷ to follow the news on a scale from (1) never to (5) daily. The four classes of news media users that were identified are (1) "news minimalists" (48%), who follow news the least in any type of media; (2) "news omnivores" (9%), who consume the most news in all types of media; (3) "traditionalists" (31%), who use institutionalized media for news consumption, both offline and online, but do not consume news via social media; and (4) "online news users" (12%), who mainly use social and online media for news consumption. Each respondent in this study is assigned to one

⁶ CLPA is an extension of latent class analysis (LCA) which uses continuous variables in a confirmatory approach to identify underlying classes based on pre-specified patterns of item responses.

⁷ These sources include television, newspapers, radio, websites, apps, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, YouTube, Google, and Wikipedia. Mean use scores range from 1.25 (Twitter) to 2.97 (news on television). For a more elaborate discussion see Geers (2020).

of these four news user types, based on the CLPA (Geers, 2020). The type of news user is included as a categorical independent variable in the current study.

Mediators

First, political knowledge is measured with a battery of six knowledge questions with multiple choice answer categories, including a "don't know" option (e.g., "Which parties are part of the current Dutch government?" and "When do the elections to the European Parliament take place?"), resulting in a political knowledge index ranging from 0 to 6 ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.59$). Second, internal political efficacy, was measured with three items ("I'm well capable of discussing politics"; "I think I'm better informed about politics than other people of my age"; and "I think I understand the main political issues well") on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$, $M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.48$).

Control Variables

Several control variables were included, starting with the usual sociodemographic variables, age ($M = 17.05$, $SD = 1.30$), gender (45.8% male, 53.5% female, 0.7% other), and education, "VMBO" and "MBO" recoded in lower educational level (58%) and "HAVO," "VWO," and "HBO" recoded in higher educational level (42%).

Analytical Strategy

The research question was answered by using an exploratory latent class analysis (LCA) to distinguish between different types of political participation. The resulting classification was then compared with the social background characteristics examined in previous studies (gender, education, and age) using multinomial logistic regression to answer the second research question. Finally, regression analyses and second multinomial logistic regression model compared the political participation typology against a news user typology and to assess the potential mediating role of knowledge and efficacy.

Exploratory latent class analysis (LCA) uses dichotomous/nominal variables to identify the underlying (latent) classes that explain patterns in responses in a set of variables (Hagenaars & McCutcheon, 2002). Using this technique, different types of respondents (classes) can be identified based on their item responses. Latent class analysis differs from other classification techniques, such as cluster analysis, because it fits a model to the data rather than providing an ad hoc classification of the given data (van de Pol, Holleman, Kamoen, Krouwel, & de Vreese, 2014).

Mplus 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) was used for the LCA analysis. The MIXTURE option was used to identify latent classes, and maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) was used for all analyses. The model was estimated using 400 random starts and 100 final state optimizations. To evaluate model fit the -2 Log-Likelihood ($-2LL$) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) were used. For these indexes, lower values suggest better model fit. Entropy was used as a measure of classification accuracy (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996), where entropy values of 1.0 indicate highly separable classes, and values of zero indicate classes with complete overlap. Additionally, to test whether the classes represent

different types of users, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether the means for the political participation items significantly differ from one another for the different classes.

Results

First, an LCA was conducted to measure whether different types of political participation could be distinguished based on 11 participatory activities. We ran series of successive LCA models, from a one-class to a five-class solution. In this study, the five-class solution was not significantly better than the four-class solution ($p = .392$), while the four-class solution was significantly better than the three-class solution ($p = .016$). Inspection of the other fit statistics showed a higher entropy value for the two-class solution than for the four-class solution, indicating a good fit. However, the values for $-2LL$ and BIC were lower for the four-class solution than the two-class solution, suggesting better model fit for the four-class solution. Although the fit statistics do not provide a clear-cut preference for the four-class solution over the two-class solution, we decided to focus on the four-class model as it provides a more profound insight into the different patterns of political participation. Table 2 shows the common fit indices for one-, two-, three-, four-, and five-class solutions.

