

**On Trust, Participation, and Media Bias**

Jericho Bernal, Sharon Liu, Tabitha Wagner, Chloe Young, Cesar Moreno, Kayla Pilgrim, Reese Pederson, Ayaan Syed, Lexie Acosta, Jorge Duran, Aashir Khan, Claire Creedon, Deven Horkovy, Dream Cannon, Ella Usiade, Hassan Rana, Ian Choong, Lauren Cole, Max Tuck, Michael Malone, Reese Pederson, Sharon, Diego Sanchez, & Kristen Dyrsch

University of Illinois at Chicago

POLS 200 - Methods of Political Science

December 1st, 2023

Professor R. H. Bruhl

## I. The Research Question

The main question we sought to answer was how trust, participation in politics, and media bias relate to one another. This led us to ask questions and research on multiple topics. These included:

- Does high trust lead to high participation?
- Does the media influence who we trust?
- Does participation lead to trust in specific media?

All these research questions were used to understand further the relationship between trust, participation, and media.

## II. The Research Purpose

Political participation is a vital part in not only creating a stable government but ensuring that individuals have rights afforded to them. The issue lies when a lack of trust is present in the citizens, and this leads to a decrease in participation. Individuals may have a multitude of why they have levels of distrust, but two vital ideas are the government itself and the media. It is no secret that many hold some level of disdain towards the government. This directly leads to whether people may participate in political action. Now with the rise in media and methods to consume it, it has allowed for several ideas of government to be placed in the spotlight. Our objective was to understand how opinions on media and media consumption affect how people participate in politics. This was done in hopes of having a better grasp as to what sources people find to provide reliable information as well. We wanted to see if their opinions regarding the media they consume or rather, do not, as well as their trust, impact their overall involvement in

society and democracy. In recent years, media use or involvement with media has affected the government. This research was very useful because it showed that most people do not trust the government and that mainstream news channels are not as popular as they once were. Many people said they get their news from X, formerly known as Twitter, or from TikTok. Both are not mainstream news outlets but a place where many feel they can get accurate news.

### III. The Literature Review

Tsfati, Y., Strömbäck, J., Lindgren, E., Boomgaarden, H. G., & Vliegenthart, R. (2023). What News Outlets do People Have in Mind When They Answer Survey Questions about Trust in “Media?” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 35(2), 1–7. <https://doi-org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/10.1093/ijpor/edad008>

The authors investigated further into the question, “what news outlets do people have in mind when they answer survey questions about trust in ‘media’?” They conducted a large-scale survey of about 2,300 people in Sweden. The topic included both general media trust measures as well as specific measures about trust in twenty mainstream and non-mainstream news outlets. The authors found that respondents generally averaged all mainstream news sources when indicating whether or not they trust the media.

I thought this source was an interesting read because it is doing analysis about how people answer surveys regarding a portion of our topic.

Archer, A. M. N. (2018). Political Advantage, Disadvantage, and the Demand for Partisan News. *Journal of Politics*, 80(3), 845–859. <https://doi-org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/10.1086/696993>

The author argues that the national political environment can affect the demand for

partisan media. She used a data set that characterizes the partisan slant of local newspapers and their circulation levels between 1932 and 2004 to find that when parties are advantaged in the presidential election that the demand for affiliated news decreases relative to the demand for news affiliated with the disadvantaged party.

I thought this source was an interesting read because I have not seen a lot of studies talk about how the position in an election cycle and what the projected outcome is.

It affects how people consume media. I would be interested to find more studies about this.

Kerrissey, J., & Schofer, E. (2013). Union Membership and Political Participation in the United States. *Social Forces*, 91(3), 895–928. <https://doi-org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/10.1093/sf/sos187>

The authors analyze the effects of union membership on political participation. They find that union membership does lead to increased political participation especially for those that are otherwise unlikely to participate like low-income and less educated individuals.

I thought this source was an interesting read because we never talked much as a group about the diverse groups of people we are likely to survey and how that might skew some results one way or another. Hypothetically, building off the source, if many of us happened to be working union jobs and surveyed the people we collaborated with we would find an elevated level of participation rather than if the group of people were from more diverse or varying backgrounds.

Bertsou, Eri. “Rethinking Political Distrust.” *European Political Science Review*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2019, pp. 213–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773919000080>.

Article centering on political distrust- Namely - the beneficial “liberal distrust” present in democracies and the contemporary distrust found in modern politics. It was found Using empirical data to organize a model. They concluded by showing a significant asymmetric relationship between trust and distrust beyond elevated levels in one correlating with a decrease in another. Distrust was seen as low enough to necessitate intervention as it demonstrates danger to the health of a democracy and its institutions.

Scheufele, Dietram A. “Science Communication as Political Communication.” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS, vol. 111, no. Supplement 4, 2014, pp. 13585–92, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1317516111>.

Analyzes the relation between political and Scientific debate and the role of empirical data in shaping what issues are debated and what attitudes emerge regarding politics.

Esquith, Stephen L. (Stephen Lawrence). *The Political Responsibilities of Everyday Bystanders*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Asserts the capability of political education to motivate Political bystanders to be active and affirms Political distrust to be a correlation with the perception of government failure rather than outright government faith.

Ladd, Jonathan McDonald. “The Role of Media Distrust in Partisan Voting.” *Political Behavior* 32, no. 4 (2010): 567–85. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40960955>.

In this study, the researchers found that in the 2004 election, distrust in the media led to many voters relying on political “predispositions” to make the decisions on who to vote for. They provide a graph that directly correlates the rise of the media with the decrease of confidence in the press. By two thousand, confidence in the press was substantially lower than confidence in other institutions.

Im, Tobin, Wonhyuk Cho, Greg Porumbescu, and Jungho Park. “Internet, Trust in Government, and Citizen Compliance.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART* 24, no. 3 (2014): 741–63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24484836>.

In this study, trust for the government was measured against time spent on the internet.

The results suggested that negative effects the internet may have on government trust and compliance can be moderated by e-government.

Schroeder, Ralph. “Media Systems, Digital Media and Politics.” In *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization*, 28–59. UCL Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt20krxdr.5>.

This part of the book dives into the relationship between media and politics in four countries, US, Sweden, China, and India. It further discusses the impact of the media on the rise of right-wing populism in these four countries.

Bernard, F. M., 2001 “Democratic legitimacy: plural views and political power”

The author argues that if western democracy wants to continue as a legitimate political system it needs to maintain the integrity of its principles. He demonstrates that in a democracy accountability is more than damage control and must be part of considerations in the political forum before decisions are made, not just after the fact when trying to assign blame.

