Conceptualizing and Measuring Participation in the Age of the Internet: Is Online Political Engagement Really Different to Offline?

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While the study of e-participation has gained increasing attention within political science, our understanding of its underlying structure and relationship to offline participation is limited. This article addresses these gaps by focusing on three interrelated questions: (1) Is e-participation a multidimensional phenomenon (differentiation hypothesis)? (2) If submodes exist, do they mirror existing modes of participation (replication hypothesis)? (3) If offline forms are replicated online, do they mix together (integration hypothesis) or operate in separate spheres (independence hypothesis)? We test our hypotheses through confirmatory factor analysis of original survey data from the U.K. General Election of 2010. The results show that distinct submodes of e-participation, comparable to those occurring offline, can be identified. Support for integration and independence varies according to the type of participation undertaken. Finally our results suggest that the online environment may be fostering a new social-media-based type of expressive political behavior.

The question of what constitutes political participation has received considerable attention from political scientists, particularly in recent decades. The debate has centered on two central and interrelated concerns, namely what qualifies as a valid act of participation and how can acts of participation be classified? The arrival of the Internet has renewed debate on both fronts, although scholars have not as yet fully confronted its implications. This is largely because most of the "classic" or widely accepted definitions of participation were formulated in the pre-Internet era (Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). However, those scholars working within this tradition who have referenced Internet activities are clearly skeptical about the extent to which they form authentic forms of participation (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010). By contrast, a newer stream of "e-participation" studies has started from the assumption that online activities form a new type of participatory engagement and proceeded to testing their mobilizing effects at the individual level (Bimber 2001; Marien, Hooghe, and Quintelier 2010; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005; Whiteley 2010). As a result, limited attention has been paid to mapping the relationship of online and offline modes of political activity and particularly how far the former simply replicates the latter or extends it into new behavioral territory.[1]

This article aims to address these gaps in the literature by examining the relationship of online to offline participation in a more rigorous conceptual and empirical manner than has hitherto been the case. Specifically, we seek to establish how far the Internet is replicating and widening the repertoire of participatory actions and how far these spheres of action are interrelated or independent of one another. We do this in four steps. First, we review the classic and newer e-participation literatures and establish what is known about the relationship of online political activity to offline forms. Based on this review, we derive a series of hypotheses

specifying the potential relationships between the two modes and map these hypotheses to a set of empirical outcomes that identify a pattern of association between items measuring online and offline political activities. We then test these hypotheses using a simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis (SCFA) of original survey data from the U.K. General Election of 2010. Finally, we draw conclusions about the "fit" between online and offline forms of participation, with particular reference to how far pre-Internet modes of engagement mirror and blend with their online equivalents.

The Internet and Studies of Participation

The question of how to define political participation is one that has received considerable attention within the discipline but attracted no clear consensus. Principal areas of contestation have centered on specifying what activities are to be included and excluded and how these activities interlink together into subclusters or modes of participation. These debates are, of course, connected and have proceeded in parallel. While early empirical work on participation tended to focus mostly on voting and election-related behaviors in a homogenized fashion (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948), subsequent work expanded the subject of study to show that it is multidimensional with activities clustered into distinctive but related modes. Pioneering work by Verba and Nie (1972) to systematically explore the range of participatory acts beyond voting led to a fourfold categorization that covered turnout, campaigning, communal, and particularized contacting activities. Key distinctions centered on the extent of individual initiative and resources each required as well as the extent of external elite structuring and conflict associated with the act (Claggett and Pollock 2006). While Verba and Nie (1972) were mindful of the extrainstitutional arena of participation in specifying a communal element, work by scholars toward the end of the decade argued for an extension of the model to include a wider range of extrainstitutional forms of political action such as strikes and demonstrations (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Marsh 1977). The gradual move of more peaceable types of protest activity into the mainstream prompted scholars to further distinguish a range of "low-level" types of unconventional behavior such as joining a march or boycotting certain products from more radical and violent forms of direct action (Bean 1991; Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Teorell, Torcal, and Montero 2007).

While a general consensus appears to have emerged that a widening of the participatory schema to include noninstitutionalized forms of political behavior is an inevitable and necessary process, arguments have continued as to how far this extension can and should go. In particular, the question of whether less active and instrumental types of political engagement qualify as forms of participation has formed an increasing focus for debate within the literature. Some scholars explicitly rejected what they see as an overly reductionist definition of the classical literature and argued for inclusion of a wider range of "passive kinds of involvement" in the definition of participation such as attending ceremonial or supportive activities or paying attention to what is happening in the government or in politics (Conway 1991, 12–13). Others have argued for a more restricted and instrumental definition to be adopted (Parry, Moyser, and Day 1993; Teorell, Torcal, and Montero 2007; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). As Verba and colleagues neatly summarized it, "we are concerned with doing politics, rather than with being attentive to politics" (1995, 39). Brady underscores this narrower understanding in his influential survey of the field when he states that "action" is the defining element of participation: "political interest, political efficacy, political information . . . only gauge the motivations or dispositions inclining people to become involved in politics; they do not tell us whether someone undertakes political activity" (1999, 737).