Table 2. Model Fit Statistics.

No. of classes	No. free par	$-2LL$	BIC	LRT p value	Entropy
1	11	-5319.561	10715.994	N/A	N/A
2	23	-4834.876	9830.485	0.0000	0.760
3	35	-4757.138	9758.871	0.0014	0.694
4	47	-4714.748	9757.952	0.0164	0.701
5	59	-4689.663	9791.642	0.3918	0.680

Note. Fit indices: No. free par = number of free parameters; $-2LL$ = -2 log-likelihood; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; LRT = Lo-Mendell-Rubin Adjusted LRT Test. The four-class model (in bold) is selected for further analyses.

Table 3 reports the class count, proportions, and average latent class probabilities for most likely membership for each class for the four-class solution.

Table 3. Class Count, Proportions, and Average Latent Class Probabilities for Most Likely Membership (Row) by Class (Column).

Class	Count	Proportions	Class			
			1	2	3	4
1. Civic omnivores	85	.078	0.881	0.018	0.101	0.000
2. Slacktivists/online citizens	247	.228	0.016	0.747	0.097	0.140
3. Humanitarian citizens	166	.153	0.070	0.011	0.856	0.063
4. Disengaged citizens	586	.541	0.000	0.073	0.042	0.885

Note. The values in bold indicate the average latent class probabilities for each assigned class.

RQ1 asked about the types of political participation that can be distinguished among young people. The class proportions show that 54% of the respondents fall in the disengaged citizens category, 8% were civic omnivores, 23% were slacktivists, and 12% were humanitarian citizens (labels for the different categories are mostly based on Hustinx et al., 2012).

Table 4 shows for each type of political participation the mean scores, standard errors, and confidence intervals for the 11 different types of participatory activities, and demonstrates that the different classes significantly differ in their mean scores. Based on these analyses, we found that four types of young citizens can be distinguished that differ in their patterns of political participation.

Table 4. Estimated Means and Standard Errors, and Confidence Intervals for News Exposure Items for the Four-Class Solution.

	Slacktivists/ Civic omnivores online citizens Humanitarian citizens Disengaged citizens				<i>F</i> test* (<i>df</i>)
	(<i>n</i> = 85)	(<i>n</i> = 247)	(<i>n</i> = 166)	(<i>n</i> = 586)	
	<i>M</i> (<i>SE</i>) [95% <i>CI</i>]	<i>M</i> (<i>SE</i>) [95% <i>CI</i>]	<i>M</i> (<i>SE</i>) [95% <i>CI</i>]	<i>M</i> (<i>SE</i>) [95% <i>CI</i>]	
Signed an online petition	0.54 (0.05) ^a [0.43, 0.65]	0.37 (0.03) ^b [0.31, 0.43]	0.27 (0.03) ^c [0.20, 0.33]	0.03 (0.01) ^d [0.02, 0.05]	92.59 (3)
Joined a demonstration	0.36 (0.05) ^a [0.26, 0.47]	0.01 (0.01) ^b [0.00, 0.03]	0.05 (0.02) ^b [0.02, 0.09]	0.01 (0.00) ^c [0.00, 0.01]	104.28 (3)
Signed a written petition	0.53 (0.05) ^a [0.42, 0.64]	0.08 (0.02) ^b [0.04, 0.11]	0.06 (0.02) ^b [0.02, 0.10]	0.01 (0.00) ^c [0.00, 0.02]	127.24 (3)
Liked a social media update	0.71 (0.05) ^b [0.61, 0.80]	0.94 (0.02) ^a [0.91, 0.97]	0.59 (0.04) ^b [0.51, 0.67]	0.26 (0.02) ^c [0.22, 0.29]	170.30 (3)
Shared a social media update	0.75 (0.05) ^a [0.66, 0.85]	0.41 (0.03) ^b [0.35, 0.47]	0.29 (0.04) ^c [0.22, 0.36]	0.02 (0.01) ^d [0.01, 0.03]	168.78 (3)
Volunteered in your neighborhood	0.54 (0.05) ^a [0.43, 0.65]	0.31 (0.03) ^b [0.25, 0.37]	0.43 (0.04) ^a [0.35, 0.50]	0.19 (0.02) ^c [0.16, 0.22]	25.40 (3)
Used social media to inform about your neighborhood	0.78 (0.05) ^a [0.69, 0.87]	0.58 (0.03) ^b [0.52, 0.64]	0.25 (0.03) ^c [0.18, 0.31]	0.08 (0.01) ^d [0.06, 0.10]	160.74 (3)
Boycotted products	0.59 (0.05) ^a [0.48, 0.70]	0.00 (0.00) ^b [0.00, 0.00]	0.65 (0.04) ^a [0.58, 0.72]	0.02 (0.01) ^b [0.01, 0.03]	376.36 (3)
Intentionally bought products	0.71 (0.05) ^a [0.61, 0.80]	0.00 (0.00) ^c [0.00, 0.00]	0.61 (0.04) ^b [0.54, 0.69]	0.00 (0.00) ^c [0.00, 0.00]	510.67 (3)
Changed social media profile	0.69 (0.05) ^a [0.59, 0.79]	0.07 (0.02) ^b [0.04, 0.10]	0.13 (0.03) ^b [0.08, 0.18]	0.01 (0.00) ^c [0.00, 0.02]	216.98 (3)
Expressed opinion via social media	0.84 (0.04) ^a [0.75, 0.92]	0.24 (0.03) ^b [0.19, 0.30]	0.19 (0.03) ^b [0.13, 0.25]	0.01 (0.00) ^c [0.00, 0.02]	222.65 (3)

