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The Impact of Media Consumption on Civic Participation: Examining Media and Social Capital Effects

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THE IMPACT OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION ON CIVIC PARTICIPATION: EXAMINING
MEDIA AND SOCIAL CAPITAL EFFECTS

By

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B.A. in Criminology & Criminal Justice and Sociology, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale,
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Approved by:

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

AN'DREA HALL, for the Masters of Arts degree in SOCIOLOGY, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: THE IMPACT OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION ON CIVIC PARTICIPATION:
EXAMINING MEDIA AND SOCIAL CAPITAL EFFECTS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Darren Sherkat

This study examines how media consumption and social capital impact civic participation. Although several studies have been conducted on the issue of media effects and social capital, mostly in the area of political participation, fewer studies have explored their impact on civic participation. This study therefore expands the literature on the issue of civic participation by looking at the effects of using different media types such as: television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet, in addition to having a certain level of social capital, in order to engage in civic activities.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression technique was used in analyzing data from the 2008 American National Election Survey, in examining past civic participation and future civic participation separately. The results show modest support for the models. However, education and social connectedness (a dimension of social capital) as measured by community work, membership in one or more social/political organizations, and discussing politics with family and friends, were the most important for explaining both past and future civic participation.

KEYWORDS: civic participation, social capital, media effects, trust

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DEDICATION

For Mommy and Nana

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 2 – Literature Review.....	4
CHAPTER 3 – Data and Methods.....	16
CHAPTER 4 – Results.....	27
CHAPTER 5 – Discussion and Conclusion.....	47
REFERENCES.....	53
VITA.....	61

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Table 1.....	26
Table 2.....	29
Table 3.....	35
Table 3.1.....	38
Table 4.....	43
Table 4.1.....	46

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Civic participation is considered to be the hallmark of democracy; the way American people can voice their concerns and exercise their rights. Although much of extant political science literature has primarily focused on political participation such as voting behaviors (e.g., Bartels 1993; Baum & Jamison 2006; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Graber 2004; Kenski & Stroud 2006; Fullerton and Stern 2013; Ladd 2012; Prior 2005), civic participation remains relatively understudied among scholars, especially with regard to news media consumption.

Civic participation broadly entails the coming together of individuals with a collective aspiration to improve social and political life. Though understudied, the several studies regarding civic engagement have concluded that a civically engaged citizenry engenders trust among fellow American citizens, builds solidarity among community members, and makes individuals feel closer to social institutions and groups (Brown & Smart 2007; Farmer 2006; Flanagan & Levin 2010; Hoffman & Thomson 2009; Jennings & Stoker 2004; Markus 2002; Putnam 2000; Sánchez-Jankowski 2002; Stoll & Wong 2007; Xenos & Moy 2007). Albeit notable studies about civic participation, largely absent from these analyses is the impact of different types of media consumption on civic participation.

Scholars in both political science and media communications fields have long established that news media is the primary conduit by which most political information is disseminated to the American public (Chaffee & Kanihan 1997; Cooke & Gronke 2007; Curran 2005; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Graber 2010; Jerit, Barabas, & Bolsen 2006; Ladd 2012; Xenos & Becker 2009). Landmark studies have theorized about how news comes to shape public understanding of politics and its influence on citizens' political knowledge, and by extension,

political participation (McManus 1994; Mondak 1995; Shudson 1981; Tuchman 1973; Zaller 1999). Meanwhile, more recent studies have extensively explored whether news media presents political bias and if this biased reporting has an effect on citizens' trust in the media trust and in turn, their political participation (Baum 2006; Boulianne 2009; Cooke & Gronke 2007; Delli Carpini 2004; Kenski & Stroud 2006; Nie, Miller, Golde, Butler, & Winneg 2010; Paolo 2013; Strömbäck & Shehata 2010). Despite this considerable body of research on how news media effects political participation and other political processes, scant attention has been given to which news media consumption might impact citizens' likelihood to engage in civic activities. Given the significance of news media on American politics and the conceptual differences between civic and political participation (Markus 2002), more empirical investigations are warranted in this area. Understanding which types of news media are more likely to prompt citizens' to get involved with civic activities will have meaningful implications for sociologists of politics, political science scholars and politicians alike. Not only could this paper yield an increase in knowledge about Americans' civic participation more generally, but we will also have a better grasp of which type of media is influencing what types of civic participation. As the media environment becomes increasingly diverse, citizens' decisions to participate or not participate in civic activities may increasingly become a matter of what types of media they use and what types of civic activity they are motivated to participate in.

The present paper begins to address these concerns and fill the gap in this area of literature by predicting the level of willingness to engage in future civic activities based on four distinct types of news media consumption: (1) newspapers, (2) radio, (3) television, and (4) the Internet. Using data from the 2008 American National Election Survey (ANES), I assess the impact each of these four types of news media consumption has on citizens' level of willingness

to engage in future civic activities, controlling for key demographic factors such as race, age, education, income, and political party identification. These data are especially useful because they were collected when a significant proportion of Americans turned to both traditional news media outlets (e.g., newspapers, radio and television) and the Internet for news regarding the presidential campaign. The central research question I pose is: Which type of media is most likely to predict Americans' propensity to participate in civic activities? Unlike past studies, this present study contributes to our understanding of how different forms of news media consumption can influence citizens' willingness to become civically engaged.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: chapter two presents a general discussion on the news media environment and political learning with a review of the literature and addresses specific socio-demographic characteristics which can affect citizens' willingness to be civically engaged such as race, income, age, education, and political party identification. The chapter also addresses the four main types of media consumption and presents a brief historical overview of each type of news media. Additionally, there is also a detailed discussion about what previous studies pertaining to media consumption and civic participation have found. Finally, integrated in chapter two are specific research questions and hypotheses posed in this study. Chapter three outlines the methodological procedure used and explains how each variable is measured. Chapter four presents the findings of the analyses and chapter five presents a discussion and conclusion and also identifies limitations of this research as well as suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining Civic Participation

Civic participation can take many forms, as it has distinct nuances that distinguish it from other types of public behavior such as work and leisure. A common conception of civic participation refers to any activities that address community concerns through nongovernmental means (McBride 1998). Additionally, civic participation could also be broadly construed as behavior that affects one's relations with others and the economic, social, and political conditions in which we live (Delli Carpini 2004). Both civic and political participation play an important role in building the community, and empirical studies have found that the types of participation are closely related. For example, Wilkins (2000) found civic participation to be a positive predictor of political participation. Nevertheless, these types of participation are still conceptually distinct forms of participation. For the purpose of this study, I focus specifically on civic participation as an important individual-level of social capital and consider the factors that influence its production. In this framework, civic participation serves as a marker of community engagement and integration (Brehm & Rahn 1997; Uslander 1998).

2.2 Traditional Media Use and Civic Participation

News media plays a profound role in disseminating information to the American public about the political world. Because a strong democracy depends on a well-informed citizenry, yet, increasingly the majority of Americans are becoming less personally involved in politics, individuals often find themselves heavily reliant on the press for information concerning the political environment (Cooke 2005; Curran 2005). Thus, in its integral role, news media is largely responsible for the public's level of political information, or misinformation.

Observations of traditional media consumption generally reveal that political news from radio, newspapers, and television encourages community involvement and foster civic participation (Hooghe 2002; McBride 1998; Lee, Capparella, & Southwell 2003; Mondak 1995). Given that both television and newspapers are the oldest and most ubiquitous forms of American news, they have unsurprisingly become a dominant part of both civic and political processes. As noted by Gurevitch, Coleman, and Blumler (2009), “television transferred politics to the living room” and as such, undoubtedly contributed to the expansion of the audience for politics (p. 166). Similarly, newspapers are argued to be relatively well suited for conveying information about politics (Graber 2010; Just 2011; Mondak 1995; Strömbäck & Shehata 2010). Being politically aware, attentive and knowledgeable are crucial antecedents for civic participation. In fact, previous studies have identified linkages between citizens’ interest in politics, political knowledge, and civic engagement (see, for example, Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela 2010; Strömbäck & Shehata 2010). However, one of the enduring questions about the relationship between media use and civic participation is whether the media in general fosters cynicism or distrust and thus, discourages people from engaging in civic activities.

Putnam (1995), for example, has argued that television and other forms of media occupy a substantial amount of time that people could potentially be using to engage in civic and political activities. According to Putnam (1995), the number of hours American spent with television and other media on a daily basis had increased in the past three decades while social capital has been declining at a similar pace. He also found that television viewing was negatively associated with both civic participation and trust in individuals, and thus expanded his claim to posit that the media produces a climate of distrust among fellow Americans, which consequently leads people to not want to participate in civic and political activities. In recent years, scholars

have agreed with Putnam and accused the media of having an unhealthy impact on democracy, specifically civic involvement. From this perspective, the media is said to serve as a distraction, keeping people home and uninvolved in community affairs.

