Online Civic Styles, Political Apathy, and Political Efficacy



Nathan D. Coffman

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Online Civic Styles, Political Apathy, and Political Efficacy

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Presented by:
Nathan D. Coffman

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Pledge: _____

Approved:

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Dr. Lydia Eckstein

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Dr. Andrew Bloeser

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Abstract

Civic-mindedness is a concept that has been taken for granted. Recent scholarship has illustrated the ways in which the development of the Internet suggests the existence of different kinds of civic-mindedness or "civic styles," which may correspond to different patterns of political psychology and participation. This study builds on prior research to propose two online civic styles, the dutiful and actualizing styles, as predictors of participation-predicting political psychological variables. The dutiful citizenship style (DC) is conceptualized as prioritizing one-way communication managed by authorities and is understood as traditional whereas the more recent, actualizing citizenship style (AC) shifts toward peer-to-peer network sharing and self-expression via social media. This study sought to compare the predictive power of DC and AC with respect to four psychological variables. An online survey method was used. Regression analysis was conducted to predict internal political efficacy, external political efficacy, online political efficacy, and political apathy based on AC and DC. Results indicate that DC is stronger than AC as a predictor of all three types of political efficacy and that neither AC nor DC significantly predicts political apathy. Further research is needed to determine the construct validity of each proposed online civic style and to further analyze the ways in which these civic styles might correspond with psychological variables. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

Keywords: civic style, internal political efficacy, external political efficacy, online political efficacy, political apathy

Online Civic Styles, Political Apathy, and Political Efficacy

Developed democracies around the globe have seen a relatively steady decline in voter turnout and other forms of direct political participation among voting-aged populations (Desilver, 2016b). On this measure, the United States consistently ranks low in comparison with other industrialized democracies. The contemporary period is uniquely non-participatory, with only about 58% of eligible voters voting in the most recent (2016) national election (Regan, 2016). Voter participation in primary elections is even lower (Desilver, 2016a). Beyond that, citizens' trust in traditional institutions is unprecedentedly low. Since 1973, public confidence in the presidency has dropped steadily from 52% to 32%. Confidence in the Supreme Court has dropped from 45% to 40%. Confidence in Congress has fallen from 42% to just 12%—edged up from a mere 9% in 2016 (Gallup Poll, 2017). Beyond government, there have been steady, decades-long decreases in confidence placed in such institutions as churches, public schools, the media, banks, organized labor, and big business (Gallup Poll, 2017). These trends are worrying for supporters of democracy. By its nature, democratic governance would seem to require from the citizenry a certain degree of faith in and active support for the electoral system, the government, and certain bedrock public institutions.

Commented [1]: snarky comment: are we in the single digits with the current president?

Commented [2]: this one surprised me...

Scholars on both sides of the political spectrum (Murray, 2012; Putnam, 2000) have attributed the decreases in traditional civic participation and civic trust to an increasing atomization of society. Such atomization has allegedly wrought a transformation of the citizenry from collective-minded neighbors to individual-minded consumers and spectators. Commonly, the blame for such atomization and the consequent transformation of citizens has fallen on the ever increasing role of personal technology and a corollary personalization of the former public sphere (Postman, 1985). Put simply, the thinking goes that as private activity becomes more

enticing, and especially as private activity providing entertainment becomes easier, more pervasive, and more accessible, citizens spend less time and energy on public life, which is comparatively more taxing and less satisfying. This trend is thought to get compounded by the "mass" nature of the media, which directs attention toward large and worldly affairs that are usually only loosely or indirectly connected to the average citizen's day-to-day political activity. The political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) posited that it was private life which was the burden, isolating and uninfluential as it is. Public life, to be personally engaged with others in the arena of political participation, was the sought-after privilege which offered maximal satisfaction. Contemporary citizens, on the other hand, may hold another conceptualization altogether. Today, it may be the case that many eschew participation in public life for a comparatively more alluring retreat into isolation, distraction, consumption, and entertainment.

However, at the very least such an explanation is complicated by the development of the Internet and especially by the more recent arrival of Web 2.0 (DiNucci, 1999) and its network-focused social media features. No longer, it seems, can the archetypal disengaged citizen be neatly captured by the picture of the solitary American holed up in isolation, consuming television unto death—the sort of image conjured up by Postman, for instance, in his work *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985), wherein the author decries the commodification of public affairs by their televisual presentation. For in many ways, unlike older technologies, the Internet of today ostensibly mimics a traditional public community where many disparate voices may be heard and political deliberation and mobilization may flourish. The Internet, if considered as a sort of worldwide town hall, might well be expected to combat that disposition toward counter-civic individualism that personal media has been accused of causing.

Some works (Jenkins, 2006; Palfrey & Gasser, 2016) have portrayed Internet-savvy citizens as uniquely adept at using online resources for political information-sharing, discussion, and grassroots organization. More concretely, political candidates have overtly benefited by embracing Web 2.0 channels to communicate with and mobilize potential voters and organizers. In 2004, presidential candidate Howard Dean was one of the first to realize the Internet's potential for political fundraising. Considered an outsider candidate, Dean called on the financial support of ordinary Internet users rather than that of wealthy, established donors. He quickly amassed 350,000 donors, at that time a Democratic record (Smith, 2014). The trend continued in the following years. In 2008, Barack Obama famously used "viral" messaging techniques (message sharing via peer-to-peer networks) on Youtube and social media to mobilize supporters (Miller, 2008). In 2012, President Obama again used digital technologies to top his 2008 numbers and raise $690 million from 4.4 million individuals. Obama topped his challenger, Mitt Romney, who relied primarily on a group of big donors not culled from the Internet (Scherer, 2012). In 2016, Donald Trump expertly used social media, specifically Twitter, to bypass traditional editorial gatekeepers and send messages directly to supporters. Also in 2016, Internet-using citizens witnessed a proliferation of propagandist "fake news" stories on social media sites like Facebook, as well as an unprecedented degree of digital "data-driven psychometric micro-targeting" (Albright, 2016) of potential voters. Both the Trump and the Clinton campaigns explicitly used this latter tactic to flood potential supporters with belief-confirming online media (Albright, 2016; Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016) that likely calcified support via the confirmation bias, our tendency to seek and prefer information that conforms with our existing beliefs (Taber & Lodge, 2006), and the mere exposure effect, our tendency to prefer stimuli to which we have been exposed repeatedly (Zajonc, 1968). Notably, Bernie Sanders also garnered

significant grassroots support in 2016 using the Internet. Armed with twice the number of Facebook followers as Hillary Clinton (Sifry, 2016) and a Reddit subreddit page dwarfing those of other candidates (Guadiano, 2015), Sanders posed a surprisingly significant challenge for the Democratic nomination in a decidedly Internet-centric, ground-up and "post-material" way (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). Sanders, more than his Democratic challengers, used the full force of social media to spread his brand as a "meme" along Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, and Snapchat.