Botwick, Aryeh, 1990 “Skepticism and political participation” *Philadelphia: Temple University Press*

The author argues for political participation and believes that more people need to get involved politically. The author also proposes strategies to increase participation. He tries to find parallels between now and past societies while forming his arguments.

Duncan, Grant 2018 “The Problem of Political Trust: A Conceptual Reformulation” *Routledge*  
First Edition

The author examines how trust has evolved from a quality of personal relationships into a critical factor in political institutions and representation. And to an abstract and impersonal factor that applies now to complex systems including monetary systems.

Conroy, Meredith, et al. “Facebook and Political Engagement: A Study of Online Political Group Membership and Offline Political Engagement.” *Computers in Human Behavior*,  
Pergamon, 24 Apr. 2012,

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563212000787](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563212000787).

In *Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement* by Meredith Conroy, Jessica T. Feezell, and Mario Guerrero, they designed a survey consisting of 455 university undergraduate students. This study assessed the relationship between online political group membership and political engagement, which was measured through political participation and the scope of political knowledge revolving around the 2008 election. Their main question centered around what groups foster political engagement versus what groups diminish participation. The study found that there is a strong correlation between participation in online political groups and political participation. Still, they could not confirm that there is a relationship between participation in online political groups and political knowledge.

The most likely explanation is a low-quality online discussion or misinformation spread via these groups.

Floyd, Jonathan. *Is Political Philosophy Impossible? : Thoughts and Behaviour in Normative Political Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

In Floyd's book *Is Political Philosophy Impossible?*, he sets out to determine the different rules of political philosophy, along with the different continuities of philosophy. Floyd explains the differences in philosophers' thoughts and why political philosophy is so complex. These institutions have unique rules, which makes evaluating it much more difficult. He focuses heavily on normative behaviorism, which is his method of applying behavioral trends to produce a normative political theory.

Lee, Sangwon, et al. "Platform-Dependent Effects of Incidental Exposure to Political News on Political Knowledge and Political Participation." *Computers in Human Behavior*, Pergamon, 5 Oct. 2021, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S074756322100371X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S074756322100371X).  
*In Platform-dependent effects of incidental exposure to political news on political knowledge and political participation*, Sangwon Lee, Andreas Nanz, and Raffael Heiss discuss the effects of incidental exposure to political news on social media. Incidental exposure is when individuals encounter news, often politically biased, even when they are not actively looking for news. This is becoming increasingly common on all social media apps. Still, this study specifically looked at Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and their platform-specific effects on their users' political knowledge and participation. This data was collected during the 2020 election, and it was found that incidental exposure is not entirely beneficial. Incidental exposure on Facebook and Twitter did not affect political knowledge or participation. Still, their findings suggest YouTube can negatively



impact political knowledge, especially for those new to politics or with less political knowledge.

Ladd, Jonathan McDonald. "The Role of Media Distrust in Partisan Voting." *Political Behavior* 32, no. 4 (2010): 567–85. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40960955>.

This paper talks about trust in the media and how they have been very unpopular in recent decades. They then analyze how this feeling may impact voting behaviors using the 2004 presidential election. They find that due to the high amount of unpopularity in the media, it leads people to believe that campaign information is also not believable. This causes people to revert to standard partisan ways. Due to their distrust in the media, they rely on things already known, which means partisan biases.

Powell, G. Bingham. "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective." *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 1 (1986): 17–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1957082>.

Powell discusses how and why the American participation rate is so low and some factors that could influence this. He concludes that there are institutional as well as cultural factors that encourage political participation but points out that it has been very low since the 1960s. However, there are many institutional and legal disadvantages, such as voter suppression in the form of various registration laws, which make it more difficult to vote. This led to the conclusion that education and socio-economic status were main factors and correlations within not voting, as these people are usually suppressed. Changing the registration laws to make things more accessible and equitable is seen as an easy solution.

Weinschenk, Aaron C., and David J. Helpap. "Political Trust in the American States." *State & Local Government Review* 47, no. 1 (2015): 26–34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24638838>.

The authors first identify that trust in government has dropped significantly in recent years. They then point out the difference in trust in state and local governments, which is far higher than trust in the federal government. They find that unemployment is negatively related to trust, and ideology is positively correlated. Income is also seen as a statistically significant factor, so if the person is doing well, they will trust their government. Differentiating between state and federal government, corruption, and polarizations, while important in federal trust was not in state level government. Lastly they differentiate between economic, political, and social factors, and determine that economic and political factors are of greater import.

Altschuler, D., & Corrales, J. (2013). *The promise of participation: experiments in participatory governance in Honduras and Guatemala*. Palgrave Macmillan.

This book presents an argument that civic, or any kind of participation leads to other forms of participation, which makes it a generative attitude. The evidence of a large survey shows that the simplest form of participation can produce more forms of participation.

Geurkink, B., Zaslove, A., Sluiter, R., & Jacobs, K. (2020). Populist Attitudes, Political Trust, and External Political Efficacy: Old Wine in New Bottles? *Political Studies*, 68(1), 247–267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719842768>

This article uses data collected from the Netherlands (2018) to show the relationship between voting, populist parties/attitudes, political trust, and effectiveness. The conclusion of the study shows that populist attitudes and voting preferences are not only obtained through political trust but from different other attitudes.

Silverblatt, A., & Silverblatt, A. (2014). *Media literacy: keys to interpreting media messages* (4th ed.). Praeger.

This book provides instructions on how to present and interpret information collected from the media. It also provides methods that allow for an analytical and evaluative approach to media content.

MARIEN, SOFIE, and MARC HOOGHE. "Does Political Trust Matter? An Empirical

Investigation into the Relation Between Political Trust and Support for Law

Compliance." *European journal of political research* 50.2 (2011): 267–291. Web.

In this study, researchers focus on empirical investigation and see if there is a difference between political trust and support for law compliance. The ESN is a questionnaire repeated each year to measure political satisfaction, life quality, religion, and society.

What was found is that in every country where there was high political trust there tended to be more legal freedoms. As increased people felt that their political trust was low the legal permissiveness was also low, which means that the researchers uncovered that when the trust was low the government and regimes were restricting and held more regulations against its citizens. What the researchers highlight in the study is that as political trust goes down there is less support for law complaints but then the government implements more policies creating a vicious cycle of increased restrictions and less and less trust.

Peters, Yvette. *Political Participation, Diffused Governance, and the Transformation of*

*Democracy : Patterns of Change*. Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2018. Print.

