International Journal of Internet Science

Being Early on the Curve:
Online Practices and Expressive Political Participation

Eulàlia Puig-i-Abril, Hernando Rojas

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Life Sciences Communication

Abstract: This study examines the effects of online information seeking and social interactions in the context of early Internet adopters in Bogotá, Colombia. Data analyses of a stratified sample survey conducted in 2004 provide evidence that online news media use and online social interactions affect online political engagement. In this data there is a clear positive relationship between online information seeking, social interactions, and expressive political participation; a relationship that is particularly encouraging for societies experiencing political conflict, and in which offline political expression can be limited; yet the online domain could offer an alternative. The positive effects of the online practices on political engagement are limited to the online domain and do not (yet) spill over to the offline domain. Plausible explanations of this discrepancy between the online and the offline realms, as well as some of the antecedents of the online practices, are discussed.

Keywords: Expressive political participation, online social interactions, online news, Colombia

Introduction

While a majority of the population now has Internet access in countries such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom, the situation is quite different in other parts of the world where penetration rates are much lower. Worldwide, it is estimated that only 16% of the population is online (International Telecommunication Union, 2005), with most of the world users concentrated in specific regions. While empirical research about Internet use begins to accumulate for those countries where the online domain has thrived, there is scant evidence on how online citizens in countries with lower levels of access use the Internet, and on the consequences of those uses.

For the Internet, as for any other innovation, a diffusion path, that is, the process by which a new technology is adopted within a social system (Rogers, 2003), can have profound consequences on whether an innovation is ultimately adopted, and most importantly, on how its use is "reinvented" by the users of said technology. The diffusion of an innovation has been conceptualized as a communication process of reaching mutual understanding over a new design that can facilitate collective action (Rogers, 2003). From this perspective, the diffusion of innovations is ultimately a process of ongoing social change in which examining early use can be critical to understanding the potential impact on the social system as a whole.

In the diffusion of innovations literature, distinctions have been made between early adopters, early majorities, late majorities, and laggards (see Rogers, 2003). There is evidence that early adopters are a heterogeneous group

Direct all correspondence to Eulàlia Puig-i-Abril, Department of Life Sciences Communication, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1545 Observatory Drive, Madison, WI 53706, Phone: +1 (608) 262 1464, Fax: +1 (608) 265 3042, e-mail: epabril@wisc.edu

of people that have been described as innovators and opinion leaders, that is, technology-driven individuals who are less risk-averse than the average citizen, that tend to be of high socio-economic status, and thus have the economic means to acquire new technologies, and also the cultural resources to employ them (Rogers, 2003). An early majority has been conceptualized as the members of the social system who follow suit with trusted opinion leaders. They are the key tipping point, from which the rate of adoption rapidly increases.

The fact that a new technology is not yet readily available to all citizens in a society should not deter us from analyzing its use since it is precisely this type of understanding that can enable these societies to creatively tackle the opportunities and challenges that come with technological advances. This paper's goal is to assess the contribution of the Internet to expressive political participation in such a society–Bogotá, Colombia – among an early majority of users that is being constituted.

The question guiding our research is whether certain Internet uses, such as news or information seeking, and social interactions, contribute to expressive political participation in the online and offline domains in a society with moderate levels of access–but at the same time one that could greatly benefit from the alternative possibilities offered by the virtual domain in a context of face-to-face political duress. To answer these questions, the city of Bogotá in Colombia provides an ideal scenario due to its high levels of political strife coupled with an early majority diffusion of innovation stage for Internet use.

In terms of Internet access, Bogotá, with an overall access rate of 26% in 2004, constitutes an interesting case study since it presents a case in which early adoption has occurred, and the process of a transition to an early majority is well underway. Thus, it provides a case that can illustrate political effects in the making. The data used in this research comes from a stratified quota sample that represents the city of Bogotá and its seven million inhabitants, and provides an important initial assessment of the potential for certain Internet uses to result in expressive political participation, particularly under conditions of political instability.

Understanding the relationships between certain Internet uses and expressive political participation is critical for societies under turmoil, in which new technologies can provide opportunities to re-address collective issues and conflict resolution. In this study, by focusing on the early majority of Internet users and examining whether for them the Internet has constituted itself in a new pathway to political participation, we can start to assess the potential of the Internet as an alternative participatory mechanism for societies in crisis.

Literature review

In this study, we are concerned with expressive political participation; i.e. a form of political participation that entails the public expression of political orientations. From this perspective, not all political conversations entail participatory behavior. For example, political talk with friends or family, which can be critical in terms of defining political identity (Walsh, 2003), is rather considered as an antecedent of participatory behavior, while on the other hand, going to a public forum to express one's political views would be considered participatory behavior. It is clear to us that all forms of political conversation have important political consequences, but distinguishing between background conversations and the public expression of our views makes sense theoretically, and has been supported empirically. In our view, then, expressive political participation is a subset of political participation–political participation with a dimension of public expressiveness.

To be clear: (1) there is no consensus in the literature on the conceptualization of expressive political participation; (2) the distinction between political conversation and expressive political participation is sometimes blurred in certain strands of the literature (Boyle et al., 2006); and (3) certain theorists discount expressive political participation as form of participation altogether (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

In previous literature, expressive political participation has sometimes been conceptualized as political expression, political attitude expression, political participation involving public expression, and opinion expression. Endersby and Towle (1996), for example, referred to the notion of *political expression* as the public display of your opinion or support for a candidate or policy through bumper stickers, T-shirts, or yard signs. Stanyer (2005), on the other hand, included these behaviors under the broader notion of campaigning and used the label of *political attitude expression*. Scheufele and Eveland (2001) used the term *public political participation* to encompass activities that ranged from displaying a campaign button, or working for a political campaign, to trying to persuade someone to vote for or against a candidate.

However, as stated above, certain strands of the literature blur the distinction between political conversation and expressive political participation. For example, Boyle et al. (2006) coin the term expressive action to include talking to friends and family about politics, sending letters to the editor, contacting public officials, and attending

rallies. Moreover, Verba et al. (1995) explicitly do not consider political discussion among friends, letters to the editor, or calls to a live show as forms of political participation since "the target audience is not a public official" (p. 40), and rather consider these to be at the border of political activity.

