
Erik Bucy
College of Media and Communication
Texas Tech University

Jacob Groshek
College of Communication
Boston University

AAPOR
Annual Conference
May 2014

MEDIA PARTICIPATION: CONCEPTS

- Bucy and Gregson (2001; see also Bucy, 2005; Bucy, D'Angelo, & Newhagen, 1999) refer to the broad range of civic and political actions that can take place online, over the airwaves and through exposure to political messages

- actions which invite involvement—as *media participation*.

- For a substantial portion of the electorate, media participant *is* political participation.

MEDIA PARTICIPATION: EXAMPLES

- Actions include a civic or political purpose, but are not limited to:
  - direct leader/legislator contact,
  - public opinion formation,
  - participating in civic discussions,
  - mediated interactions political actors,
  - donating to political causes,
  - and joining mobilizing efforts

- Each of these examples may contribute to the psychological feeling of being engaged with and more positively disposed towards the political system.

MEDIA PARTICIPATION HYPOTHESIS

- Increased engagement with civically relevant interactive media will have salutary attitudinal (and behavioral) effects over time.

- “As political involvement becomes increasingly reliant on new media formats and technologies, intensive use of interactive public affairs media will produce a heightened sense of system satisfaction and political efficacy, a trend that should manifest itself longitudinally as mass media become more interactive in nature” (Bucy, 2005, p. 110)

- This general idea that has found considerable support in recent years but mostly in piecemeal fashion (Boulianne, 2009; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003; Xenos & Moy, 2007; Weber, Loumakis & Bergman, 2003).
MEDIA PARTICIPATION: HERE

- Missing from this growing body of evidence is longitudinal analysis that empirically assesses the effects of media participation from the earliest days of interactive media to the present.
- To accomplish this, we analyze American National Election Studies (ANES) data from 1992 to 2012 for different forms of participatory media and their relationship to
  - political efficacy
  - campaign participation
  - trust in government

HYPOTHESES

- **H1:** The use of participatory media formats by voting age citizens should increase with each passing election cycle from 1992 to 2012.
- **H2:** The increased use of participatory media across elections over time will be positively related to increased
  - political efficacy,
  - campaign participation, and
  - trust in government

HYPOTHESIS

- **H3:** All else equal, increased participatory media use across elections will be positively associated with higher levels of
  - political efficacy
  - campaign participation, and
  - trust in government

DATA SUMMARY

- American NES dataset for the years
  - 1992 (N = 2,485)
  - 1996 (N = 1,714)
  - 2000 (N = 1,807)
  - 2004 (N = 1,212)
  - 2008 (N = 2,322)
  - 2012 (N = 5,914)
  - total sample size = 9,540 respondents
- Using the common standard applied by AAPOR, the response rates were
  - 74.0% in 1992
  - 59.8% in 1996
  - 60.5% in 2000
  - 66.1% in 2004
  - 63.7% in 2008
  - 38.0% in 2012 (lowest ever)
METHOD:
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Participatory media use included
  - listening to political talk radio shows
  - accessing political information online
- Nonparticipatory media use included
  - reading newspapers
  - watching television news
- In constructing these variables, binary exposure conditions were added to create indexes of participatory and nonparticipatory media use levels.

METHOD:
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Political efficacy: Measured on a 0 to 100 scale that is derived by ANES. Has a mean of 42.71 across all years (SD = 39.13).
  - 1992: M = 51.57 (SD = 40.27)
  - 1996: M = 38.30 (SD = 37.53)
  - 2000: M = 48.16 (SD = 40.37)
  - 2004: M = 47.56 (SD = 39.82)
  - 2008: M = 37.97 (SD = 37.83)
  - 2012: M = 35.10 (SD = 36.49)
- Composed from the two variables
  - “Do government officials care what people like the respondent think”
  - “Do people like the respondent have any say in what the government does?”