The author of this book research how institutional reforms have changed citizens' political involvement. To do this study the researcher employed comparative quantitative

methods in which he compared other democratic countries. He specifically selected thirty-two democratic countries that he looked at for 25 years. \. In this researcher's case, he established political participation as turnout in elections and declared membership in political parties, political activism defined as boycotting demonstrations and signing a petition, and direct participation defined as interaction in policy making. What was uncovered is that new democratic institutions do not make a direct impact but gradually allow more people to become more politically active and more willing to participate.

Wojcieszak, Magdalena E., and Diana C. Mutz. "Online Groups and Political Discourse: Do Online Discussion Spaces Facilitate Exposure to Political Disagreement?" *Journal of Communication* 59.1 (2009): 40–56. Web.

The authors of this journal surveyed to measure political engagement and disagreement in online forums. To select candidates, they did random digit dialing and respondents were asked to take part in periodic surveys for some incentives. First before doing the survey they administered a screening where 11% of participants ended up using a chat room in the prior year. What the researchers uncovered was the fact that 45% of chat rooms were hobby or activity based. They then uncovered that 10% were politically based. After establishing this they went further and uncovered that in activity and hobby-based chat rooms, roughly 50% of them had political discussions of some kind. After establishing that political discourse occurs in all types of charts the research then explored whether the political views were shared. What researchers uncovered is that through all online group forums politics will occur and disagreement is common leading to more political discussion.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Molyneux, L., & Zheng, P. (2014). Social Media, Political Expression, and Political Participation: Panel Analysis of Lagged and Concurrent Relationships. *Journal of Communication*, 64(4), 612-634.

In this comprehensive study, the authors investigate the dynamic relationships between social media usage, political expression, and political participation through panel analysis. They employ robust methodology and a substantial dataset to explore the causal relationships between these variables. The article is peer-reviewed and presents valuable insights into the impact of social media on political behavior. However, it is essential to consider the limitations of self-reported data and potential selection biases when interpreting the findings. This article is highly relevant to my research on the role of social media in shaping political engagement, and it offers a methodological framework that I can potentially apply to my own investigations in this field.

Wolfsfeld, G., Yarchi, M., & Samuel-Azran, T. (2016). Political Information Repertoires and Political Participation. *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 2096-2115.

In this peer-reviewed article, Wolfsfeld, Yarchi, and Samuel-Azran explore the relationship between political information repertoires and political participation. They investigate how individuals' engagement with various media sources and platforms, including traditional and digital media, influences their levels of political engagement and participation. The authors employ a robust empirical methodology to analyze survey data and assess the connections between media consumption and political activities. The authors adopt a rigorous research approach, including surveys and statistical analysis, to the article acknowledges certain limitations, such as potential biases in self-reported data and the complexity of measuring political participation comprehensively. Additionally, it

emphasizes the need to consider context-specific factors when interpreting the findings. This research contributes to the broader understanding of how media consumption patterns influence political participation. By examining political information repertoires, it addresses a pressing question in the age of digital media and offers insights that can inform discussions on media effects, political engagement, and the role of media in contemporary democracies.

Tang, G., & Lee, F. L. F. (2013). Facebook Use and Political Participation: The Impact of Exposure to Shared Political Information, Connections with Public Political Actors, and Network Structural Heterogeneity. *Social Science Computer Review*, 31(6), 763-773. In this article, Tang and Lee investigate the relationship between Facebook use and political participation. They explore the impact of exposure to shared political information, connections with public political actors, and network structural heterogeneity within the context of Facebook. Using a data-driven approach, the authors analyze the role of online social networks in shaping political engagement. By investigating the nuanced dynamics of Facebook use, this research contributes to the broader discourse on social media's impact on politics. It highlights the importance of shared political information, connections with public political actors, and network structures within online social networks as factors that influence political participation. This article is a valuable resource for those exploring the evolving landscape of digital politics.

Hetherington, Marc J., and Jason A. Husser. "How Trust Matters: The Changing Political Relevance of Political Trust." *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2012, pp. 312–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00548.x>.

The reading “How Trust Matters: The Changing Political Relevance of Political Trust” by Hetherington and Husser talks about how Americans have grappled with issues of redistribution and race. After the 9/11 terrorist attack led to a massive increase in media attention to foreign affairs, which caused people to think about the government in terms of defense and foreign policy. They demonstrate that such changes in issue salience alter the policy preferences that political trust shapes. They primarily show that trust did not affect attitudes about race but that in 2004, it focused on foreign policy and national defense preferences.

Jones, D. A. (2004). Why Americans Do Not Trust the Media: A Preliminary Analysis. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 9(2), 60-75.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X04263461>

The reading/ analysis of “ Why Americans Don't Trust the Media” by David Jones talks about how an alarming number of Americans no longer trust the media anymore to report accurate news. Throughout the analysis, there are different studies on the factors as to why so many Americans no longer trust the media. The biggest factor is Americans have a lack of trust in the government. It also mentions how many conservatives and Republicans, mainly the ones that listen to talk radio, are usually low.

Kim, D. H., & Ellison, N. B. (2022). From observation on social media to offline political participation: The social media affordances approach. *New Media & Society*, 24(12), 2614-2634. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444821998346>

The observation “Social Media to Offline Political Participation: The Social Media Affordances Approach” by Nicole Ellison and Dam Kim analyzes the wave of political

participation and social media in 2016. The study seeks to clarify the mechanism behind social media and its affiliation with politics. It evaluates the study of the theoretical model in which observation of others' political activities on social media models similar political behaviors. The results of the observation highlight how much social media affects individuals' political participation.

Anduiza Perea, Eva, et al., editors. *Digital Media and Political Engagement Worldwide : a Comparative Study*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

This has studies on focus groups from both the US and The UK where they figure out what influences people's political orientations and how digital media takes a role in that.

Gastil, J., & Knobloch, K. R. (2020). *Hope for democracy: How citizens can bring reason back into politics*. Oxford University Press.

This study goes into detail about how citizens think democracy is failing them in the US and forces them to research more in their government before making final voting decisions and how researching about their roles as citizens make them better voters.

Ognyanova, K., Lazer, D., Robertson, R. E., & Wilson, C. (2020). *Misinformation in action:*

Fake news exposure is linked to lower trust in Media, Higher Trust in government when your side is in power. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*.

<https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-024>

This study goes into detail about how online misinformation is linked to lower trust in the media yet higher trust in a more republican government among moderate and conservative crowds, where such misinformation is pushed vs how it taken in liberal crowds, where they are less likely to believe the misinformation.



