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**TALKING, POLITICS, AND MEDIA:
HOW DOES MEDIA USE CORRELATE WITH POLITICAL TALK AND
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION?**

A Thesis

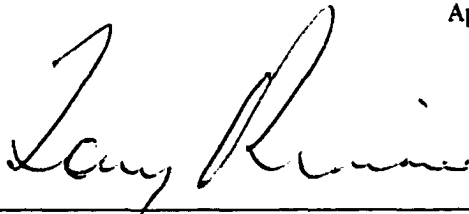
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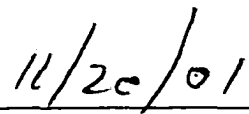
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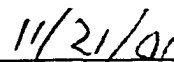
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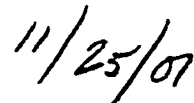
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationships among media news use (TV news and newspaper use), political talk, and political participation. This study began by proposing a replication of Kim, Wyatt, and Katz's (1999) study. In the process we found that a close replication was not possible due to differences between the studies in the way constructs were created.

We proposed that the more media news people used and the more educated they were, the more political talk they would be involved in. We further predicted that the amount of media news use and political talk would predict political participation. Both predictions were partially supported in a secondary analysis of data from the 2000 American National Election Study (NES).

Political talk, education, age, gender and income predicted political participation in our regression model. TV news use was a weak predictor in the model. Newspaper use did not predict political participation. This was not expected given the literature reviewed.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

There are several ways to participate in an election campaign. We can attend public meetings, make financial contributions, work for a candidate or party, and vote for a candidate. Implicit in all these activities we assume there is talk about politics. We further assume that news media inform political talk and that both are associated with people's level of political participation. This study seeks to explore associations among media news use, political talk, and political participation. A causal direction is hypothesized from media use to political talk to political participation.

This study set out to replicate Kim, Wyatt, and Katz's (1999) study. Kim et al. (1999) reported that media consumption was associated with political talk and political participation. They did not test the direction of this influence, but said that both agenda setting and two-step flow communication models suggested a causal direction from media to audience.

Agenda setting theory proposes that media have the power to set public and policy agendas (Cook, Tyler, Goetz, Gorden, Protes, Leff, & Molotch, 1983). The two-step flow model suggests opinion leaders scan messages from media and pass the information to individuals (Baran & Davis, 2000).

The two-step flow model of communication was first identified in the Erie County voting studies in 1948 (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948). The researchers found that respondents received a great deal of political information not only from radio or print but also by talking to their friends, family, and acquaintances. " The investigators realized that people were talking to each other extensively about the election, and that these interpersonal exchanges played a key role in leading the voters to their decision" (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995, p. 89). The two-step model proposes that information in a society is first circulated by the media and then passed on via opinion leaders by interpersonal communications (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

Kim et al.'s (1999) study found a positive association between media use and political talk as well as political participation. Their nationwide study was done in May 1996, at a time when federal budget balancing and Medicare were salient topics. The study was designed to explore the association between media use, political talk and political participation. We wondered if their findings could be generalized to, and replicated in, other populations. The purpose of this study then, is to

examine the associations among media use, political discussion and political participation through a secondary analysis of a general-purpose, national data set.

Based on Kim et al.'s findings, we expected to find that (a) media use predicted political discussion, and that (b) both media use and political discussion predicted political participation.

Statement of Problem

Kim et al. (1999) defined deliberative democracy as a process where citizens participate voluntarily and freely to discuss public issues. They emphasized that "the concept of deliberative democracy covers not only institutional procedures such as the rule of majority but also the political culture of free discussion and voluntary participation" (p. 361).

Based on this definition, therefore, political conversation appears to be at the core of deliberative democracy. By "political conversation" Kim et al. mean all sorts of political discussion or talk, as long as the conversation does not involve any specific purpose or agendas. They were more interested in casual conversation than formal political discussion.

Some scholars have pointed out the importance of conversation for democracy (Barber, 1984; Dewey, 1927; Lasker, 1949). Carey (1995) has emphasized that conversation is the heart of democratic society. By discussing the news with each other, for example, people are able to share information, form opinions, and set public agendas. Conversation, in this sense, becomes significant in a democratic society.

Schudson (1997), however, argues that "nothing in conversation itself necessarily suggests democracy, not even its formal egalitarianism" (p. 305). He notes that talking about politics among people of different backgrounds can be "uncomfortable" and sometimes leads to conflicts. He believes that people's talk about politics must have a specific purpose such as solving problems or deciding public policies, otherwise political conversation will not be relevant to democracy.

In other words Schudson does not believe that political talk can be casual and nonpurposive. Kim et al. (1999) do not agree with Schudson. They declared that political conversation could be nonpurposive, intimate, and reciprocal.

Although Kim et al. (1999) and Schudson (1997) had different definitions of political talk, all imply that political talk or conversation could be related to democracy. The argument, then, brings out the question as to motives and purposes of conversation: where conversation comes from, as well as whether and how it might affect people's participation in politics.

Kim et al. (1999) attempted to answer these questions and identified correlations among media use, political talk, and political participation. They reported that (a) media news use is closely associated with the frequency of political conversation in daily life and (b) media news use and political conversation in politics are also closely associated with political participation.

The purpose of this study is to test Kim et al.'s ideas by exploring the relationships among media use, political talk, and political participation including voting intention. We did not design a data-gathering endeavor specific to the task as Kim et al. did, but rather we used a general-purpose data set, the 2000 American National Election Study (NES). The data were gathered as part of the biannual National Election Studies by the Center for Political Studies of the Institute for Social Research at University of Michigan. The survey offered questions similar to those asked by Kim et al., so it lent itself to an attempt at replicating Kim et al.'s findings.

As the study proceeded it became apparent that the 2000 American National Election Study data could not precisely answer Kim et al.'s questions. This less-directed (at least from our point of view) data set could provide a useful vehicle, however, to test the persistence of Kim et al.'s general findings.

The next chapter (Chapter Two) provides a literature review which develops the argument of this study. Theoretical explanation of the ideas grounding the study will be offered as well as the arguments and hypotheses for the study.

The third chapter describes the methods used in this study, the survey instrument used to collect the data, and the variables used in the research. The results of the study are reported in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five evaluates the results of the study and explores the

implications of its findings. Suggestions for further research directions in the area are offered.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature regarding media use and function, the relationship between media and political socialization, the importance of political talk, and the prediction of political participation. A theoretical foundation for the study is developed. The discussion leads to a series of arguments and hypotheses regarding associations among media use, political talk, and political participation.

What Media Do to People: Agenda Setting and the Priming Effect

How do people develop their political views? The answer is complicated but for the last 50 years, dating back to the Erie County's voting studies of Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948), scholars have believed that individuals' political orientations come largely from the environment in which they live. Mass media are assumed here to be an accessible and important source for political information.

Media have been reported as having different impacts on people. Studies such as agenda setting and priming suggest that media provide important public affairs agendas for audiences as well as influence people's evaluations of political candidates and issues. Denton and

Woodward (1990) propose three effects of such mediated communication. They note that media have an agenda-setting function, that they construct specific political realities, and that they personalize politics. Agenda setting has been examined for both newspaper and television. The research in agenda setting recognizes an interactive association between media and audience, and has proposed a causal direction in the relationship: from media to publics.

Cohen (1963) was among the first to propose such an effect. He argued that "The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (p. 13).

McCombs and Shaw (1972) first tested the idea of agenda setting in the 1968 U.S. presidential election. They reported that there was a substantial relationship between the rankings of media reports and the voters' ranking of public issues during the presidential campaign.

McCombs and Shaw interviewed registered voters who had not yet decided which candidate they would vote for during September and October of the 1968 U.S. presidential election. The researchers asked their respondents what they personally thought were the critical issues in the presidential campaign. The researchers then compared the rankings of issues that respondents mentioned to the rankings of issues

that media had covered during the same period of time (Baran & Davis, 2000).

McCombs and Shaw concluded that “the data suggest a very strong relationship between the emphasis placed on different campaign issues by the media . . . and the judgements of voters as to the salience and importance of various campaign topics” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 180-181).

Another empirical study by Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) during the 1976 presidential election campaign found that mass media may have an impact on voter evaluations and cognitive images of the candidates. The study not only confirmed the agenda setting model but also suggested a causal direction of the media effect. Becker and McLeod (1976) also reported that the public agenda could be a direct or indirect effect of the mass media agenda.

The idea of agenda setting has been extended from the effect of media reports on the public agenda to the impact of media on policy makers. Cook, Tyler, Goetz, Gordon, Protess, Leff, and Molotch (1983) reported that policy makers who were exposed to an investigative media report changed their views of the issue's importance and their perception of the public's view of the issue's importance. Cook et al. declared that media agenda setting “also influence policy makers, who often gain their understanding of public opinion through the media” (1983, p. 33).