While Putnam and others' research is valuable, it largely ignores decades of mass communication literature that has illustrated some positive impacts of media use on civic participation (e.g., Boulianne 2009; Graber 2004; Kenski & Stroud 2006; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999; Min 2007; Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak 2005; Weber, Loumakis, & Bergman 2003; Xenos & Moy 2007). Pinpointing the significance of news consumption specifically, McLeod et al. (1999) and more recently, Graber (2004) contend that citizens glean much of their political information through the media. In Graber's (2004) extensive exploration of the current news media environment, she concluded that "the quantity and quality of news that various media venues supply collectively is adequate for citizenship needs" even when political news is presented a less detailed manner (p. 563). Overall, Graber's (2004) work suggests the news media still play a crucial role in connecting the public's everyday life to civic participation.

More importantly, accumulating evidence indicates that it is not time spent watching television or using other types of media, but what matters more is the specific type of media content that influences citizens' civic participation (Delli Carpini 2000; Krueger 2006; McLeod 2000). In recent decades, scholars have observed a transformation in the media environment, and as such, media contents are increasingly becoming commercialized and diversified and also individualized (Nie et al. 2010). Thus, it is critically important to examine the influence of media forms because different types of media may serve varied functions. Further, since different media types tend to be plural in their modes of presentation, it is logically reasonable to expect them to be plural in their effects on civic participation.

In order to address concerns with the role of traditional media types in civic participation, this study explores a variety of media consumption in relation to civic participation. Several studies have provided evidence that attending to news also means better integration in the community, more interest in and knowledge of public affairs, and more active participation in public affairs (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt 2010). Media that requires high levels of cognitive involvement (TV news programs and newspapers, for example) are of particular interest when analyzing media pathways to civic engagement. In this study, I focus on the relationship between traditional media types and civic participation. Interest in the news media is operationalized as following national news on television, radio, as well as reading newspapers and reviewing news online.

2.3 The Internet's Impact on Civic Participation

The advent of the Internet has drastically altered the American public's consumption of political news, and thereby the civic and political landscape more generally. This is in part due to the fact that the Internet has penetrated a great majority of American households and broadband connections have become widely accessible throughout the U.S. and many other countries in the world (Althaus & Tewksbury 2000; Barber 2001; Bimber 1998; Delli Carpini 2000; DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson 2001).

Regarding civic participation, the Internet is significant because research has consistently demonstrated that an increasing number of citizens are venturing online to follow news and political campaigns (Howard 2006), share information and discuss issues with one another (DiMaggio et al. 2001), and learn more about government actions and policies (Garcia-Castanon, Rank, & Barreto 2011; Gil de Zúñiga, Puig-i-Abril & Rojas 2009). Accordingly, Internet usage could potentially have an observable impact on citizens' past civic participation and level of

willingness to participate in future civic activities. In 2000, Althaus and Tewksbury predicted that “any study of the general adult population’s Internet use will be extremely time-bound,” and thus, patterns of consumption and effects “may change dramatically as use of computer technologies becomes more widespread in the general population” (p. 22). In years since their claim, researchers have pursued a variety of analytic strategies to better determine the Internet’s direct and indirect effects on civic and political engagement. Although a myriad of studies have previously examined the role of the Internet in citizens’ civic and political participation, overall, scholars have reached no consensus on the ways in which the Internet affects contemporary civic and political engagement. This lack of consensus is likely indicative of political scholars’ general views about the Internet in relation to civic engagement.

Some scholars have a pessimistic view of Internet usage among citizens, suggesting that the Web will cause citizens to become more distracted and less attentive to their democratic duties, which include regular participation in civic and political activities (Bimber 1999; Nie 2001; Norris 2001; Putnam 2000; Weber et al. 2003). In particular, Putnam (2000) has theorized extensively about the Internet’s impact on social and political life, asserting that Internet use has led to a sharp decline in civic engagement in the past 30 years. Similarly, Nie (2001) relates increased time spent online with a reduction in time to socialize with others and attend events outside the home, ultimately concluding that the Internet causes people to lose touch with their social environment. However, a more recent study by Uslaner (2004) found that the Internet, by itself, posed no real threat to civic engagement or a decline in citizens’ trust in other people.

Another negative impact of the Internet emphasized by scholars is its potential to further fragment American citizens, leading to a widening gap in political knowledge and civic and political engagement (Bonfadelli 2002; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2009; Jerit et al. 2006; Just 2011;

Norris 2003; Prior 2005). Notably, Prior's (2005) analysis of media choice revealed that the Internet increases both political knowledge and involvement in the political process, but also found that the Internet leads "other people [to] take advantage of greater choice and tune out of politics completely" (p. 587). This tuning out, according to Prior (2005), is a result of people's newfound freedom to choose between their preferred types of media (e.g. news *or* entertainment) when using the Internet.

Conversely, another set of scholars tend to be more optimistic in their theorizing about the Internet's impact on civic and political engagement. It is within this set of scholars that two distinct viewpoints emerge. One set of scholars contends that because the Internet is relatively affordable in terms of cost and time, people can cheaply and readily access political information this way. It is argued that when these factors converge, they can create a convenient environment where citizens who are already knowledgeable and politically engaged will be more likely to get involved online (Althaus & Tewksbury 2000; DiMaggio et al. 2001; Di Gennaro & Dutton 2006; Xenos and Moy 2007). Xenos and Moy's (2007) analysis of direct and differential effects of the Internet on political and civic engagement revealed that Internet use impacts civic behavior (e.g., joining a group or volunteering for a campaign organization). Most notably, and similar to extant research, they find stronger effects for those "who may already be predisposed to engage in these behaviors" (p. 714). A second position supported by other scholars recognizes the Internet's potential to mobilize politically inactive populations (Barber 2001; Delli Carpini 2000; Krueger 2002; Krueger 2006).

Generally, it appears that both groups agree that the convenience of the Internet has the potential to attract a broader set of citizens to engage in civic activities in at least two different ways. First, because the Internet is readily accessible for many Americans, increased information

access could reduce political knowledge deficiencies that are typically used to justify civic and political disengagement (see, for example, Prior 2005; Bonfadelli 2002). Secondly, the improved access to information could diminish political knowledge gaps observed between those of high socioeconomic status and those of low socioeconomic status, and younger generations and other age groups, and between men and women. Both groups of scholars challenge the notion that the Internet will contribute to civic decline, thus one aim of this study is to explore the Internet's impact on civic participation.

2.4 Conditioning Factors Associated with Civic Participation

A voluminous amount of political science and sociological research has consistently found that individuals with greater access to social capital than others are afforded more political and economic opportunities (Good 1998; Hansen 1997; Hayes & Bean 1993), thus it is imperative to situate this present study of civic participation within a broader structure.

Scholars have contended that individuals with higher socioeconomic status—that is, higher levels of education, income, and occupational status—are much more likely to be civically engaged than those who with lower levels of SES (Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold 2007; Davies 1970; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Flanagan & Levine 2010; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry 1996). In general, researchers have found that education tends to have the most substantial influence on civic activity as opposed to income and occupational status. This is usually the case because those with higher education are exposed to ample opportunities for involvement with civic and political activities. For example, on college and university campuses, civic participation may take several forms, including community service, political debates and social discussions on campus with fellow students, internships, and study-abroad opportunities (Harriger & McMillian 2007). Thus, as colleges and universities increasingly integrate public

and civic issues with their course curriculum and extracurricular activities they offer, the gap between individuals who attend college and those who do not attend may widen. Moreover, inequalities in civic participation among Americans are rooted in the differing education and civic participation of their parents. That is, parents of high socioeconomic status are able to pass on to their children advantages such as political awareness and access to community and educational resources. Trends over the past several decades suggest that the class divide in civic participation has widened, but there is no conclusive evidence as to what mechanisms are at the root of this divide.

Regarding race, in the past, research has found sharp differences in rates of civic participation between racial and ethnic groups (Antunes & Gaitz 1975; Dawson & Cohen 1993; Stoll 2001; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995; Williams, Babchuk, & Johnson 1973). As Verba et al. 1995 argue, racial and ethnic gaps associated with rates of civic participation can lead to the disproportionate representation of community interests and ideas and an unequal distribution of benefits. Further, because civic participation is one of the primary ways by which a variety of voices and viewpoints are heard, differences in patterns of participation may exacerbate unequal representation in the civic sphere (Stoll 2001).

Finally, one's age or stage in life may have an impact on likelihood to engage in civic activities. Life-course theories posit that civic engagement increases as one's roles and institutional connections in the community become more stable over time, and as such, different stages in life may interact with other influences to increase civic participation (Sánchez-Jankowski 2002; Smith 1999; Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss 2002). Some scholars, like Burr, Caro, & Moorhead (2002) for instance, contend that civic engagement follows a U-shape curve

over the life course indicating a wider range of voluntary roles such as volunteering performed in early adulthood and later life when one may have fewer familial and work demands.