Guess, A., Munger, K., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. (2019). How accurate are survey responses on social media and politics? *Political Communication*, 36(2), 241–258.

doi:10.1080/10584609.2018.1504840

Guess's team studied how the accuracy of survey responses correlates with observed social media activity, but individual-level discrepancy and extreme outliers means that these surveys are flawed in observing citizen behavior. They recommend including diverse answers and defining what it means for a post to be "about politics" to parse our prior assumptions that muddy how someone would answer said surveys. A better use of the survey is therefore not simply gauging beliefs on a temporary incident, nor gauging allegiance, but to gauge what politics means to the individual and work from there to better catalog the insular consequences of local and national politics.

Jenkins, H., & Carpentier, N. (2013). Theorizing participatory intensities. *Convergence The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 19(3), 265–286.

doi:10.1177/1354856513482090

Through a panel at Prague, a conversation was observed on the differences of cultural leadership and organizations regarding ideal democracy. This, alongside a discussion on participation and power, divulged into the role of critical theory and cultural studies that define the language used to communicate academic findings to the public. Academia, accepted as the node where political discourse diverges from, must therefore be made self-evident when interviewing students regarding political issues- the caveat as the equating of education with participation clashing with other cultural contexts.

van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2018). In politics we trust...or not? Trusting and distrusting demonstrators compared. *Political Psychology*, 39(4), 775–792.

doi:10.1111/pops.12464

Regarding the debate between political trust and protest, the divide lies within trust being positively or negatively related to protest; leading to data analysis of 9,000 demonstrators across seven European countries to determine the relationship's qualities. In their findings, it is not the issue of if the protesters trust political elites, but who they are and the context around their struggle. While the study focuses on the European political landscape, nevertheless, the shift from "what" to "why" in understanding political distrust is a key observation that could redefine the project's definition of "trust."

Arshad, S., & Khurram, S. (2020). Can the government's presence on social media stimulate citizens' online political participation? investigating the influence of transparency, trust, and responsiveness. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101486.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2020.101486>

This paper investigates how the quality of information shared by a government agency on social media influences citizens' online political participation. Using data from 388 followers of the Punjab Food Authority, the study reveals a significant relationship between information quality, transparency, trust, responsiveness, and political engagement. Transparency mediates the link between information quality and trust, while trust and responsiveness affect online political participation. The study aims to fill gaps in research on government social media use in developing countries and offers practical suggestions for agencies.

Bennett, W. L. (2012). The personalization of politics. *The ANNALS of the American Academy*

*of Political and Social Science*, 644(1), 20–39.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716212451428>

This article introduces a framework for understanding large-scale individualized collective action facilitated by digital media. It discusses the shift from group-based to personalized politics, where individually expressive actions replace collective efforts in protests. The trend is observed in widespread, rapidly organized political participation targeting various entities. While group-based "identity politics" endures, the recent era sees diverse mobilizations where individuals rally around personal values to address issues like economic justice, environmental protection, and worker and human rights.

Pang, H. (2018). Is mobile app a new political discussion platform? an empirical study of the effect of WeChat uses on college students' political discussion and political efficacy.

*PLOS ONE*, 13(8). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202244>

This study explores the impact of WeChat on political engagement among Chinese college students. While WeChat fosters political discussions, the intensity of usage does not significantly enhance individual political efficacy. The survey of 282 WeChat users reveals that the app serves as a new channel for political information and discussions about government and politics. Information needs and recognition needs positively predict internal political efficacy, offering insights into the role of mobile-based communication technology in promoting democratic engagement in.

Gibson, Rachel, and Marta Cantijoch. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Participation in the Age of the Internet: Is Online Political Engagement Really Different to Offline?"

*The Journal of Politics*, vol. 75, no. 3, 2013, pp. 701–16,

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613000431>

This study looks at whether online political participation is different from offline participation. Using survey data from the 2010 UK election, the authors find that online participation clusters into types like offline participation. However, they also find online, and offline participation operate separately in some ways. For example, reading news online and expressing political views online differ from doing those things offline. The study shows how online participation relates to traditional offline participation. This is relevant for thinking about how technology changes political engagement, which relates to our research on media trust and online/media participation.

Molyneux, Logan, and Rachel R. Mourão. "Political Journalists' Normalization of Twitter: Interaction and New Affordances." *Journalism Studies* (London, England), vol. 20, no. 2, 2019, pp. 248–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1370978>.

This study analyzes how political journalists utilized different Twitter affordances to interact with each other and audiences during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The authors find journalists predominantly used Twitter to talk among themselves rather than engage the public. Older Twitter features like tweets and retweets were more "normalized" to conform to traditional journalistic norms, while newer features like quote tweets displayed more opinion and humor. The paper demonstrates how journalists are negotiating longstanding professional norms as they adopt new digital tools, which is relevant to understanding the evolving media environment and its implications for political participation as our research examines.

Snyder, James M., and David Strömberg. "Press Coverage and Political Accountability." *The Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 118, no. 2, 2010, pp. 355–408,

<https://doi.org/10.1086/652903>

This empirical study analyzes the impact of press coverage on citizen knowledge, politicians' actions, and policy outcomes. The authors find that greater local newspaper coverage of members of Congress leads to more informed voters, greater political participation, changes in representatives' behavior such as less partisan voting, and more federal money flowing into their districts. This suggests press coverage plays a key role in strengthening electoral accountability.

Freeze, Baumgartner, Bruno, Gunderson, Olin, Ross & Szafran. 2020, "Fake Claims of Fake News: Political Misinformation, Warnings, and the Tainted Truth Effect" *Published online Political Behavior* 2021; 5 February 2020

Their research helps to illuminate the less explored dark side of misinformation warnings. Their findings suggest general warnings of misinformation should be avoided as indiscriminate use can reduce the credibility of valid news sources and lead individuals to discard useful information.

Peterson & Allamong, 2022, "The Influence of Unknown Media on Public Opinion: Evidence from Local and Foreign News Sources.," *American Political Science Review*, Volume 116, Number 2.

They used two large survey experiments to consider how source familiarity influences political communication. This demonstrates the public is averse to consuming news from unfamiliar media, they show that depending on exposure to them, unknown local and foreign media sources can influence public opinion to an extent like established mainstream news outlets on the same issues.

Meng, Shuhua, Zhou, 2022, “News Media Effects on Political Institutional and System Trust: The Moderating Role of Political Values,” *John Hopkins University Press*, Volume 46, Number 1. pp. 157-181 (Article)

This article explores the correlation between media effects and political trust, as well as the moderating factor. The authors measured political trust in two categories: institutional and system trust. Analyses were based on two waves of surveys conducted among Internet users existing in China.