It is not the purpose of this article to fully sort out these controversies that are intimately tied to the definition of participation under which one operates, but it is critical to make them explicit in order to place our findings within the broader context of civic and political participation. Verba et al. (1995) narrowly define political participation as "an activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action–either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy, or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (p. 38). Yet, other forms of engagement in public life may be equally important for citizen efficacy and basic democratic functioning, leading some scholars to expand the concept of political activity beyond actions strictly directed at influencing the government (e.g., voting or campaign work) to include communal activities such as attending local discussion forums or working on behalf of community groups (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Putnam, 1995). This expanded conception of political participation (sometimes referred to as civic participation) not only increases the scope to include communal forms of engagement, but also privileges a view of the community, rather than elected offices, as the central locus of political mobilization and action.

In this work we adopt this expanded view of political participation, and contend that expressive political participation constitutes a sub-dimension of political participation, one that is particularly critical for societies in transition, in which democratic institutions are not fully established. The bulk of the literature on political participation does not always explicitly make the distinction considered here, and tends to regard political participation as a whole, including expressive political participation (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005; Krueger, 2005; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002). In this study, we conceptualize expressive political participation as a dimension of this broader construct–one that is particularly relevant for the study of societies in transition and the emergence of democratic institutions–and treat conversation and news media use as antecedents of expressive political participation.

Antecedents of Political Participation

The literature focusing on the antecedents of political and civic participation has consistently identified that social standing (see for example Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Lipset, 1960/1981; Milbrath, 1965; Tingsten, 1937; Verba & Nie, 1972), news media use (see for example Kim & Han, 2005; McLeod, Rush, & Friederich, 1968; Moy & Scheufele, 2000; Newton, 1999; Norris, 1996; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Lee, 2001; Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005; Voltmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2002), interpersonal conversations (see for example Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2003; Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Rojas et al., 2005; Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004), and certain orientations toward politics (interest, efficacy, and knowledge) all contribute to increased levels of political action (see for example Eveland, 2001, 2002; Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999).

Despite empirical findings to the contrary, social commentators attribute many social ails to communication innovations. Television, for example, has been accused of eroding community identity (Bogart & Orenstein, 1965), declining trust in government (Robinson, 1976), and depleting social capital (Putnam, 1995, 1996). With the emergence of digital media in the past few years, television has had to share this "infamous" reputation with other technologies such as the Internet, which has been "accused" of leading to declines in social involvement and increases in loneliness and depression (Kraut et al., 1998). This media-malaise thesis is pervasive despite the scant empirical evidence to support it. According to its more popular versions, media themes (Robinson, 1976), or frames (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) contribute to rising cynicism and distrust of the political establishment.

However, evidence contrary to the media-malaise thesis has accumulated for various different modes of communication (Norris, 2000). Rather than being medium dependent, it seems that positive or negative outcomes of media use are contingent on the specific content sought by the user (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). So far, research has shown that informational/news-seeking uses of media are related to increased civic engagement, and entertainment/diversion uses can be related to its decline (Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001).

Internet Use and Political Participation

The results of the first wave of research on the effects of the Internet on political participation provided mixed results, in part because some studies employed access or time spent rather than specific uses; also certain samples were considered not to be representative of the population; and causality and endogeneity problems were still being sorted out (for a summary of this debate see Nie, 2001).

Since then, a new wave of studies has mostly refuted dystopian views of new communication technologies, establishing positive relationships between informational uses of the Internet and social capital (Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001), political participation (Shah, Schmierbach, Hawkins, Espino, & Donovan, 2002), and civic engagement (Jennings & Zeitner, 2003). Wellman, Quan-Haase, Witte, and Hampton (2001) provided evidence that online interaction supplements interpersonal relations and results in increased voluntary association membership and increased political participation (see also Wellman et al., 2003). Even Kraut has revisited his earlier study and claimed that the negative effects of Internet use had "dissipated." Instead, they found "positive effects of using the Internet on communication, social involvement, and well being" (Kraut et al., 2002, p. 49). From a theoretical perspective what these studies suggest is that certain Internet uses emphasizing information, communication across citizens, or public deliberation result in increased political engagement (Polat, 2005).

While some feared that news in the online environment might have resulted in societal fragmentation and displacement of community concerns, research shows that online news use supplements rather than supplants traditional news consumption (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000). Dutta-Bergman (2006; 2005) has proposed the notion of channel complementarity to emphasize that consumption of one channel in a particular content area supplements the consumption of other channels in that area. Within this logic of channel complementarity, it should come as no surprise that online information seeking is positively related with group membership, community involvement, and political activity (Kwak, Poor, & Skoric, 2006; Moy, Manosevitch, Stamm, & Dunsmore, 2005; Taveesin & Brown, 2006).

Furthermore, online information seeking has been linked to increases in online interactive civic messaging that ultimately result in higher levels of civic participation (Shah et al., 2005). Kavanaugh, Reese, Carroll, and Rosson (2005) provide evidence that this happens through an interaction effect with weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), which results both in increased face-to-face contact and political participation.

However, most of these relationships have been tested in the context of countries with well established democratic institutions. This study seeks to extend this body of knowledge to societies in transition by testing the relationship of online news media use and online social interactions with expressive political participation in Colombia. In societies like the one under study, the Internet can potentially provide new pathways to democratic political participation by engaging individuals with different skill sets (Krueger, 2002), and by providing a new arena in which ideas can be discussed.

Context of this Study

For most of its independent life, Colombia has been a country where violence has played a critical role as a conflict resolution mechanism. Internal wars between liberals and conservatives that characterized the 19th and roughly the first half of the 20th century evolved into a confrontation with communist guerillas in the context of the cold war. This yet unresolved conflict was fueled in the late 20th century with money pouring into the country from illegal drugs. Traditional land owners found in drug barons an ally against communist guerilas that led to the creation of private armies, known as paramilitary groups, that were supposed to fight the communist guerrillas and that have ultimately evolved into a new actor in the conflict.