Note. Different superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between figures in a row at $p < .05$. Lowest figures in a row are assigned "a," then "b," etc. Abbreviation: 95% CI = 95% Confidence intervals

* $p < .001$ in all instances.

The first type, disengaged citizens, are characterized by their low mean score on each of the 11 participatory activities. This implies that they are not engaged in any form of political participation measured in this study. The civic omnivores, on the other hand, are characterized by their overall high mean scores on all participatory activities, implying a high level of political engagement. The third type, slacktivists, are characterized by their higher mean scores on online, low-effort political activities, such as “liking or sharing a social media update” or “signing an online petition.” Finally, the humanitarian citizens are, on the one hand, characterized by their lower mean score on both conventional form of political participation (such as “signing a petition” or “joining a protest”) and online forms of political participation (such as “liking, sharing or expressing an opinion on social media”). On the other hand, the humanitarian citizens are characterized by their higher mean score on both “volunteering in the neighborhood” and political consumerism (“boycotting products” and “intentionally buying products”). Figure 1 visualizes the mean scores on the 11 participatory activities for each type of political participation.

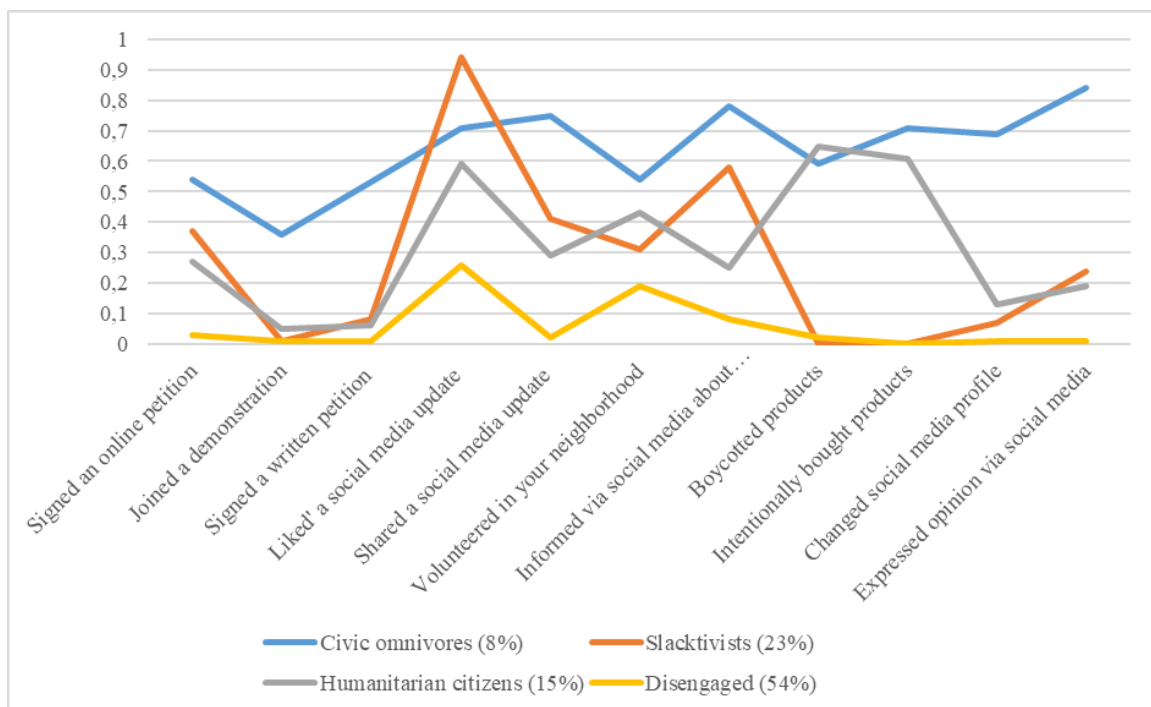


Figure 1. Sample means of political participation items for each class.

RQ2 asked whether the different types of political participation differ in their social background. Table 5 presents the results from a multinomial logistic regression that assesses this for the background characteristics that we have at our disposal (Model 1), while Table 6 presents two additional models: one that has a dichotomous dependent variable, distinguishing minimalists (0) from others (1), and one that uses the sum of participation activities, instead of the typology, as a dependent variable. We use the “disengaged” citizen as the baseline category.