Thus, another aim of this study is to account for the structural positions of individuals as potential conditioning factors in attempting to understand their likelihood to engage in civic activities. Given that dominant values in the United States privilege White, male, middle to upper class individuals, the intersections across race, gender, age, and education could offer variances in likelihood to participate in civic activities. Furthermore, because the media is a political socializing agent for many people (Graber 2010), and traditional forms of media (e.g., television news and newspapers) tend to cater to the ideological values of the aforementioned dominant groups, these variables are meant to tap into lower levels of social capital and marginality.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Social capital can be broadly defined as an individual's connectedness to others in their community. The concept of social capital has been popularized in recent years through the work of Robert Putnam (1995a; 1995b; 2000), as he has extensively examined the relationship between social capital and civic engagement. Putnam borrowed the concept of "social capital" from Hanifan, who coined the term in 1916 and explained that social capital had both personal and communal benefits:

The community as a whole will benefit by cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, sympathy, and fellowship of his neighbors... When the people of a given community have become acquainted with one another and have formed a habit of coming together occasionally for entertainment, social intercourse, and personal enjoyment, then by skillful leadership this social capital may easily be directed towards the general improvement of the community well-being. (Hanifan 1916:130).

Putnam's (1995; 2000) conceptualization of social capital places an emphasis on norms, trust, social networks, and cooperative actions, which he believes are most necessary for solving social

issues and building a more unified community. He defined social capital as “features of social life-networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (1995b:664-665). From Putnam’s perspective, individuals who regularly interact with one another in face-to-face settings are better able to gain and generate interpersonal trust and are more likely to participate in civic affairs. Conversely, those who rarely interact with others in face-to-face settings, according to Putnam, will lack the skills and willingness to work to on community issues. Simply put, Putnam asserts that strong social ties and a general sense of trust are fundamental to the functioning of democracy.

Over the years, Putnam’s approach has proved to be influential for subsequent empirical studies focused on civic engagement because he was one of the first scholars to explore the relationship between media and the status of social capital and civic engagement. Overall, his assertion concerning the role of social capital has been well received by political scientists, sociologists, and media scholars. However, his grandiose claim that media, in particular TV, is the main culprit of the decline of social capital has been met with much criticism and controversy. Several scholars have come forward to critique Putnam’s argument on theoretical and empirical grounds. For example, in her 1996 article titled, “Does Television Erode Social Capital? A Reply to Putnam,” Norris found that the relationship between civic engagement and television viewership “is more complex than sometimes suggested” (p. 479). Though Norris found some support for Putnam’s thesis, she concluded that watching the news, particularly current news programs such as *Nightline* and *60 Minutes*, did not appear to be damaging to democracy; and in fact, she claimed doing television watching “may even prove beneficial” (p. 479). Nevertheless, Putnam’s approach to civic participation is still a useful one.

This present study conceptualizes social capital similarly, including social connectedness and trust (trust in institutions such as the government and media) to assess civic participation. In this case, civic participation is a *result* of social capital, not a *component* of social capital.

2.6 Research Questions and Hypotheses

This present study aims to uncover the role of media consumption by disaggregating the catchall term “traditional media” and explicitly distinguishing between four main types of media: television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet. Additionally, this study examines the impact of social capital on civic participation. Thus, my research questions and hypotheses are as follows:

1. Research Question: In what ways, if at all, does consuming news from television, newspapers, radio, and/or the Internet impact past civic participation?
 - a. Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of media use will be associated with greater participation in past civic activities.
2. Research Question: How is social capital associated with past civic participation?
 - a. Hypothesis 2: Higher levels of social capital will be associated with greater participation in past civic activities.
3. Research Question: In what ways, if at all, does consuming news from television, newspapers, radio, and/or the Internet predict willingness to participate in future civic activities?
 - a. Hypothesis 3: Higher levels of media use will be associated with higher levels of willingness to participate in future civic activities.
4. Research Question: How is social capital associated with individuals’ willingness to participate in future civic activities?

- a. Hypothesis 4: High levels of social capital will be associated with higher levels of willingness to participate in future civic activities.

CHAPTER 3

DATA AND METHODS

3.1 Sample

To test the impact of media use and social capital on civic participation, I use secondary data from the 2008 American National Election Studies (ANES), the oldest continuous series of survey data exploring electoral behavior and attitudes in the United States. The ANES survey focuses specifically on voter perceptions of major political parties, candidates, national and international issues, and of the importance of the election. Additionally, it focuses on political affiliation, as well as participation in the electoral process. Advantages of the dataset include a large nationally representative sample and a wide variety of potential variables with which to conduct analysis. The 2008 ANES is a time series study, which conducted telephone interviews in pre-election and postelection waves from 2008 to 2009. There were no interviews conducted on Election Day.¹ In total, the sample included 2,323 pre-election and 2,102 postelection interviews (26% response rate). The survey target population consisted of English or Spanish speaking U.S. citizens aged 18 years and older as of November 4, 2008 (Election Day) that resided in one of the forty-eight United States or the District of Columbia. The 2008 ANES employed a multi-stage sampling design drawing first from counties, then census tracts, census block groups, locatable mailing addresses, and finally eligible persons, which consisted of those individuals that passed the screen in each eligible household. At the final stage, eligible households were stratified by major city, block group size, prior survey experience, race and age.

¹ An Election Day cutoff was forgone so as not to give the impression of an explicit political motivation for the survey and to encourage the participation of those without a strong interest in politics and elections.

3.2 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in the present study are past and future civic participation. Past civic participation is an additive index of respondents' past participation in eight civic activities. Respondents were asked the following questions: 1) "Have you ever joined in a protest march, rally or demonstration?" 2) "Have you ever signed an online petition about a political or social issue?" 3) "Have you ever signed a paper petition about a political or social issue?" 4) "Have you ever given money to any other organization concerned with a social or political issue, not counting a religious organization?" 5) "Have you ever attended a meeting to talk about a political or social concerns?" 6) "Have you ever attended a meeting of a town city government or school board?" and 7) "Have you ever distributed information or advertising supporting a political or social interest group?" Responses for these seven questions were based on a dichotomous scale where 1 = "yes" and 0 = "no." The responses were recoded so that 1 = "yes" and 0 = "no." As a final measure, respondents were asked: "During the past 12 months, have you worked with other people to deal with some issue facing your community?" This variable was based on a dichotomous scale where 1 = "yes" and 0 = "no." The responses were recoded so that 1 = "yes" and 0 = "no." These items were then used to create a single summed index called "past civic participation," or a count of how many times the respondents' participated in each of the activities.

Future civic participation is an additive index of respondents' likelihood to engage in seven civic activities. Respondents were asked the following questions: 1) "In the future, how likely are you to join in a protest march, rally or demonstration?" 2) "In the future, how likely are you to sign an online petition about a political or social issue?" 3) "In the future, how likely are you to sign a paper petition about a political or social issue?" 4) "In the future, how likely are

you to give money to any other organization concerned with a social or political issue, not counting a religious organization?” 5) “In the future, how likely are you to attend a meeting to talk about a political or social concerns?” 6) “In the future, how likely are you to attend a meeting of a town city government or school board?” and 7) “In the future, how likely are you to distribute information or advertising supporting a political or social interest group?” Responses to these items were originally coded on 5-point scales consisting of: 1 = “extremely likely,” 2 = “very likely,” 3 = “moderately likely,” 4 = “a little likely,” and 5 = “not at all likely.” These values were reverse coded so that 1 = “not at all likely” and 5 = “extremely likely.” Factor analysis with principal components extraction and varimax rotation were used to test the hypothesis that these seven variables on 5-point scales would form a single construct of future civic participation. Communalities revealed that the seven indicators associated well with one another and Cronbach’s alpha supports the reliability of the scale ($\alpha = .845$). Thus, these items were used to create a factor variable called “future civic participation,” which explained 52.3% of the variance. Descriptive statistics for past and future civic participation are summarized in Table 1.

3.3 Independent Variables

The independent variables used in this study are broadly referred to as media consumption, comprised of respondents’ recollection of their media use habits. Measures of media use contained four distinct dimensions: watching national news on TV, reading newspaper articles, listening to radio news, and reviewing news on the Internet.