According to Cook et al. (1983), media are gatekeepers for the public. They scan the information and help policy makers understand what public opinions are. By "understanding" public opinion through media, people may be required to evaluate and organize the information they gained from media. This idea of evaluation suggests more than Cohen's idea of "what to think about." Corbett (1991), for example, has proposed that media might determine what people think. Iyengar and Kinder's priming effect provides a mechanism to accommodate these ideas.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found that media are capable of influencing people's evaluation of public issues or officials. They provided a powerful model called the priming effect. "By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged" (p. 63). They argued that TV coverage influences people's judgement as they evaluate governments, presidents, policies and candidates for public office.

The priming effect was also found in a newspaper study in Hong Kong. Willnat and Zhu (1996) examined the association between news content and public opinion about Governor Christopher Patten's democratization plan for Hong Kong. The authors developed a time-series study by collecting data from 52 weekly public opinion polls, plus a content analysis of the three leading newspapers in Hong Kong between

October 1992 and October 1993. Willnat and Zhu (1996) asserted that media coverage of Patten's plan strongly influenced people's evaluation of his performance.

Both agenda setting and the priming effect suggest that media provide significant cues about what the important issues are in society, while the priming effect further proposes that media have an impact on individuals' judgement or evaluations of public officials and issues. Most people are not directly involved with government or with groups concerned about particular issues, so they depend on other sources of information for their ideas about what the "public issues" are (McCombs, Einsiedel & Weaver, 1991). To the extent that media provide such information media also help set priorities (the agenda setting effect) and prompt evaluations of public issues and officials (the priming effect).

The priming effect provides a bridge between media effect and individual attitude change. Since media affect people's judgement, they may also have the ability to influence people's attitudes on certain public issues or political candidates. We assume then, that media are able not only to influence individuals' political priorities regarding public policies, and people's evaluation of issues and candidates, but media may also affect people's political attitudes as well.

We may conclude that agenda setting and the priming effect suggest that media not only tell people what to think about but also what to think regarding the public's evaluation of public issues and officials.

By taking cues from media, people become aware of what the important topics in society are and this gives them confidence to interact with other citizens. "Such activities may help unify the society and increase social cohesion by providing a broad base of common social norms, values, and collective experience to be shared by its members" (Wright, 1986, p. 20). We assume, then, that individuals pay more attention to those messages that feed their social needs.

Media and Political Socialization: Uses and Gratifications

Individuals are not born with political beliefs. People learn to become politically active during their preadult years through mass media use and social interaction with family (Atkin, 1981). Most scholars recognize that mass media strongly influence individuals' political socialization (Graber, 1997; Paletz, 1999).

Kuo (1986) indicated that mass media use and interpersonal communication reinforce one another in the process of political learning. Kuo also suggested that political discussion is a critical predictor for political knowledge among adolescents.

A similar conclusion was reached by Kennamer (1990). He argued that discussion was a stronger predictor than actual election debate exposure on two measures of campaign information. In other words, interpersonal discussion was a significant source for political information.

Koch (1994) reported on an experimental study examining the impact of newspaper reading on college students' political values, behavior, and opinion. She concluded that "interpersonal communication variables were most affected by the stimulus" (p. 29). The stimulus here was media use. Koch found a strong and positive relationship between newspaper reading and feeling comfortable in talking about politics among college students.

But why do individuals want to learn political information, how do people select news and why do they only talk about certain topics? The uses and gratifications model offers a theoretical explanation for these questions.

Harwood (1999) explained that the uses and gratifications model suggests individuals find media messages that provide them with particular gratifications. For example, media are used to reduce loneliness and escape the frustrations of everyday life as well as provide entertainment.

Vincent & Basil (1997) also noted that "the uses and gratifications perspective is often employed to examine audience use of mass media according to social and psychological needs" (p. 380). They further contend that individuals differ in the gratifications they seek from the mass media. Individuals' orientations are related to their social conditions and functions or personality dispositions and abilities.

The uses and gratifications approach indicates that individuals ignore irrelevant messages and only pay attention to the things that they feel useful and intellectually or emotionally gratifying. "They use the media to gain a sense of security and social adequacy from knowing what is happening in their political environment" (Graber, 1997, p. 197).

The uses and gratifications model explains why people are only interested in some topics but not others and how people read newspapers or watch television to gratify their social needs. If we assume that making political conversation is a critical way to socialize with other people, then in order to be sociable and be capable of making a conversation with others, we expect people will use media to gain information about what is happening in the community.

We next explore the importance of political talk in social and political life.

Why Political Talk is Important

Why do we need to talk about politics? Talking about politics is a critical practice of democracy. Political discussion has a tremendous impact on people's political attitudes and behavior. By discussing with others, people are able to construct their own language, exchange ideas, understand each other, and then build a common good, even in a community.

We have conversations every day with family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers. What is the outcome of this process of talking?

Wallen (1996) points out that participating in a conversation leads people to have a better understanding of different ideas and at the same time validate their knowledge.

People sometimes do not feel comfortable talking about politics because it may provoke an argument between discussants (Schudson, 1997). Although conflict may occur during a political conversation, the purpose of conversation is to understand differences between participants and to search for the truth. Wallen (1996) argued that "the calls for a dialogue do not offer a solution, a readily available means for mediating between conflicting views and interests, but rather point to a problem, and pose a challenge" (p. 406).

In order to participate in a dialog and exchange ideas, participants are challenged to think more clearly about their argument. In other words, conversation motivates people to recall and organize their ideas on the topics they are talking about. This cognitive process of recall and reorganization, mediated by discussion, may influence people's evaluation of an issue or a candidate.

Kim et al. (1999) pointed out the contributions of political conversations. They noted that "political conversation often happens in the private sphere, but its inputs (e.g., information, topics, and issues) come from outside the private sphere, particularly from the political system and political world, and its outputs (e.g., public opinions, issue

positions, voting preference, participatory activities) are fed back into the political systems and political world" (p. 362).

In other words, political conversations contribute to forming public opinions, setting issue positions, and even showing voting preference in deliberative democratic systems.

Barber (1984) argued that political talk is at the heart of strong democratic systems. "Strong democratic talk, always involves listening as well as speaking, feeling as well as thinking, and acting as well as reflecting" (p. 178).

He summarizes nine functions of talk (Barber, 1984, p. 178-198).

The articulation of interests; bargaining and exchange

Persuasion

Agenda-setting

Exploring mutuality

Affiliation and affection

Maintaining autonomy

Witness and self-expression

Reformulation and reconceptualization

Community-building as the creation of public interests, common goods, and active citizens

The two functions of particular interest to the present study are persuasion and agenda setting. Barber (1984) indicated that agenda setting is associated with political talk. His concept of agenda setting is

different from that of Cohen. Barber does not focus on media impact but rather on how "talk" influences public agendas. He noted that in a democratic stimulation, "agenda-setting cannot precede talk, deliberation, and decision but must be approached as a permanent function of talk itself" (p. 182). That is, talk helps us to continue examining and scrutinizing the social problems in a community. It takes place in the center rather than at the beginning of its politics.

The significance of conversation is that "conversation binds communities, and conversation becomes our means--our eyes, voices, and ears of discovering where we are going and where we have been" (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1994, p. 11).

Now that the importance of political talk in a democratic society has been noted, what then? What do we usually talk about and what motivates us to talk?

Where Talk Comes From

How do people get ideas about what happens in their political environment? Most people do not have contact with politics directly. Instead of getting involved in politics, people get political information from mass media and from personal networks (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948; Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). Lowery and DeFleur (1995) noted that although the Erie County voting behavior studies found that radio and print played an important role in activating, reinforcing, or converting people's voting preference, the studies also found that

participants received a great deal of political information from other people.

Beck (1991) also asserted that "personal networks include the people who are in face-to face contact with the individual--family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers" (p. 372). Beck argued that both media and personal networks are important intermediaries that influence people's political evaluation of politics.

Beck examined these intermediaries in the 1988 Ohio presidential campaign. He found that through exposure to various intermediaries, people received consonant and dissonant information, meaning information they may agree or disagree with. The different messages may have the effect of reinforcement or even may change people's preferences. The personal network in Beck's study was found to have less impact on discussants because people tended to talk more to those who have consonant opinions; therefore, conversations may reinforce discussants' opinions but not change them. On the other hand, Beck found that media cover more neutral information and this may challenge audience's political preferences.

Kim, Wyatt, and Katz (1999) suggested that people's political conversation was stimulated by their media use. They have also found that freedom to talk, issue-specific news, and newspaper use were most strongly related to ordinary political conversation (Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000).

Among media alternatives, newspapers are recognized to be a primary source of political issue information. The newspaper has been recognized as superior issue information provider and television news has been identified as the most effective medium for transmitting information about dramatic, visually appealing events (Parenti, 1993). Briens and Wattenberg (1996) also asserted that people who were more attentive to newspaper political coverage would have greater knowledge of candidates' stances on issues than those watching political news on TV.