However, urban elites facing the challenge of drug lords trying to assert national political power, as well as international pressure, initiated a large scale offensive against drug cartels. A failed peace process with FARC, Colombia's oldest and most important guerrilla group, at the turn of the century, led to the election in 2002 of Alvaro Uribe as president, under the promise that guerrillas would be defeated through the use of force. While president, Uribe started a full-blown offensive against the leftist rebels and is currently negotiating a peace process with paramilitary groups. In the midst of this political turmoil, Bogotá, Colombia's capital, emerged as a political alternative to Colombia's violence cycles. A series of local governments since 1992 have emphasized political accountability, cultural innovations on citizenship, and the physical transformation of the city, changing the political game (see for example Muñoz, Arturo, Bromberg, & Moncada, 2003; Pizano, 2003).

With decreasing violence and the increasing importance of public opinion, Bogotá can be understood today as a testing ground for a new Colombia–one that chooses to resolve its political conflicts through inclusion rather than exclusion, through dialogue, rather than through force and imposition. As Internet penetration and use develops, citizens have new communication mechanisms at their disposal that can become alternatives to traditional political participation that ultimately enhance the quality of political life.

In Bogotá, 26% of adults had Internet access at the time of this study. This is well above the 9% rate estimated by the International Telecommunication Union for the country as a whole (ITU, 2005). This is consistent with urban-rural gaps in user distribution that have been observed elsewhere (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005). For those

accessing the Internet, public places, such as Internet cafes, constituted the most common place of access (46%), followed by work (33%), and home (21%). In Colombia the legal system protects freedom of expression and the only attempts to curtail free expression online have been the unsuccessful government efforts to impede guerilla groups from developing and maintaining an active web presence. From the perspective of citizens, we are unaware of any legal action to restrict their access to political information, or to hinder their expression online.

Hypotheses

As has been documented in the previous section, news-seeking uses of the media have been consistently related to increased levels of civic engagement. News provides people with political information that increases political knowledge, and makes issues relevant to individuals who learn about problems in their community; in doing so, both interest in politics as well as the motivation to take part in the political process increase. Simultaneously, news content makes people aware of opportunities to participate in the political realm, thus increasing a sense of political self-efficacy that results in higher levels of engagement. In the online environment information seeking has been linked to increases in online interactive civic messaging that ultimately result in higher levels of civic participation. In countries such as the United States, news consumption in the online domain has been shown to impact civic engagement (Shah, Kwak, et al., 2001).

In societies in transition, as the one under study, we expect that online news seeking will be positively related to a series of behaviors in the expressive realm that constitute a form of political participation. For these reasons we offer the following hypothesis:

H1. Online news media use is positively related to online expressive political participation.

A large body of research confirms the relationship between interpersonal discussion and political engagement. Mobilization opportunities, knowledge, and motivation result from interpersonal contacts. Previous research has found that frequent political discussion affects feelings of political efficacy and levels of political knowledge (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999), which ultimately result in increased civic engagement (see for example McLeod et al., 2001; Wuthnow, 1994; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000). Online social interactions have also been found to predict civic participation (Shah et al., 2005). It is plausible, then, that in Bogotá, people who interact online more frequently will be better informed about community issues and will therefore be more willing to express their opinion on political issues. For these reasons we offer the following hypothesis:

H2. Online social interactions are positively related to online expressive political participation.

It seems plausible that the consequences for people who become more engaged in the online domain, through news use and interpersonal interactions, can go beyond the online domain. One would expect that those seeking new forms of political expression in the online domain will eventually seek forms of political expression in the offline domain. For these reasons we offer the following hypotheses:

H3. Online news media use is positively related to offline expressive political participation.

H4. Online social interactions are positively related to offline expressive political participation.

Provided that online social interactions and news media use are significantly related to expressive political participation, it would be of interest to explore the antecedents of these behaviors. Therefore, to further clarify the nature of the above relationships, we pose research questions regarding the predictors of online surveillance media use and social interactions.

R1. What are the antecedents of online surveillance media use?

R2. What are the antecedents of online social interactions?

Methods

This study relied on local survey data collected in December 2003 and December 2004 in the city of Bogotá, from a single panel of respondents. The December 2003 data were collected by a professional polling firm on behalf of the city government, as an assessment of civic culture. The Civic Culture Study used random sampling techniques to identify an initial random sample of households. Using the city's digital map, 600 blocks were randomly selected. From these, over 2000 individual households were randomly selected. Then, relying on

quotas stratified by gender, age, economic strata, and neighborhood, one individual within these households was selected in order to represent the city's population, (i.e., matching the census of Bogotá). This mixed procedure ultimately resulted in a nonrandom quota sample based on census demographic information despite its initial random steps.

For the December 2004 wave of this study, a custom questionnaire was developed that complemented the questions posed by the Civic Culture Study was developed, with an array of questions about Internet use and communication practices. A professional polling firm was engaged to re-contact the individuals who had completed the 2003 questionnaire, and solicit their participation in a second wave of surveying. The attrition rate for this survey against the previous wave was 50%, with 715 respondents completing the second questionnaire. It is interesting to point out that only 40 subjects (3% of the original sample) refused to participate in the second wave. No-contacts, for which residential instability was an important factor, resulted in this rate.

In order to examine the possibility of systematic attrition between the first and the second waves in the panel, a comparison of basic demographic characteristics, between those that participated only in the first wave and those that participated in both waves, was undertaken. The second wave sample is slightly older (Wave I: $M = 40.8$; $SD = 16.2$, $n = 1,433$; Wave II: $M = 43.6$; $SD = 16.6$, $n = 715$), and female (Wave I: 55%; Wave II: 61%). However, in terms of education, social strata, political interest, political knowledge, political talk, news media use, and associational membership, there were no significant differences between those who did not participate in Wave II and those who did. The results presented in this study are all based on cross-sectional analyses of the second wave of data, which contained the Internet use variables that are being considered in this paper. Bearing in mind that all our analyses are cross-sectional in nature, a diligent reader could object to the causal ordering that we employ and suggest alternative casual orderings. However, based on previous findings and theories in the research area of Communication Mediation we are confident of the causal model that is posited in this study. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the possibility of reciprocal or reversed causation and address this issue in the limitations and discussion section of this study.