3.3.1 TV News Consumption

For consumption of TV news, respondents who were randomly assigned to take the original version of the survey were asked: “How many days in the past week did you watch the

national network news on TV?” Respondents who were randomly assigned to take the new version of the survey were asked: “During a typical week, how many days do you watch news on TV?” Responses to both items were originally coded on an 8-point scale wherein, 0 = “none,” 1 = “one day,” 2 = “two days,” 3 = “three days,” 4 = “four days,” 5 = “five days,” 6 = “six days,” and 7 = “seven days.” Then, respondents were asked to report how much attention they paid to TV news. Respondents assigned to the original version of the survey were asked: “How much attention do you pay to news on national news shows?” Respondents assigned to the new version of the survey were asked: “How much attention do you pay to news on TV?” Responses to both items were originally coded on a 5-point scale wherein, 1 = “a great deal,” 2 = “a lot,” 3 = “a moderate amount,” 4 = “a little,” and 5 = “none at all.” All aforementioned values on each variable were kept as they were since they were already coded in the appropriate direction. In order to normalize the distribution of TV news consumption and attention variables, Z-scores were computed so that each score on each variable had a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

3.3.2 Newspaper Articles Consumption

For consumption of newspaper articles, respondents who were randomly assigned to take the original version of the survey were asked: “How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper?” Respondents who were randomly assigned to take the new version of the survey were asked: “During a typical week, how many days do you read news in a printed newspaper?” Responses to both items were originally coded on an 8-point scale wherein, 0 = “none,” 1 = “one day,” 2 = “two days,” 3 = “three days,” 4 = “four days,” 5 = “five days,” 6 = “six days,” and 7 = “seven days.” Then, respondents were asked to report how much attention they paid to newspaper articles. Respondents assigned to the original version of the survey were asked: “How much attention do you pay to newspaper articles?” Respondents assigned to the

new version of the survey were asked: “How much attention do you pay to news in printed newspapers?” Responses to both items were originally coded on a 5-point scale wherein, 1 = “a great deal,” 2 = “a lot,” 3 = “a moderate amount,” 4 = “a little,” and 5 = “none at all.” All aforementioned values on each variable were kept as they were since they were coded in the appropriate direction. In order to normalize the distribution of newspaper articles consumption and attention variables, Z-scores were computed so that each score on each variable had a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

3.3.3 Radio News Consumption

For consumption to radio news, respondents who were randomly assigned to take the original version of the survey were asked: “How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper?” Respondents who were randomly assigned to take the new version of the survey were asked: “During a typical week, how many days do you listen to news on the radio?” Responses to both items were originally coded on an 8-point scale wherein, 0 = “none,” 1 = “one day,” 2 = “two days,” 3 = “three days,” 4 = “four days,” 5 = “five days,” 6 = “six days,” and 7 = “seven days.” Then, respondents were asked to report how much attention they paid to newspaper articles. Respondents assigned to the original version of the survey were asked: “How much attention do you pay to news on the radio?” Respondents assigned to the new version of the survey were asked: “How much attention do you pay to news on the radio?” Responses to both items were originally coded on a 5-point scale wherein, 1 = “a great deal,” 2 = “a lot,” 3 = “a moderate amount,” 4 = “a little,” and 5 = “none at all.” All aforementioned values on each variable were kept as they were since they were already coded in the appropriate direction. In order to normalize the distribution of radio news consumption and attention variables, Z-scores were computed so that each score on each variable had a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

3.3.4 Internet News Consumption

A single item measured respondents' Internet access: "Do you have access to the Internet or the World Wide Web?" Responses to this item was originally dichotomized as 1 = "yes" and 5 = "no." The dichotomous nature of the responses were maintained, but recoded so that 1 = "yes" and 0 = "no."

Finally, for Internet consumption, only half of the survey's respondents were assigned to the new version of the survey and were asked²: "During a typical week, how many days do you watch, read, or listen to news on the Internet?" Responses to this item was originally coded on an 8-point scale wherein, 0 = "none," 1 = "one day," 2 = "two days," 3 = "three days," 4 = "four days," 5 = "five days," 6 = "six days," and 7 = "seven days." Then, respondents were asked to report how much attention they paid to Internet news. Respondents were asked: "How much attention do you pay to news on the Internet?" Responses to this item were originally coded on a 5-point scale wherein, 1 = "a great deal," 2 = "a lot," 3 = "a moderate amount," 4 = "a little," and 5 = "none at all." The values on these items were reverse coded so that 1 = "none at all" and 5 = "a great deal."

3.4 Demographics

Several key demographic variables are also included in the models: race, gender, age, education, income, political party identification, church attendance, and dimensions of social capital including, trust in the media, trust in the government, and social connectedness. These variables include many of the most widely employed variables in the study of American political behavior that have been shown to have an impact on civic participation to varying degrees.

3.4.1 Race

² Questions regarding Internet usage were only asked to half of the survey's sample, which later posed an issue in the multivariate analyses. This issue is later discussed in Chapter 4.

As noted in previous civic and political participation literature, racial/ethnic minorities report lower levels of civic participation (Dawson & Cohen 1993; Stoll 2001; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995). Therefore, it is important to account for race in order to properly test the relationship between media consumption and willingness to participate in future civic activities. Race was originally coded as following: White (62.1%), African American (25.1%), other race (11.3%), White and another race (.7%), Black and another race (.3%), and White, black and another race” (.1%). On a separate item, respondents were asked about Latino status. Those who responded “yes” (21.9%) and those who were not Latino responded “no” (77.9%). These values were recoded so that those who were Latino were coded 1 = “yes” and those were not Latino were coded 0 = “no.” For purposes of analytical strategy, race was recoded dichotomously into Whites³ (0) and African Americans (1).

3.4.2 Sex

The present study will use the original dummy coding of females (1) and males (0) for gender.

3.4.3 Education, Income, and Age

Age was measured in years ranging from 18 to 90 or older, and all values were kept as they were since they were already coded in the appropriate direction. Another focal variable of this study, education, was determined by the “highest grade of school or year of college completed,” ranging from grades 1 through 17, with 17 years of college indicating the completion of a Bachelor’s degree. The respondents averaged 47 years of age with some college education. Respondent’s annual household income was measured in \$10,000 increments with

³ A small proportion of multi-ethnics and non-Hispanic “others” were combined with whites in the comparison category for the multivariate models.

selections ranging from “none or less than \$2,999” to “\$150,000 and over,” and the average response was between \$30,000-\$34,999.

3.4.4 Political Orientations and Social Capital

Political party identification was measured by asking respondents the following question: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?” Dummy variables were created for each of the four political parties. Church attendance was included as a measure of two questions. First, respondents were asked, “Do you attend church or religious services?” Responses ranged from 1 = “yes” and 5 = “no.” If respondents responded “yes” to the first question, they were asked about the amount of times with responses ranging from: 1 = “every week,” 2 = “almost every week,” 3 = “once or twice a month,” 4 = “a few times a year,” and 5 = “never.” The values on the second item were reverse coded so that 1 = “never” and 5 = “every week.” Respondents who reported “no” (i.e. never attend church or religious services) were recoded as “never” on the second question. These items were used to create a single variable for “church attendance.”

Previous research has suggested there is a growing mistrust among Americans toward the media, which could represent a lack of willingness to exert effort to obtain knowledge about national news and political information via media (Cappella & Jamieson 1996; Chaffee & Kanihan 1997; Cooke & Gronke 2007). Thus, one’s trust in the media to report news fairly could have an impact on whether or not an individual consumes information via the media at all, or even which type of media an individual consumes the most. Therefore, a control variable for trust in the media was measured by the following question: “How much of the time do you think you can trust the media to report the news fairly?” with options ranging from 1 = “just about

always,” 2 = “most of the time,” 3 = only some of the time,” 4 = “almost never.” The values on these items were reverse coded so that 1 = “almost never” and 4 = “just about always.”

Social capital is a multilevel construct measured by several individual and interpersonal factors, including trust in the government to gauge institutional trust, in addition to discussion with family and friends about politics, the number of organizations respondents were actively involved in, and their self-reported volunteer work, which gauged social connectedness.

To measure trust in the government, respondents were randomly assigned to answer the original version of the question, which asks: “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?” This variable was measured on a 4-point scale, 1 = “just about always,” 2 = “most of the time,” 3 = “only some of the time,” and 4 = “never.” Respondents who were randomly assigned to answer the new version of the question were asked: “How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way?” This variable was measured on a 5-point scale wherein 1 = “always,” 2 = “most of the time,” 3 = “about half of the time,” 4 = once in a while,” and 5 = “never.” All aforementioned values on each variable were kept as they were since they were already coded in the appropriate direction. However, these two variables were combined and then, in order to normalize the distribution of both variables, Z-scores were computed so that each score on each variable had a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

To gauge social connectedness, respondents were asked about their interpersonal political discussions with family and friends. Respondents were randomly assigned to either answer the original or new version of the question. Those who were assigned to the original version of the question were asked: “How many days within the past week did you talk about politics with family or friends?” Those who were assigned to the new version of the question were asked:

“During a typical week, how many days do you discuss politics with your family and friends?” Both items were measured on an 8-point scale wherein 0 = “none,” 1 = “one day,” 2 = “two days,” 3 = “three days,” 4 = “four days,” 5 = “five days,” 6 = “six days,” and 7 = “seven days.” All aforementioned values on each variable were kept as they were since they were already coded in the appropriate direction. However, these two variables were combined and then, in order to normalize the distribution of both variables, Z-scores were computed so that each score on each variable had a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

To further gauge social connectedness, respondents were asked about their volunteer work. Specifically, respondents were asked: “Were you able to devote any time to volunteer work in the last 12 months or did you not do so?” The responses were dichotomized where 1 = “yes” and 5 = “no.” The dichotomous nature of the variable was maintained, but the variable was recoded so that 1 = “yes” and 0 = “no.”

As a final dimension of social connectedness, respondents were asked about the number of social and political organizations they belonged to. Respondents were asked: “How many organizations are you currently a member of?” Respondents could indicate between 0 to 50 organizations. Types of organizations included labor unions, hobby clubs, sports teams, and groups working on political issues, school groups, community groups, in addition to many other types.