Although TV was not identified as the strongest provider for issue information, McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy (1999) found that local television news was the strongest predictor of local political interest. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy (1999) further contended that TV had an impact on awareness of issues and therefore people may have two ways of following up on the specific issue. One way was to read newspapers the next day and the other was to engage in interpersonal communication.

Because newspaper and TV news seem to have different characteristics regarding their impact on audiences and the way they transmit information, this study will investigate them separately in the analysis.

Media seem, then, to serve two functions: as a source of information and as a stimulus of conversation. We hypothesize here that

higher levels of media use will be associated with higher levels of political conversation.

Hypothesis 1a: As media use increases, the amount of people's political talk will increase.

What if education is a confounder in the relationship? Koch's (1994) study of newspapers' impact on college students' political behaviors used a relatively well-educated sample. Level of education has been reported as a strong predictor of newspaper reading (Wilson, et al., 1999), so education may be a confounder here--it may be a stronger predictor of talking than is newspaper reading. In Kim et al.'s study (1999), education was reported as the only significant demographic predictor for political talk. We speculate, then, that level of education will also be associated with political talk.

Hypothesis 1b: As their level of education increases, the amount of people's political talk will increase.

Education may be operating as a confounding variable in the media use, education, and political conversation complex. We want to clarify if media use is associated with political conversation even when education is controlled for.

Hypothesis 1c: As media use increases, the amount of political talk will increase, even when education is controlled for.

What if.....?

What if our speculations are not supported? Four reasons arise.

First of all, there might not be a media effect. The theories we have

utilized such as agenda setting and the priming effect suggest that media act as a gatekeeper, (a) helping people decide what the important issues are, (b) delivering the messages to the audience, and (c) providing evaluation cues.

The agenda setting effect, however, raises the chicken and the egg question. We are not clear which one comes first. Public opinion may be generated before media cover an issue. What media cover are existing public issues. Media may not have the power to penetrate what people think about or talk about.

Second, the spiral of silence hypothesis suggests that people are less likely to talk about what they think if they perceive their opinions are not the dominant opinions in the community. They will accommodate their opinion to their perception of the majority opinion because they are afraid to isolate themselves from the majority (Noelle-Neumann, 1984).

Based on the spiral of silence hypothesis, when the majority opinion appears not to coincide with their opinions, people are less likely to express their thoughts. Therefore, even well-informed people may not necessarily be motivated to talk about what they think regarding political issues. Once the spiral of silence effect occurs, the relationship between media use and the amount of talk may change. As media use increases talk decreases, but not by enough to show a negative relationship.

Third, the media use questions asked in the 2000 NES data set, for example, the days per week that respondents read newspapers, did not

mention political issues. People get all kinds of information from newspapers, not just “political issues.” People who report reading newspapers more days a week are not necessarily reading more political news. We try here to narrow newspaper reading and TV news viewing to political news by adding an attention to political campaign news measure, but the sensitivity of the measure may still be in question.

Fourth, education may really emerge as a confounding variable, and we are not able to effectively control for it. We wonder too, how other demographic factors such as income, gender, and age affect the complex of media use and political talk.

Take gender, for example. Some studies suggest that women are less involved politically and the arena for political discussion for them is centered among family relationships. Political discussants for men, on the other hand, can be friends or workmates (Miller, Wilford, & Donoghue, 1999).

With regard to age, Sternberg (1998), in an Australian study, claimed that the younger generation was consuming less media news than before. Scholars also point out that people’s core political predispositions are highly stable through the life span. Sears and Funk (1999), for example, found evidence that adults showed a persistence of partisan predisposition through a long-term longitudinal study.

Political talk has been identified as an important means of political involvement, but it is not the only means. We should also recognize the

importance of other participatory activity in terms of shaping individuals' political views or behavior.

Political Participation

Political theorists have studied how levels of citizen participation might affect democratic systems. Some scholars have suggested that low political participation may undermine the stability of the political system (Schattschneider, 1960; Walker, 1966). Renshon (1974) argues that "levels of political participation indicate citizen satisfaction rests on assumptions both about the efficacy of the behavior and its ability to satisfy the original motivation to participate in political activities" (p. 17).

Renshon explained the origins of participation from three different perspectives: political utility, civic obligation, and political efficacy. The idea of political utility is that individuals gain utility or satisfaction from rewards. If people can maximize rewards and minimize costs, they may be more likely to participate in politics. The idea is also offered by Downs (1957). Downs' economic theory suggests that rational citizens can reduce information costs by using free information, and the free information in our society comes from "persons and nonpersons, the latter composed mainly of mass media" (p. 229).

Mass media, however, are not the only source of free information. Downs argues that people also get free information by talking to others. Downs maintains that although individuals can obtain free information by conversing with well-informed friends or reading newspapers,

personal contact has the advantage of getting some other types of utility, "such as pleasure in their company and ability to steer the discussion so as to gain more precise information" (Downs, 1957, p. 229).

According to Downs (1957), both interpersonal communication and media use are free information sources. By utilizing free information or maximizing the reward, people are more likely to participate in politics.

Individuals have various ways to participate in politics in a democratic society. We can vote for candidates, work for the party, attend political meetings, belong to political organizations, write letters to or call public officials, wear campaign buttons, place stickers on our cars, or make campaign contributions to candidates. Individuals also may influence friends, families, and coworkers by persuading them to commit to a specific issue or support a candidate.

Kim et al. (1999) categorized political participatory activities into two types. One was a "campaigning" type (voting intention, working for a political campaign, attending public meetings, and contacting elected officials), which they considered to be activities "within" the political system. Their second type was a "complaining" type (demonstration, writing letters to media, and calling in to talk shows), which they considered to be the activities "outside" the political system.

We are interested here in the campaigning type of participatory activities, for two reasons. First, the present study seeks to explore associations among media use, political talk, and political participation.

According to Kim et al.'s (1999) study, "for the campaigning type, general political talk was an effective predictor" (p. 378). They indicated there was a relationship between political talk and political participation. We wonder if their finding can be replicated.

Second, the data we utilize here is an election study, the 2000 NES. Campaigning type activities were emphasized in these data. Six items are generally included as categories of "political participation" (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). These items include: vote in elections, work for political party, attend political meetings, persuade people to vote for or against certain candidates, wear campaign buttons, place stickers or signs, and make contributions to candidates or parties.

Dye (1997) said that people have a variety of ways to participate in politics. People may run for public office, make financial contributions to political candidates, attend political meetings, wear a political button, place a bumper sticker on their cars, attempt to influence friends while discussing candidates or issues, be active in campaigns and vote in elections. Dye (1997) also indicated that "less than 1 percent of the population runs for office at any level of government and only about half of all voting-age Americans bother to go the polls" (1997, p. 149).

Kim et al. (1999) considered only three activities "intention to vote," "work for the party," and "attend public meetings" as their categories of political participation. We include the following activities in our political participation measure: "vote," "work for the party," "attend political

meetings," "persuasion," "wear campaign button, place stickers or have signs," and "make contributions to candidates, parties, and other political groups" as components of our measure of political participation.

Media Use, Political Talk, and Political Participation

We believe that talk and media use have the potential to lead people into action. Graber (1997) points out that media not only shape people's knowledge, attitude, and feelings, they can influence behaviors and participatory actions. Media use then may relate to political participation. Talk may also be associated with political participation. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995) contend that political discussion during an election campaign is an important vehicle of social influence. Different discussants and the different extent of political conversation may have different effects on vote choice. Based on this argument, talk may be associated with voting preference.

Barber (1984) indicated that "political talk is not just talk about the world; it is talk that makes and remakes the world" (p. 177). People exchange ideas by discussing with each other and "with talk we can invent alternative futures, create mutual purposes, and construct competing visions of community" (Barber, 1984, p. 177).

Hence, we speculate that media are not only associated with talk but also other forms of political participation, and talk itself may also be a stimulus for political participation.

Hypothesis 2: As levels of media use and political talk increase, the level of political participation will increase.

What if.....?

What if media use and political talk are not associated with political participation? Talking politics is much easier than doing politics. Our political participation measures are reports of behaviors, not of intentions regarding behaviors. Admittedly, they are self reports, but it may be that they are too specific to show an association with talk.

Kim, Wyatt, and Katz (1999) have found that other factors also show strong associations with participation even though these researchers still found media use and conversation were associated with political participation. They asserted that "education, family income, and political interest were very effective predictors of the campaigning type of participation" (Kim et al., 1999, p. 378). Education, age, gender and income, then, may serve as confounding variables and they may have an even stronger impact on stimulating participation than does conversation. Given these arguments, the demographics of education, age, income and gender will be added as controls in the testing of our Hypothesis 2.

Summary of Hypotheses

The present study seeks to explore associations among media use, political talk, and political participation. We are particularly interested in whether media use and political talk predict political participation. The following hypotheses are addressed in this study:

Hypothesis 1a: As media use increases, the amount of people's political talk will increase.

Hypothesis 1b: As their level of education increases, the amount of people's political talk will increase.

Hypothesis 1c: As media use increases, the amount of political talk will increase, even when education is controlled for.