Measurement

Criterion variables. Two dependent variables were considered in this study: online and offline expressive political participation. Online expressive political participation was measured with a single item that asked respondents whether they had expressed their opinion on the Internet about news or political matters on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (frequently), ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 1.64$, $n = 179$). Offline expressive political participation was operationalized averaging four dichotomous items ($M = 0.17$, $SD = 0.26$, $n = 183$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .65$). The questions asked participants whether they had signed a petition; written a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine; given a speech; or called a live radio or TV station to express their opinion.[1]

A supplementary dependent variable, associational membership, was used for additional analysis. Associational membership was measured by an additive index of 15 behavioral items which asked whether the respondent belonged to a wide range of organizations including: recreational, cultural, educational, environmental, professional, charities, cooperative, security, gender, ethnic, and labor unions ($M = 18.92$, $SD = 4.38$, $n = 183$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$). All items composing the associational ties index were measured on a 3-point scale ranging from non-member to active member. It is important to point out that, on this index, a person that belongs to more than one association of the same type does not get a high score; a high score implies belonging to different types of organizations.

Control variables. Five established demographic control variables (Verba et al., 1995) were included in our model: gender (43% females, $n = 183$); age ($M = 35.19$, $SD = 13.00$, $n = 183$); education level, measured using a 7-point scale indicating the level of formal education from none (1), to incomplete primary education (2), primary education (3), incomplete high school (4), high school degree (5), some college (6), and college degree or higher (7) ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 1.01$, $n = 183$); marital status (55% married or living with a significant other, $n = 183$); and house stratum, a proxy measure of household income that is based on the government's classification of households from 1 through 6 that is used for taxation and utility payments, ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.34$, $n = 183$).

Two communication variables that have been related in the past to civic and political participation were included in this study: traditional news media use (Shah, McLeod, et al., 2001), and face-to-face political talk (Rojas et al., 2005). Traditional news media use was measured averaging eight items that measured the respondent's

---

[1] Exploratory factor analysis reveals a one factor solution for these items, which gives additional confidence to the notion of expressive political participation as a dimension that is advanced in this paper.

exposure to national newspapers, local newspapers, national news magazines, national television news, local television news, political commentary on television, radio news, and political commentary on radio, using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from never (0) to frequently (5), ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.06$, $n = 183$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$). Face-to-face political talk was gauged using an additive index that averaged five items ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.28$, $n = 183$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$): assessing the frequency of political conversation with family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors ranging from never (0) to frequently (5), and the size of respondents' discussion network.

The group of control variables also included measures of political knowledge and political interest, variables that have been consistently related with higher levels of participation (Delli-Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Political knowledge was measured with nine items taking into account "rules of the game, the substance of politics, and people and parties" (Delli-Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 65), adapted to the Colombian context. An additive index for political knowledge was constructed ($M = 6.50$; $SD = 2.07$, $n = 183$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$). Political interest was operationalized with one item that tapped respondents' interest on a 3-point scale ranging from not at all interested (1) to very interested (3), ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 0.64$, $n = 183$).

Independent variables. Online social interactions was measured by averaging two items that asked participants how often they had used e-mail, and how often they had engaged in an online chat, using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from never (0) to frequently (5), ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.33$, $n = 182$; $r = .36$). Online news media use was measured with a single item that used a 6-point Likert scale ranging from never (0) to frequently (5); it asked how often respondents had used the Internet to search for news and information ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.94$, $n = 183$). These independent variables were also used as criterion variables to be able to answer the research questions posited in this paper. A table that includes means, *SD*s, and zero-order correlations between variables of interest is presented as an Appendix.

Results

Before engaging in our formal hypotheses testing, we performed a series of tests to compare people with and without access to the Internet. Mean score differences and proportions of people between those with and without access were significant (see Table 1). In Bogotá, males are more likely to have Internet access than females. People with access are also: younger, less likely to be married, more educated, and have a higher income. These traits are consistent with previous findings from the digital divide literature (see for example Cho, Gil de Zuniga, Rojas, & Shah, 2003).

Table 1
Comparative Statistics and Group Differences

Variables	Mean/percentage online only $n = 185$	Mean/percentage offline only $n = 530$	Two-tailed t-statistic/ chi-square-statistic
Gender† (female= 1)	47%	65%	18.74**
Age (years)	35.2	46.5	9.35***
Marital status† (married = 1)	45%	59%	10.62*
Education	6.09	4.00	24.05***
Income	3.38	2.46	8.60***
News media use	2.56	1.75	8.99***
Political talk	2.19	1.44	6.92***
Political knowledge	6.50	4.57	10.44***
Political interest	1.90	1.54	6.60***
Associational membership	18.92	16.79	6.26***

† Chi-square statistic instead of a t-statistic.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. $n = 715$.

In terms of communication variables, people online use traditional news media and discuss politics more frequently than their offline counterparts. Politically, they are more interested, have higher levels of political knowledge, and belong to more associations (see Table 1). Bearing in mind these differences, and to provide a more stringent test of our hypotheses, all the analyses that follow were run for those with Internet access only. This reduced our sample size to 185 individuals. To test our hypotheses we ran multiple hierarchical Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions organizing the independent variables into two blocks: an initial control block that included demographics, traditional news media use, face-to-face political talk, as well as two measures of political involvement (political knowledge and political interest); and a second block that contained the variables

of interest in this study was included in order to asses their contribution to expressive political participation above and beyond the contribution of our set of control variables. Parallel models were run for both online and offline expressive political participation.