3.5 Analytic Strategy

Data analysis for this study proceeded in two steps. First, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationship between demographics, media consumption, social capital and civic participation. Second, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses were conducted to test four hypotheses and to answer the research questions. OLS regression is

used to predict values of a continuous response variable using one or more explanatory variables and can also identify the strength of the relationship between these variables (Knoke, Bohrnstedt & Mee 2002). The factor scales for both dependent variables (past and future civic participation) are continuous measures, thus OLS regression is appropriate.

Table 1: Descriptives for independent and dependent variables (N= 2,332)

Variables	Range (Min – Max)	Mean/ Percent	Std. Deviation
Dependent Variables			
Past Civic Participation	.00 – 8.00	2.66	2.38
Future Civic Participation (Factor)	-1.25 – 3.25	0	1
Independent Variables			
Watch TV news	-2.10 – 1.23	0	1
Attention to TV news	-1.59 – 2.69	0	1
Read newspaper articles	-.91 – 1.71	0	1
Attention to newspaper articles	-1.86 – 2.52	0	1
Listen to radio news	-.84 – 1.81	0	1
Attention to radio news	-1.61 – 2.07	0	1
Access to Internet	0 – 1	69.5	0.46
Use Internet news (N = 1167)	0 – 7	2.24	2.79
Attention to Internet news (N =557)	1 – 5	3.01	1.09
Control Variables			
Race			
Whites	0 – 1	74.4	0.43
African Americans	0 – 1	25.1	0.43
Latinos	0 – 1	21.9	0.41
Gender			
Men	0 – 1	43	4.95
Women	0 – 1	57	4.95
Education	1 – 17	12.9	2.96
Income	1 – 25	11.9	8.49
Age	18 – 90	47	17.97
Political party			
Democrat	0 – 1	42.1	0.49
Republican	0 – 1	18.6	0.39
Independent	0 – 1	30.7	0.46
Other	0 – 1	7.1	0.26
Church Attendance	1 – 5	2.77	1.59
Trust in the Media	1 – 4	2.36	0.71
Social capital			
Trust the government	-2.7 – 2.2	0	1
Discuss politics with family/friends	-1.44 – 2.23	0	1
Volunteer work in 12 months	0 – 1	0.28	0.45
Member of organization	0 – 13	0.84	1.39

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Bivariate Analyses

During bivariate analyses, I examined relationships between independent variables (e.g., race, gender, education, income, political party identification, etc.) and the dependent variables (past and future civic participation). According to previous literature, the aforementioned items are strong predictors in civic participation. First, I examined correlations between key control variables and the dependent variables, and then all other independent variables. Results are presented in Table 2.

African Americans and past civic participation and future participation were negatively correlated ($r = -.108$; $r = -.099$, respectively), though both were significant at the .01 level. Likewise, correlations between Latinos and past and future civic participation were weakly correlated ($r = -.162$; $r = -.072$, $p < .01$, respectively). Pearson's r revealed women (compared to men) and past and future civic participation were negatively correlated ($r = -.052$; $r = -.040$, $p < .01$ respectively).

As expected, Pearson's r revealed a strong correlation between education and past civic participation relationship ($r = .419$, $p < .01$). Pearson's r also revealed a strong relationship between education and future civic participation ($r = .269$, $p < .01$). The correlation between income and past civic participation revealed a strong relationship ($r = .217$), which was significant at the .01 level. Income and future civic participation were positively correlated and statistically significant ($r = .085$). Age and past and future civic participation were also positively correlated and statistically significant ($r = .062$; $r = .088$, $p < .01$ respectively). Democrats and future civic participation were positively correlated ($r = .109$, $p < .01$); Republicans and past

participation were positively correlated ($r = .102, p < .01$), while Independents were negatively associated with future civic participation ($r = -.059, p < .01$) and those who identified as “other party” were negatively associated with both past and future participation ($r = -.095; r = -.095, p < .01$).

Church attendance was positively correlated with past and future civic participation ($r = .112; r = .114$), and both correlations were significant at the .01 level. Being a member of one or more organizations revealed a strong association with past and future civic participation ($r = .459; r = .321, p < .01$). Discussing politics with family and friends was also strongly associated with past and future civic participation, ($r = .290; r = .297$), and both correlations are significant at the .01 level. Similarly, Pearson’s r revealed a strong association between having done community work in the past year and both past and future civic participation ($r = .467; r = .380$).

Correlations between trust in the government and past participation was positive but weak ($r = .044, p < .05$) and trust in the media and past civic participation was negative ($r = -.097$), and was significant at the .01 level.

Regarding media consumption, Pearson’s r revealed that watching TV news was weakly correlated with both past participation ($r = .020, p < .05$). However, paying attention to TV news was strongly correlated with both past participation ($r = .244$) and future civic participation ($r = .263, p < .01$). Reading newspaper articles and past civic participation was weakly associated ($r = .110, p < .01$). Paying attention to newspaper articles and past and future civic participation was positively correlated ($r = .134; r = .153$, respectively). Listening to radio news was also positively associated with past and future civic participation ($r = .190; r = .156, p < .01$). Pearson’s r revealed weak correlations between paying attention to radio news and past civic participation ($r = .182$) and future participation ($r = .199$). Having Internet access was strongly

associated with both past civic participation ($r = .315$) and future civic participation ($r = .226$); and using the Internet for news was strongly correlated with past civic participation ($r = .348$) and future civic participation ($r = .284$). As expected, Pearson's r revealed a strong association between paying attention to news on the Internet and past civic participation ($r = .297$) and future civic participation ($r = .319$), and both correlations were significant at the .01 level.

Table 2: Correlations Between Independent and Dependent Variables (N=2,332)

Independent Variables	Past Civic Participation	Future Civic Participation
Blacks	-.108***	-.099***
Latinos	-.162***	-.072***
Women	-.052**	-.040*
Education	.419***	.269***
Income	.217***	.085***
Age	.062***	.088***
Democrat	-.007	.109***
Republican	.102***	-.005
Independent	-.027	-.059***
Other party	-.095***	-.095***
Church attendance	.112***	.114***
Member of organization	.459***	.321***
Discuss politics with family & friends	.290***	.297***
Community work	.467***	.380***
Trust the government	.044**	.012
Trust the media	-.097***	-.004
Watch TV news	.020**	.019
Attention to TV news	.244***	.263***
Read newspaper articles	.110***	.032
Attention to newspaper articles	.134***	.153***
Listen to radio news	.190***	.156***
Attention to radio news	.182***	.199***
Internet access	.315***	.226***
Use Internet news	.348***	.284***
Attention to Internet news	.297***	.319***

* = $p < .10$, ** = $p < .05$, *** = $p < .01$.

4.2 Multivariate Analyses

In this study, I am exploring the effects of media consumption and social capital on past civic participation and the likelihood of future civic participation. I hypothesize that higher levels

of media consumption and social capital will be associated with greater participation in past civic activities. I also hypothesize that higher levels of media consumption and social capital will be associated with higher levels of willingness to participate in future civic activities.

Hypotheses were tested using ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions for each dependent variable. The independent variables were entered in separate blocks (demographics, political orientations and social capital, media consumption) to assess the impact of each block of variables on each dependent variable and to examine the effects of social capital and media consumption. Examination of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) using a criterion of 4.0 revealed that there was no multicollinearity in any of the models. Tables 3, 3.1, 4, and 4.1 present the outcomes of the OLS regressions for the three models and a full model that includes all independent variables. Displayed in each table are the independent variables' coefficients, denotation of statistical significance, and standard errors in parentheses. Also, reported are the sample size and R^2 .

4.2.1 Demographics Model for Past Civic Participation

Column 1 of Table 3 reports the results of the Demographics Model (Model 1). In this model, I regressed past civic participation on race, gender, education, income and age to create a baseline model. Results of the regression indicated that these key demographics explained 21.8% of variance in the model. Controlling for all other factors, African Americans engaged in .413 ($p < .01$) fewer activities than the predominately White comparison category, while Latinos participated in .550 fewer activities than non-Latinos ($p < .01$). Women compared to men participated in .322 fewer civic activities ($p < .01$). Controlling for other factors, a one year increase in education increases civic participation by .329 ($p < .01$). Similarly, a \$10,000

increase in income increases civic participation by .023 ($p < .01$). Likewise, a one-year increase in age increases civic participation by .013 ($p < .01$).

Overall, this first model indicated that those older, with higher income and those with higher education, participated in more civic activities, while African Americans compared to Whites, Latinos compared to non-Latinos, and women compared to men engaged in the least amount of civic activities.

4.2.2 Political Orientations and Social Capital Model

Column 2 of Table 3 reports the results of the Political Orientations and Social Capital Model (Model 2). In this model, I added political orientations and social capital variables. Results of the OLS regression indicated that these variables explained 40% of variance in the model.