While most scholars would likely agree attention to news does not constitute participation per se, the status of political discussion or talk occupies something of a "gray" area. In its more persuasive form, political discussion can be seen to acquire the directed and instrumental characteristics of more accepted modes. However, for a number of scholars even its more casual form, political discussion can lay claim to the participatory label. Delli Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs (2004), for example, argue for taking the "longer" view of political discussion and locate it in classical notions of participation that center on a more abstract understanding of a "sharing of public life." According to this definition, the more casual act of talking with others about politics becomes a participatory act in itself (see also Bennett, Flickinger, and Rhine 2000; Pan et al. 2006). Relatedly, several scholars have argued for understanding political talk and nonverbal speech acts such as the use of badges and yard signs in campaigns in more symbolic terms, labeling them as "expressive" participation (Endersby and Towle 1996). For other scholars, the term "expressive" denotes a wider set of softer and harder types of engagement ranging from political conversation and letters to newspaper editors to contacting public

officials, working on a campaign, and even attending a rally (Boyle et al. 2006; Scheufele and Eveland 2001; Stanyer 2005). Recent work by Hamlin and Jennings (2011) has sought to impose greater rigor on the use of the term and taken a more conservative approach to the concept, referring to it as a form of political behavior rather than participation. Their definition highlights its diffuse, rather than elite and targeted, nature and its symbolic rather than instrumental quality which they see as manifested most typically in acts such as letters to newspaper editors and public speeches.

To date, attention to the role of the Internet in the evolution of these debates has been minimal. One obvious reason for this is that most of these studies were conducted prior to, or just on the cusp of, the digital era.[2] Participation scholars who have referenced the online sphere, however, have queried whether "virtual" forms of civic political engagement form credible alternatives to their "real world" counterparts (Putnam 2000, 180; Sander and Putnam 2010, 15) and particularly whether they are sufficiently instrumental to count as participation. Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2010) for instance argue that "friending" a candidate does not equate to working for a campaign and that a social networking site such as Facebook is still largely a forum for political talk among friends rather than a place for organized political effort directed toward influencing public officials. They do, however, leave the door open to these interactive forms of political engagement serving as a catalyst to more concerted political behavior, and they are alert to the fact that these forums are changing so rapidly "that they may well morph into new forms of activity aimed at political influence" (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010, 501). Indeed in their most recent work, Scholzman and his colleagues refer to political activity within blogs and social network sites as new nonhierarchical "participatory forms" that bypass traditional institutions and appeal particularly to the post-Boomer cohorts (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, 511).

The e-Participation Literature

The lack of attention given to online political engagement within "classic" participation studies does not mean the subject has gone unresearched. A second stream of literature focusing on how Internet use is affecting individual political behaviors and attitudes has emerged over the past decade. In contrast to the classic approaches, this "e-participation" literature has treated online political activity either explicitly or implicitly as participation and concentrated on identifying its mobilizing effects i.e., establishing whether it is drawing less active citizens into the political process. Studies taking an explicit approach typically start with a reference to "Internet participation" which they treat as a unidimensional mode of engagement (it is measured with a single index) that fits within the wider spectrum of the new and extrainstitutional modes of political engagement that have emerged over the past two decades such as boycotting and petition signing (Marien, Hooghe, and Quintelier 2010; Oser, Hooghe, and Marien, forthcoming; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005; Whiteley 2010).[3] Other approaches have simply identified a range of online actions such as contacting a politician by e-mail or donating money to be investigated and then proceeded to examine the profile of those engaging in them and/or their impact on offline behavior such as voting (Anduiza, Gallego, and Cantijoch 2010; Bimber 1999; Gibson, Lusoli, and Ward 2005; Krueger 2002; Saglie and Vabo 2009; Sylvester and McGlynn 2010). While these studies are interesting in that they generally point to significant, albeit small, effects of Internet use on political engagement (Boulianne 2009), their concentration on questions of mobilization and causality has led to a preoccupation with methodological problems of endogeneity and the removal of self-selection biases rather than the conceptualization and measurement of the e-participation activities themselves.

As measures of e-participation have expanded to include social-media-based political activities such as posting to a blog or joining a social-network group, there has been a limited but increasing amount of attention given to the measurement and modeling of e-participation. This work has focused particularly on mapping the types of e-participation that exist and assessing whether they copy or depart from offline modes. Jensen, Danziger, and Venkatesh (2007) provided one of the first attempts to directly address these questions and applied multidimensional scaling to a range of offline and online civic-engagement

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[2]The most recent attempt at a comprehensive classification of participatory activities by Teorell, Torcal, and Montero (2007) used data from the 1999–2002 period when the Internet was only on the cusp of becoming a mass medium.

[3]Most of these studies measured engagement using a single index. Oser, Hooghe, and Marien (Forthcoming) applied latent class analysis in which one of the classes corresponded to the "online activists," i.e., individuals with a high probability of undertaking a range of activities online such as donating, contacting, signing a petition, and starting or joining a political online group. However, their findings as shown in Figure I(6) suggest that "online activists" were less likely to join a political group than to e-donate, e-contact, and e-petition. This is consistent with our findings as shown below.

items. The analysis supported the idea that a communal mode of participation could be identified online; however, they concluded that it occurred independently to an individuals' offline community involvement.[4] Subsequent work by Saglie and Vabo (2009) applied exploratory factor analysis to a range of online political actions studied and confirmed a disaggregation into several familiar offline categories, i.e., contacting, campaigning, and petition-related activities. No offline items were included, however, to assess whether any integration of the two spheres was occurring. More recently, a simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis (SCFA) by Hirzalla and Van Zoonen (2011) using a large number of offline and online political activities identified a number of distinct modes of participation that corresponded to existing types and that were defined by a mix of offline and online items.