Hypothesis 2: As levels of media use and political talk increase, the level of political participation will increase.

Based on the hypotheses in the study, a causal direction for the components we are interested in is shown in a path model in Figure 1. We assume that both education and media use predict political talk directly and that they also predict political participation through the mediation of political talk.

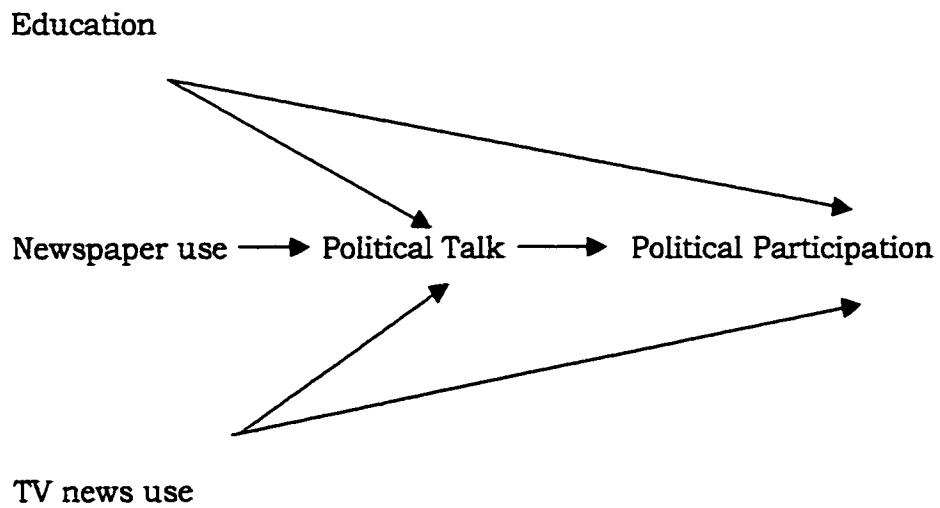


Figure 1. A Path Model Proposing How Education, Newspaper Use and TV News Use Predict Both Political Talk and Political Participation.

The next chapter will introduce the methodology we utilize in this study. We describe the survey, the instrument used to collect the data, and the variables that are studied.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature regarding media effects, the concept of political socialization, the importance of political talk, and finally associations among media use, political talk, and political participation. The expectations of this study were also offered and the theoretical explanations of agenda setting, priming effect, and uses and gratifications were provided to support these expectations. This chapter introduces the data utilized in this study, the instrument used to collect data, and the variables studied.

The Data

This study involves a secondary analysis of survey data from the 2000 American National Election Study (NES). The 2000 NES was conducted by the Center for Political Studies of the Institute for Social Research, under the general direction of Nancy Burns and Donald R. Kinder. Ashley Grosse was the Director of Studies for the National Election Studies and oversaw the study from its early planning stages

through the release of the 2000 data (see Codebook from Burns, Kinder, Rosenstone, & Sapiro, 2001).

The data represent the merging of two presidential studies. The number of cases in this data set, 1807, includes all respondents from the 2000 Pre- and Post-Election surveys. The 2000 National Election Study entailed both a pre-election interview and a post-election re-interview. Interviewing for the pre-election survey began on September 5, 2000 and concluded on November 6, 2000. The average length of interview in the pre-election survey was 68 minutes. The overall response rate was 61%. The post-election survey interviewing occurred between November 6 and December 21, 2000, with an average interview length of 64 minutes. The overall re-interview response rate was 86%.

The NES staff reported that they implemented a number of strategies to bolster response rates, including respondent incentives, interviewer incentives, carefully written appeals to respondents, special non-response training for interviewers, express mailed pre-notification packages for respondents, and extensive refusal conversion attempts. Most of these strategies were implemented during the pre-election study.

The post-election study was marked by the willingness of the respondents to be re-interviewed, perhaps due to continuing interest in the election outcome of the prolonged dispute between now President George W. Bush and his opponent Al Gore. The overall refusal rate (the proportion of all cases in which a respondent refuses to do an interview

to the total eligible respondents contacted) for the post election study was 5%.

The study continued NES's commitment to probability area sampling and face-to-face interviewing. Part of the survey was executed by face-to-face interviewing and part by telephone interviewing. Both methods were applied to the Pre-election and Post-election surveys. Random digital dialing was used to develop the telephone interview sample. We make no distinctions here in this study between data obtained from face-to-face and from telephone interviewing.

The population of inference for the 2000 Pre- and Post-Election Study is defined as including all United States citizens of voting age on or before the 2000 Election Day. Eligible citizens must have resided in housing units in the forty-eight coterminous states. This definition excludes persons living in Alaska or Hawaii and required eligible persons to have been both a United States citizen and eighteen years of age on or before the 7th of November 2000.

Variables

The variables studied here are political discussion, political participation, and media use. Respondent demographics of education, age, gender and income were also included in the analyses.

Among the variables we are interested in, media use and demographic data including education, age, gender and income were obtained from the pre-election survey. The political discussion and

political participation measures were acquired from the post-election study. We do not address issues that might arise in the timing of interviews.

Dependent Variables

Political discussion and political participation served as dependent variables.

Political Discussion. The first hypothesis asserted that media use and level of education predicted political talk. Respondents were first asked to respond to a simple "yes/no" question: "Do you ever discuss politics with your family or friends?" If respondents reported "yes," then they were asked for the frequency of their discussion on a scale of 1 to 7 (days). We interpreted this measure as the higher the score the higher the level of political discussion reported. The question wording was as follows. We use the NES variable naming and labeling system to facilitate the identification of variables for those who might follow us in working with these data in this very large NES 2000 data set.

VAR 001205 (A3a. HOW OFTEN DOES R DISCUSS POLITICS)

How many days in the past week did you talk about politics with family or friends? (1-7)

Political Participation. The second hypothesis asserted that both media use and political talk predicted political participation. Following the lead of previous literature, a set of eight yes-no items reporting various political campaign behavior was combined into an additive index

labeled political participation. The eight questions were worded as follows:

VAR 001225 (B2. DID R TRY TO INFLUENCE VOTE OF OTHERS)

We would like to find out about some of the things people do to help a party or a candidate win an election. During the campaign, did you talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates?

- 1. Yes
- 5. No

VAR 001226 (B3. DID R DISPLAY BUTTON/STICKER/SIGN)

Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?

- 1. Yes
- 5. No

VAR 001227 (B4. DID R GO TO MEETINGS/RALLIES ETC)

Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?

- 1. Yes
- 5. No

VAR 001228 (B5. DID R DO ANY OTHER CAMPAIGN WORK)

Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates?

- 1. Yes
- 5. No

VAR 001229 (B6. DID R CONTRIBUTE TO CANDIDATE)

During an election year people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Did you give money to an individual candidate running for public office?

- 1. Yes
- 5. No

VAR 001231 (B7. DID R GIVE MONEY TO PARTY)

Did you give money to a political party during this election year?

1. *Yes*
5. *No*

VAR 001233 (B8. DID R GIVE TO GROUP FOR/AGAINST CAND)

Did you give any money to any other group that supported or opposed candidates?

1. *Yes*
5. *No*

VAR 001241 (C1. DID R VOTE)

In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time.

Which of the following statements best describes you:

1. *I did not vote (in the election this November);*
2. *I thought about voting this time - but didn't;*
3. *I usually vote, but didn't this time; or*
4. *I am sure I voted.*

We recoded the Variables 001225-001233 to "yes = 1" and "no = 0" rather than the original value of "yes = 1" and "no = 5." Variable 001241 was also recoded into a dichotomy. If the respondents answered "4. I am sure I voted" on VAR 001241, we gave them "1", and the rest of the response options recoded as "0".

This set of eight dichotomous (yes/no) questions, was transformed via a counting procedure into an additive index we call political participation. We interpret this index as the higher respondents score on the index, the higher their level of political participation. The reliability of

this political participation index was $KR = 0.62$. Carmines and Zeller (1979) suggest a reliability level of 0.70 as appropriate for ad hoc scales of this type. While the political participation index did not quite meet this reliability standard, it was accepted here as satisfactory for subsequent analysis.

The distribution of the political participation index was severely skewed (skew = 1.4). Hamilton (1990) and Mosteller & Tukey (1977) suggests that a log transform can reduce positive skewness and bring distributions close to normality. Morgan, Griego, & Gloeckner (2001) have suggested a rule of thumb where a skew range of +1 to -1 can be assumed to meet assumptions of normality. A log transformation of the index was effected and the skew of this transformed index (skew = - 0.06) fell within Morgan et al.'s (2001) suggested range for normality. The log transform of the political participation index was used in subsequent analyses.

Independent Variables

The independent variables included media use and several demographic measures. Media use measures involved both national television news viewing and newspaper use. Demographic measures included education, gender, age, and income. Education was a component of the study's first hypothesis. The remaining demographic measures were components of the study's second hypothesis.