The divergence between the micro-targeting practices of Trump and Clinton (top-down) and the largely user-generated, grassroots campaign of Sanders (bottom-up) reveals, for one, that the Internet offers candidates and institutions multiple routes to influence citizens. However, recent history has also revealed the naiveté of certain optimistic assessments (Ayres, 1999; Coleman, Morrison, & Svennevig, 2008; Dahlberg, 2001; Sharoni, 2012) that have supposed that the Internet serves by force of logical necessity as an unalloyed boon to the public sphere, as an all-inclusive, consensus-seeking community that shifts power toward ordinary citizens and thereby buttresses deliberative democracy.

By contrast to those optimistic assessments, the Internet's power to fragment, polarize, mislead, and radicalize the electorate is now clear (Dahlberg, 2007; Sunstein, 2017). Just as the Internet was instrumental for the development and successes of the pro-democratic demonstrations of the Arab Spring in 2011, as well as the Occupy movement of that same year, it has also been intimately linked to the global campaign of ISIS more recently (Irshaid, 2014). Evidently, anti-civic and anti-democratic sentiments can flourish just as readily as more constructive sentiments in the Internet's soil. What is more, even in non-radical contexts the Internet may have the effect of pulling out the common ground from under citizens by creating

echo chambers (Sunstein, 2017) and filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011), which may insulate users from diverging opinions and reduce the potential for inter-ideological dialogue and consensus-building. Obvious examples include the algorithms behind Google's personalized search option and Facebook's personalized news feed, as well as Twitter's user-curated content bubbles in the form of selective user following. There are also concerns about "slacktivism," or the notion that engagement with political matters via the Internet amounts to a politically vacuous virtue signaling that has the counterproductive psychological effect of "excusing" so-called slacktivists from "actual," concrete political participation (Carr, 2012). The extent to which online engagement with political content correlates with more concrete political participation, whether online or offline, is disputed (Christensen, 2011; Leung, 2009). Finally, on a structural level, traditional governmental and corporate institutions (in addition to Internet service providers and online media platforms) increasingly exert influence over what is seen and said on the Internet. (Schneider, 2013). Companies like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Facebook, Amazon, and Verizon have moved toward stricter control over what software can run on their platforms and what content shows up in users' feeds. Governments around the world increasingly partner with Internet companies to surveil citizens and censor specific content as in the cases of China's infamous "Great Firewall" or, in the United States, the partnerships between the National Security Agency (NSA) and Facebook, Google, and Verizon. These partnerships allow the NSA to access personal data that it otherwise could not (Schneider, 2013). Each of the phenomena discussed above could weaken the claim for the Internet's inherently pro-democratic nature.

Is the Internet yet another in the long line of ways in which people abdicate genuine and constructive public engagement in favor of "amusing ourselves to death" (Postman, 1985) in isolation at the hands of established power—only now, in the era of Web 2.0, with some thin

veneer of faux communal interconnectedness? Or is it possible for Internet-using citizens to carve out a genuinely pro-civic and pro-political community that fulfils early predictions regarding the Internet's positive effect on democratic functioning? Clearly, the Internet's relationship to the public sphere is ambiguous--and likely very much rests on the specific policies, regulations, and technological innovations that will shape the Internet's future development.

Political Psychology: Efficacy and Apathy

Because the effects of the Internet on the political sphere *per se* are currently ambiguous, this study seeks to clarify which kinds of Internet use can increase pro-political habits of thought and behavior in the electorate. Research has indicated that social media use positively correlates with political participation in a general sense (Boulianne, 2015). Yet the same is also true of the use of older, less network-based media like newspapers and television, of which higher degrees of consumption correlate with increased political mobilization (Newton, 1999). In general, highly mediated people seem to participate in political life more actively than less mediated people and have habits of engagement. Shall one simply conclude, then, that people will (or will not) adopt participatory habits of citizenship regardless of what shape the media takes as the Internet age progresses? In other words, is the use of newer, network-based media neutral with regard to political activity? To address these questions, a distinctly psychological approach will be useful. The political psychological variables of political efficacy and political apathy are at the center of this inquiry. Both variables are integral to any discussion on the health and robustness of a political community as they allow us to assess attitudes regarding the value that individuals personally place on political participation.

High levels of political efficacy predict increased political participation (Almond & Verba, 1963; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Milbrath, 1965) as do low levels of political apathy (Bennett, 1986). Political efficacy, at the most basic level, reflects citizens' attitudes about their own civic and political acumen and the responsiveness of government to their desires. People with high political efficacy believe that they can understand and influence public affairs via the democratic system by interacting with the government, which is thought to genuinely represent and serve the people. People with low political efficacy, on the other hand, believe that they cannot understand or influence public affairs and that the democratic system and government do not respond to the desires of citizens. Notably, many scholars since Balch (1974) have split up the notion of political efficacy into two independently varying component parts. Namely, these are internal political efficacy and external political efficacy. Internal political efficacy (IPE) refers to beliefs about one's own personal ability to comprehend and participate in politics irrespective of the perceived level of genuine representativeness of the political system itself. External political efficacy (EPE) refers to beliefs about whether the political system is open and responsive to the actions of individuals irrespective of the political skills of those individuals. In sum, high IPE says that "I am the kind of person that can act," whereas high EPE says that "the political system is the kind that will respond to my actions." In addition to IPE and EPE, recent scholarship (Sasaki, 2016) has proposed another independently varying aspect of political efficacy: online political efficacy (OPE). OPE refers to a person's sense of political empowerment specifically on the Internet. No research has yet determined whether there are analytically distinct internal and external components of OPE, but OPE has been shown to vary independently of other forms of political efficacy, which is to say that a person may feel politically efficacious on the Internet but not in offline settings, or vice versa (Sasaki, 2016).