METHOD:
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Campaign Participation:
  - Measured on a 0 to 5 scale. Overall mean of 0.75 (SD = 1.02).
    - 1992: M = 0.68 (SD = 0.97)
    - 1996: M = 0.57 (SD = 0.93)
    - 2000: M = 0.63 (SD = 0.91)
    - 2004: M = 0.94 (SD = 1.07)
    - 2008: M = 0.88 (SD = 1.12)
    - 2012: M = 0.78 (SD = 1.04)
- Items included
  - 1) Attempting to influence others during the campaign,
  - 2) Attending political meetings or rallies,
  - 3) Working for a party or candidate,
  - 4) Displaying candidate buttons or stickers, and
  - 5) Donating money to a party or a candidate during the campaign.
METHOD: DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Trust in government: On the 100-point ANES scale. (overall mean = 28.86, SD = 22.11)
  - 1992 M = 28.48 (SD = 20.89)
  - 1996 M = 31.55 (SD = 28.48)
  - 2000 M = 35.98 (SD = 22.69)
  - 2004 M = 36.84 (SD = 22.14)
  - 2008 M = 26.34 (SD = 23.71)
  - 2012 M = 22.35 (SD = 19.17)

- The items composing the trust
  - 1) Trust in the federal government to do the right thing,
  - 2) The federal government is run by few interests or for the benefit of all,
  - 3) Perceived amount of wasted tax money, and
  - 4) How many government officials are thought of as crooked.

METHOD: CONTROL VARIABLES

- age (M = 7.11 [approximately aged 45-49], SD = 3.37),
- gender (53.9% female),
- education (M = 2.78 [high school graduate or equivalent], SD = 0.93),
- political party affiliation (47.2% Democrat, 31.2% Republican)
- voting (67.7% reported having voted).
- strength of partisanship (M = 2.53 [4-point scale], SD = 1.05)

FINDINGS: H1

- H1: The use of participatory media by voting age citizens should increase over time, as new media become increasingly available with each passing election cycle.

  - This hypothesis was supported.
  - Using multiple forms of interactive media (talk radio and the Internet for political information), however, seems to be reaching a point of limited growth.

- Means levels of interactive media use reported by citizens for political / campaign purposes (means on 1-8 scale)
  - 2.76 in 1992
  - 3.15 in 1996
  - 3.70 in 2000
  - 4.55 in 2004
  - 4.65 in 2008
  - 4.67 in 2012

  - ANOVA was statistically significant over time (F(5, 13227) = 290.19, p < .001)
H2: The increased use of participatory media across elections will be positively and more strongly related to system-level outcomes than use of traditional media alone:

- a) political efficacy: supported
- b) campaign participation: supported
- c) trust in government: not supported

Here, a factorial analysis of variance examined the impact of two independent variables (year and media use) on the dependent variable of interest.
HYPOTHESIS 3

- H3: All else equal, increased participatory media use will be positively associated with higher levels of political efficacy.
- a) political efficacy: supported
- b) perceived government responsiveness: supported
- c) trust in government across elections: not supported

Table 1: Fixed Effects Regression of Variables Predicting Political (System) Efficacy

| efficacy_external | Coef.  | Std. Err. | t     | P>|t| |
|-------------------|--------|-----------|-------|-----|
| blended_media     | 0.078051 | 0.196173  | 4.24  | 0.000 |
| education         | 7.787921 | 0.493176  | 15.80 | 0.000 |
| age               | -0.137423 | 0.126474  | -0.90  | 0.369 |
| genderdumy        | 0.0019679 | 0.0003079 | 6.39  | 0.000 |
| vote_dummy        | 2.326348 | 1.479437  | 1.57  | 0.116 |
| democrat          | 0.58186  | 1.915819  | 1.04  | 0.297 |
| republican        | -1.395805 | 0.139574  | 28.17 | 0.000 |
| campaign participation | 2.605004 | 0.4194526 | 6.39  | 0.000 |
| party_id_partisanship | 1.787142 | 0.498287  | 3.56  | 0.000 |
| y2012            | 17.06756 | 1.282935  | 13.80 | 0.000 |
| y2000            | 7.255278 | 1.385583  | 5.24  | 0.000 |
| y2004            | 3.794662 | 1.594852  | 2.49  | 0.013 |
| y2008            | 2.618241 | 1.594522  | 1.68  | 0.091 |
| _cons            | -1.692792 | 1.543353  | -1.09 | 0.276 |
|                   | -15.23972 | 2.438833  | -6.25 | 0.000 |

Note: Coefficients reported are unstandardized and were derived with fixed effects operators for time. 1996 was dropped to avoid perfect collinearity in time.