Table 2
Online Expressive Political Participation–Hierarchical OLS Regression Model

Variables	Block 1 β (*SE* B)	Block 2 β (*SE* B)
Block 1: Control variables		
Gender (female = 1)	- .06(.22)	- .10(.20)
Age	- .22(.01)**	- .10(.01)
Marital status (married = 1)	.12(.25)	.09(.23)
Educational level	.03(.12)	- .01(.11)
Income	- .03(.09)	- .06(.08)
News media use	.38(.11)***	.25(.10)***
Political talk	.19(.02)*	.07(.02)
Political knowledge	- .09(.06)	- .14(.06)*
Political interest	- .01(.20)	.03(.18)
Incremental R²		*26%***
Block 2: Online communication		
Online news media use		.35(.06)***
Online social interactions		.22(.09)**
Incremental R²		*16%***
Total R²		*42%*

Note. Entries correspond to standardized regression coefficients.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. $n = 185$.

The regression model predicting online expressive political participation explained 42% of the variance (see Table 2). Among the control variables, age (β = -.22, $p < .01$), traditional news media use (β = .38, $p < .001$), and face-to-face political talk (β = .19, $p < .05$) were significant upon entry. Once the second block of variables was introduced, age and face-to-face political talk dropped to non-significant levels, news media use remained significant (β = .25, $p < .001$), and political knowledge gained significance (β = -.14, $p < .05$). Control variables accounted for 26% of the incremental variance.

Table 3
Offline Expressive Political Participation–Hierarchical OLS Regression Model

Variables	Block 1 β (*SE* B)	Block 2 β (*SE* B)
Block 1: Control variables		
Gender (female = 1)	-.07(.03)	-.06(.04)
Age	.14(.00)	.10(.00)
Marital status (married = 1)	-.03(.04)	-.03(.04)
Educational level	.14(.02)	.16(.02)*
Income	.08(.01)	.09(.02)
News media use	.14(.02)	.17(.02)*
Political talk	.22(.00)**	.24(.00)**
Political knowledge	-.03(.01)	-.02(.01)
Political interest	.15(.03)*	.14(.03)
Incremental R²		*24%***
Block 2: Online communication		
Online news media use		-.04(.01)
Online social interactions		-.08(.02)
Incremental R²		*1%*
Total R²		*25%*

Note. Entries correspond to standardized regression coefficients.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. $n = 185$.

The online practices of interest to this study accounted for 16% of the incremental variance (Table 2). Both online news media use (β = .35, $p < .001$) and online social interactions (β = .22, $p < .01$) were significant predictors of online expressive political participation. These results provided support for hypotheses 1 and 2,

according to which online social interactions and online news media use would be positively related to online expressive political participation.

The regression model explaining offline expressive political participation explained 25% of the variance (see Table 3). In this model, control variables accounted for 24% of the incremental variance, with face-to-face political talk (β = .22, $p < .01$) and political interest (β = .15, $p < .05$) appearing as significant predictors upon entry. In the final model, education (β = .16, $p < .05$), traditional news media use (β = .17, $p < .05$), and face-to-face political talk (β = .24, $p < .01$) remained significant.

The second block, that is, the one with our online communication variables, was not significantly related to offline expressive political participation. Neither online news media use nor online social interactions contributed significantly to the dependent variable. These results did not provide support for hypothesis 3 and 4, according to which online social interactions and online news media use would also be positively related to offline expressive political participation.

Further Analysis

Bearing in mind that our hypotheses were partially supported, it makes sense to start exploring the antecedents of both online news media use and online social interactions. In order to do so, we ran two additional OLS regressions, using the same independent variables as in the previous models: demographics, traditional news media use, and face-to-face political talk, but this time to predict online news media use and online social interactions.

The regression model predicting online news media use explained 16% of the variance (see Table 4). None of the demographics were significant, however, traditional news media use was significant (β = .25, $p < .001$) as well as face-to-face political talk (β = .22, p < .01).

Table 4
Online News Media Use–OLS Regression Model

Variables	β (*SE* B)
Gender (female = 1)	.03(.27)
Age	-.06(.01)
Marital status (married = 1)	.05(.32)
Educational level	.01(.14)
Income	.02(.11)
News media use	.25(.14)***
Political talk	.22(.02)**
R^2	*16%*

Note. Entries correspond to standardized regression coefficients.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. $n = 185$.

With regards to online media use, we found that those using traditional media for information or news-seeking purposes, and having more face-to-face conversations about politics are also more likely to search for information online. However, the amount of variance that remains unexplained suggests that there are other important roots to online information seeking that remain unaccounted for.

Table 5
Online Social Interactions–OLS Regression Model

Variables	β (*SE* B)
Gender (female =1)	.13(.17)*
Age	-.38(.01)***
Marital status (married=1)	.02(.01)
Educational level	.17(.09)*
Income	.18(.07)**
News media use	.21(.09)**
Political talk	.18(.02)**
R^2	*31%*

Note. Entries correspond to standardized regression coefficients.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. $n = 185$.

The model for online social interactions explained 31% of the variance (see Table 5). In this model, demographics did have some explanatory power, with gender ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), age ($\beta = -.38$, $p < .001$), education ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$), and income ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$) being significant predictors.

In addition, both news media use ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$) and face-to-face political talk ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$) were significant. With respect to online social interactions, we found that males, and those with a higher income, education, and who tend to discuss politics face-to-face and seek news information from traditional media are also more likely to engage in online social interactions.

In order to explore the incongruence in our results between online and offline participation, and provide potential explanations, we conducted some further additional analysis, using our model to predict associational membership. This is a form of social capital that has been conceptualized as an antecedent to civic and political engagement (see for example Putnam, 2000). It is plausible that our lack of results for offline political participation might be related to the stage of diffusion of the Internet rather than to a permanent disjuncture of the online and offline world. If this is the case, it is possible that the online behavior under consideration might already be affecting some of the precursors of political participation (such as associational membership), if not yet participation itself. Examining the possible effects of online behavior on associational membership could shed some light and aid in the interpretation of our results.