As well as showing how the online environment was replicating and merging together online and offline types of political activity, the work of Hirzalla and Van Zoonen (2011) also signaled the possibility that the online environment might be giving rise to a new type of participation that lacked an obvious offline counterpart. In particular, the authors identified a "sharing" factor that was defined primarily through online activities (forwarding e-mail, signing an e-petition, and engaging in online as well as offline discussion). This finding links with that of Rojas and Puig-i-Abril who use structural-equation modeling on survey data from Colombia to identify an "e-expressive" mode of participation. This is a form of political participation that takes place on blogs and social networks and centers on "the public expression of political orientations" (2009, 906–7).While the authors do not claim to have found a wholly new mode of participation (the notion of expressive participation has a legacy in the offline literature as noted above), they do raise the question of whether the online environment is particularly conducive to this mode of engagement and note that its "discovery" renews the debate of what constitutes participation. Online expressive activity is arguably more influential and public than its offline counterpart. Posting comments to a blog or social-network page gives them a wider audience and is a more interactive experience than wearing a badge or sending a letter to a newspaper editor. While not conclusive on this

point, the work of Robertson, Vatrapu, and Medina (2010) examining *Facebook* walls suggests that participants are engaged in more than simply discussion and are interested in persuading others and making calls to action.

The work of Krueger most explicitly develops this notion that digital media, while not introducing entirely new forms of participation, may be enhancing the claims of certain behaviors to be labeled as such. The Internet, he argues, returns us to Conway's more inclusive approach to understanding participation whereby the "... boundaries between passive and active [participation] are increasingly blurred ... " (2002, 483). Actions typically considered as passive, such as attention to and discussions of news, take on a more instrumental and active quality, and citizens make "inputs" to politics via their website activities, without explicitly seeking to do so. Such changes, Krueger argues, mean that there is now a case for understanding some forms of online activities as closer to participation as it is classically understood. Despite mounting an interesting argument, Krueger does not undertake an empirical test of his argument. Additionally one could counter his claim that online news gathering demands any greater effort and initiative on the part of the citizen in that the sharing features of most social-media tools mean that it is now easier than ever to have information pushed to your inbox, twitter stream, or Facebook profile without engaging in the active searching and seeking required in the pre-Google era.

Despite the predominant focus of the e-participation literature on identifying mobilizing effects, therefore, more recent efforts to conceptualize it and map its relationship to offline modes of participation have been made. These studies have raised, but not fully resolved, some important questions for further analysis. First, is e-participation a unidimensional or a multidimensional phenomenon that can be disaggregated into different "classes" of online participation? Second, if it is multidimensional, then do similar modes of engagement exist online to those found offline? Third, if online modes replicate those found offline, then to what extent are the two spheres merging together and substituting for one another, or are they mutually exclusive? Finally, while no entirely "new" forms of participation have been identified online, how far does the Internet environment change or "elevate" what were previously considered more passive and less participatory behaviors (i.e., news consumption and discussion) to a more active, collective, and influential status that enhances their claim to be genuine forms of participation?

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[4]These findings are qualified by the fact that there were key differences between the online items that measured levels of community involvement while offline items measured individual civic skills.

Hypothesizing the Relationship of Online and Offline Participation

This article seeks to address these questions and the resulting gap in the literature in the following ways. First, we confront a basic structural question of whether e-participation is a multidimensional phenomenon like offline participation or a unidimensional concept that does not disaggregate or cluster into distinct submodes. If multidimensionality is supported, we then seek to identify what modes exist and how far they resemble their offline counterparts. In particular, if they do replicate their offline counterparts, is there an integration or merging of the corresponding forms of behavior or do they separate to form distinctive modes of activity? Finally, we explore in a more speculative manner the question of whether the Internet is promoting the growth of more "active" types of previously passive political activity through the emergence of new social-media technologies.

In undertaking this conceptual mapping of the underlying dimensions of e-participation, we hope to first provide a foundation for future work to build on. By better specification of the behaviors being modeled, it becomes easier to derive accurate expectations about mobilization effects and more consistent and cumulative tests of those relationships. More generally, however, this research is important in relation to wider contemporary debates about how well democracies are accommodating citizen demands. There has been considerable discussion in recent years of an increasing democratic deficit among advanced industrial nations. Central to the diagnosing of these problems has been the observation of a shift in preferred modes of participation that individuals are engaging in, with increasing numbers turning away from official modes via parties and voting, or "duty-based," toward more direct or "expressive" modes (Dalton 2008). Modeling e-participation in the manner we propose here allows us to revisit those important debates and shed new light on the extent to which technological change may be accelerating or challenging these new patterns of citizen influence.

We begin with our starting hypothesis of multidimensionality. Following the logic and findings of the "classic" participation literature and the results from e-participation studies detailed earlier, we argue that multiple forms of participation will exist online. While there may have been some studies that have analyzed online participation in a unidimensional manner by collapsing it into a single scale, this approach appears to be driven by methodological expediency rather than a clear theoretical rationale. The most obvious basis for this reductionist or undifferentiated view of e-participation is arguably derived from the technologically deterministic logic whereby one sees the web as a more "bounded" context than the offline participation sphere. Individuals can much more easily move across types and levels of activity in the online arena than in the "real world," and this increases the likelihood of the convergence of these practices. While we do not rule out the prospect that e-participation constitutes a single dimension ceteris paribus, we have no clear reason, following the literature on participation, to expect at least a lack of differentiation.

> *H1 (Differentiation Hypothesis)*: E-participation is a multidimensional phenomenon and can be disaggregated into distinctive clusters or subtypes of activity.