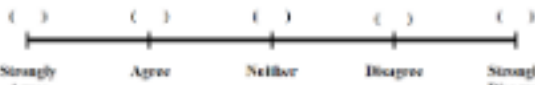
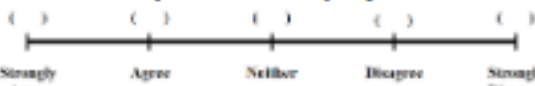
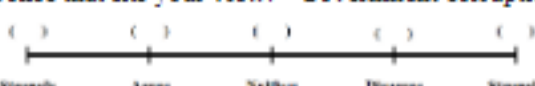
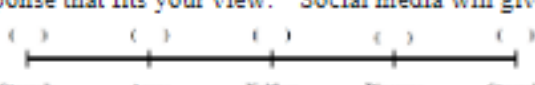
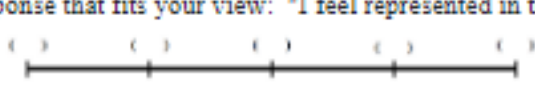
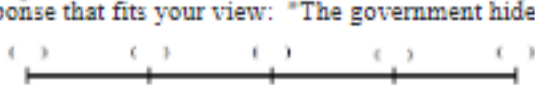
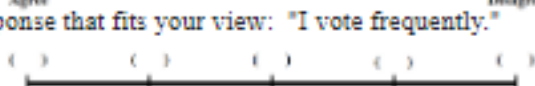
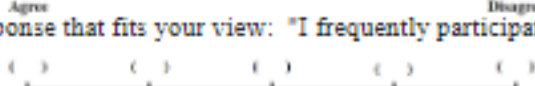
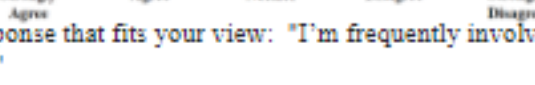
In summation, three key observations were made apparent when discussing the literature in our group meetings. (1) There is a high correlation between distrust in the media and political polarization. (2) Distrust can be treated as synonymous with perceived failings of the government. And (3), distrust can be used as a mobilizing pressure for radical participation. It caused our questionnaire to focus on the three categories that will be discussed in the research design.

#### IV: The Research Design

As for the way we researched the question, we decided as a collective to settle on a survey. We picked a survey because of continuity from previous stages of the research which involved a survey, and a survey was the best and most convenient way of outsourcing information and data for the project. We categorized survey questions into three main categories (trust, media, and political participation) and brainstormed around forty questions. We wanted to keep the survey simple and concise to not bore the participants but hash out as much information as we could. Once created, surveys were distributed by each member of the class either on paper or written out digitally. To answer the research questions, the group decided to conduct a survey

using the included survey (11 items, with nine using the Likert Scale and the latter two being short answer, open-qualitative questions) with respondents answering anonymously. The Likert-Scale questions were subdivided into three groups: trust in government, trust in media, and political participation. We gathered 177 responses- though some were incomplete. Here is a copy of the questionnaire:

*On Trust, Participation, and Media Bias*

1. Select the response that fits your view: "I am aware of different media perspectives."  

2. Select the response that fits your view: "My representatives will protect my rights."  

3. Select the response that fits your view: "Government corruption is a problem."  

4. Select the response that fits your view: "Social media will give me reliable news."  

5. Select the response that fits your view: "I feel represented in the media I consume."  

6. Select the response that fits your view: "The government hides information."  

7. Select the response that fits your view: "I vote frequently."  

8. Select the response that fits your view: "I frequently participate in political protests."  

9. Select the response that fits your view: "I'm frequently involved with local communities."  

10. What news source do you distrust the most? Why? (Open-Response)  


---



---
11. What news source do you frequent? Why? (Open-Response)  


---



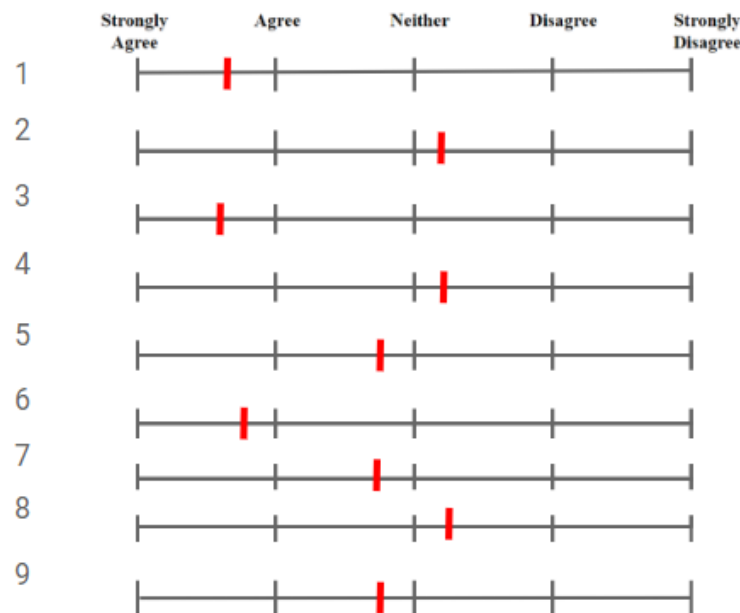
---



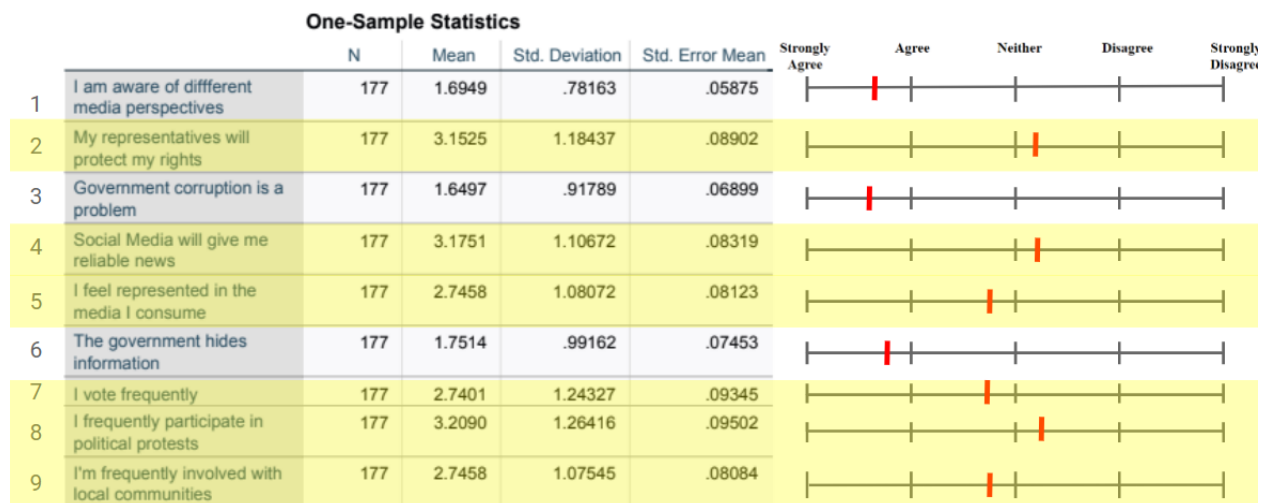
## IV. The Research Results and Analysis