Adjusted R^2 = 0.18 | N = 7717 | p < .05

Table 2: Fixed Effects Regression of Variables Predicting Campaign Participation

| campaign participan | Coef.  | Std. Err. | t     | P>|t| |
|---------------------|--------|-----------|-------|-----|
| blended_media       | 0.074836 | 0.0051063 | 14.00 | 0.000 |
| education           | 0.089944 | 0.013534  | 6.64  | 0.000 |
| age                 | -0.005157 | 0.034265  | 1.50  | 0.133 |
| genderdumy          | 0.075289 | 0.0223737 | 3.36  | 0.001 |
| vote_dummy          | -0.322501 | 0.315541  | 10.23 | 0.000 |
| democrat            | 0.058163 | 0.0000668 | 1.45  | 0.147 |
| republican          | -0.075363 | 0.011299  | 1.33  | 0.047 |
| trust_index         | -0.001878 | 0.0005447 | -3.47 | 0.001 |
| efficacy_external   | 0.0019679 | 0.0003079 | 6.39  | 0.000 |
| party_id_partisanship | -0.078777 | 0.034392  | 2.22  | 0.047 |
| y1992               | 14.46256 | 0.351623  | 4.16  | 0.000 |
| y2000               | -0.007938 | 0.0376096 | -0.21 | 0.833 |
| y2004               | 2.248627 | 0.435345  | 5.21  | 0.000 |
| y2008               | 2.306942 | 0.432767  | 5.49  | 0.000 |
| y2012               | 2.069487 | 0.417539  | 4.96  | 0.000 |
| _cons               | -0.620889 | 0.058702  | -9.42 | 0.000 |

Note: Coefficients reported are unstandardized and were derived with fixed effects operators for time. 1996 was dropped to avoid perfect collinearity in time.

Adjusted R^2 = 0.12 | N = 7717 | p < .05

Table 3: Fixed Effects Regression of Variables Predicting Trust in Government

| trust_index         | Coef.  | Std. Err. | t     | P>|t| |
|---------------------|--------|-----------|-------|-----|
| blended_media       | -0.1135642 | 0.1080776 | -1.05 | 0.293 |
| education           | -0.670079 | 0.2836144 | -2.36 | 0.018 |
| age                 | -0.1569483 | 0.0716125 | -2.21 | 0.028 |
| genderdumy          | -0.3405563 | 0.0769599 | -4.45 | 0.000 |
| vote_dummy          | -0.098313 | 0.0663021 | -1.54 | 0.126 |
| democrat            | 2.353077 | 0.875439  | 2.77  | 0.006 |
| republican          | -0.1297313 | 0.0599339 | -2.15 | 0.032 |
| efficiency_external | 0.0308283 | 0.0061452 | 28.17 | 0.000 |
| campaign participation | -0.8248396 | 0.2390082 | -3.47 | 0.001 |
| party_id_partisanship | 0.629199 | 0.2832252 | 2.22  | 0.026 |
| y1992               | -6.252711 | 0.7323596 | -8.38 | 0.000 |
| y2000               | 3.160647 | 0.785439  | 4.02  | 0.000 |
| y2004               | 4.466835 | 0.9022411 | 4.98  | 0.000 |
| y2008               | -0.582935 | 0.100088 | -5.80 | 0.000 |
| y2012               | -0.821891 | 0.696504  | -1.19 | 0.236 |
| _cons               | 27.50112 | 1.348847  | 20.39 | 0.000 |

Note: Coefficients reported are unstandardized and were derived with fixed effects operators for time. 1996 was dropped to avoid perfect collinearity in time.

Adjusted R^2 = 0.16 | N = 7717 | p < .05
**YEAR BY YEAR SUMMARY**

- Additional analyses included running regression models for each year for each dependent variable.
- Significant relationships are indicated in this table by “Y”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>efficacy</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>campaign participation</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trust</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>(neg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Even when controlling for a host of germane variables, media participation stood as a significant, positive predictor in most elections.
- Expect for trust, which was significant and negative only in 2008.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Altogether, this study found meaningful support for most aspects of the media participation hypothesis.
- Good reason to believe that increased media participation will integrate more thoroughly with previously nonparticipatory media modes.
- Images from flickr or tweets appearing on cable news coverage are the standard.
- This has generally positive implications for democratic system satisfaction and increased efficacy, based on previous elections from 1992 to 2012.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- It remains to be determined, however, how media participation trends will relate in other, critical arenas such as
  - political cynicism
  - media trust and cynicism
  - voting behaviors
- Distinctions between participatory and nonparticipatory media formats are diminishing and the ecology of media is increasingly becoming a lifestyle rather than separated activity.
- With the proliferation of participatory media, there is thus considerable reason for optimism but also, as the results from this study demonstrated, important limitations that must be considered.

- Evidence presented here suggests that each election has its own unique dynamics.
- With that, increased media participation was related in all years to higher levels of efficacy and campaign participation.
- These results held in all years in regression models for campaign participation and in all by two elections (1992 and 2012) for efficacy.