Commented [3]: but the distinction between internal (I can say something and have an effect online") and external ("the Twitter/FB/Reddit/... world will respond to/ engage with my posts" is not made?

Commented [4]: I guess to keep with the way you described IPE and EPE, it might be helpful to have a catchy "I am the kind of person..." phrase that you used above

Lastly, political apathy can be defined as indifference toward, lack of interest in, or lack of attention to politics (Bennett, 1986). All told, the citizen most likely to participate in politics has low political apathy and high political efficacy in each of its forms.

Are the ways in which this particular kind of citizen uses the Internet different from the ways in which other kinds of people use the Internet? If so, what is the style of Internet use that might distinguish this citizen from those who are less likely to politically participate? This study seeks to address this question with an eye to recent work (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011; Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014; Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2013) that theorizes on civic styles in the Internet age. Research has shown that online media use positively predicts political participation in a general sense (Boulianne, 2015), yet this finding might be refined or complicated by examining the particular and diverging ways in which people use the Internet. Certain styles of Internet use may correspond with diverging patterns of participation-predicting psychological variables.

Online Civic Styles

Bennett, Wells, and Freelon (2011) identify two civic styles: dutiful citizenship (DC) and actualizing citizenship (AC). The dutiful civic style is characterized by participation in organized groups like political parties, unions, civic groups, and (famously) social clubs such as bowling leagues (Putnam, 2000), as well as active information-seeking via news outlets and engagement with public life out of a sense of duty. Institutions are the bedrock of this citizenship model. The other style, actualizing citizenship, is characterized by a less institution-centric model of civic life. Actualizing citizenship deemphasizes organization-based and duty-motivated activities. It is thought to rest on a "looser" and more individual-centric model of political life. Actualizing citizens engage primarily with peer networks rather than institutional authorities, they share and

pool information amongst one another rather than locate it directly, and they emphasize self-expression over responsibility to the collective (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011). For example, it is a strong self-reported motive among online content creators (i.e., political bloggers) to enhance self-awareness and express self-identity to others through created content (Leung, 2009). This concern—to hone and express one's political identity among peers—is thought to be central to the actualizing style of citizenship. Where the dutiful civic style adopts a hierarchical, group-based political ontology, the actualizing civic style adopts one of "networked individualism" (Rainie & Wellman, 2012) in which citizens are nodes in non-tiered webs of individual-expressive political activity.

Certain theorists might refer to actualizing citizenship as wrapped up with a sort of "political hobbyism" (Hersh, 2017) because political activity under its dictates seems to emerge from a goal of individual gratification, the same motivation for engagement in hobbies such as rooting for a particular sports team. Hersh (2017) proposes this hobby-like political participation as separate and distinct from participation based on the motives of civic duty and rational self-interest. However, it seems that a more general and thoroughgoing label for such a civic style is indeed the notion of self-actualization. Hobbying, of course, not only gives people something to do with their spare time; it also (and perhaps more centrally) provides precisely those opportunities for individual identity-building and self-expression that are associated with the actualizing style of citizenship.

The Present Study

Although some work has already examined correlations between psychological variables and Web 1.0 versus Web 2.0 Internet use (Yamamoto & Kushin, 2013), not much research has specifically addressed political apathy and political efficacy together in the context of differing

styles of Internet use. There is also scant research employing the language offered by Bennett, Wells, and Freelon (2011) regarding civic styles, particularly insofar as these styles denote the online habits and preferences of users themselves, not the presentational layout and content of websites and online applications.

Given that Web 2.0 ostensibly builds on a non-hierarchical, networked model of organization, one might expect that citizens whose civic styles are primarily actualizing will feel more politically "at home" using the Internet of today than those who have primarily dutiful civic styles. Because of this matchup between the civic style and the medium, it might be expected that Internet-using *actualizing* citizens will be associated with higher levels of political efficacy and lower levels of political apathy than their Internet-using *dutiful* peers. As such, one might reasonably predict that a strong actualizing online civic style (AC) will more strongly predict high political efficacy and low political apathy than will a strong dutiful online civic style (DC). The present study sought to address this prediction. It was hypothesized that AC would more strongly than DC positively predict (1) IPE, (2) EPE, and (3) OPE, and more strongly than DC negatively predict (4) political apathy.

The goal of this study was ultimately to refine the ways in which we think about civic-mindedness, especially insofar as civic-mindedness channels through the Internet, and the relationship between civic-mindedness and the psychological criterion variables in question. Since political efficacy and political apathy are known to predict political participation, this research could help us in finding ways to increase political participation by appealing to the civic styles that most strongly predict active political engagement. Findings could be especially relevant to political campaigns, social organizations, and web designers that seek to mobilize citizens effectively and efficiently.

Method

Participants

Two-hundred and one adults were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online data collection service. All participants were required to be adults 18 years or older and living in the United States at the time of their participation. Demographic items were included in the survey to ensure that this was the case. MTurk was chosen as the data collection method in order to provide a sample that was representative of the U.S. population. This decision was informed by recent work that has indicated that MTurk provides samples that are more demographically diverse than typical samples drawn from American college students (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). The responses of 33 participants were discarded from data analysis. Of these 33 participants, 32 participants incorrectly answered an attention check item, suggesting that their data would be unreliable. The remaining one participant reported not being a U.S. citizen. Because this study specifically addresses ideas about citizenship, it was decided that analysis should be restricted to current U.S. citizens living in the United States. These exclusions resulted in a sample size of $N = 168$ (66 females; M age = 37.81, $SD = 11.54$). Each participant was compensated $0.25 through MTurk for their time and participation.