Table 6
Associational Membership–Hierarchical OLS Regression Model

	Block 1	Block 2
Variables	β (*SE* B)	β (*SE* B)
Block 1: Control variables		
Gender (female =1)	.06(.59)	.07(.59)
Age	.03(.03)	.00(.03)
Marital status (married=1)	.12(.68)	.11(.68)
Educational level	.01(.31)	.03(.31)
Income	.23(.25)***	.25(.25)***
News media use	.06(.30)	.04(.31)
Political talk	.24(.06)***	.22(.06)***
Political knowledge	.17(.17)*	.15(.17)*
Political interest	-.01(.54)	.00(.53)
Incremental R²		*27%***
Block 2: Online communication		
Online news media use		.18(.17)*
Online social interactions		-.11(.26)
Incremental R²		*3%**
Total R²		*30%*

Note. Entries correspond to standardized regression coefficients.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. $n = 185$.

The regression model for associational membership explained 30% of the variance (see Table 6). In this model, control variables accounted for 27% of the incremental variance, with income ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$), political talk ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$), and political knowledge ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) appearing as significant predictors.

The second block, the one with our online practices variables, was significant, and explained 3% of the incremental variance. Online news media use ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$) was the only significant predictor of associational membership.

Discussion

Overall, our results confirm the importance of certain well-established predictors such as education, news media use, and political talk for political participation. More specifically, our results suggest that among early Internet adopters, certain uses (news media use and social interactions) are positively related to expressive political participation in the online domain. This relationship, however, does not hold for the offline domain.

In the case of online expressive political participation, our results suggest that those who are younger, consume news, and talk about politics more often are more likely to engage in online expressive political participation.

Most importantly, above and beyond these relationships there is a strong and positive relationship among seeking news and information online, interacting online, and political participation in this domain. On the other hand, in the case of offline expressive political participation, those with higher education levels, who talk more about politics, and who are exposed to news are most likely to engage in offline expressive political participation. Online news media use as well as online social interactions appeared to be unrelated to offline expressive political participation.

The differences found in this data for the online and offline domains are intriguing and warrant further research. One possibility is that the benefits of the online world do not "spill over" to the offline world. In this scenario, people who engage online would continue to do so in the online world, with little if any effects from their online interactions onto offline political practices. A likely reason for this scenario would be that real world politics require a level of commitment that "netizens" are not willing to pay. A second plausible explanation revolves around the stage of diffusion of the Internet within the Colombian context. Within this line of reasoning, an early majority of Internet users could still be in the process of "reinventing" the innovation (Rogers, 2003), and not yet adapting it in meaningful ways to contribute to the offline political processes. Under this line of reasoning, one should expect that in the near future the online activities described here will be not only related to online engagement, but also to offline participatory behavior. A third plausible explanation is related to the circumstances in which this data was collected. It is possible that in the context of political uncertainty that has characterized Colombia in recent years, citizens feel safer engaging in expressive political participation behaviors online, fueled by a sense of anonymity that in the offline world does not exist. If this were the case, the online domain could start to provide a forum where civic issues are debated, potentially serving as a conduit to a more open society that not only materializes in cyberspace. Our additional analysis regarding associational membership suggests to us that online practices are starting to have an influence on offline behaviors that have been considered antecedents of political engagement. Therefore, we contend that explanations two and three are more likely, and that these online behaviors will result in offline participation in the near future.

Despite the lack of significant findings regarding offline participatory behaviors, we are convinced that the findings from this research are important for multiple reasons: (a) they provide empirical evidence of the relationship between certain online communication and participation behaviors in a context that typically remains understudied; (b) these relationships remain significant after controlling for a host of indicators that have been traditionally related to political participation; (c) they provide empirical evidence of the relationship between online information seeking and associational membership; and (d) they provide fertile ground to continue studying the potential of the Internet to increase peaceful conflict resolution through the development of an engaged citizenry.

While assessing the potential implications of this research, it is important to keep in mind some of its shortcomings. First, the operationalization of Internet variables is somewhat limited. Future research needs to replicate these findings using expanded measures of the dependent and independent variables. Particular attention has to be paid to the content of online social interactions, additional dimensions of political engagement, as well as the types of information that are more conducive to political engagement. Second, the operationalization of online and offline expressive political participation are not fully parallel. Future research should pay particular attention to developing measures for the online world that more closely replicate the dimension of offline engagement considered in this study. Third, despite having only one measure in time, we ordered the variables in a causal order according to which communication variables serve as independent variables while political behavioral outcomes were treated as a consequence of communication. The argument could be made that in reality political behavior is the antecedent variable and increased communication is really a consequence of the political variables and not the other way around. While this is certainly plausible, unfortunately, the cross-sectional nature of our data does not allow us to formally test for this within this data set. There is, however, an accumulating body of evidence that suggests that the causal ordering modeled in this paper reflects the relationship between communication and political behaviors.

Norris (2000) has proposed that the "process of political communication can be understood as a 'virtuous circle,' a ratcheting process that over the long term gradually reinforces the activism of the active" (p. 309). Despite the intuitive appeal of reciprocal causation between communication and participation (Verba et al., 1995) and some evidence that supports the notion of such a virtuous circle (Eveland et al., 2003), a more plausible model to understand these relations is one of asymmetrical reciprocal causation (Rojas, 2006). In an asymmetrical reciprocal model, communication variables would have primacy over political variables, i.e. participating in politics might make you more likely to talk about politics in the future, but the relationship between talking about politics today and participating in the future is stronger. Empirical evidence supporting this notion has been reported for political efficacy (Semetko & Valkenburg, 1998), civic participation, (Shah et al., 2005), and political participation (Rojas, 2006). This notion of asymmetrical reciprocal causation is congruent with findings reported by McLeod and colleagues under the rubric of communication mediation (McLeod et al., 1996;

McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, Horowitz, et al., 1999), and those reported by Ball-Rokeach and colleagues under the notion of "storytelling neighborhood" or communication infrastructure (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2003; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, & Qiu, 2001). Future research, of course, needs to strive for multiple measures over time in a way that provides more solid grounding for this asymmetrical reciprocal causation that underlies the models presented in this study.

In addition, future research should strive to provide empirical evidence that sheds light on the multiple explanations that have been discussed here, as well as explore the negative relationship between political knowledge and online expressive political participation. Is this relationship an artifact of the diffusion stage of the Internet in Colombia, or does it signal a lowering of the bar for political debate?