First of all, the results demonstrate that there is a gender difference. Females have especially a higher chance to be humanitarian citizens. The risk of falling in the humanitarian citizens condition compared with the minimalist condition is 31% smaller for males compared with females (RRR = .69; Table 5, Model 1).

Table 5. Explaining Political Participation.

Participation type	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	RRR	RRR	RRR
<i>Civic omnivores</i>			
Education (dummy)	.536* (.147)	.568** (.159)	.434** (.131)
Male	1.578 (.372)	1.152 (.366)	1.019 (.260)
Age group	1.124 (.094)	1.136 (.097)	1.095 (.095)
<i>Media user</i>			
Online news users		2.237* (.838)	2.077 (.792)
Traditionalists		2.276** (.651)	1.652 (.492)
News omnivores		5.318*** (1.929)	3.300** (1.253)
Knowledge			.996 (.086)
Internal efficacy			1.678*** (.156)
Constant	.108*** (.030)	.062*** (.020)	.019*** (.008)
<i>Slacktivists</i>			
Education (dummy)	1.774*** (.281)	1.858*** (.306)	1.490* (.265)
Male	.947 (.145)	.919* (.146)	.734 (.123)
Age group	1.048 (.065)	1.069 (.068)	1.043 (.068)
<i>Media user</i>			
Online news users		3.007*** (.729)	2.860*** (.700)
Traditionalists		2.738*** (.500)	2.168*** (.412)
News omnivores		3.947*** (1.114)	2.937*** (.853)
Knowledge			1.062 (.061)
Internal efficacy			1.351*** (.085)
Constant		.161*** (.036)	.074*** (.021)
<i>Humanitarian</i>			
Education (dummy)	1.750*** (.325)	1.179** (.327)	1.320 (.272)
Male	.691* (.125)	.647* (.120)	.477*** (.094)
Age group	1.179* (.080)	1.189** (.082)	1.150* (.081)
<i>Media user</i>			
Online news users		1.762 (.528)	1.644 (.501)
Traditionalists		2.545*** (.517)	1.922** (.408)
News omnivores		2.271* (.790)	1.561 (.559)
Knowledge			1.046 (.068)
Internal efficacy			1.490*** (.107)
Constant	.184*** (.040)	.122*** (.030)	.046*** (.015)
Log likelihood	-1231.493	-1195.247	-1161.11

Pseudo R^2	.018	.047	.074
N		1,084	1,084

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

Overall, females participate more: a .31 higher score on the participation scale (Table 6, Model 2).