Materials

Online Civic Style. Previous research (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011) has analyzed online political content and web design in terms of DC versus AC citizenship models in presentation of civic-oriented content. It has been supported that civic-oriented websites that operate on dutiful precepts provide a qualitatively different set of resources than do those websites that operate on actualizing precepts or a mix of both presentational styles (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011). This is especially the case for youth-targeting websites. The present

study adopts the framework of Bennett, Wells, and Freelon (2011) but refocuses the concepts of DC and AC citizenship from web content analysis to psychological orientation, or the habits and preferences of Internet users themselves. There is an analogue in Yamamoto & Kushin (2013), which surveys Internet users about "Online expression" and "Attention to traditional Internet sources." However, the present study goes further by addressing differences between DC and AC civic styles along four different dimensions, provided by Bennett, Wells, and Freelon (2011). These are: (1) Knowledge, (2) Expression, (3) Joining Publics, and (4) Taking Action. Previous research has not applied the "online" qualification to the AC and DC civic styles and has more or less assumed that AC corresponds with online activity and DC with offline activity. This study departs from that notion for two reasons: (1) the Internet seems to offer plenty of opportunities for DC expression even in the era of Web 2.0 and is not an AC-only medium, and (2) examining both styles in an online context rather than imagining one as an online phenomenon and the other as an offline phenomenon controls for the possibility that Internet use itself (not differing civic styles) impacts the criterion variables. Participants responded to a questionnaire consisting of eight items, which were statements to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*Very slightly or not at all* to 5=*Extremely*) based on the degree to which participants agreed with the statements. Four of these statements endorsed the AC civic style and four endorsed the DC civic style. One question each centered on each of the following four dimensions: Knowledge, Expression, Joining Publics, and Taking Action. For example, statements endorsing the actualizing civic style included (1) "I use the internet to create political content (like blogs and videos) to be shared with my peers" (Expression) and (2) "I use the internet to keep in touch with groups and networks of my peers that have common political interests" (Joining Publics). Both of these statements imply an actualizing style of Internet use wherein creative activity and peer-to-peer

networks are valued. Statements endorsing the dutiful civic style included (1) "I use the internet to send direct messages (like emails) to news outlets and government officials" (Expression) and (2) "I use the internet to keep in touch with traditional, organized groups like political parties, unions, and civic clubs" (Joining Publics). Both of these statements imply a dutiful style of Internet use wherein organized group activity and one-way communication with authorities are valued. The four DC items and the four AC items were summed into two different additive indexes. The DC scale appears to be internally consistent, with an "acceptable" (George & Mallery, 2003) Cronbach's alpha score above .70 (M = 10, SD = 3.34, α = .74). The AC scale also appears internally consistent, with a "good" (George & Mallery, 2003) Cronbach's alpha score above .80 (M = 9.53, SD = 3.62, α = .81). When all eight items (both the AC and DC) were tested for reliability together, there was a Cronbach's alpha score of .88 (M = 19.51, SD = 6.58, α = .88). Since this value is higher than either of the Cronbach alpha scores for the DC and AC scales separately, there is cause for doubt as to whether the DC and AC scales measure analytically distinct constructs as this research proposes. This doubt is compounded by the fact that inter-item correlations between AC and DC items were all positive and significant except for one relationship between DC-Knowledge and AC-Expression. (See Table 1.)

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Internal Political Efficacy (IPE). Levels of IPE were assessed by a questionnaire consisting of four items, which were statements to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*Very slightly or not at all* to 5=*Extremely*) based on the degree to which participants agreed with the statements. These four statements addressed participants' self-perceived personal qualifications for participating in political activity. The statements were: (1) '"I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics," (2) "I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country," (3) "I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as

most other people," and (4) "I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most other people." All four statements come from the widely used measure employed by Craig et al. (1990). These items were summed into an additive index (M = 13.24, SD = 3.71, α = .86).

External Political Efficacy (EPE). As with IPE, levels of EPE were assessed by a questionnaire consisting of four items, which were statements to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*Very slightly or not at all* to 5=*Extremely*) based on the degree to which participants agreed with the statements. These four statements addressed levels of perceived receptivity of the government and political system to the influence of everyday citizens. The statements were: (1) "There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does," (2) "Voting is an effective way for people to have a say about what the government does," (3) "Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office," and (4) "Most public officials are truly interested in what people think." All four statements come the widely used measure employed by Craig et al. (1990). These items were summed into an additive index (M = 11.33, SD = 3.52, α = .80). IPE and EPE correlated positively but not significantly (r (166) = .14, p = .075). (See Table 2.)

Online Political Efficacy (OPE). Levels of OPE were assessed by a questionnaire consisting of four items, which were statements to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*Very slightly or not at all* to 5=*Extremely*) based on the degree to which participants agreed with the statements. These four statements addressed participants' self-perceived personal qualifications for participating in political activity while online (internal dimension) as well as their perceptions about government receptivity to citizens' online activity (external dimension). The statements were: (1) "By using the Internet, people like me can have more political power," (2) "By using the internet, people like me can have more of a say in what the government does," (3) "By using

the internet, people like me can better understand politics," and (4) "By using the internet, public officials will care more about what people like me think." All four statements come from Sasaki (2016). These items were summed into an additive index (M = 11.84, SD = 3.64, α = .84).

Attention Check. One attention check item was included to eliminate participants who may not have read the survey carefully. Since the study was conducted online and participants earned monetary compensation for their participation, there was a possibility that some participants may have chosen to click through the survey quickly without adequately paying attention to the content. This attention check item asked participants to identify the activities that they enjoyed from a list of activities. The item specified: "Even though you may enjoy many of these, select only cooking from all listed activities." Participants who failed this attention check were removed from the study before data analysis because this task required only the bare minimum of attention necessary to reliably fill out the questionnaires.