Using SPSS and Google Sheets to parse the responses, the first nine Likert-scale questions resulted in the following tables. The red lines represent the means for each question.

|   |  | N   | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|--|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | I am aware of different media perspectives     | 177 | 1.6949 | .78163         | .05875          |
| 2 | My representatives will protect my rights      | 177 | 3.1525 | 1.18437        | .08902          |
| 3 | Government corruption is a problem             | 177 | 1.6497 | .91789         | .06899          |
| 4 | Social Media will give me reliable news        | 177 | 3.1751 | 1.10672        | .08319          |
| 5 | I feel represented in the media I consume      | 177 | 2.7458 | 1.08072        | .08123          |
| 6 | The government hides information               | 177 | 1.7514 | .99162         | .07453          |
| 7 | I vote frequently                              | 177 | 2.7401 | 1.24327        | .09345          |
| 8 | I frequently participate in political protests | 177 | 3.2090 | 1.26416        | .09502          |
| 9 | I'm frequently involved with local communities | 177 | 2.7458 | 1.07545        | .08084          |



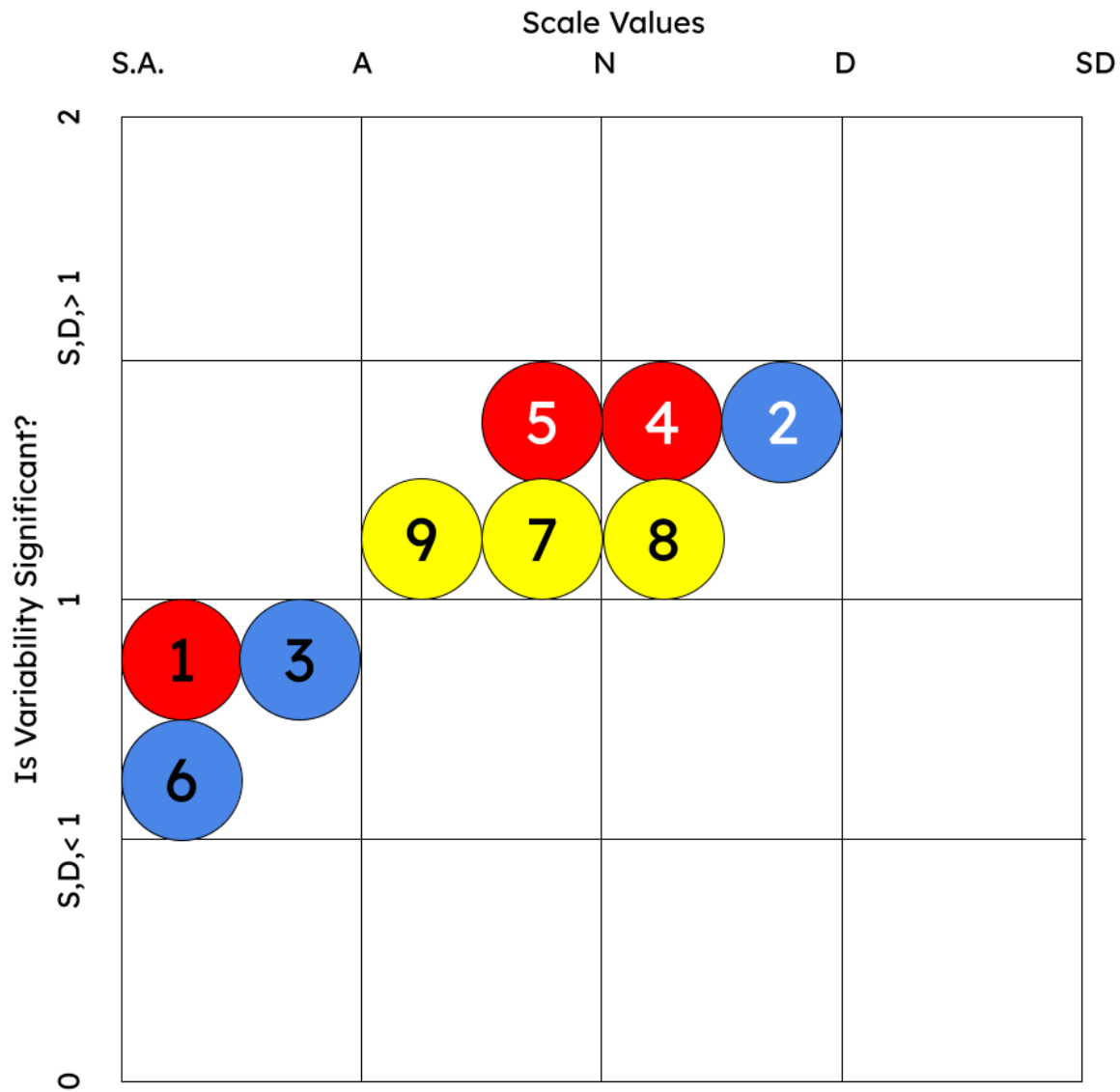
From this data set, we know that most people are aware of different media perspectives with low variability. They also believe that government corruption is a problem, as well as routinely hiding information from the public. The statements afterwards, however, tended to be the most polarizing with slight nudges away from neutrality. There was slight disagreement over representatives protecting rights, social media's reliability, media representation, voting frequency, protest participation, and community involvement- all with noticeable standard deviations greater than one and thus higher variability.



Within this data, we have two groups that emerge based on means and standard deviation. Group 1 (blank) comprises statements 1, 3, and 6; notably having means that agree with the statements with low standard deviations. Group 2 (highlighted) comprises the rest of the statements having means that border on neutrality while having high standard deviations. What we really separated were the universally accepted values from the more polarized, case-by-case based values among the respondents.

Lastly, within the question groupings regarding trust government, trust in media, and participation. The media group (red) of statements 1, 4, and 5 saw the first statement highly

accepted, while the latter two were highly varied and neutral. The government group (blue) of statements 2, 3, and 6, saw the first statement as neutral with the latter two being highly accepted. Finally, the participation group (yellow) of statements 7, 8, and 9 were all highly variable- which aligns as they were about political activities that vary from person to person.