Media Use. Media use measures included both national television news viewing and newspaper use. The review of literature suggested that newspaper and television news often differ in the nature and the size of their effects. Our data analyses supported this idea, with TV news and newspaper use both showing quite different bivariate associations with political talk and political participation, while at the same time TV news use and newspaper use showed weak associations with each other.

We therefore did not combine television and newspaper measure into one global media use measure. Further, although data for both national and local television news viewing were available in the data set, we did not take local television news use into account. Our focus here was a national presidential election, and we considered that national television news and newspaper use would be more relevant to the study.

Respondents were asked on a 0-7 scale for each media use measure.

TV News Use. Respondents were asked how often they watched national TV news.

VAR 000329 (A6. NUMBER OF DAYS R WATCHED NAT'L NEWS)

How many days in the past week did you watch the national network news on TV?

0. NONE
1. ONE DAY
2. TWO DAYS
3. THREE DAYS
4. FOUR DAYS
5. FIVE DAYS

6. *SIX DAYS*
7. *EVERY DAY*

Newspaper Use. Respondents were asked how often they read daily newspaper.

VAR 000335 (A10. DAYS R READ A DAILY NEWSPAPER)

How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper?

0. *NONE*
1. *ONE DAY*
2. *TWO DAYS*
3. *THREE DAYS*
4. *FOUR DAYS*
5. *FIVE DAYS*
6. *SIX DAYS*
7. *EVERY DAY*

Poindexter (1979, 1980) has suggested that people who do not read newspapers and those who do not watch television news have different traits from newspaper readers and TV news viewers. Here we are more interested in the relationship between media use and political behaviors, so we have excluded nonreaders and nonviewers from this study. We do include nonreaders and nonviewers in our measures from time to time as a quality check.

Attention to Media Use. Chaffee and Schleuder (1986) have contended that media attention measures are important in evaluating media impact. Following this argument, we combined our media use measures with their respective attention measures into two additive media use indexes we call TV news use and newspaper use. Our attention measures differ from the use measures insofar as they focused

specifically on the presidential election. Their question wording was as follows:

Attention to National TV News Use:

VAR 000330 (A6a/A6a.T. ATTENTION TO NATIONAL NEWS)

IF R WATCHED NATIONAL NETWORK TV NEWS IN PAST WEEK:

How much attention do you pay to news on national news shows about the campaign for President – a great deal, quite a bit, some, very little, or none?

1. A GREAT DEAL
2. QUITE A BIT
3. SOME
4. VERY LITTLE
5. NONE

If respondents reported reading newspapers any days in the past week, they were then asked the simple yes/no question of " Did you read about the campaign in any newspaper?" If the respondents reported reading about the campaign in any newspaper last week, they were asked how much attention they paid to articles about the campaign for president. The question wording for newspaper attention was as follows:

Attention to Newspaper Use:

VAR 000337 (A10b/A10b.T. ATTENTION TO PAPER ARTICLES)

How much attention do you pay to newspaper articles about the campaign for President – a great deal, quite a bit, some, very little, or none?

1. A GREAT DEAL
2. QUITE A BIT
3. SOME
4. VERY LITTLE
5. NONE

The scaling direction on these two attention measures was reversed through recoding so, for example, a score of 5 represented "A great deal" instead of the score of 1 that appeared in the original data. Following this recoding, the exposure and attention measures for each of the two media were then summed to deliver the TV and newspaper use measures.

Demographics

Education. For level of education, respondents were asked the following question.

VAR 000910 (Y3. HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED)

What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed?

Age. Respondents were asked the date and the year that they were born.

VAR 000908 (Y1x. RESPONDENT AGE)

What is the month, day and year of your birth?

Each respondent's age was calculated by subtracting his/her reported year of birth from 2000, the year of the survey.

Gender.

VAR 001029 (ZZ1. IWR OBS: R GENDER)

Respondent's sex is:

1. MALE
2. FEMALE

We dummy coded gender to 1 for male and 0 for female.

Income.

VAR 000994 (Y27x. HH INCOME -ALL HHs)

I am going to read you a list of income categories. Please tell me which category best describes the total income of all members of your family living in your house in 1999 before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. Please stop me when I get to your family's income.

1. A. NONE OR LESS THAN \$4,999
2. B. \$5,000-\$9,999
3. C. \$10,000-\$14,999
4. D. \$15,000-\$24,999
5. E. \$25,000-\$34,999
6. F. \$35,000-\$49,999
7. G. \$50,000-\$64,999
8. H. \$65,000-\$74,999
9. J. \$75,000-\$84,999
10. K. \$85,000-\$94,999
11. M. \$95,000-\$104,999
12. N. \$105,000-\$114,999
13. P. \$115,000-\$124,999
14. Q. \$125,000-\$134,999
15. R. \$135,000-\$144,999
16. S. \$145,000-\$154,999
17. T. \$155,000-\$164,999
18. U. \$165,000-\$174,999
19. V. \$175,000-\$184,999
20. W. \$185,000-\$194,999
21. X. \$195,000-\$199,999
22. Y. \$200,000 and over

The study's hypotheses were tested using correlation and regression analysis. The statistical analysis software used was SPSS, Version 10.

This chapter has reviewed the nature of the data, the instrument used to collect data and the variables we are interested in. The following chapter will report on the general characteristics of the sample and provide the results of the statistical tests associated with the study's research hypotheses.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter first reports on some of the general characteristics of the sample studied here, and then describes the variables we are particularly interested in. Finally, a series of tables, figures and statistical tests are offered in association with the reporting of the analyses of the study's research hypotheses.

Summary Description of Sample

Demographic Variables

A total of 1807 United States citizens (over age 18 by the day of the election), eligible to vote, and residing in United States households were surveyed September to November, 2000. Of these, 778 were males (43.1%) and 1029 were females (56.9%). The mean, median, and modal age of the sample were 47.22, 45, and 37 respectively, with age ranging from 18 to 97.

The median and mode for annual household income of the sample were in the category of \$35,000-\$49,999. This is consistent with census

data which reports 1999 median household income at \$ 40,816 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Education was asked for as the highest school year that respondents had completed. The mean and median education level, as shown in the frequency distribution in Table 1, were 13.62 and 14 respectively, on a scale from 0-17 years. This is close to a sophomore level in a four-year college education. The mode was 12, the equivalent of high school graduates. The bar chart in Figure 2 shows the distribution of education level to be negatively skewed (skew = - 0.87) but within Morgan, Griego, and Gloeckner's (2001) rule of thumb that distributions with a skew coefficient within the range +1 to -1 can be assumed to approximate a normal distribution.

Table 1

Frequencies & Summary Statistics for Education

Years Completed	N	Years Completed	N
0	3	9	26
1	0	10	52
2	3	11	66
3	0	12	483
4	5	13	181
5	2	14	240
6	14	15	106
7	12	16	316
8	30	17	259
Valid	1798	Mode	12
Missing	9	Std. Dev.	2.57
Mean	13.62	Skew	-0.87
Median	14	Range	17

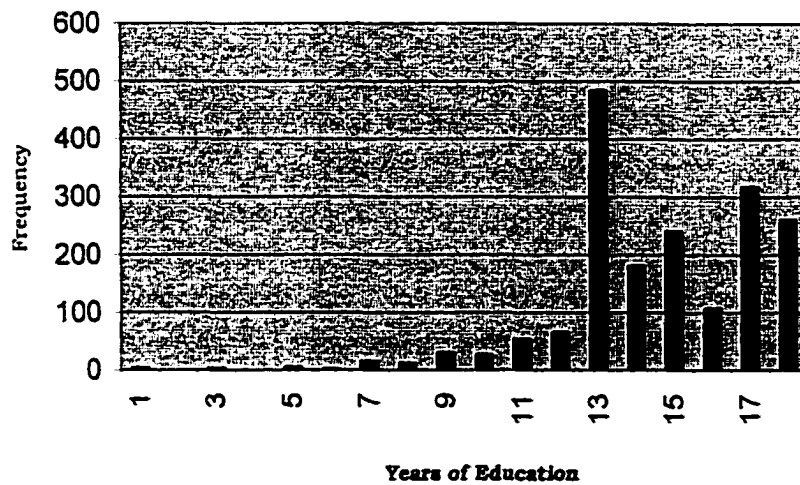


Figure 2. Bar Chart Showing the Highest School Years that Respondents Have Completed.

Media Variables

Respondents reported their frequency of television news viewing and newspaper reading in days per week (0-7). The mean and median days of national television news viewing with nonviewers included were 3.29 and 3. The mode was 7. More than a quarter (28.5%) of the respondents reported watching national television news every day while 26.8% of the respondents reported not watching TV news at all.

The mean and median days per week for newspaper reading in the sample with nonreaders included were 3.44 and 3. The mode was 7.

More than one third (33.8%) of the sample reported reading the newspaper every day in the week before the survey was executed while more than a quarter (25.9%) of respondents reported they did not read the newspaper at all.