Political Apathy. Levels of political apathy were assessed by a questionnaire consisting of five items, which were statements to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*Strongly disagree* to 5=*Strongly Agree*) based on the degree to which participants agreed with the statements. These five statements addressed participants' levels of indifference or lack of interest in participating in political activities. The statements were: (1) "Registering to vote is a hassle," (2) "I don't care much about voting," (3) "Learning about elections takes too much time," (4) "Staying informed about politics and government is too much trouble," and (5) "Voting is a hassle." All five statements come from the widely used measure employed by Pinkleton & Austin (2004). These items were summed into an additive index (M = 9.24, SD = 3.70, α = .83).

Demographics. At the end of the survey, demographic information was collected to determine whether participants were eligible for inclusion in the study and for the purpose of

further analysis. Demographic items were presented at the end of the survey in order to avoid any effect on participants' answers elsewhere. Participants were asked to indicate if they were over the age of 18 and currently a citizen of the United States. These two questions were the participation criteria for the study. Every participant reported being at least 18 years of age but one participant reported not being a U.S. citizen. This participant was excluded from data analysis.

Procedure

The survey was programmed into SurveyMonkey, an online survey development service, and listed on Amazon MTurk under the title "Civic Styles and Political Psychology." Prior to the study, participants read a research participation consent form that outlined the purpose of the research, what they would be asked to do, and the amount that they would be compensated for their time and participation. Participants were informed that their involvement in the study would be entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time after beginning the survey. Individuals who did not consent were automatically redirected to a debriefing page and their data was removed before analysis. Individuals who consented were directed to the survey and first completed the researcher-designed online civic style scale adapted from Bennett, Wells, & Freelon (2011), followed by the IPE scale (Craig et al., 1990), the EPE scale (Craig et al., 1990), the OPE scale (Sasaki, 2016), an attention check item, the political apathy scale (Pinkleton & Austin, 2004), and then demographic items. Within each scale, individual questions were presented in random order to control for order effects. In order to maintain anonymity of participants, no identifying information was collected. Participants' responses were identifiable only by the randomly generated MTurk worker code that they were assigned. After completing

the survey, participants were debriefed and fully informed of the purpose of the study. The study took participants approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Design

Bivariate correlations were calculated among all variables. In order to test the research hypothesis, four regression models were constructed to predict internal political efficacy (IPE), external political efficacy (EPE), online political efficacy (OPE), and political apathy based on actualizing citizenship (AC) and dutiful citizenship (DC).

Results

Table 2 presents bivariate correlations between all selected variables. IPE and EPE correlated positively but not significantly (r (166) = .14, p = .075). OPE correlated positively and significantly with both IPE (r (166) = .17, p = .027) and EPE (r (166) = .47, p = .000). Political apathy correlated negatively and significantly with IPE (r (166) = -.24, p = .001), EPE (r (166) = -.36, p = .000), and OPE (r (166) = -.16, p = .043). AC and DC were highly positively correlated (r (166) = .79, p = .000). AC positively correlated with IPE (r (166) = .21, p = .006), EPE (r (166) = .25, p = .001), and OPE (r (166) = .38, p = .000) but did not significantly correlate with political apathy (r (166) = -.03, p = .684). DC positively correlated with IPE (r (166) = .30, p = .000), EPE (r (166) = .35, p = .000), and OPE (r (166) = .39, p = .000) but did not significantly correlate with political apathy (r (166) = -.05, p = .516).

Table 3 presents separate regression models for IPE, EPE, OPE, and political apathy as outcome variables. Each of these were simultaneously regressed on AC, DC, age, gender, and time spent on social media as predictor variables. The first column in Table 3 indicates that DC (β = .27, p = .021), age (β = .24, p = .002), and gender (β = -.22, p = .003) were significant predictors of IPE. A significant regression equation was found (F(5,162) = 9.01, p = .000) with

an R^2 of .22. All predictor variables taken together explained 21.8% of the variance in IPE. The research hypothesis predicted that AC would be a stronger predictor than DC of IPE. This hypothesis was not supported, as DC (β = .27, p = .021) more strongly predicted IPE than did AC (β = .07, p = .567) when predictor variable overlap was controlled for.

The second column indicates that DC (β = .34, p = .006) and age (β = .17, p = .028) were significant predictors of EPE. A significant regression equation was found (F(5,162) = 6.59, p = .000) with an R^2 of .17. All predictor variables taken together explained 16.9% of the variance in EPE. The research hypothesis predicted that AC would be a stronger predictor than DC of EPE. This hypothesis was not supported, as DC (β = .34, p = .006) more strongly predicted EPE than did AC (β = .04, p = .756) when predictor variable overlap was controlled for.

The third column indicates that none of the tested predictor variables was a significant predictor of OPE. A significant regression equation was found (F(5,162) = 6.43, p = .000) with an R^2 of .17. All predictor variables taken together explained 16.6% of the variance in OPE. The research hypothesis predicted that AC would be a stronger predictor than DC of OPE. This hypothesis was not supported, as DC (β = .23, p = .060) more strongly predicted OPE than did AC (β = .20, p = .097) when predictor variable overlap was controlled for.

The fourth column indicates that age (β = -.22, p = .006), gender (β = -.18, p = .023), and time typically spent on social media (β = .19, p = .014) were significant predictors of political apathy. A significant regression equation was found (F(5,162) = 4.14, p = .001) with an R^2 of .11. All predictor variables taken together explained 11.3% of the variance in political apathy. The research hypothesis predicted that AC would be a stronger predictor than DC of political apathy. This hypothesis was not supported, as DC (β = -.13, p = .292) more strongly predicted

political apathy than did AC ($\beta = -.02$, $p = .856$) when predictor variable overlap was controlled for.

Discussion

We find ourselves in an era of rapid technological acceleration and drastic changes in the ways in which people interact with the media, government institutions, and one another. At the same time, we are witnessing disruptions of certain civic and political patterns on which older generations could rely. In the face of such change, few could doubt the continued importance of a general civic-mindedness for the preservation and success of our democratic order. There is serious cause for worry if one finds any truth in the pronouncements of scholars like Habermas (1989), Murray (2012), Postman (1986), and Putnam (2000), each of whom identifies a trend among citizens toward neglecting the public sphere and our shared collective responsibility in favor of more limited zones of concern. The Internet is still a new frontier, and one whose intrinsically social character will likely both map and shape the future development of sociopolitical organization generally. Therefore, consideration of the ways in which citizens interact civically via the Internet will likely prove fruitful. This is so with regard to thinking about the future of our political world and, on a somewhat more practical level, also with regard to influencing, mobilizing, and communicating with our fellow citizens online.