Meanwhile, the last two questions resulted in the following top four categories for each:

Question 10 - Distrusted Media Sources and Why

| Media          | Count | %    |
|----------------|-------|------|
| Fox            | 91    | 0.46 |
| CNN            | 32    | 0.16 |
| Social Media   | 20    | 0.1  |
| Mainstream/TV  | 17    | 0.09 |
| Majority Total | 160   | 0.88 |
| Total          | 197   | 1    |

| Reason         | Count | %    |
|----------------|-------|------|
| No Comment     | 70    | 0.4  |
| Bias           | 30    | 0.17 |
| Conservatism   | 19    | 0.11 |
| Mainstream     | 17    | 0.1  |
| Majority Total | 136   | 0.78 |
| Total          | 177   | 1    |

To reiterate, Fox was the most distrusted media source, followed by CNN, social media, and Mainstream/TV. We did not have as much comprehensive data as to why, however, with seventy respondents leaving no comment on why they distrust a specific thing, while bias, conservatism, and the media being mainstream followed from behind. This discrepancy is rather telling of how, although people have their trusted and distrusted media sources decided, their

reasoning as to why, has never been rationalized, is something not desirable to write down, or that the latter two questions were victim to a poor choice in wording.

#### Question 11 - Trusted Media Sources and Why

| Media          | Count | %    |
|----------------|-------|------|
| Social media   | 19    | 0.09 |
| Tiktok         | 18    | 0.08 |
| Mainstream/TV  | 17    | 0.08 |
| BBC            | 15    | 0.07 |
| Majority Total | 69    | 0.32 |
| Total          | 223   | 1    |

| Reason               | Count | %    |
|----------------------|-------|------|
| No Comment           | 120   | 0.68 |
| Diverse Perspectives | 11    | 0.06 |
| Non-Bias             | 10    | 0.06 |
| Reliable             | 6     | 0.03 |
| Majority Total       | 147   | 0.83 |
| Total                | 177   | 1    |

A similar case occurred in this question, though for the media table, it should be noted that there was a wide selection of media sources that were tabulated such that there was no consensus on the most trusted source. Rather, it seems that it was far easier for the respondents to agree on a source to distrust rather than to agree on a source to trust. Social media was the clear winner, followed by its partner in Tiktok, while Mainstream/Televised media and the BBC held

last positions on the podium. Again, however, a majority of 120 respondents did not comment on why they trusted their preferred source the most, which is more than the seventy respondents who did not comment on their most distrusted sources.

Because of this, the respondents made clear the nonuniformity regarding trust in media and the reasons we do so. The only statement that can be agreed upon is that most people distrust Fox News, and even that comes with the caveat of the percentage being under the necessary 0.50 to count as a majority agreement. Mainstream/Televised Media also polled as between 0.08 to 0.09 in both distrust and trust, placing in both the top four media sources in both lists. With no comments from the reasoning sections, and the wide variability of the trusted media sources, what was observed was that there is no evidence of their being consensus regarding trust in media.

## VI. The Discussion and Conclusion

Within the trust in media group, the survey highlights that the respondents generally perceive themselves as aware of various media perspectives (mean = 1.6949), with low variability (SD = 0.78163). Trust in social media for reliable news is neutral (mean = 3.175) with significant variability (SD = 1.18437). Meanwhile, media representation is somewhat agreed as being representative of the respondents (mean = 2.7458) with significant variability (1.08072).

Within the trust in government group, trust in representatives protecting rights falls in the neutral range (mean = 3.1525) with significant variability (SD = 1.18437). The respondents agree that government corruption is a problem (mean = 1.6497) with significant variability (SD =

0.91789). Concerning government transparency, the population generally agrees that it hides information (mean = 1.7514) with low variability (SD = 0.99162).

Within the political participation group, ambiguity arises in responses related to voting frequency (mean = 2.7401), political protests (mean = 3.2090), and community involvement (mean = 2.7458). The significant standard deviations for these questions (SD > 1.00) implies significant variability.

Within the distrust group, Fox (0.46), CNN (0.16), social media (0.1) and Mainstream/Televised Media (0.09) were the most distrusted forms of media as the 0.88 majority. The reasons to distrust them included bias (0.17), conservatism (0.11), and being mainstream (0.1) with a 0.38 majority with 0.40 not responding.

Within the trust group, social media (0.09), TikTok (0.08), Mainstream/Televised Media (0.08), and the BBC (0.07) were the most trusted forms of media with a 0.32 majority. The reasons to trust them included diverse perspectives (0.06), non-bias (0.06), and reliability (0.03) with a 0.15 majority with 0.68 not responding.

The completed study draws notable conclusions. The survey reflects socially acceptable norms and beliefs concerning media bias and government concerns, with political participation and specific issues within these domains varying significantly among respondents. Fox News emerges as the most distrusted news source, holding a near plurality, while Mainstream/Televised Media is almost equally trusted and distrusted. Overall, distrust in media sources outweighs trust, and the reasons for trust and distrust in certain sources exhibit high variability. Refining survey questions may capture more holistic and nuanced perspectives on political attitudes and behavior, but the current responses suggest that the significant variability among these three attributes makes deciphering their relationships highly improbable.

## References

- Altschuler, D., & Corrales, J. (2013). *The promise of participation: experiments in participatory governance in Honduras and Guatemala*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Anduiza Perea, Eva, et al., editors. *Digital Media and Political Engagement Worldwide : a Comparative Study*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Archer, A. M. N. (2018). Political Advantage, Disadvantage, and the Demand for Partisan News. *Journal of Politics*, 80(3), 845–859. <https://doi-org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/10.1086/696993>
- Arshad, S., & Khurram, S. (2020). Can the government's presence on social media stimulate citizens' online political participation? investigating the influence of transparency, trust, and responsiveness. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101486. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2020.101486>
- Bennett, W. L. (2012). The personalization of politics. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 644(1), 20–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716212451428>
- Bernard, F. M., 2001 “Democratic legitimacy: plural views and political power”
- Bertsou, Eri. “Rethinking Political Distrust.” *European Political Science Review*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2019, pp. 213–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773919000080>.
- Botwick, Aryeh, 1990 “Skepticism and political participation” *Philadelphia: Temple University Press*
- Conroy, Meredith, et al. “Facebook and Political Engagement: A Study of Online Political Group Membership and Offline Political Engagement.” *Computers in Human Behavior*,