Among the total of 1807 respondents, 3 were missing on the TV use question. 174 respondents (9.6%) reported that they neither watched television nor read newspapers in the week prior to the survey. Meanwhile, 248 respondents (13.7%) reported that they used both media, national television news and newspapers, 7 days a week.

The data reported so far included nonviewers and nonreaders. In Chapter 3 we noted that our interest in the present study involved TV news viewers and newspaper readers only. Poindexter (1979, 1980) has contended that TV news nonviewers and newspaper nonreaders have unique characteristics that TV news viewers and newspaper readers do not have. Since we are interested here in how media consumption influences individuals' political communication and political participation, we eliminated these nonreaders and nonviewers from the sample. Data where nonviewers and nonreaders are excluded are offered next.

Table 2 reports that the mean, median and mode for national TV viewing with nonviewers excluded were 4.5, 5, and 7 days per week respectively.

Table 2

Frequencies & Summary Statistics for National TV Viewing - Nonviewers Excluded

Day	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	165	12.5	12.5
2	201	15.2	27.7
3	179	13.6	41.3
4	99	7.5	48.8
5	135	10.2	59.0
6	27	2.0	61.0
7	515	39.0	100.0
Total	1804	100.0	

Valid	1321	Mode	7
Missing	486	Std. Dev.	2.31
Mean	4.5	Skew	-0.16
Median	5.0	Range	6

Table 3 reports that after excluding nonreaders, the mean, median and mode for newspaper reading were 4.6, 5, and 7 days per week respectively.

Table 3

Frequencies & Summary Statistics for Newspaper Reading - Nonreaders Excluded

Day	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	216	16.1	16.1
2	181	13.5	29.6
3	130	9.7	39.4
4	74	5.5	44.9
5	92	6.9	51.8
6	36	2.7	54.4
7	610	45.6	100.0
Total	1807	100.0	

Valid	1339	Mode	7
Missing	468	Std. Dev.	2.44
Mean	4.64	Skew	-0.32
Median	5	Range	6

Figure 3 is a bar chart showing TV news viewing and newspaper reading. It shows that 515 respondents (39%) reported that they watched TV seven days a week and 610 respondents (45.6%) reported that they read a newspaper every day. The data for national TV news use (skew = -0.16) and newspaper reading (skew = -0.32) were both negatively skewed.

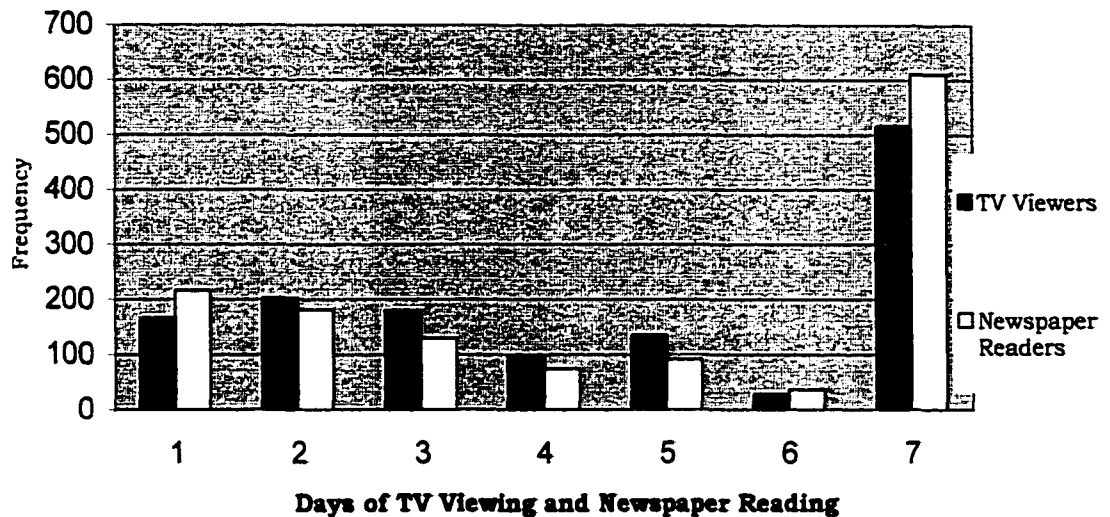


Figure 3. Bar Chart of Frequencies for TV Viewing and Newspaper Reading with Nonviewers and Nonreaders Excluded

Political Discussion Measure

Political discussion was one of our two dependent variables. The question first asked if respondents discussed politics with family or friends. More than four out of five respondents (80.9%) reported that they had discussed politics with their family or friends. Those people who had discussed politics with their family or friends were further asked for their frequency of discussion of politics with family, measured as days (0-7 days) in the past week. Their frequency of political discussion is reported in Table 4 and as a bar chart in Figure 4.

Table 4 shows that more than a half of the sample (52.5%) reported that they discussed politics every day. The mean days of the

past week that they discussed politics was 5.19 and the median and mode were identical at 7.

Table 4

Frequencies & Summary Statistics for Respondents' Discussion of Politics

Day	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	63	5.1	5.1
2	149	12.1	17.2
3	145	11.7	28.9
4	97	7.9	36.8
5	110	8.9	45.7
6	23	1.9	47.5
7	648	52.5	100.0
Total	1235	100.0	

Valid	1235	Mode	7
Missing	572	Std. Dev.	2.13
Mean	5.19	Skew	-.61
Median	7	Range	6

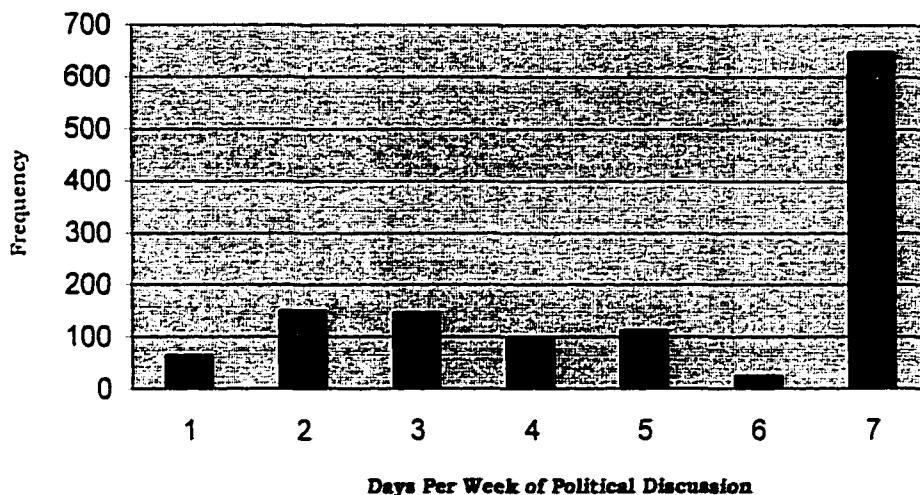


Figure 4. Bar Chart of Frequencies for Political Discussion

Political Participation Variables

Based on previous literature, we identified eight items related to political participation. Respondents were asked dichotomous yes/no questions and the results are reported in Table 5. Among these variables, more than one third (35.1%) of the sample reported trying to persuade people that they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates during the campaign.

More than three out four respondents (76.1%) reported that they were sure that they voted in November's presidential election while only 23.9% of the sample reported that they did not vote this time; they thought about voting this time - but didn't; or they usually vote but didn't this time. This 76.1% voting report is substantially higher than the 51.2% reported as the voting turnout in the 2000 presidential

election from the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate ("51% of eligible," 2000).

Other than persuasion and voting, less than 10% of the respondents reported that they have participated in other political activities, such as attend meetings and speeches (5.5%), worked for party or candidates (2.8%), contributed to party candidates (6.6%), contributed to party (6.4%), or contributed to groups (4.4%) (see Table 5).

Table 5

Items in Political Participation Index

	Valid	Missing	Yes (Valid Percent)	No (Valid Percent)
V1225 Persuasion	1555	252	546 (35.1%)	1009 (64.9%)
V1226 Button & Sticker	1554	253	156 (10.0%)	1398 (90.0%)
V1227 Attend Meetings & Speeches	1555	252	85 (5.5%)	1470 (94.5%)
V1228 Work for Party or Candidates	1555	252	43 (2.8%)	1512 (97.2%)
V1229 Contribution to Candidates	1553	254	103 (6.6%)	1450 (93.4%)
V1231 Contribution to Party	1555	252	99 (6.4%)	1456 (93.6%)
V1233 Contribution to Groups	1555	252	69 (4.4%)	1486 (95.6%)
V1241 Vote	1554	253	1182 (76.1%)	372 (23.9%)

The additive index we called political participation combined the eight variables listed in Table 5 thereby transforming the original dichotomous measures to a continuous measure. The frequency distribution of this political participation index is reported in Table 6 and as a histogram in Figure 5. Political participation scores ranged from 0 to 8, with a median of 1.47 and mean and mode identical at 1. Almost half of the sample (43.3%) reported that they have been involved in at least one of the eight political activities while only one person reported that he/she was involved in all eight of the political activities.