This study sought to examine the relationships between two proposed online civic styles, namely actualizing citizenship (AC) and dutiful citizenship (DC), and four political psychological variables that are known to predict political activity: internal political efficacy (IPE), external political efficacy (EPE), online political efficacy (OPE), and political apathy. In particular, it was hypothesized that AC would more strongly than DC positively predict IPE, EPE, and OPE, and more strongly than DC negatively predict political apathy. Both AC and DC

did in fact positively predict IPE, EPE, and OPE. However, neither AC nor DC significantly predicted political apathy. Counter to the research hypothesis, DC was a stronger predictor than AC with regard to all four criterion variables: IPE, EPE, OPE, and political apathy. When regression analysis was performed to control for predictor variable overlap, DC proved a much stronger predictor of IPE and of EPE and a marginally stronger predictor of OPE and (negatively) of political apathy.

Though recent work (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011; Rainie & Wellman, 2012) has suggested that a self-actualizing politics and civic life predicated on a social ontology of "networked individualism" (Rainie & Wellman, 2012) would offer as many or more opportunities to nurture a sense of efficacy as would more traditional, more duty-based, and less individual-expressive models of civic action, this study's findings imply the opposite. AC was associated with lower political efficacy across the board.

Perhaps citizens turn to AC specifically when traditional DC behavior is understood as ineffectual or wrong-headed, an explanation offered by Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2014). This might explain why AC is associated with lower political efficacy than DC is. However, that explanation is rendered less plausible by the finding that AC was associated with higher levels of EPE than levels of IPE. Since DC is predicated on a certain degree of deference to external institutions, it is unlikely that this pattern would emerge if it were simply the case that a subset of citizens were abandoning DC for the less institution-centric AC after having discerned an unresponsiveness on the part of institutions. Granted, DC was associated with higher levels of EPE than was AC, which might lend some credence to this anti-institution explanation, except that DC was also associated with higher levels of both IPE and OPE. This runs counter to previous conceptualizations (Shehata, Ekström, & Olsson, 2016) that have connected AC with a

pattern of high IPE and low EPE, and DC with the opposite pattern of low IPE and high EPE. The present study indicates that actualizing citizens are simply less efficacious than dutiful citizens overall rather than efficacious in different ways or in different settings. Findings also suggest that the two styles probably substantially overlap in individual citizens and that the AC-DC model is more useful as a conceptual distinction than as a typology.

It has been supposed that AC is just another way by which citizens may exercise their civic potential with an equal degree of efficacy as what could be expected from traditional brands of citizenship. This study points to a different explanation: that AC might be in some sense a "lower" type of civic style. The data support at least two possible explanations: that AC inspires a lower sense of political efficacy than DC does, and that AC is the last resort of citizens who already have relatively low political efficacy. Of course, as time progresses and as the Internet develops, these patterns may change. One can imagine, for instance, that the sociopolitical system might restructure itself in certain ways in order to adapt to new civic styles and social technologies. If such changes occur, then actualizing citizens might begin to regard themselves as more in sync with the political system and will perhaps grow more politically efficacious. One can imagine, too, that as society moves further into the digital age, the degree of overlap between AC and DC styles might decrease and citizens could find themselves squarely in separate camps with regard to civic styles rather than manifesting traits of both styles simultaneously, as this study and others (Shehata, Ekström, & Olsson, 2016) suggest is currently the case.

In an abstract sense, there may be some cause for worry if self-actualization reigns over duty as a civic motivator. Worries may be similar to those often associated with the notions of "lifestyle politics" (Bennett, 2013), "identity politics" (Chua, 2018), and "political hobbyism"

(Hersh, 2017), concepts that all circle around the practice of placing too high a premium on virtue-signalling and self-expression to the detriment of large-scale political action within a broad civic culture. If duty toward the whole collective declines as a motivator, then we might expect to see more selfish behavior, more virtue-signalling and posturing, and less self-sacrifice for the benefit of strangers, not just peers. On the other hand, if the only motivation for political action is duty and citizens do not perceive any opportunities for self-actualization, then one should probably expect to see low participation and a less robust democracy. Self-actualization seems to be a legitimate and compelling motivator generally. A politics robbed of opportunities for ordinary citizens' self-actualization risks alienating and disaffecting the electorate. Though DC proved stronger than AC as a predictor, it should be noted that both civic styles correlated positively with political efficacy. Both styles are probably beneficial, individually and societally, given a proper balance.

Limitations and Future Directions

Because AC and DC were found to correlate strongly and because the internal consistency of AC items plus DC items was found to be higher than the internal consistency of either scale taken separately, there is a strong possibility that the scales supposing to measure AC and DC measured the same construct. Future research could work toward deciphering whether AC and DC are empirically independent phenomena. Since AC has been conceptually associated with relatively young cohorts (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011; Bennett, Wells, & Rank, 2009), or the so-called "online generation," future research might examine the specific ways in which age interacts with civic styles to predict psychological variables and political participation. The present study shows that both styles of citizenship are negatively correlated with age, indicating that younger cohorts are more likely than their elders to embrace both forms of online

citizenship. However, it is worth noting that the negative correlation is weaker for DC (r (166) = -.15, p = .046) than for AC (r (166) = -.23, p = .003). This suggests that AC is indeed a more fundamentally youth-centric style than is DC, even as both variables as conceptualized in this study are "online" styles and might reasonably be expected to appeal to an "online generation." Future studies might also examine relationships between online civic styles and other variables such as political cynicism, political ideology and partisanship, personality variables, moral foundations (Haidt, 2012), and social trust. Since this study's AC and DC scales surveyed participants about their online behavior only, and not their motivations, future research could ask Internet users about the reasons they interact politically via the Internet and the rewards that they perceive themselves as receiving from doing so. Leung (2009) might serve as an example of how to ask about Internet motivation and gratification. Relationships between online civic styles and political participation such as voting could be examined as well.