In conclusion, this paper has provided further evidence for the hypothesis that online news media use and social interactions facilitate online political engagement. Most importantly, the findings suggest that in the context of a society in crisis these online practices come along with increased political participation. These effects do not seem to extend to the offline political world, but they show up in the offline social world in the form of additional association membership, thus indicating that the spills onto the political offline world might be on the march.

References

Alesina, A., & La Ferrara, E. (2000). Participation in heterogeneous communities. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *115*, 847-904.

Althaus, S., & Tewksbury, D. (2000). Patterns of Internet and traditional news media use in a networked community. *Political Communication*, *17*, 21-45.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Kim, Y. C., & Matei, S. (2001). Storytelling neighborhood: Paths to belonging in diverse urban environments. *Communication Research, 28*, 392-428.

Berelson, B. R., Lazarsfeld, P. F., & McPhee, W. N. (1954). *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a presidential election*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bogart, L., & Orenstein, F. E. (1965). Mass media and community identity in an interurban setting. *Journalism Quarterly*, *42*, 179-188.

Boyle, M. P., Schmierbach, M., Armstrong, C. L., Cho, J., McCluskey, M. R., McLeod, D. M., et al. (2006). Expressive responses to news stories about extremist groups: A framing experiment. *Journal of Communication*, *56*, 271-288.

Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American voter*. New York: Wiley.

Capella, J. N., & Jamieson, K. H. (1997*). Spiral of cynicism: The press and the public good.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Cho, J., Gil de Zuniga, H., Rojas, H., & Shah, D. V. (2003). Beyond access: The digital divide and Internet uses and gratifications, *IT & Society*, *1*(5), 106-132.

Delli-Carpini, M. X., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2005). The Antecedents of community-oriented Internet use: Community participation and community satisfaction**. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, *11*(1). Retrieved October 2, 2006, from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue1/dutta_bergman.html

Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2006). Community participation and Internet use after September 11: Complementarity in channel consumption. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *11*(2). Retrieved September 20, 2006, from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue2/dutta-bergman.html

Endersby, J. W., & Towle, M. J. (1996). Tailgate partisanship: Political and social expression through bumper stickers. *The Social Science Journal*, *33*, 307-319.

Eveland, W. P., Jr. (2001). The cognitive mediation model of learning from the news: Evidence from non-election, off-year election, and presidential election contexts. *Communication Research*, *28*, 571-601.

Eveland, W. P., Jr. (2002). News information processing as mediator between motivations and public affairs knowledge. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *79*, 26-40.

Eveland, W. P., Jr., Shah, D. V., & Kwak, N. (2003). Assessing causality in the cognitive mediation model: A panel study of motivations, information processing and learning during campaign 2000. *Communication Research*, *30*, 359-386.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, *78*, 1360-1380.

Hardy, B. W., & Scheufele, D. A. (2005). Examining differential gains from internet use: Comparing the moderating role of talk and online interactions. *Journal of Communication*, *55*, 71-84.

International Telecommunication Union. (2005). *Free statistics home page.* Retrieved February 12, 2007, from http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/index.html

Jennings, M. K., & Zeitner, V. (2003). Internet use and civic engagement: A longitudinal analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *67*, 311-334.

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *37*, 509-523.

Kavanaugh, A. L., Reese, D. D., Carroll, J. M., & Rosson, M. B. (2005).Weak ties in networked communities. *The Information Society*, *21*, 119-131.

Kim, S. H., & Han, M. (2005). Media use and participatory democracy in South Korea. *Mass Communication & Society*, *8*, 133-153.

Kraut, R., Kiesler, S., Boneva, B., Cummings, J., Helgeson, V., & Crawford, A. (2002). The Internet paradox revisited. *Journal of Social Issues*, *58*, 49-74.

Kraut, R., Patterson M., Lundmark V., Kiesler, S., Mukopadhyay, T., & Scherlis W. (1998). Internet paradox: A social technology that reduces social involvement and psychological well being? *American Psychologist*, *53*, 1017-1031.

Krueger, B. S. (2002). Assessing the potential of Internet political participation in the United States. *American Politics Research*, *30*, 476-498.

Krueger, B. S. (2005). Government surveillance and political participation on the Internet. *Social Science Computer Review*, *23*, 439-452.

Kwak, N., Poor, N., & Skoric, M. M. (2006). Honey, I shrunk the world! The relation between Internet use and international engagement. *Mass Communication and Society*, *9*, 189-213.

Lipset, S. M. (1960/1981). *Political Man*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Matei, S., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2003). The Internet in the communication infrastructure of urban residential communities: Macro- or mesolinkage? *Journal of Communication*, *53*, 642-657.

Matei, S., Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Qiu, J. L. (2001). Fear and misperception of Los Angeles Urban Space: A spatial-statistical study of communication-shaped mental maps. *Communication Research*, *28*, 429-463.

McLeod, J. M., Daily, K., Guo, Z., Eveland, W. P., Jr., Bayer, J., Yang, S. et al. (1996). Community integration, local media use, and democratic processes. *Communication Research*, *23*, 463-487.

McLeod, J. M., Rush, R. R., & Friederich, K. H. (1968). The mass media and political information in Quito, Ecuador. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, *32*, 575-587.

McLeod, J. M., Scheufele, D. A., & Moy, P. (1999). Community, communication and participation: The role of mass media and interpersonal discussion in local political participation. *Political Communication*, *16*, 315-336.

McLeod, J. M., Scheufele, D. A., Moy, P., Horowitz, E. M., Holbert, R. L., Zhang, W., et al. (1999). Understanding deliberation: The effects of discussion networks on participation in a public forum. *Communication Research*, *26*, 743-74.

McLeod, J. M., Zubric, J., Keum, H., Deshpande, S., Cho, J., Stein, S., et al. (2001, August). *Reflecting and Connecting: Testing a Communication Mediation Model of Civic Participation*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.

Milbrath, L. (1965). *Political participation: How and why do people get involved in politics?* Chicago: Rand McNally.