Table 6. Explaining Nonminimalist and Levels of Political Participation.

Participation type	Model 1	Model 2
	Odds ratio	B
Nonminimalists		
Internal efficacy	1.45*** (.08)	.36*** (.05)
Knowledge	1.04 (.05)	.02 (.04)
Education (dummy)	1.19 (.18)	-.12 (.14)
Male	.67** (.09)	-.31*** (.13)
Age group	1.09 (.06)	.09 (.05)
<i>Media user</i>		
Online news users	2.27*** (.47)	.68*** (.20)
Traditionalists	1.98*** (.30)	.57*** (.15)
News omnivores	2.52*** (.62)	1.06*** (.23)
Constant	.05*** (.02)	.57** (.02)
Log likelihood	138.88	
Pseudo R^2	0.093	0.117
N	1,084	1,084

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

Hypothesis 1 proposed that news media repertoires are congruent with political participation repertoires. The results in Table 5 show that news omnivores are likely to be political omnivores and that news minimalists are likely to be political minimalists. News omnivores participate more than news minimalists, and more than traditionalists. Traditionalist news users are more likely to be humanitarianists. We further elaborate on this interesting combination in the concluding section. There is a strong association between being a news minimalist and a participation minimalist (i.e., disengaged citizen). Of the disengaged citizens, almost two-thirds (66.2%) of the adolescents are also news minimalists. Online news users are particularly likely to be slacktivists. These patterns are largely in line with our congruency hypothesis. We see that there is in many instances a logical fit between media type and participation type. Hypothesis 1 is thus largely supported.

The final hypothesis assumed a mediating role of political knowledge and political efficacy on the relation between media repertoires and political participation repertoires.

This requires first of all that an association between media repertoires and knowledge and efficacy exists. As Table 7 demonstrates, this is indeed the case. For knowledge, we find that traditionalists score significantly higher than the other groups.

Table 7. Explaining Political Knowledge and Efficacy.

	Knowledge	Efficacy
	B	B
Education_dummy	.944*** (.092)	.257*** (.088)
Male	-.180* (.089)	.702*** (.079)
Age group	.003 (.034)	.086* (.031)
<i>Media user</i>		
Online news users	.012 (.137)	.258* (.125)
Traditionalists	.397*** (.102)	.621*** (.092)
News omnivores	.040 (.161)	1.023*** (.144)
Knowledge		.265*** (.027)
Efficacy	.316*** (.032)	
Constant	1.783*** (.130)	1.377*** (1.22)
R^2	.232	.252
N	1,084	1,084

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

For efficacy, we see more outspoken differences: omnivores score significantly higher than all other categories, followed by traditionalists and online users. Omnivores score 1.02 points higher than the reference category (news minimalists). The second prerequisite is that the mediators affect the dependent variable. Model 3 in Table 7 shows that this is the case for efficacy, but not for knowledge. This makes us reject Hypothesis 2a. Efficacy increases the probability to belong to any of the types other than disengaged. The third prerequisite for mediation is that inclusion of the mediator decreases the main effects of the independent variables (i.e., of the various media repertoires). We see that this is indeed the case: The RRRs of the media variable in Model 3 in Table 5 are in general lower than those in Model 2.

We see a particular difference for the association between news omnivores and civic omnivores, where the RRR decreases from 5.318 to 3.300. These results are in line with Hypothesis 2b.

Conclusion

The main question that guided this study is how political participation repertoires are linked to news media repertoires to advance our understanding of how youth act in an expanding information environment and a growing opportunity structure for political participation and civic engagement. After identification of the different political participation repertoires, we examined how the participatory repertoires can be explained by news media repertoires and social background characteristics.