To develop our test of the subtypes of activity that emerge and to determine whether they replicate, integrate, or extend offline types, we draw further on the offline participation literature to provide a basic division of e-participation activities. The classic literature reviewed earlier, and particularly the most recent statement by Teorell, Torcal, and Montero (2007), provides an obvious basis for drawing up some expectations. Using a basic division between whether the action took place via a representational or extra-representational channel and whether the participation is exit-based, i.e., a "one time" form of engagement or "voice" based and is sustained over time, they identify five main types of involvement—voting, party and protest activity, consumerism, and targeted forms. While this list is quite comprehensive in terms of covering the key subdimensions or classes of participation, it omits communal and collective activities which have been a feature of the literature since Verba and Nie (1972).

Following the extant literature regarding participation classification, therefore, we develop our expectations about the subtypes of participation that will emerge if differentiation is supported. A core expectation is that the types of behaviors to emerge will replicate their offline counterparts.

> *H2 (Replication Hypothesis)*: The subtypes of e-participation activity identified will replicate or correspond to existing types of offline participation.

Within the replication hypothesis, two further competing subhypotheses are suggested by the e-participation literature as characterizing the relationship between offline and online behaviors. The first argues that while online activities may look like their offline counterparts, they occupy separate spheres of activity. While individuals may undertake both types of

activity, they engage in each separately, and the online version is not substituted for the offline. Countering this is the argument that the medium is largely irrelevant, and the two types are merging together to re-form distinctive but integrated clusters of activity. So one is simply engaging in political discussion or contacting others by whatever means available, be they online or offline.

> *H2a (Independence Hypothesis)*: The subtypes of e-participation identified that replicate existing types of offline participation will *not* merge offline and online activities
>
> *H2b (Integration Hypothesis)*: The subtypes of e-participation identified that replicate existing types of offline participation will merge offline and online activities.

A final question raised by the above literature review is whether Internet-based political activities mean the extension of existing categorization schemes to include new participatory modes. The more radical or ambitious claim in this regard would be that e-participation is adding a new and original mode of participation that carries no obvious offline counterpart. To date, the closest the literature has come to suggesting this is in the identification of a "sharing" or e-expressive mode of participation that involves the use of social media to publicly promote one's own or others political opinions. However, as noted, this type of activity has a clear precedent in the offline environment and so, we would argue, can be accommodated within the replication, independence, and integration hypotheses. A "softer" version of this argument implicit within e-participation research is that certain forms of more passive and noninstrumental political engagement are being "upgraded" online and becoming more authentic participatory acts. While clearly of great interest, this "upgrading" hypothesis is not something we can directly test here due to limitations of data (explained more fully below). We are able, however, to derive certain implications from the results of the preceding hypotheses that allow us to draw some tentative conclusions about the validity of these claims.

In order to more directly convey the central logic informing the hypotheses that we test below, we represent our expectations for the differentiation, replication, integration, and independence hypotheses in Table 1. The table presents the differentiation and replication hypothesis by specifying a list of commonly accepted modes of participation and engagement drawn from the extant offline literature and their online counterparts. The division between columns 2 and 3 presents the independence hypothesis in that each type constitutes a separate sphere of activity, while the merging of the two columns constitutes the integration hypothesis whereby the activities take place interchangeably. In specifying these hypotheses, we recognize that our analysis excludes "hybrid" participatory acts whereby online tools are used in support of offline participation. One example of this type of two-step engagement might be sending an e-mail or text message to prompt attendance at a rally or demonstration. While clearly of interest to participation scholars, the location and significance of this new mixed mode of engagement is seen as something for future studies to explore once the basic questions of correspondence posed here have been addressed. If we establish, for example, that actions within the two spheres occur largely independently of each other, then this hybrid action becomes a potentially important and novel "bridging" mode.

Data and Methods

We test our hypotheses using data drawn from a national opinion survey of the U.K. population that was designed to measure citizens' online and offline political activities during the 2010 General Election.[5] The survey included 13 e-political activities, nine of which were campaign-specific. These items divided into those measuring involvement in the official campaign through party sites and tools and those that focused on involvement via more informal types of content and resources. Use of social networks for either official or unofficial political purposes was also included. Four items measured engagement in more general political activities—donating, contacting, signing a petition, and discussing politics. A further four offline equivalents of these general political activities were also measured. One item was used to measure attention to news offline—newspaper readership. All variables were measured as binary responses. The data source provides one of the richest insights into citizen e-participation outside of the United States. *Pew Internet and American Life Project* surveys are an ideal, if not unique, opportunity to retest the questions posed.

Table 2 reports the basic frequencies across the 18 items for Internet and non-Internet users. (For a full list of question wordings, see Appendix A online). The results show that consultation of mainstream

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TABLE 1   The Differentiation and Replication Hypotheses

	Modes	Offline Activities	Online Activities
Participation	Voting	Voting	e-Voting
	Party / campaign activities	Volunteering for a party or candidate, donate	Signing up as supporter / volunteer, joining SNS group to support the party, donate online
	Protest activities	Demonstrations, rallies, signing a petition	Signing an e-petition
	Contacting	Mailing a politician, telephone	e-Mailing a politician
	Communal	Working with others to solve a community problem	Joining a SNS group around a political issue
	Consumerism	Boycotting	e-Boycott
Passive Engagement	News attention	Reading newspapers	Reading online newspapers, blogs, watching YouTube videos
	Discussion	Discuss politics	Online chat
	Expressive	Letter to editors, public speech, wearing buttons or displaying stickers	Post, forward, embed political content

news media was the most popular online activity followed at some distance by accessing party produced sites, which involved a fifth of the Internet users. Other types of engagement with the official e-campaigns through newsfeeds and downloading tools and widgets were more limited (attracting around 5% of Internet users). On the unofficial side, more active types of engagement such as posting or forwarding political content were similarly confined to a fairly small minority of the population. Although these levels of engagement do not match those seen in the U.S. e-campaign during the Presidential election of 2008 (estimated at over half of the adult population according to Smith 2009), levels have clearly increased in the United Kingdom since 2005. The growth in use of official e-campaign resources is particularly striking when compared with Ward and Lusoli's (2005) findings from the previous election.

Simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis (SCFA) was judged as the most theoretically appropriate and efficient method to test our hypotheses. Using this technique, we can map and test the specified relationships set out in Table 1 simultaneously. Essentially, we are predicting that various activities will cluster together in a particular manner to identify a set of latent participation modes, although we don't know how far these will be defined by online and offline activities. Unlike exploratory factor analysis, however, these latent constructs are specified in advance, and the data are fitted to a model with a set of statistics being available to test the fit of expectations to the reality of the data. One is therefore able to assess how far these specified

variables constitute a valid representation of the relationships between these variables within the population. The simultaneous estimation of the measurement model allows us to more explicitly test the strength of the relationships between the items and the constructs as well as between the constructs themselves.[6]

The SCFA was run using Mplus version 6.12. The estimator used was weighted least squares with mean and variance adjustment (WLSMV) which is appropriate for binary data. The data included Internet users only.[7]

[6]Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on all 17 items (WLSMV estimator, oblique Geomin rotation, N = 1,960), and results showed that the optimal solution was a four-factor model that closely resembled that shown in Figure 3 (CMIN/DF=1.36, CFI=0.987, RMSEA=0.013). The minor difference was the loading of e-news items (party site and YouTube) on the expressive factor.

[7]Including non-Internet users was problematic in that it introduced a set of respondents that scored zero on all 13 items. While statistically the analysis could be conducted, conceptually, the inclusion of these nonresponses was seen as problematic in that it changed the meaning of the zero score for the two groups. For Internet users, the score was an indication that activity was possible for the respondent but had not been performed for whatever reason. For a non-Internet user, a zero meant the activity was not possible, and we cannot know whether they would have not done it, had they had access. This confusion of meaning of the zero response meant that for purposes of maintaining a clear interpretation of the data and findings, only Internet users were included. The analyses shown in Figures 2 and 4 were run using non-Internet users and did not change the key substantive findings reported here.

TABLE 2   Political Engagement of U.K. Citizens in 2010

Type of Activity		Total Sample (%)	Internet Users (%)	N
Campaign Online	Read/accessed official sites	15.5	20.6	301
	Signed up as supporter/for e-news	4.6	6.1	89
	Used online tools to campaign/ promote parties	3.3	4.3	63
	Read/accessed mainstream news sites	27.6	36.7	539
	Viewed/accessed nonofficial online video	5.7	7.6	112
	Joined/started political group on a SNS	3.2	4.2	62
	Posted political comments to own/other blog/SNS	4.5	6.0	88
	Forwarded nonofficial content (jokes, news)	2.6	3.4	50
	Embedded/reposted nonofficial content	1.1	1.4	21
Noncampaign Online/Offline	Online contact with government official	6.8	9	132
	Offline contact with government official	8.7	8.5	170
	Online donation to political cause/organization/party	1.1	1.5	22
	Offline donation	3.3	3.5	64
	Signed online petition	9.6	12.7	186
	Signed offline petition	9.3	10.3	181
	Discussed politics online	13.2	17.5	255
	Discussed politics offline	54.7	59.1	1,064
	Read newspaper	60.1	58.1	1,179

Source: BMRB National Face-to-Face Quota Survey of 1,960 U.K. adults, weighted data.

Hypotheses Testing

As a first step, we mapped our e-political activity items onto the categories outlined above in Table 1, and the results are reported in Table 3. As the table makes clear, the range of items available, while extensive, did not allow us to populate all of the participatory categories listed in Table 1. This shortage led to some modes being excluded either because they had no online version in practice (voting) or were not measured in either mode in the survey (consumerism). Since a basic requirement for SCFA models to be estimated is that one has multiple observed variables to define the latent constructs, this reduction led to a consolidation of some items into broader categories than those set out in Table 1. This reconfiguration did mean a trade-off of precision in terms of defining the various modes and the aggregation of some categories.

Specifically, we created a mode of "targeted" participation that contained our contact, donate, and petition items. This was done following the logic of Teorell, Torcal, and Montero who have argued that certain actions can be grouped around an aim of targeting specific institutions within the democratic polity (2007, 347). These are typically one-off actions designed to influence representative institutions on a particular issue, policy, or decision-making process and that "deactivate" once undertaken (Inglehart and Catterberg 2003, 302; Marsh and Kaase 1979, 42). A second consolidation involved the movement of the two discussion items into the expressive mode. The addition of discussion does not seem at odds with Rojas and Puig-i-Abril's (2009) understanding of the online or "e-expressive" mode as the use of social media to publicly promote one's political opinions. Nor does it seem to conflict with Hamlin and Jennings' (2011) focus

TABLE 3 BMRB Items Mapped into Theoretical Categories

	Modes	Offline Activities	Online Activities
Participation	Party and campaign activities	Donate	Register Tools Join social-networking site e-Donate
	Targeted (Protest/Contacting/Donating)	Petition Contact Donate	e-Petition e-Contact e-Donate
Passive Engagement	News attention	Read newspapers	e-News e-Videos Sites
	Expressive (Expressive/Discussion)	Discuss	e-Discuss Post Forward Embed

on public speech acts as characteristic of expressive political behaviors. We do, however, not use more instrumental behaviors such as elite contact and participating in a rally as other studies have done (Gil de Zuniga et al. 2010). Finally the communal item—joining or starting a social-network group around a political issue—was used to measure the campaign/party mode of participation. Given political focus of the group joined or started was not specified and it involved a collective or organizational form of activity during an election, we reasoned that this item would be likely to capture party-oriented activities.