- Pergamon, 24 Apr. 2012,  
[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563212000787](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563212000787).
- Duncan, Grant 2018 “The Problem of Political Trust: A Conceptual Reformulation” *Routledge*  
First Edition
- Esquith, Stephen L. (Stephen Lawrence). *The Political Responsibilities of Everyday Bystanders*.  
Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.
- Floyd, Jonathan. *Is Political Philosophy Impossible? : Thoughts and Behaviour in Normative  
Political Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Freeze, Baumgartner, Bruno, Gunderson, Olin, Ross & Szafran. 2020, “Fake Claims of Fake  
News: Political Misinformation, Warnings, and the Tainted Truth Effect” *Published  
online Political Behavior* 2021; 5 February 2020
- Gastil, J., & Knobloch, K. R. (2020). *Hope for democracy: How citizens can bring reason back  
into politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Geurkink, B., Zaslove, A., Sluiter, R., & Jacobs, K. (2020). Populist Attitudes, Political Trust,  
and External Political Efficacy: Old Wine in New Bottles? *Political Studies*, 68(1),  
247–267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719842768>
- Gibson, Rachel, and Marta Cantijoch. “Conceptualizing and Measuring Participation in the  
Age of the Internet: Is Online Political Engagement Really Different to Offline?”  
*The Journal of Politics*, vol. 75, no. 3, 2013, pp. 701–16,  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613000431>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Molyneux, L., & Zheng, P. (2014). Social Media, Political Expression, and  
Political Participation: Panel Analysis of Lagged and Concurrent Relationships. *Journal  
of Communication*, 64(4), 612-634.

Guess, A., Munger, K., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. (2019). How accurate are survey responses on social media and politics? *Political Communication*, 36(2), 241–258.

doi:10.1080/10584609.2018.1504840

Hetherington, Marc J., and Jason A. Husser. “How Trust Matters: The Changing Political Relevance of Political Trust.” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2012, pp. 312–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00548.x>.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1370978>.

Im, Tobin, Wonhyuk Cho, Greg Porumbescu, and Jungho Park. “Internet, Trust in Government, and Citizen Compliance.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART* 24, no. 3 (2014): 741–63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24484836>.

Jenkins, H., & Carpentier, N. (2013). Theorizing participatory intensities. *Convergence The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 19(3), 265–286.

doi:10.1177/1354856513482090

Jones, D. A. (2004). Why Americans Do Not Trust the Media: A Preliminary Analysis. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 9(2), 60-75.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X04263461>

Kerrissey, J., & Schofer, E. (2013). Union Membership and Political Participation in the United States. *Social Forces*, 91(3), 895–928. <https://doi-org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/10.1093/sf/sos187>

Kim, D. H., & Ellison, N. B. (2022). From observation on social media to offline political participation: The social media affordances approach. *New Media & Society*, 24(12), 2614-2634. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444821998346>

Ladd, Jonathan McDonald. "The Role of Media Distrust in Partisan Voting." *Political Behavior* 32, no. 4 (2010): 567–85. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40960955>.

Ladd, Jonathan McDonald. "The Role of Media Distrust in Partisan Voting." *Political Behavior* 32, no. 4 (2010): 567–85. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40960955>.

Lee, Sangwon, et al. "Platform-Dependent Effects of Incidental Exposure to Political News on Political Knowledge and Political Participation." *Computers in Human Behavior*, Pergamon, 5 Oct. 2021, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S074756322100371X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S074756322100371X).

MARIEN, SOFIE, and MARC HOOOGHE. "Does Political Trust Matter? An Empirical Investigation into the Relation Between Political Trust and Support for Law Compliance." *European journal of political research* 50.2 (2011): 267–291. Web.

Meng, Shuhua, Zhou, 2022, "News Media Effects on Political Institutional and System Trust: The Moderating Role of Political Values," *John Hopkins University Press*, Volume 46, Number 1. pp. 157-181 (Article)

Molyneux, Logan, and Rachel R. Mourão. "Political Journalists' Normalization of Twitter: Interaction and New Affordances." *Journalism Studies* (London, England), vol. 20, no. 2, 2019, pp. 248–66,

Ognyanova, K., Lazer, D., Robertson, R. E., & Wilson, C. (2020). Misinformation in action: Fake news exposure is linked to lower trust in Media, Higher Trust in government when your side is in power. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*.  
<https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-024>

Pang, H. (2018). Is mobile app a new political discussion platform? an empirical study of the effect of WeChat uses on college students' political discussion and political efficacy. *PLOS ONE*, 13(8). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202244>

- Peters, Yvette. Political Participation, Diffused Governance, and the Transformation of Democracy : Patterns of Change. Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2018. Print.
- Peterson & Allamong, 2022, "The Influence of Unknown Media on Public Opinion: Evidence from Local and Foreign News Sources.," *American Political Science Review*, Volume 116, Number 2.
- Powell, G. Bingham. "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective." *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 1 (1986): 17–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1957082>.
- Scheufele, Dietram A. "Science Communication as Political Communication." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS, vol. 111, no. Supplement 4, 2014, pp. 13585–92, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1317516111>.
- Schroeder, Ralph. "Media Systems, Digital Media and Politics." In *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization*, 28–59. UCL Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt20krxdr.5>.
- Silverblatt, A., & Silverblatt, A. (2014). Media literacy: keys to interpreting media messages (4th ed.). Praeger.
- Snyder, James M., and David Strömberg. "Press Coverage and Political Accountability." *The Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 118, no. 2, 2010, pp. 355–408, <https://doi.org/10.1086/652903>
- Tang, G., & Lee, F. L. F. (2013). Facebook Use and Political Participation: The Impact of Exposure to Shared Political Information, Connections with Public Political Actors, and Network Structural Heterogeneity. *Social Science Computer Review*, 31(6), 763-773.
- Tsfati, Y., Strömbäck, J., Lindgren, E., Boomgaarden, H. G., & Vliegenthart, R. (2023). What

- News Outlets do People Have in Mind When They Answer Survey Questions about Trust in “Media?” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 35(2), 1–7. <https://doi-org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/10.1093/ijpor/edad008>
- van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2018). In politics we trust...or not? Trusting and distrusting demonstrators compared. *Political Psychology*, 39(4), 775–792. doi:10.1111/pops.12464
- Weinschenk, Aaron C., and David J. Helpap. “Political Trust in the American States.” *State & Local Government Review* 47, no. 1 (2015): 26–34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24638838>.
- Wojcieszak, Magdalena E., and Diana C. Mutz. “Online Groups and Political Discourse: Do Online Discussion Spaces Facilitate Exposure to Political Disagreement?” *Journal of Communication* 59.1 (2009): 40–56. Web.
- Wolfsfeld, G., Yarchi, M., & Samuel-Azran, T. (2016). Political Information Repertoires and Political Participation. *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 2096-2115.