The main finding of this study is that there is a large group of avoiders among the Dutch youth examined in the study, avoiding both news consumption and participatory activities. Though we have to be cautious with generalization, the voluntary participation of respondents due to self-selection might yield rather an overestimation of participation than an underestimation. Although recent studies have been more optimistic about the involvement of young people with political news and political behavior through online

platforms (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018a), the findings of the current study seem more alarming. The largest share of our sample was identified as disengaged young citizens, with a minimalistic news diet. Even though we could also identify a group of highly engaged young citizens, which we labelled civic omnivores, with a matching omnivorous news repertoire, this group was smaller than 10% of the sample.

Considering these results, we can affirm that the news media repertoires are aligned with political participation repertoires regarding to the level of news consumption and political participation. Clear associations between online news use and belonging to the participation type "slacktivists," which are involved only in online activities requiring minimal effort, such as "liking or sharing a social media update" or "signing an online petition." While these activities might not require huge investments, they do signal political involvement that materializes in an online environment. A fourth group consisted of humanitarian citizens, with low involvement in traditional offline activities *and* online political activities. This group is rather involved in activities targeted at the community level and newer, unconventional forms of participation, such as volunteering in the neighborhood and political consumerism. This finding is in line with an earlier study among university students, in which these types of citizens seem to mainly act out of social or humanitarian reasons (Hustinx et al., 2012). Remarkably, although the humanitarian citizens were not particularly involved in traditional political activities such as demonstrating and signing a written petition, they were very likely to have a traditional news media repertoire. An explanation for this finding might be the significance of geographical proximity for youth (Middaugh & Kahne, 2009). Additional analyses showed that youth across all news media repertoires paid most attention to regional news, and that almost a third of our sample had "volunteered in their own neighborhood" or used "social media to inform about matters in their neighborhood." Local news and local activities targeted at either the community or political sphere thus seem of importance to draw young people into engagement.

As for the sociodemographic antecedents of political participation we found that gender mattered, whereas education and age did not. However, the sample was rather homogeneous with regard to age and education, which might explain why we found no effects for these factors.

The finding that internal political efficacy (and not so much political knowledge) serves as an important mediator between media use and political participation, with people with high levels of internal political efficacy considerably less likely to be disengaged, is in line with previous studies (Chen et al., 2019; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; S. Lee & Matsuo, 2018; Möller et al., 2014) and the finding that females are more likely to be politically engaged, and more specifically to be humanitarianists, provides further evidence for the absence, or even reversal, of a gender gap (Bode, 2017; Christensen & Bengtsson, 2011).

Although we make no specific claims about causal relationships in this study (except in the Results section, when using the statistical language that comes with multivariate analyses), this is an important question for future research. The underlying assumption is that a specific news media repertoire leads to a specific political participation repertoire, but testing this hypothesis requires experimental or panel survey research. Additionally, longitudinal research with more elaborate questionnaires (e.g., also capturing the socioeconomic contexts in which young people grow up) is necessary to examine how the individual repertoires of young people develop. Only then we gain a better understanding of their socialization into

citizenship, which might well be characterized by an underlying process of mutual causality, in that news media use and political participation drive each other (Norris, 2000; Slater, 2007).

The findings of this study suggest that being inside the virtuous circle is key. Regardless of the causal flow, this study shows that young people who are news avoiders also avoid participating in civic and political life, whereas highly engaged young citizens are also highly involved in news consumption across all platforms. News omnivores are frequently also civic omnivores, and news minimalists frequently belong to the category of the civic disengaged. Research has shown that adolescents with a positive orientation toward political participation are more likely to become politically active in their adult life (McFarland & Thomas, 2006), so it is important to gain better understanding of how to draw young people into the virtuous circle. We encourage future studies to be targeted at developing and evaluating civic education programs for the purpose of stimulating citizenship, and specifically examine the role of local news and local participatory activities in the mobilization of youth, as our results demonstrate these are a defining element of the “humanitarian” participation type and one that might be particularly interesting for specific groups of youngsters.

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