To measure formal involvement in the campaign or party activities, we had a fairly healthy range of online items—registering as a friend or supporter, using online tools to help the parties in their campaigns and joining a social-networking group, as mentioned earlier. The decision to add the donation item was made with some caution. First, as noted above, donating can be seen as part of a more targeted dimension of activities. Second, as the recent work of Claggett and Pollock (2006) has shown, while donating money to a campaign is typically seen as part of a party mode of activity (Dalton 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), the two actually form distinctive modes of participation. The item was thus included in both the party and targeted categories at this stage, while we remained open to its possible relocation in the course of the analysis. Finally, for the most passive types of engagement—attention to news and public affairs—we had a useful mix of online

and offline items, the former including mainstream sources and the online video channel YouTube.

The final division of items shown in Table 3, while reduced from the ideal version set out in Table 1, still permits testing of our core hypotheses of differentiation and replication. All modes allowed for some test of our independence and integration hypotheses, particularly the news attention and the targeted dimensions. To empirically test our hypotheses, we converted Table 3 into a series of measurement models. As a first step to test the differentiation and replication hypotheses (H1, H2), we included only the e-engagement items. In a subsequent step, we then added the offline equivalents to test the integration and independence hypotheses (H2a and H2b).

This resulted in the first measurement model shown in Figure 1 in which four factors were specified according to the online clusters defined in Table 3. These were named as e-party, e-targeted (a cross loading of e-donation was included here), e-expressive, and e-news.

The results of the full SCFA are reported in Figure 2.[8] Based on the modification indices, regression loadings, and standard errors, only one key adjustment was made: deletion of the e-donation item on the e-targeted factor which was found to be

[8]Tests of the individual constructs revealed all items to have positive and significant loadings and where global fit measures were possible to specify, to indicate acceptance of the default model. As two of the constructs had only three indicators (e-targeted and e-news), single-measurement models were only just identified (i.e., df = 0), making global fit tests not possible.

FIGURE 1 Baseline of the SCFA Model of E-Participation, Online Activities, Internet Users
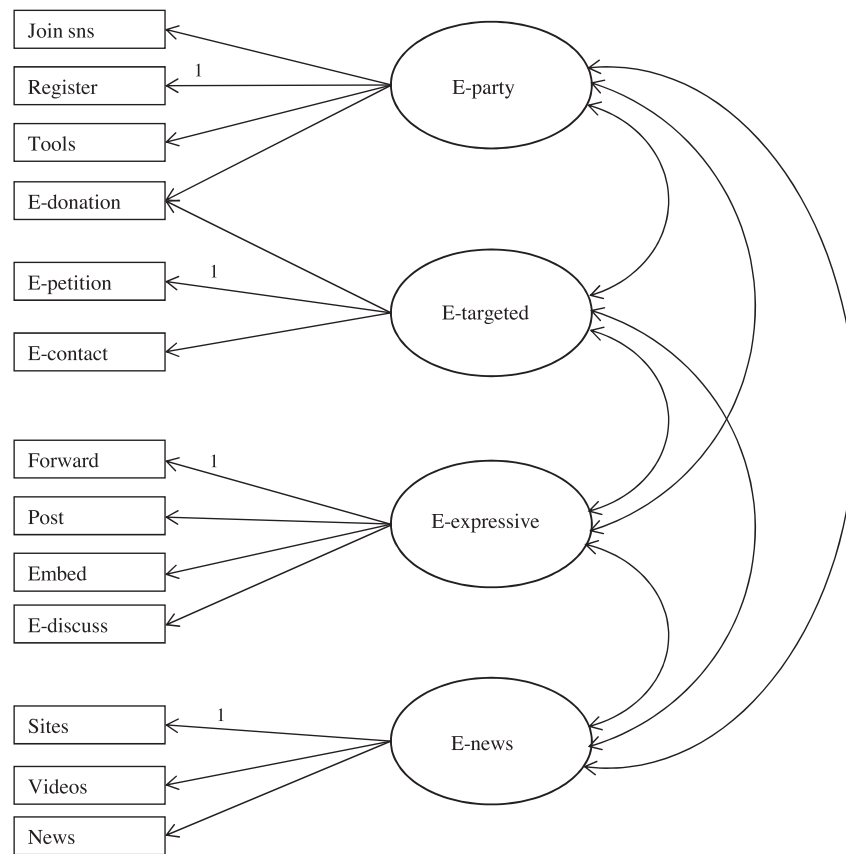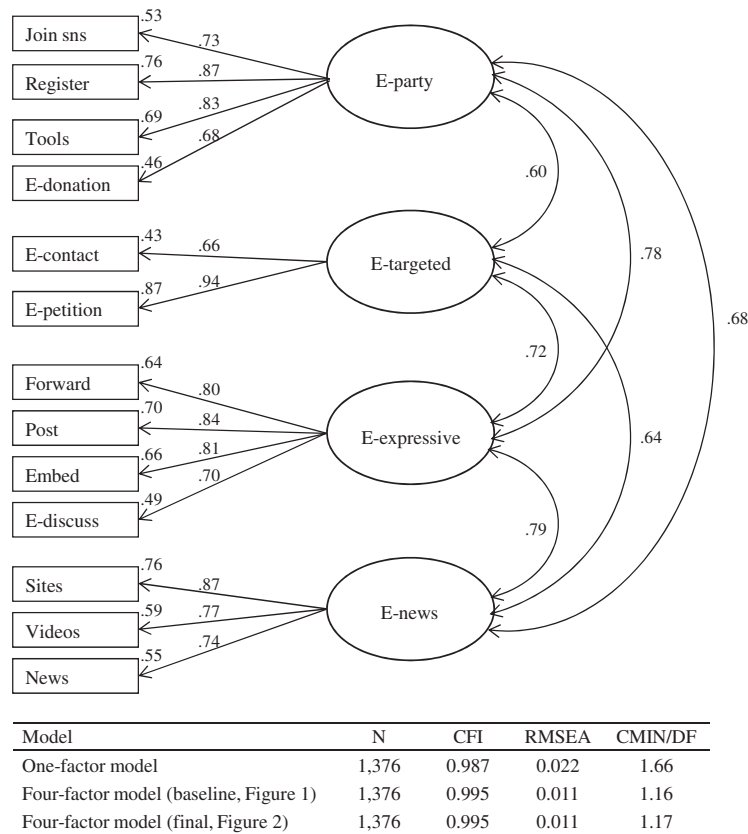