Generalizability of this study's findings is reduced by the nature of the sample, which was recruited from the Internet via Amazon MTurk and might accordingly contain a large proportion of Internet-friendly and Internet-savvy people relative to the population at large. Future research might mitigate this possible confounding variable by recruiting participants by other means. In addition, all participants were residents and citizens of the United States. The patterns observed likely differ in other parts of the world, especially in nations in which political and civic rights, Internet access, and online expression are suppressed or otherwise less available than they are in the United States.

Because of the correlational design of this study, one has no way of determining directions of causality from the data. It may very well be the case that having high political efficacy in the first place causes one to adopt more DC characteristics than AC ones, just as it

may be the case that having more DC characteristics in the first place causes one to have high political efficacy whereas having a primarily AC style inspires relatively less political efficacy. Alternatively, some third variable might have caused the observed correlations. Going forward, experimental research designs might shed light on these questions of causality.

Conclusions

This study put the notions of actualizing and dutiful citizenship to empirical examination. When both concepts were considered insofar as they manifest online, the data suggests that a significant degree of overlap exists, that online *dutiful* citizens are likely to be online *actualizing* citizens, too. However, the dutiful online civic style seems to be the stronger predictor of political efficacy in spite of the online actualizing style's more network-centric features. Neither style seems a strong predictor of political apathy. This research goes some way toward updating our notions of citizenship in the wake of the ever-advancing Internet age. In the interest of promoting good citizenship and a healthy political system, future research will benefit from imagining the ways in which changing technology and structures of social interaction impact civic-mindedness and civic behavior among the electorate.

Commented [6]: I felt bad having waited to finish reading your comp until this late in the weekend... and yet, I knew if I could put anyone's off this long, it would be yours. And I was right: This is an exceptionally well-written comp that has paid attention to structure, APA-style, breadth, and depth. And, this was ALL done independently - not all of the analyses you ran were taught in 207 (I believe) and you interpreted and reported them beautifully. In many ways, this is more like a Master's than a Bachelor's thesis, but that just means you will hit the ground running when you return from PC and decide to go to graduate school.

All of that said... if you have it in you (and find the time), add a short Conclusions paragraph here... can really be 2-3 sentences only, just to leave the reader with a broader take-away message. Remember, the paper is like an hour-glass, it opens wide and ends wide.

Looking forward to your comp oral! Very solid work!

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Table 1

Inter-item correlations between online civic style items (Pearson's r)

Item	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. DC – Joining Publics	--							
2. DC – Knowledge	.23**	--						
3. DC – Taking Action	.68**	.26**	--					
4. DC – Expression	.58**	.19*	.56**	--				
5. AC – Joining Publics	.59**	.34**	.61**	.47**	--			
6. AC – Knowledge	.45**	.40**	.44**	.26**	.66**	--		
7. AC – Taking Action	.71**	.25**	.77**	.59**	.69**	.50**	--	
8. AC – Expression	.49**	.05	.59**	.55**	.42**	.23**	.54**	--

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01

Commented [7]: a BEAUTIFUL table!!! :)

Table 2

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all variables (Pearson's r)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. AC	9.53	3.62	--								
2. DC	10	3.34	.79**	--							
3. IPE	13.24	3.71	.21**	.30**	--						
4. EPE	11.33	3.52	.25**	.35**	.14	--					
5. OPE	11.84	3.64	.38**	.39**	.17*	.47**	--				
6. Apathy	9.24	3.70	-.03	-.05	-.24**	-.36**	-.16*	--			
7. Age	37.81	11.54	-.23**	-.15*	.22**	.13	-.05	-.22**	--		
8. Sex (female)	--	--	.01	-.12	-.29**	-.18*	-.06	-.11	-.12	--	
9. Social media	2.20	1.26	.24**	.22**	.07	-.01	.10	.19*	-.25**	.10	--

Note. *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$

Table 3
Regression models predicting IPE, EPE, OPE, and political apathy

Variable	IPE β	EPE β	OPE β	Apathy β
AC	.07	.04	.20	-.02
DC	.27*	.34**	.23	-.13
Age	.24**	.17*	.03	-.22**
Sex (female)	-.22**	-.11	-.03	-.18*
Time spent on social media	-.07	-.05	.01	.19*
R^2	.22***	.17***	.17***	.11**

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Appendix

Informed Consent

Please carefully read all of the following before moving on.

Purpose of research: The purpose of this study is to examine relationships between online civic styles and the political psychological variables of political apathy and political efficacy.

Procedure: You will be asked to respond to several questionnaires. It should take you approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Risks to Individual: There will be no risk other than what is normally experienced in everyday life.

Compensation: You will receive $0.25 through MTurk in compensation for your time and assistance after a review of the completeness of your data. We reserve the right not to issue payment for surveys that were begun, but not finished.

Confidentiality: Your name will never be associated with the data you provide and will be completely confidential. The researcher is interested in patterns in the data as a whole as opposed to individual scores. Any reports made based on the data will focus solely on these general patterns. When the data you provide today is no longer needed, it will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: You do NOT have to participate in this study. Furthermore, upon beginning the study, you may choose to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. You may skip any individual questions that you do not wish to answer, and you may choose not to participate in any part of the study without being questioned.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Nathan Coffman at coffmann@allegheny.edu or the research advisor, Dr. Lydia E. Jackson at ljackson2@allegheny.edu or at (814) 332-5955. If you have questions about the treatment of research participants, you can contact Dr. Ryan VanHorn, Chair of the Allegheny Institutional Review Board (IRB) at rvanhorn@allegheny.edu.

I understand that by clicking "I consent" below I indicate that I am at least 18 years of age at the time of my participation in this study, and that I have carefully read and understood the information on this form and all of my questions this far have been answered. I hereby agree to participate in this study.

- I consent [In this case the participant was sent to the next screen to complete the questionnaires below.]
- I do not consent [In this case the participant was sent to a screen telling them that they could close the browser window.]