Controlling for political orientations and social capital, African Americans compared to whites engaged in .586 ($p < .01$) fewer activities in the past, while Latinos compared to non-Latinos engaged in .462 ($p < .01$) fewer activities. Women compared to men engaged in .298 ($p < .01$) fewer activities. A one year increase in education increases civic participation by .203 ($p < .01$). Similarly, increase in annual income increases civic participation by .018 ($p < .01$). A one year increase in age increases civic engagement by .007 ($p < .05$).

Controlling for demographics and social capital, those in “other” party engaged in .428 ($p < .05$) fewer activities compared to Independents. Membership in one or more social/political organizations increases civic participation by .376 ($p < .01$). More notably, those who worked in their community engaged in 1.559 ($p < .01$) more civic activities than those who did not. Also notable is that a one day increase in discussing politics with family and friends increases civic participation by .435 ($p < .01$).

This model revealed that attending church/religious services, trusting the government, and trusting media had no effect on past civic participation.

4.2.3 Media Consumption Effects Model

Column 3 of Table 3 displays the OLS regression analyses for the Media Effects Model (Model 3). In this model, I added media consumption (i.e. watching TV news, listening to radio news, etc.) variables. Results of the OLS regression indicated that these variables explained 29.5% of variance in the model.

Controlling for media consumption, African Americans engaged in .426 ($p < .01$) fewer activities than whites, and Latinos engaged in .446 ($p < .01$) fewer activities than non-Latinos. Women compared to men engaged in .389 ($p < .01$) fewer activities. A one year increase in education increases civic participation by .252 ($p < .01$), and a year increase in age increases civic participation by .016 ($p < .01$), while income lost its effect on past civic participation when media consumption was controlled for.

Contrary to my hypotheses, watching TV news decreases civic participation by .080 ($p < .10$), while paying attention to TV news increases civic participation by .421 ($p < .01$). A one unit increase in reading newspapers increases civic participation by .089 ($p < .10$) and a unit increase in listening to radio news increases civic participation by .225 ($p < .01$). A unit increase in attention to radio news increases civic participation by .184 ($p < .01$). And finally, those with Internet access compared to those who did not engaged in .957 ($p < .01$) more activities than those who did not.

4.2.4 Full Model

In column 4 of Table 3 (Full Model) are the OLS regression analyses for the full model. The full model includes all variables for the three models discussed above. Results of this

regression indicated that these variables explained 46.8% of variance in the model. With a full model, there is more confidence in the findings. That is, I become certain that specific independent variables do influence past participation in civic activities. The forces that impact past civic participation most are education and social capital, specifically, membership in social and political organizations, doing community work, and discussing politics with family and friends.

Controlling for other factors, African Americans compared to whites engaged in .546 ($p < .01$) fewer activities, while Latinos compared to non-Latinos participated in .395 ($p < .01$) fewer activities. Women compared to men engaged in .324 fewer activities ($p < .01$). Republicans engaged in .197 ($p < .10$) fewer activities compared to Independents, and those in “other” party engaged in .393 ($p < .05$) fewer activities than did Independents.

A year increase in education increases civic participation by .164 ($p < .01$) and similarly, a year increase in age increases civic participation by .013 ($p < .01$). As was the case in previous models, being a member of an organization ($b = .350$, $p < .01$), doing work in the community ($b = 1.497$, $p < .01$) and discussing politics with family and friends ($b = .367$, $p < .01$) significantly increased past civic participation.

Holding all other factors constant, a one unit increase in watching news on TV decreases civic participation by .072 ($p < .10$). A one unit increase in attention to TV news increases civic participation by .253 ($p < .01$). A one unit increase in listening to radio news increases civic participation by .093 ($p < .05$). Having access to the Internet remained significant .809 ($p < .01$).

In this model, the most important predictor of past civic participation was having done community work in the past (standardized beta = .282), followed by being a member of a social or political organization (standardized beta = .207), which lends support to Hypothesis 2.

Table 3: OLS Regressions – Media Consumption and Social Capital on Past Civic Participation

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Full Model
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)
Blacks	-.413*** (.115)	-.586*** (.103)	-.426*** (.112)	-.546*** (.109)
Latinos	-.550*** (.123)	-.462*** (.109)	-.446*** (.118)	-.395*** (.107)
Women	-.322*** (.094)	-.298*** (.082)	-.389*** (.090)	-.324*** (.080)
Education	.329*** (.018)	.203*** (.017)	.252*** (.018)	.164*** (.017)
Income	.023*** (.006)	.018*** (.005)	.005 (.006)	.006 (.005)
Age	.013*** (.003)	.007** (.002)	.016*** (.003)	.013*** (.003)
Democrats		.091 (.100)		.077 (.098)
Republicans		-.160 (.121)		-.197* (.118)
Other Party		-.428** (.167)		-.393** (.164)
Church attendance		.030 (.027)		.013 (.026)
Member of organization		.376*** (.032)		.350*** (.032)
Discuss politics with family & friends		.435*** (.044)		.367*** (.045)
Community work		1.559*** (.097)		1.497*** (.096)
Trust the government		.013 (.042)		.022 (.041)
Trust the media		-.093 (.061)		-.087 (.060)
Watch TV news			-.080* (.048)	-.072* (.043)
Attention to TV news			.421*** (.056)	.253*** (.051)
Read newspaper articles			.089* (.047)	.005 (.042)
Attention to newspaper articles			.049 (.065)	.036 (.058)
Listen to radio news			.225*** (.046)	.093** (.041)
Attention to radio news			.184*** (.067)	.001 (.060)
Internet access			.957*** (.115)	.809*** (.102)
Constant	-2.137*** (.294)	-.733*** (.315)	-1.736*** (.296)	-.864*** (.314)
R ²	0.218	0.440	0.295	0.468
N	2076	2026	2070	2020

* = p < .10, ** = p < .05, *** = p < .01.

4.2.5 Internet Use Effects Model

Internet news consumption effects had to be estimated separately from the other media consumption variables because only a random half of the sample was asked questions regarding Internet use.⁴ The OLS regression analyses are presented in Table 3.1. Results of this regression indicated that these variables explained 24.1% of the variance in the model. In Column 3 of Table 3.1 (Model 3), results show that African Americans participated in .502 ($p < .10$) fewer activities than did whites, and Latinos also participated in .502 ($p < .05$) fewer activities than did non-Latinos. In this model, a year increase in age increases civic participation by .024 ($p < .01$). Likewise, a year increase in education increases participation by .373 ($p < .01$). Controlling for other factors, and most notably, a one unit increase in attention to Internet news among Internet users increases civic participation by .442 ($p < .01$).

4.2.6 Full Model for Internet Use Effects

Column 4 of Table 3.1 (Full Model) presents the OLS regression analyses for past civic participation regressed on the key demographics, political orientation and social capital variables, and Internet consumption effects. Results of this regression indicated that these variables explained 48.7% of variance in the model. The results shown in the full model reveal African Americans participated in .597 ($p < .05$) fewer activities than whites. Women compared to men in this model participated in .347 ($p < .05$) fewer activities. Similar to the previous model, education ($b = .195$, $p < .01$) and age ($b = .021$, $p < .01$) maintain their statistical significance. Though not significant in Model 3, controlling for other factors, the full model shows that

⁴ The interviewers first asked respondents if they had access to the Internet, then asked questions regarding Internet use. If respondents did not have access to the Internet, there is no way they could answer questions about how often they reviewed news online (i.e. Internet news consumption). Furthermore, the question about how much attention paid to Internet news was asked *only to respondents who used the Internet*. Thus, there is a significant reduction in the N for the models presented in Tables 3.1 and 4.1.

Republicans participated in .760 fewer activities ($p < .01$) than Independents. Likewise, those in other parties participated in .905 fewer activities than Independents. Notably, membership in social/political organizations ($b = .354, p < .01$), discussing politics with family and friends ($b = .460, p < .01$), and community work ($b = 1.642, p < .01$) maintained significant effects on past civic participation controlling for Internet use. In the full model, controlling for demographics, political orientations, and social capital, a unit increase in attention to Internet news among Internet users increases civic participation by .311 ($p < .01$).

Overall, this model modestly supports Hypothesis 1 and strongly supports Hypothesis 2. Much like the full model presented in Table 3, the strongest predictor of past civic participation was having done community work (standardized beta = .316), followed by being a member of a social or political organization (standardized beta = .222).

Table 3.1: OLS Regressions – Internet Use Among Internet Users and Social Capital on Past Civic Participation

Independent Variables	Internet Use	Full Model
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)
Blacks	-.502* (.263)	-.597** (.237)
Latinos	-.502** (.250)	-.307 (.216)
Women	-.289 (.194)	-.347** (.164)
Education	.373*** (.052)	.195*** (.046)
Income	-.008 (.013)	-.002 (.011)
Age	.024*** (.007)	.021*** (.006)
Democrats		-.229 (.207)
Republicans		-.760*** (.233)
Other Party		-.905** (.357)
Church Attendance		.015 (.055)
Member of organization		.354*** (.059)
Discuss politics with family & friends		.460*** (.085)
Community work		1.642*** (.187)
Trust the government		-.130 (.088)
Trust the media		-.137 (.122)
Internet access	.736 (.485)	.489 (.407)
Use Internet news	.034 (.046)	-.030 (.039)
Attention to Internet news	.442*** (.097)	.311*** (.084)
Constant	-1.808* (.973)	.295 (.945)
R ²	0.241	0.487
N	500	495

* = p < .10, ** = p < .05, *** = p < .01.