Source: Author elaboration.

nonsignificant. Interestingly, this result contradicts the work of Claggett and Pollock (2006) who, as noted above, found that in the offline environment, donation and campaign activities formed distinctive submodes of participation. Whether this holds when the offline item is added in the subsequent test of the integration and independence hypothesis is explored below. The results from this step of the analysis show the model had a very good descriptive fit to the data based on the range of global fit measures reported.[9] All the factor loadings were positive and significant at the .001 level, and the standardized values ranged from 0.66 to 0.87. Overall these results are seen as supporting both the differentiation hypothesis and also the replication hypothesis. E-participation is

confirmed to have identifiable clusters that conform to existing modes of offline participation. In particular, we see support for a separation between engagement in campaign or party activities, more targeted contact-related activities, expressive actions, and, finally, more passive forms of attention to politics. All of these are types of activity that have been identified or at least discussed as distinct modes of offline participation within the literature.

As a further and more explicit test of the differentiation hypothesis, we compared the fit statistics for the four-factor model shown in Figure 2 to a single-factor model (model estimates are shown in Appendix B online). The results show that the four-factor model has a better model fit which increases support for the idea that e-participation is multidimensional. It is notable, however, that the single-factor model could not be rejected. The fit statistics were above the critical threshold, and the items all had positive and significant factor loadings and R^2 values above an acceptable cut point of 0.3. While

[9]The determinant of the covariance matrix did indicate a problem of multicollinearity in that it approached zero, and two eigenvalues had values close to zero. However, further checks on the variables within the sample as a whole using multicollinearity diagnostics reveal that none displayed a tolerance less than 0.20, and VIF were below 1.5.

FIGURE 2 Results and Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for the SCFA Model of E-Participation, Online Activities, Internet Users

| Model	N	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/DF
One-factor model	1,376	0.987	0.022	1.66
Four-factor model (baseline, Figure 1)	1,376	0.995	0.011	1.16
Four-factor model (final, Figure 2)	1,376	0.995	0.011	1.17

Source: BMRB National Face-to-Face Quota Survey of 1,960 U.K. adults (1,376 Internet users), weighted data.

these latter results appear to challenge a clear-cut confirmation of the differentiation hypothesis, help is at hand in interpreting the results in the classic work of Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978). Here the authors argue that participation can be both a unidimensional and multidimensional phenomenon. There is, first, a single dimension of "activeness" which groups together those who engage in participation of any type and differentiates them from inactive citizens. Beyond this baseline participatory orientation, finer distinctions can be drawn among the "actives" in terms of the types of activities they engage in (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978, 52). It appears then that the dual structure underlying offline participation is simply being repeated in the online environment. Indeed, such results can be seen to offer stronger support for the replication hypothesis, i.e., that the Internet is largely mirroring existing patterns of political behavior.

In a second measurement model, we moved on to test the independence and integration hypotheses. To do this, we incorporated the relevant offline items listed in Table 3 onto Figure 3 and then relabeled the factors in a more generic manner, giving the "e" prefix a conditional character. This meant that we tested the integration hypothesis explicitly and the independence model by implication since our specified factors included both online activities and their offline equivalents. If the model remains a good fit to the data and the individual offline and online activities show equally strong positive loadings on the factors, this supports an integration of online and offline participation. If, however, the model fit is notably reduced and we see systematic discrepancies between online and offline item loadings, this indicates a lack of convergence across the two modes and thus support for independence. Figure 3 presents the integration model. Following the findings shown in Figure 2, we retained a loading of e-donation with the party factor only. Offline donation was cross-loaded on both the party and targeted factors. This permitted a further and more accurate test of Clagget