Researcher-Designed Online Civic Style Questionnaire – Adapted from Bennett, Wells, and Freelon (2011)

Bennet, W. L., Wells, C., & Freelon, D. (2011). Communicating civic engagement: Contrasting models of citizenship in the youth web sphere. *Journal of Communication*, *61*, 835-856.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

Scale: 1 (Very slightly or not at all) 2 (A little) 3 (Moderately) 4 (Quite a bit) 5 (Extremely)

[Statements were presented in a random order for each participant.]

1. I use the internet to get political information from news outlets and government officials. [DC – Knowledge]
2. I use the internet to send direct messages (like emails) to news outlets and government officials. [DC – Expression]
3. I use the internet to keep in touch with traditional, organized groups like political parties, unions, and civic clubs. [DC – Joining Publics]
4. I use the internet to get involved with political activities that are defined and managed by traditional organized groups. [DC – Taking Action]
5. I use the internet to get political information shared by my peers. [AC – Knowledge]
6. I use the internet to create political content (like blogs and videos) to share with my peers. [AC – Expression]
7. I use the internet to keep in touch with groups and networks of my peers that have common political interests. [AC – Joining Publics]
8. I use the internet to get involved with political activities that are generated and endorsed by groups of my peers. [AC – Taking Action]

Internal Political Efficacy (IPE) Questionnaire

Craig S. C., Niemi R. G., & Silver G. E. (1990). Political efficacy and trust: A report on the NES pilot study items. *Political Behavior, 12*, 289-314.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

Scale: 1 (Very slightly or not at all) 2 (A little) 3 (Moderately) 4 (Quite a bit) 5 (Extremely)

[Statements were presented in a random order for each participant.]

1. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.
2. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
3. I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.
4. I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.

External Political Efficacy (EPE) Questionnaire

Craig S. C., Niemi R. G., & Silver G. E. (1990). Political efficacy and trust: A report on the NES pilot study items. *Political Behavior, 12*, 289-314.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

Scale: 1 (Very slightly or not at all) 2 (A little) 3 (Moderately) 4 (Quite a bit) 5 (Extremely)

[Statements were presented in a random order for each participant.]

1. There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.
2. Voting is an effective way for people to have a say about what the government does.
3. Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.
4. Most public officials are truly interested in what people think.

Online Political Efficacy (OPE) Questionnaire

Sasaki, F. (2016). Online political efficacy (OPE) as a reliable survey measure of political empowerment when using the Internet. *Policy & Internet, 8*, 197-214.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

Scale: 1 (Very slightly or not at all) 2 (A little) 3 (Moderately) 4 (Quite a bit) 5 (Extremely)

[Statements were presented in a random order for each participant.]

1. By using the internet, people like me can have more political power.
2. By using the internet, people like me can have more say in what the government does.
3. By using the internet, people like me can better understand politics.
4. By using the internet, public officials will care more about what people like me think.

Attention Check

Below is a list of activities that people might enjoy on a daily basis. Please carefully read through this list. Which ones do you enjoy?

Even though you may enjoy many of these, select only cooking from all listed activities.

- Reading
- Walking
- Exercising
- Cleaning
- Talking on the phone
- Spending time on social media
- Watching TV
- Shopping
- Cooking
- Being with friends
- Spending time with family
- Driving
- Biking
- Sleeping

Political Apathy Questionnaire

Pinkleton, B. E., & Austin, E. W. (2004). Media perceptions and public affairs apathy in the politically inexperienced. *Mass Communication and Society*, *7*, 319-337.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neither agree nor disagree) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly agree)

[Statements were presented in a random order for each participant.]

1. Registering to vote is a hassle.
2. I don't care much about voting.
3. Learning about elections takes too much time.
4. Staying informed about government and politics is too much trouble.
5. Voting is a hassle.

Demographic Questions

Please answer the following questions.

1. What is your age? (in years)
2. Are you currently a citizen of the United States? Yes No
3. What is your gender? Female Male Wish to not disclose
4. What is your ethnicity? White Black or African American American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Indian Chinese Filipino Japanese Korean Vietnamese Native Hawaiian Guamanian or Chamorro Samoan Other
5. Are you registered to vote in your state? Yes No
6. Did you vote in the last election for which you were eligible? Yes No
7. What level of education have you received? Did not complete High School High School/GED Some College Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Advanced Graduate Work or Ph.D
8. Approximately how much time do you typically spend on social media per day? < 1 hour 1-2 hours 2-3 hours 3-4 hours 4-5 hours 5+ hours

Debriefing

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Purpose of Research: The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between online civic styles and the political psychological variables of political apathy and political efficacy. These variables have been linked to political participation. The findings could be useful to citizens seeking to understand how civic styles and psychological variables interact in ways conducive to political engagement. It could also be useful to political campaigns and web designers who seek to appeal to people in the most effective ways by appealing to civic styles that correspond with political participation.

Compensation: You will receive $0.25 through MTurk in compensation for your time and assistance.

Confidentiality: Your name will never be associated with the data you provide and will be completely confidential. The researcher is interested in patterns in the data as a whole as opposed to individual scores. Any reports based on the data will focus solely on these general patterns. When the data you provide today is no longer needed, it will be destroyed.

To Learn More: For further information on this topic, please consult the following sources:

Bennett, W. L., Wells, C., & Freelon, D. (2011). Communicating civic engagement: Contrasting models of citizenship in the youth web sphere. *Journal of Communication, 61,* 835-856.

Boulianne, S. (2015). Social media use and participation: A meta-analysis of current research. *Information, Communication & Society, 18,* 524-538.

Newton, K. (1999). Mass media effects: Mobilization or media malaise? *British Journal of Political Science, 29,* 577-599.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this research project, please consult the information below:

Experimenter: Nathan Coffman E-mail: coffmann@allegheny.edu
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lydia Eckstein E-mail: ljackson2@allegheny.edu
IRB Committee Chair: Dr. Ryan VanHorn E-mail rvanhorn@allegheny.edu

If you would like a copy of the results of this research study, you may e-mail the experimenter, Nathan Coffman, at coffmann@allegheny.edu