Moy, P., Manosevitch, E., Stamm, K., & Dunsmore, K. (2005). Linking dimensions of Internet use and civic engagement. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *82*, 571-586.

Moy, P., & Scheufele, D. A. (2000). Media effects on political and social trust. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *77*, 744-759.

Muñoz, J., Arturo, J., Bromberg, P., & Moncada, R. (2003). *Reflexiones sobre Cultura Ciudadana en Bogotá*. Bogotá: Observatorio de Cultura Urbana.

Nie, N. H. (2001). Sociability, interpersonal relations and the Internet. Reconciling conflicting findings. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *45*, 420-435.

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

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *The spiral of silence. Public opinion–our social skin* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: Political communications in post-industrial democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, P. (1996). Does television erode social capital? A reply to Putnam. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 293*, 474-480.

Pizano, L. (2003). *Bogotá y el Cambio: Percepciones sobre la Ciudad y la Ciudadanía*. Bogotá: IEPRI - CESO.

Polat, R. K. (2005). The Internet and political participation: Exploring the explanatory links. *European Journal of Communication, 20*, 435-459.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy, 1*, 65-78.

Putnam, R. D. (1996). The strange disappearance of civic America. *The American Prospect, 24*, 34-48.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rainie, L., & Horrigan, J. (2005). A decade of adoption: How the Internet has woven itself into American life (Internet Report). Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved February 12, 2007, from http://www.pewinternet.org/

Robinson, M. (1976). Public affairs television and the growth of political malaise: the case of the selling of the Pentagon. *American Political Science Review, 70*, 409-432.

Rogers, E. V. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York: The Free Press.

Rojas, H. (2006, June). *Orientations towards political conversation: Testing an Asymmetrical Reciprocal Causation Model of Political Engagement*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany.

Rojas, H., Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Schmierbach, M., Keum, H., & Gil-De-Zuniga, H. (2005). Media dialogue: Perceiving and addressing community problems. *Mass Communication & Society, 8*, 93-110.

Semetko, H. A., & Valkenburg, P. M. (1998). The impact of attentiveness on political efficacy: Evidence from a three-year German panel study. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *10*, 195-210.

Scheufele, D. A., & Eveland, W. P., Jr. (2001). Perceptions of 'public opinion' and 'public' opinion expression. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *13*, 25-44.

Scheufele, D. A., & Nisbet, M. (2002). Being a citizen online: New opportunities and dead ends. *Press/Politics, 7*(3), 55-75.

Scheufele, D. A., Nisbet, M. C., Brossard, D., & Nisbet, E. C. (2004). Social structure and citizenship: Examining the impacts of social setting, network heterogeneity, and informational variables on political participation. *Political Communication*, *21*, 315–38.

Scheufele, D. A., Shanahan, J., & Lee, E. (2001). Real talk: Manipulating the dependent variable in spiral of silence research. *Communication Research*, *28*, 301-24.

Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Eveland, W. P., & Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling Internet effects on civic participation. *Communication Research*, *32*, 531-65.

Shah, D. V., Kwak, N., & Holbert R. L. (2001). Connecting and disconnecting with civic life: Patterns of Internet use and the production of social capital. *Political Communication*, *18*, 141-62.

Shah, D. V., McLeod, J. M., & Yoon, S. H. (2001). Communication, context and community: An exploration of print, broadcast and internet influences. *Communication Research*, *28*, 464-506.

Shah, D. V., Schmierbach, M., Hawkins, J., Espino, R., & Donovan, J. (2002). Nonrecursive models of Internet use and community engagement: Questioning whether time spent online erodes social capital. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79, 964-87.

Stanyer, J. (2005). The British public and political attitude expression: The emergence of a self-expressive political culture? *Contemporary Politics*, *11*, 19-32.

Taveesin, N. J., & Brown, W. J. (2006). The use of communication technology in Thailand's political process. *Asian Journal of Communication, 16*, 59-78.

Tingsten, H. (1937). *Political Behavior: Studies in Election Statistics*. London: P. S. King & Son.

Verba, S., & Nie, N. (1972). *Participation in America: Political democracy and social equality*. New York: Harper & Row.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic volunteerism in American politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Voltmer, K., & Schmitt-Beck, R. (2002, March). *The Mass Media and Citizens' Orientations Towards Democracy: The Experience of Six 'Third-Wave' Democracies in Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Paper presented at the workshop "Political Communication, the Mass Media, and the Consolidation of New Democracies" at the Joint Sessions of Workshops of the European Consortium for Political Research, Turin, Italy.

Walsh, K. C. (2003). *Talking about politics: Informal groups and social identity in American life*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Wellman, B., Quan-Haase A., Boase, J., Chen, W., Hampton, K., Isla de Diaz, I., et al. (2003). The Social affordances of the Internet for networked individualism. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, *8*(3). Retrieved March 10, 2007, from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol8/issue3/wellman.html

Wellman, B., Quan-Haase, A., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet increase, decrease or supplement social capital? *American Behavioral Scientist*, *45*, 436-455.

Wuthnow R. (1994). *Sharing the journey: Support groups and America's new quest for community*. New York: Free Press.

Wyatt, R. O., Katz, E., & Kim, J. (2000). Bridging the spheres: Political and personal conversation in public and private spaces. *Journal of Communication*, *50*, 71-92.

Appendix

Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Online expressive	1.23	1.64	–	.16*	.53***	.39***	.12	.43***	.31***	.08	.16*
2. Offline expressive	.17	.26		–	.11	.06	.49***	.30***	.38***	.25**	.29***
3. Online news media use	3.09	1.94			–	.42***	.29***	.34***	.32***	.21**	.10
4. Online social interactions	2.90	1.33				–	.14	.28***	.30***	.15*	.10
5. Associational membership	18.92	4.38					–	.25**	.37***	.35***	.16*
6. News media use	2.49	1.06						–	.37***	.26***	.21**
7. Political talk	2.19	1.28							–	.39***	.44***
8. Political knowledge	6.50	2.07								–	.39***
9. Political interest	1.90	.64									–

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. n = 185.