4.3.1 Demographics Model for Future Civic Participation

Column 1 of Table 4 reports the results of the Demographics Model (Model 1). In this model, I regressed future civic participation on race, gender, education, income and age to create a baseline model. Results of the regression indicated that these key demographics explained 10.2% of the variance in future civic participation. Controlling for all other factors, being African American versus white increased the level of willingness to participate in future civic activities by .322 ($p < .01$). For each additional year in education, the level of willingness to participate in future civic activities will increase by .102 ($p < .01$). A one year increase in age decreased the level of willingness to engage in prospective civic activities by .003 ($p < .05$).

Overall, this baseline model indicated that African Americans compared to whites and those with higher education are on average are more willing to partake in civic activities in the future.

4.3.2 Political Orientations and Social Capital Model

Column 2 of Table 4 reports the results of the Political Orientations and Social Capital Model (Model 2). In this model, I added political orientations and social capital variables. Results of the OLS regression indicated that these variables explained 28.3% of variance in the model.

Controlling for political orientations and social capital, being African American compared to white increased willingness to participate in future civic activities by .177 ($p < .01$). For each additional year of education, willingness to engage in civic activities in the future will increase by .053 ($p < .01$). A one year decrease in age decreased willingness to engage in future civic activities by .006 ($p < .01$). Being a Democrat versus Independent increased willingness to engage in civic activities in the future by .148 ($p < .01$). Being in “other” party versus being an

Independent decreased willingness by .166 ($p < .05$). A one unit increase in church attendance increases willingness to engage in future civic activities by .028 ($p < .05$). Similar to findings presented in the past civic participation models, being a member in a social or political organization increased the level of willingness to engage in civic activities by .110 ($p < .01$). Discussing politics with family and friends increased the average level of willingness by .223 ($p < .01$). Having done community work versus not having done community work considerably increased willingness to participate in future civic activities by .563 ($p < .01$), controlling for all other factors.

4.3.3 Media Consumption Effects Model

Column 3 of Table 4 reports the results of the Media Consumption Model (Model 3). In this model, I added media consumption variables. Results of the regression indicated that these key demographics explained 18.9% of variance in the model. This model shows that being African American versus white increases willingness to engage in future civic activities by .298 ($p < .01$). For the first time, gender has an effect on future civic participation. Being female versus male increases the level of willingness to participate in civic activities in the future by .121 ($p < .01$). Education maintains significance ($b = .073$, $p < .01$). A one unit increase in age decreases willingness to participate in civic activities by .003 ($p < .05$). Watching TV news has no effect, but paying attention to TV news increases willingness to participate by .197 ($p < .01$). A one unit increase in attention to newspaper articles increases willingness to participate in future activities by .052 ($p < .10$). Listening to news on the radio increases willingness to participate by .085 ($p < .01$) and a one unit increase in paying attention to radio news increases willingness to participate by .139 ($p < .01$). Finally, having Internet access versus not having

access to the Internet increases willingness to participate by .279 ($p < .01$). This model shows modest support for Hypothesis 3.

4.3.4 Full Model

In column 4 of Table 4 are the OLS regression analyses for the full model. The full model includes all variables for the three models discussed above. Results of this regression indicated that these variables explained 31.5% of variance in the model. With a full model, there is more confidence in the findings. First, controlling for all other factors, being African American versus white increases willingness to participate in future civic activities by .188 ($p < .01$). Being female versus male decreases willingness by .077 ($p < .05$). For an additional increase in education, the level of willingness to participate in future civic activities increases by .039 ($p < .01$). For a year decrease in age, level of willingness to participate in civic activities in the future decreases by .005 ($p < .01$). Being Democrat versus Independent increases the level of willingness to participate in civic activities in the future by .125 ($p < .01$) and being in another party versus an Independent decreases willingness by .145 ($p < .10$). For a unit increase in the number of organizations one is a member of, level of willingness to participate in civic activities in the future increases by .099 ($p < .01$). A one unit increase in days spent discussing politics with family and friends increases level of willingness to participate in civic activities in the future by .180 ($p < .01$). As anticipated, having done community work versus having not done any increases level of willingness to participate in future civic activities by .528 ($p < .01$). Regarding media consumption, again, watching TV news has no significant effect on future civic participation. Attention to TV news has a consistently significant impact on future civic participation. For a one unit increase attention to TV news, level of willingness to participate in civic activities in the future will increase by .126 ($p < .01$). In this model, listening to radio news

increases willingness to participate in the future by .036 ($p < .10$) and paying attention to radio news increases willingness by .062 ($p < .05$). Having access to the Internet versus not having access increases willingness to participate in future civic activities by .236 ($p < .01$).

Contrary to what I hypothesized, media consumption seems to have the least impact on level of willingness to participate in future civic activities. Similar to the full model of Table 3, having done community work (standardized beta = .237), followed by being a member of a social or political organization (standardized beta = .141) were the strongest predictors of level of willingness to participate in future civic activities.

Table 4: OLS Regressions – Media Consumption and Social Capital on Future Civic Participation

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Full Model
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)
Blacks	.322*** (.052)	.177*** (.053)	.298*** (.051)	.188*** (.048)
Latinos	.027 (.055)	.019 (.052)	.062 (.053)	.043 (.051)
Women	-.092 (.042)	-.063 (.039)	-.121*** (.040)	-.077** (.038)
Education	.102*** (.008)	.053*** (.008)	.073*** (.008)	.039*** (.008)
Income	.003 (.003)	.001 (.003)	-.003 (.003)	-.003 (.003)
Age	-.003** (.001)	-.006*** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.005*** (.001)
Democrats		.148*** (.047)		.125*** (.047)
Republicans		-.038 (.057)		-.065 (.057)
Other Party		-.166** (.079)		-.145* (.078)
Church attendance		.028** (.013)		.020 (.013)
Member of organization		.110*** (.015)		.100*** (.015)
Discuss politics with family & friends		.223*** (.021)		.180*** (.021)
Community work		.563*** (.046)		.528*** (.046)
Trust the government		-.022 (.020)		-.015 (.020)
Trust the media		-.003 (.029)		-.007 (.029)
Watch TV news			-.019 (.022)	-.024 (.021)
Attention to TV news			.197*** (.025)	.126*** (.024)
Read newspaper articles			.020 (.021)	-.015 (.020)
Attention to newspaper articles			.052* (.029)	.042 (.027)
Listen to radio news			.085*** (.020)	.036* (.019)
Attention to radio news			.139*** (.030)	.062** (.029)
Internet access			.279*** (.052)	.236*** (.049)
Constant	-1.280*** (.134)	-.801*** (.150)	-1.016*** (.135)	-.758*** (.150)
R ²	0.102	0.283	0.189	0.315
N	2073	2022	2067	2016

* = p < .10, ** = p < .05, *** = p < .01.

4.3.5 Internet Use Effects Model

As was the case for past civic participation, Internet news consumption effects had to be estimated separately from the other media consumption variables. The OLS regression analyses are presented in Table 4.1. Results of this regression indicated that these variables explained 14.8% of variance in the model. In Column 3 of Table 4.1 (Internet Effects Model) results show being African American versus white increases level of willingness to participate in future civic activities by .209 ($p < .10$). For each additional year of education, the level of willingness increases by .080 ($p < .01$). Having access to the Internet versus not having access increased willingness to participate by .437 ($p < .05$) and a one unit increase in attention to Internet news among Internet users increases willingness to participate in future activities by .262 ($p < .01$).

4.3.6 Full Model for Internet Use Effects

Column 4 of Table 4.1 (Full Model) presents the OLS regression analyses for future civic participation regressed on demographics, political orientation and social capital variables, and Internet consumption effects. Results of this regression show that being female versus male reduces the level of willingness to participate in future activities by .146 ($p < .10$). An additional year of education increases level of willingness by .040 ($p < .05$). A one year decrease in age is decreases willingness to participate in future activities by .005 ($p < .10$). Being a Republican versus an Independent decreased willingness to engage in future civic activities by .371 ($p < .01$). For a unit increase in the number of organizations one is a member of, level of willingness increases by .097 ($p < .01$). A one unit increase in discussing politics with family and friends increases level of willingness by .246 ($p < .01$). As anticipated, having done community work versus having not done any work in the community increases level of willingness to participate in future civic activities by .370 ($p < .01$). A unit increase in trust in the media decreased level of

willingness to participate in future civic activities by .100, which was barely significant ($p < .10$). Notably, a unit increase in attention to Internet news among those who use the Internet increased the level of willingness to participate in future civic activities by .210 ($p < .01$).

