Navid Ashari Astani

Professor Justin Lohr

ENG101H Sec 0509

21 September, 2012

Summary of *Trust, Civic Engagement, and the Internet*

Uslaner, Eric M. "Trust, Civic Engagement, and the Internet." 2004. *Engagements with Rhetoric:*

*A Path to Academic Writing at the University of Maryland*. Boston: Pearson Learning Solutions, 2011. 326-43. Print.

Eric Uslaner’s *Trust, Civic Engagement, and the Internet*, written in 2004, tries to answer the vital question: “which is the real Internet, the good Net [in which internet brings people together] or the bad Net [in which internet expedites the decline of “civic engagement and good feelings”]?” (327). Uslaner claims that this is “a high stakes question because each side sees the World Wide Web as the possible solution or the villain in the drama of the decline of community” (327). Uslaner elaborates on both of these perspectives and their respective reasoning but then follows to contend that the perspectives on the Internet have been formed by either anecdotal evidence or by studies, which, he argues, are possibly misleading. Uslaner uses this as motivation for him to conduct “more systematic testing” (332) using two surveys from the years 1998 and 2000.

Uslander goes on to thoroughly analyze these two surveys, concluding his analysis with a two-stage least squares estimation (a statistical test). Uslaner explains how the results of this test support his own opinion that the Internet “neither destroys nor creates social capital [“the trust, group membership, and informal social ties in a society” (327)]” (329). He claims that the trusting and misanthropic tendencies of people, which some believe can be affected by the Internet, had, in reality, been determined during childhood and are not altered by Internet usage. The essence of Uslaner’s examination of the data is that the Internet merely “mirrors everyday life” (329) and does not affect the social capital of a society.