The political participation index showed a severe positive skew (skew = 1.40) as illustrated in Figure 5. This may be due to the low self-reported levels of participation in Table 5. A skew of 1.4 is outside the range of Morgan et al.'s (2001) rule of thumb that a skew value within the range of +1 to -1 can be considered to approximately normality. As discussed in the preceding methods chapter a log transform of the political participation index was effected. The log-transformed index showed a skew value of - 0.06. Figures 5 and 6 show histograms with a normal curve imposed, for the original and transformed indexes respectively.

Table 6

Frequencies & Summary Statistics for Political Participation Index

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	279	18.0	18.0
1	671	43.3	61.3
2	373	24.0	85.3
3	124	6.9	93.3
4	57	3.7	97.0
5	28	1.8	98.8
6	15	1.0	99.7
7	3	.2	99.9
8	1	.1	100.0
Total	1551	100.0	

Valid	1551	Mode	1
Missing	256	Std. Dev.	1.22
Mean	1.47	Skew	1.40
Median	1	Range	8

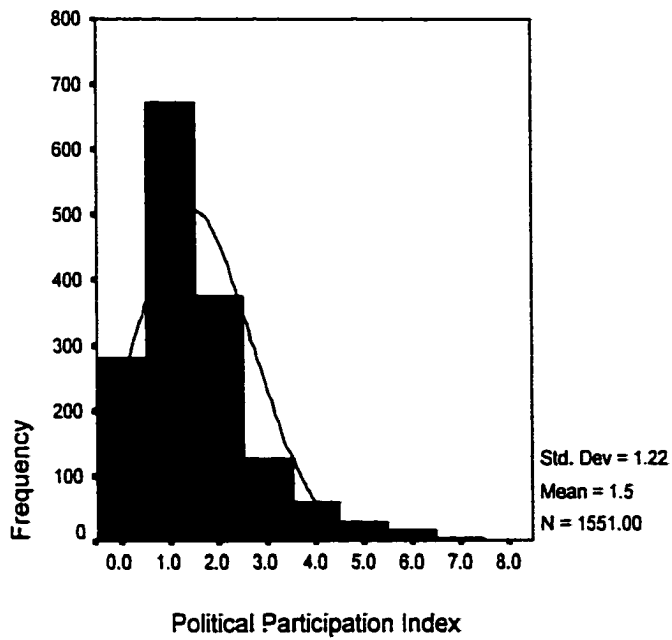


Figure 5. Histogram of Political Participation Index with Normal Curve Imposed

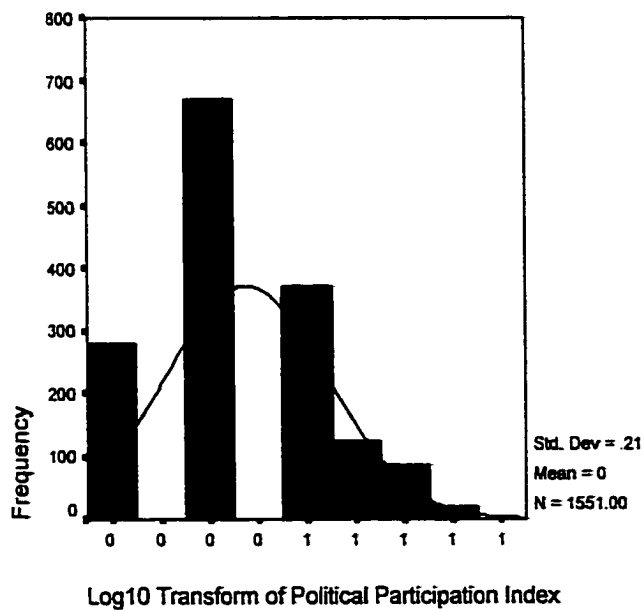


Figure 6. Histogram of Log₁₀ Transform of Political Participation Index with Normal Curve Imposed.

Tests of the Hypotheses

Media Use, Education, and Political Talk

We first hypothesized that as media use increased, the amount of people's political talk would increase. We examined both television news use and newspaper news use, with nonviewers and nonreaders excluded. These media use measures incorporated both exposure and attention to campaign news. Correlation analysis was used to test this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Table 7 reports the zero-order correlations. Both television news use ($r = 0.26$, $n = 666$, $p < .01$) and newspaper news use ($r = 0.12$, $n = 623$, $p < .01$) were positively correlated with the amount of political talk.

The finding that television news use showed a stronger relationship with political talk than did newspaper use was unexpected. We had expected newspaper use to be more strongly associated with political talk than TV news use based on the previous literature reviewed.

Level of education has been reported as a predictor of media use, especially for newspapers. Hypothesis 1b asserted that as their level of education increases, the amount of people's political talk would increase. Table 7 reports that education showed a weak positive correlation with political talk ($r = 0.09$, $n = 787$, $p < .01$).

However, there was no statistically significant bivariate correlation between education and television or newspaper news use in the data, nor

was there any substantive shift in these correlations when education was controlled for (see Table 7A).

Hypothesis 1c asserted that as media use increases, the level of political talk would increase, even when education is controlled for. Table 7A shows the partial correlation coefficients when education was controlled for. Contrast the shifts in the correlations between Table 7 & Table 7A. We conclude that education does not act as a confounding variable here in the relationships between media use and political talk.

Table 7

Zero Order Correlation Coefficients for Political Talk, Media Use, Demographics, & Political Participation

	TV	Newspaper	Political Talk	N
Demographics				
Age	.34**	.28**	.12**	785
Sex	-.04	.05	.05	790
Education	.01	.03	.09**	787
Income	.01	.05	.18**	676
News-Media Use				
Television		.20**	.26**	666
Newspaper	.20**		.12**	623
Political Participation	.17**	.13**	.25**	703

**p < .01.

Table 7A

Partial Correlation Coefficients for Political Talk & Media Use when Education is Controlled

	TV	Newspaper	Political Talk	N
News-Media Use				
Television		.22**	.27**	519
Newspaper			.09*	519
Political Participation	.12**	.09*	.20***	519

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

***p < .001.

We wondered if our eliminating nonviewers and nonreaders from the media use measures may have had an impact on this relationship, so we examined the relationships between the original television news use, newspaper news use and education measures with nonviewers and nonreaders included. Education showed no relationship with TV news use, but did show a weak to moderate positive correlation with our newspaper use measure ($r = 0.35$, $n = 787$, $p < .05$).

This finding raises the intriguing question that the relationships reported in the literature between education and newspaper use might actually be driven by the non-newspaper reading fraction.

We also predicted in hypothesis 1b that levels of education were associated with political talk. Although education did not show a correlation with our media use measures, it did show a very weak

positive relationship with political talk ($r = 0.09$, $n = 787$, $p < .01$). In other words, the more educated people are, the more political talk they reported being involved in. This finding, albeit a very weak one, is consistent with Kim et al.'s finding in their 1999 study. Education was the only demographic factor that Kim et al. found had an impact on their political talk measure. They reported a correlation of $r = 0.12$ ($n = 958$, $p < .001$). We found that age also showed a weak to moderate correlation with newspaper use ($r = 0.28$, $n = 785$, $p < .01$) (see Table 7), as did television news use ($r = 0.34$, $n = 785$, $p < .01$), and political talk ($r = 0.12$, $n = 785$, $p < .01$). Income, too, showed a positive relationship with political talk ($r = 0.18$, $n = 676$, $p < .01$).

Media Use, Political Talk, and Political Participation

Hypothesis 2 predicted that as levels of media use and political talk increased, levels of political participation would increase. Multiple linear regression was used to evaluate this hypothesis. The results are shown in Table 8. The model accounted for 18% of the variation ($R^2 = 0.18$) in our log transformed political participation index.

Table 8 shows that six of the seven variables (age, education, household income, gender, newspaper news use, television news use, and political talk), were significant predictors of political participation. Newspaper news use was the only measure that did not predict political participation in the model. Ranked in descending order of their standardized beta coefficient the six significant predictors were education

(beta = 0.22), political talk (beta = 0.17), income (beta = 0.14), TV news (beta = 0.10), age (beta = 0.10), and gender (beta = 0.08).

Of our media measures, only national television news use was a predictor of political participation. Newspaper use did not predict political participation. Political talk played a significant role in predicting participation and this result supported our Hypothesis 2. The hypothesis, however predicted that as media use and political talk increased political participation would increase. The hypothesis was supported in the case of TV news use only, and not for newspaper use.

Table 8

Regression Coefficients Predicting Political Participation^a
(Coefficients are standardized beta weights; n= 454)

Predictors	Political Participation	Political Talk
Demographics		
Education	.22***	.09*
Age	.10*	
Sex ^b	.08*	
Income	.14**	
News-Media Use		
Television	.10*	.24***
Newspaper	ns	ns
Political Talk	.17***	
Adjusted R ²	.18	.08

Note. Missing cases were deleted pairwise.

ns = no significance

^a. Political participation is log transformed to reduce positive skew.