This final model modestly supports Hypothesis 3 and strongly supports Hypothesis 4. The strongest predictor of willingness to participate in future civic activities was discussing politics with family and friends (standardized beta = .246), followed by having done community work (standardized beta = .170).

Table 4.1: OLS Regressions – Internet Media Effects and Social Capital on Future Civic Participation

Independent Variables	Internet Use	Full Model
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)
Blacks	.209* (.115)	.097 (.115)
Latinos	-.003 (.110)	.041 (.105)
Women	-.126 (.086)	-.146* (.080)
Education	.080*** (.020)	.040*** (.019)
Income	-.001 (.006)	.002 (.005)
Age	-.002 (.003)	-.005* (.003)
Democrats		-.019 (.101)
Republicans		-.371*** (.114)
Other Party		-.088 (.173)
Church Attendance		.033 (.027)
Org membership		.097*** (.029)
Discuss politics with family & friends		.246*** (.042)
Community work		.370*** (.091)
Trust the government		-.035 (.043)
Trust the media		-.100* (.059)
Internet access	.437** (.222)	.311 (.204)
Use Internet news	.014 (.020)	-.009 (.019)
Attention to Internet news	.262*** (.043)	.210*** (.041)
Constant	-.377 (.410)	.290 (.429)
R ²	0.148	0.303
<i>N</i>	504	497

* = $p < .10$, ** = $p < .05$, *** = $p < .01$.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to address a major limitation in our understanding of civic participation, namely the lack of attention toward the differential impacts of media consumption. This study examined the relationship between media consumption and civic participation within the framework of social capital theory to expand the current literature on media use and its role in civic engagement. While previous conceptualizations of social capital included too many aspects, this study concentrated on two major dimensions of social capital—(1) social connectedness and (2) institutional trust. Further, this is one of the first studies to compare the unique impact of four distinct media types (TV, newspapers, radio, and Internet) and examine them separately, as opposed to a single variable of media consumption. Using OLS regression to analyze data from the 2008 American National Election Survey, I accounted more fully for Americans' civic participation.

This study further clarifies the relationship between social capital and the effects of media use on civic participation. The findings of this study have important implications for how we think about the role of media consumption and social capital on civic participation. Results confirm an initial premise that social capital is associated with civic participation.

Conceptualizing social capital as a two-dimensional variable (i.e., institutional trust and social connectedness) demonstrated a clear relationship with civic participation. It was posited that a lack of trust in the media to report news fairly and the government to do the right and fair thing (i.e. institutional trust) would be associated with more civic engagement. This study examined the effects of trust in the media and trust in the government and found, overall, institutional trust did not influence people's past or future civic participation. The lack of

significance between trust in the media and trust in the government and civic participation in this study seemed to counter previous literature that states that distrust in the government or media will lead to greater civic participation (Cooke & Gronke 2007; Delli Carpini 2004; Nie et al. 2010; Paolo 2013) and thus weakened the construct validity of institutional trust as a concept of social capital.

People's social connectedness, however, consistently showed significant effects on both past and future civic participation. This finding is consistent with that of previous literature. Those who had frequent discussions with family and friends about politics, were members of one or more organizations, and involved in community affairs generally reported more participation in past civic activities and reported higher levels of willingness to participate in future activities across all models. Thus, those with higher social capital, or a higher social connectedness to their community tend to participate more in civic activities. This finding lends credence to Putnam's (1995a; 1995b) theory about the impact of social connectedness on civically engaged citizens. Examination of the influence of media consumption variables on past and future civic participation showed that TV, newspapers, radio, and the Internet exerted differential impacts on civic participation. Contrary to hypotheses, for the most part, watching TV news, reading newspaper articles, listening to radio news, and reviewing news on the Internet did not have significant effects on either past or future civic participation. In relation to past civic participation, paying attention to TV news illustrated a larger effect on past civic participation (see full model of Table 3). Similarly, in relation to Internet use, paying attention to the news online, as opposed to just using the Internet for news, illustrated a larger effect on past participation (see full model of Table 3.1). Paying close attention to TV news and news on the Internet also had a considerable effect on future civic participation (see Table 4 and 4.1). Thus,

attention to Internet news does not lower levels of civic participation; rather, it increases participation. These results reinforce Uslaner's (2004) study, which found the Internet, by itself, posed no real threat to civic engagement. More broadly, this study provides evidence that it is not solely about the time Americans spend watching television or using other types of media, but rather, the amount of attention they pay to a specific type of media content that will influence their civic engagement, thereby complicating Putnam's original claim that merely watching TV leads to civic disengagement. Moreover, these findings reinforce McLeod's (2000) argument that content-specific measures instead of time-spent measure should be used to test effects of media consumption. However, I would build upon that claim and suggest that the level of attention to media types also matters just as much, if not more for civic participation.

As expected, I found that socio-demographic characteristics were useful in determining past and future civic participation. For instance, the finding that women compared to men tend to be less civically engaged is consistent throughout most regression analyses. This is not surprising particularly since it corresponds with extant literature indicating that since women's movement into the paid labor force, they have less free time to devote to extracurricular pursuits outside the home such as joining protests and rallies and attending town hall meetings. If women are working full-time and coming home to do housework (i.e. cooking, cleaning, tending to children, etc.) (Hochschild 2003) this could lead to less time to be civically engaged. To be sure, Putnam (1995b) characterized women's migration out of the home and into the workforce as one of the significant social changes of the last half-century. He claimed that the movement of women into the workplace over the last generation has altered the types of social and political organizations to which women belong. Perhaps a future study could examine the gender-specific effects of being a working woman versus a housewife on civic participation.

Regarding race, African Americans participated in fewer civic activities than whites and other multi-ethnic minorities in the past. This is most readily evident in Table 3.1, displaying the Internet use effects. Among Internet users, after controlling for attention to Internet news African Americans are more disconnected from civic engagement than are white Internet users. Interestingly, though, African Americans reported higher levels of willingness to participate in future civic activities than whites when controlling for traditional media use effects (i.e., TV news, newspapers, radio). These findings suggest that African Americans are more willing to engage in future civic activities than are whites. Controlling for Internet use and attention to online news, race has no effect on future civic participation.

Results also revealed an interesting, yet expected relationship between age and civic participation. Much of previous research has demonstrated that age stands out as a predictor of many forms of civic engagement, and my findings support previous literature. Overall, regression analyses demonstrated that as age decreases, civic participation does, too. This makes sense because older individuals belong to more social and political organizations and tend to be consistently more civically and politically engaged than younger Americans (Burr et al. 2002).

In all regressions, education remained a significant predictor, showing that more educated persons have participated in more civic activities in the past and are more willing to participate in activities in the future. This again is in line with existing literature. Researchers have found that education tends to have the most substantial influence on civic activity as opposed to income and occupational status. This tends to be the case because those with higher education are exposed to ample opportunities for involvement with civic and political activities (Flanagan & Levine 2010; Nie et al. 1996).

Church attendance, however, was not significant in any of full model regressions, indicating that it had no effect on past or future civic participation. In contrast, regressions revealed an interesting relationship between political party identification, media consumption and past civic participation and future civic participation. For instance, in Table 3, regression analyses show that, overall, controlling for media consumption and social capital, Republicans compared to Independents participated in fewer civic activities. This was also the case for those in “other” party. In Table 3.1, regression analyses again revealed that Republicans and those in “other” party participated in far fewer civic activities in the past than Independents when Internet consumption effects were added to the full model. Regarding potential civic participation (Table 4) being a Democrat versus an Independent increased the level of willingness to participate in future civic activities, while being in another party versus an Independent decreased willingness to participate in future civic activities once media consumption variables were added. In the full model examining Internet use effects on future civic participation (Table 4.1), regression analyses revealed that being a Republican versus an Independent significantly decreased willingness to engage in future civic activities. Overall, these models suggest that Republicans compared to Independents are more disconnected from civic engagement than are Independents.

Notwithstanding the positive findings in this analysis, some drawbacks should be noted. First, the 2008 ANES data is not longitudinal, thus casual direction cannot be interpreted, particularly with respect to the relationship between social capital and civic participation. A future study should use longitudinal data to explore how media use and social capital impact civic participation over time. Also, future studies should further explore the trust dimension of social capital, as it was found not to have a significant impact on civic participation in this present study. Finally, this study did not differentiate between *types* of news content TV

watchers, radio news listeners, newspaper readers, and Internet users were consuming and paying attention to. Future research should examine the role of media consumption more closely as it is less clear what *types* of media content media users are paying attention to. This is especially important because previous research indicates that the media environment is quickly diversifying and content preference could have an impact on civic participation (Prior 2005).

Despite these shortcomings, I believe that this study contributes to our understanding of how media consumption and social capital impact civic participation. The results clearly show that individuals who are more community-oriented and involved in civic activities tend to be willing to participate in future civic activities because they have already participated in the past. Further, after controlling for effects of demographics, there is much more to know about media types and how they impact civic participation. However, the knowledge gained herein may therefore help us to identify and address issues pertinent to media consumption, social capital and civic participation.

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