^b. Dummy coded, male =1, female =0.

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

A Summary of Findings

The first assumption in this study was that media use was correlated with political discussion. We hypothesized that the more TV news or newspaper information about the campaign that people consumed, the more political discussion they would get involved in. The hypothesis was supported using correlation analysis and these relationships did not change much when education was introduced as a confounding variable and controlled for. Both TV news use and newspaper news use showed a positive relationship with political talk.

The regression model in Table 8 partially supports our second hypothesis which predicted that both media use and political talk would predict political participation. Although newspaper use did not play a role in the regression model, TV news use and political talk did predict political participation.

We further examined the direction and the strength of the relationships among media use, education, political talk, and political participation to test our path model. The path model is reported in Figure 7.

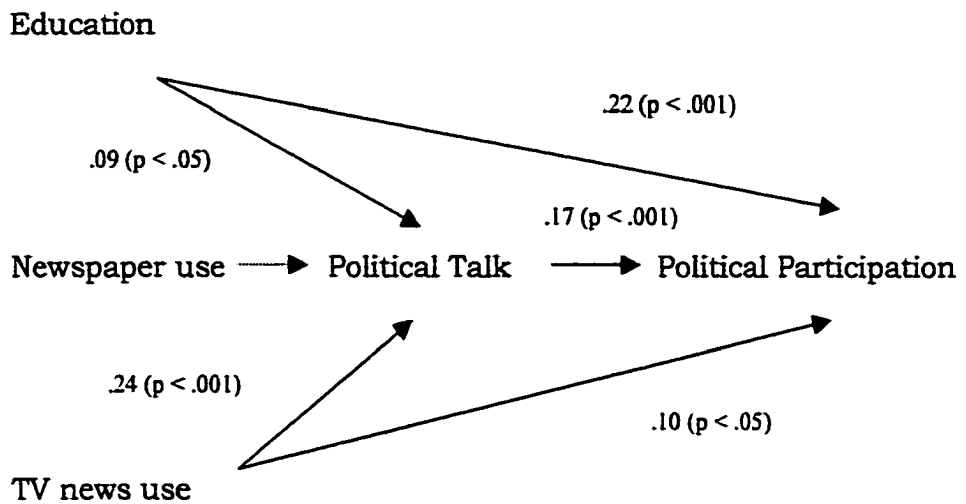


Figure 7. Path Model for Education, Media News Use, Political Talk, and Political Participation.

A path model assumes that there is a causal ordering between the variables as indicated by the directional paths (Tan, 1981). The path model in Figure 7 reports that newspaper use does not predict political talk nor political participation (indicated by a dotted line). TV news use regarding campaign news appears to predict political participation through the mediation of political talk rather than directly. As we noted previously, education did not correlate with newspaper or TV news use. However, Figure 7 shows education plays a direct role in the prediction of political participation and a lesser role when mediated by political talk.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study explored the relationship among media news use, political talk, and political participation. We hypothesized that the more media news people used and the more educated they were, the more political talk they would be involved in. In addition, we predicted that the amount of media use and political talk would predict political participation. The first and second hypothesis were both partially supported. An unexpected finding was that newspaper use did not predict political talk or political participation.

Discussion

The media measures included national TV news use and newspaper use. We excluded nonviewers and nonreaders from these two measures, first, because our model called for media use and second, because Poindexter (1979, 1980) has argued that nonviewers and nonreaders play significantly different roles from TV viewers and newspaper readers. We further incorporated attention measures in each media measure. The media use measures used here have a narrow focus:

they include attention questions, which asked about attention to political campaign content only.

Bivariate analyses showed that both national TV news use and newspaper use were positively correlated with political talk, which supported our first hypothesis (see Table 7). Education showed no association with either TV news use or newspaper use but it did show an association with political talk.

We undertook further analyses in an attempt to understand why education was not correlated with our media use measures. When nonreaders were included in our newspaper use measure, a positive correlation between education and newspaper use reappeared ($r = 0.35$, $n = 787$, $p < .05$). We have two possible explanations for this finding. First, since nonreaders were back in the sample, the sample size was substantially increased. Nonreaders made up 26% of the sample. In this case, the association might merely have been an artifact of the larger sample size.

Second, the narrow focus of our newspaper use measure, where days per week of use was combined with an attention to political campaign content measure, may have reduced the sensitivity of the newspaper use measure to deliver the correlation with education that is typically reported in the literature. Ironically, we seem to be reporting a correlation between newspaper use and education which may be driven by the nonreading fraction in the data.

How much impact sample size plays in this commonly reported relationship between education and newspaper reading and what role nonreaders play in the association are questions needing further exploration.

We further examined the relationship between media use (nonreaders and nonviewers excluded) and political talk when education was controlled for (see Table 7A). Partial correlation analysis confirmed what the bivariate analyses had already indicated: education had little or no influence on the associations between media use and political talk.

A regression model (see Table 8) was used to explore the relationship among media use, political talk and several demographics measures in predicting political participation. Six of the seven measures tested were statistically significant predictors of political participation. In descending order of beta coefficient size, they were education, political talk, income, national TV news use, age, and gender. Newspaper use did not predict political participation in the model.

The model diagrammed in Figure 7 showed that education and TV news use predicted political participation along two paths. One path was mediated through political talk and the other predicted political participation directly. The difference between education and TV news use in terms of prediction was that education seemed to predict political participation more directly instead of through the operation of political

talk, while TV news use's prediction of political participation was mediated more through political talk than directly predicting political participation.

The failure of the newspaper use measure to predict political talk and political participation raises intriguing questions. Again, we wonder to what degree nonreaders might be powering the relationships generally found in the literature, or whether our narrowing of the focus of the measure to campaign content only effectively eliminated the measure from the analysis. Also, we used national TV news use as a variable but local newspaper use was applied here as a comparison. We wonder if the more local nature of the newspaper compared to the national nature of our TV news use measure had an impact on the results.

This study began by proposing a replication of Kim et al.'s (1999) study. In the process we found that a close replication was not possible. This was largely due to the kind of measures available to us in this secondary analysis.

We describe five of these differences here. First, Kim et al. distinguished two types of media use measures: issue specific and general. Our media measures here were more general--we used a general media use measure combined with an attention to campaign content measure. In Kim et al.'s general media news measures, they treated TV news use and newspaper reading separately, as we did in this study.

Second, Kim et al.'s (1999) study divided political talk into personal and issue specific types. We focused only on personal political talk as our predictor. Third, Kim et al.'s political participation measures included a "campaign type" and a "complaining type" of participation. We focus on campaign type participation only.

There were other differences between the two studies' political participation measures. Kim et al.'s "campaign type" measure incorporated four activities (intention to vote, working for a political campaign, attending public meetings, and contacting elected officials) compared to the eight items included in our political participation measure (see Table 5). Finally, their voting measure reported an intent to vote in a forthcoming election whereas we used a self-reported voting behavior claim recorded after the 2000 national election.

These distinctions surely make a difference in the results of the two studies. However, we believe that some comparison can still be made.

First of all, both studies found that education was a statistically significant predictor for political talk and political participation. Kim et al. found that education was correlated with media news use, but we have not found a correlation between education and media news use.

Second, both Kim et al.'s and our studies found that media news use was associated with political talk. However, Kim et al. found that only newspaper use predicted political talk while TV news use did not

contribute to any type of political talk. We found the opposite: TV news use was a significant predictor for political talk and newspaper use did not play a role in our model.

Third, of Kim et al.'s two media use measures only issue specific media use was found to predict political participation. Their more general media use measure (including TV news use and newspaper news use) did not predict political participation. Our study on the other hand showed that among the media use measures TV news use did predict political participation while newspaper news use did not show any association with political participation.

Finally, both studies did show that political talk was a predictor for political participation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Four recommendations are offered for future research. First, we should further examine the association between media news use and political talk. Kim et al.'s (1999) study and our study showed different results. Kim et al. reported that newspaper use was a predictor of political talk while TV news use was not, whereas we found the opposite: TV news use was a predictor of political talk while newspaper use was not.

The second recommendation is that the causal direction of political talk and political participation might need further clarification. We found that political talk was a mediator of political participation. People who

talk about politics more appear to participate in politics more. We wonder if the association between political talk and political participation is more complicated than this. Perhaps, people who are influenced by media news use tend to participate in politics and therefore, have more political information to talk about? More work is needed to clarify causal directions here.

Third, we separated persuasion from political talk in our model, leaving persuasion as a component of our dependent measure of political participation, and political talk as a predictor. Our NES 2000 survey instrument offered these two elements separately and we followed this lead, plus that of previous literature, in separating these two elements of talk. But should persuasion and political talk be separated in this way? In a sense they are both talk.

Finally, we recommend further exploration of the purported relationship between education and newspaper use. When we excluded nonreaders for our analysis and narrowed the newspaper content range to political campaign content only, the association between newspaper use and education disappeared.

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