Figure 3   Baseline of the SCFA Model of E-Participation, Online and Offline Activities
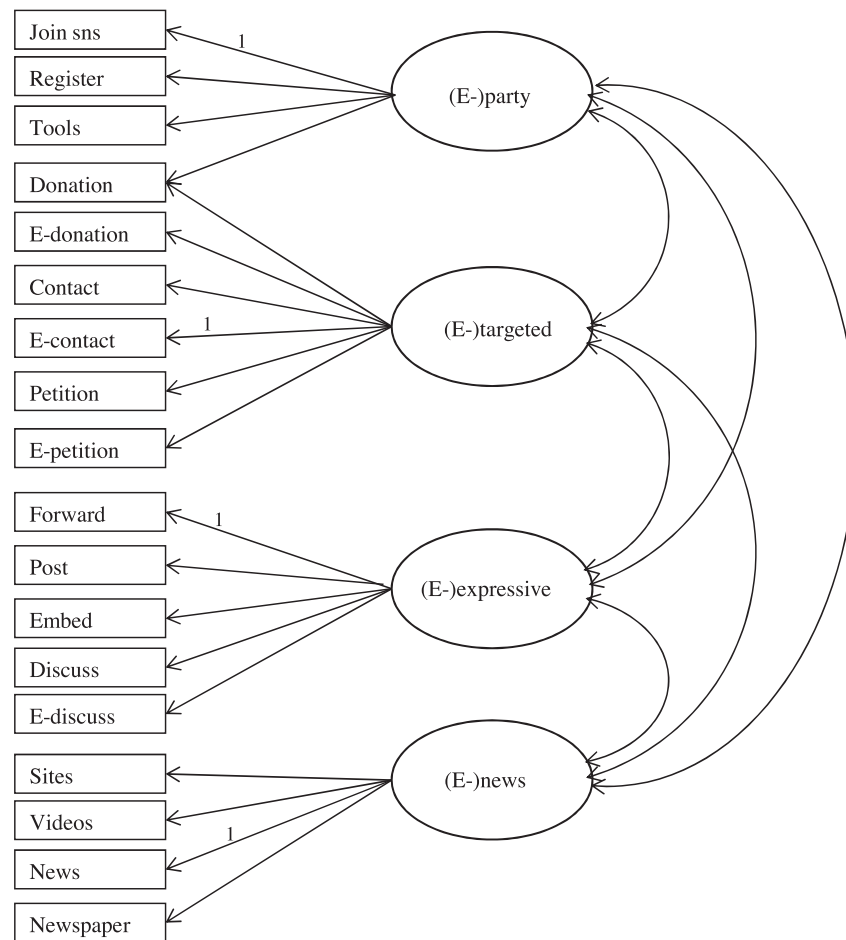
Source: Author elaboration.

and Pollock's (2006) finding that contributing money to a political cause is distinctive from campaigning itself.
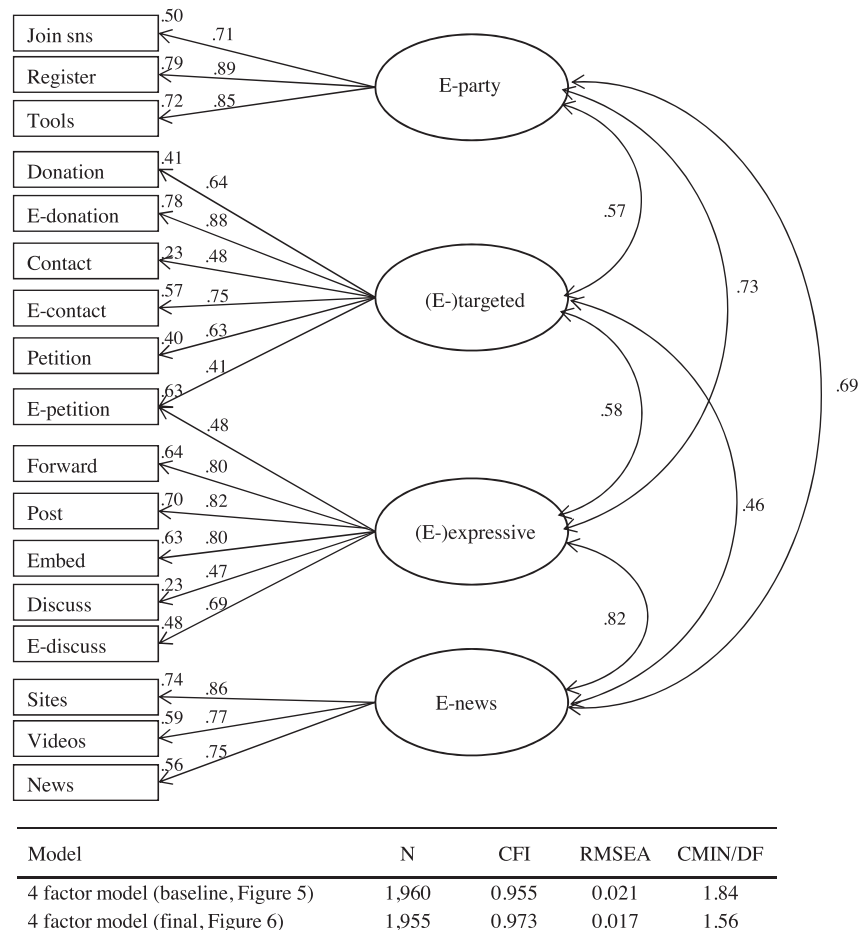
The findings are reported in Figure 4. Results for the baseline model show it fits the data to an acceptable level. However, a number of adjustments were necessary in light of factor estimates (loading scores, levels of significance, R^2 values) and modification indices. These were deletion of offline donation from the party factor (nonsignificant loading) and the subsequent deletion of e-donation which subsequently became nonsignificant; the addition of a cross-loading of e-petition onto the expressive factor; and the complete removal of reading newspapers from the model (given an extremely low R^2 indicating the proportion of variance—communality—in this item accounted for by its related factor (news) being very close to zero).

The final results are interesting in that they show support for both the independence and integration hypotheses. As noted earlier, our strongest test of the hypotheses lies with the targeted and news factors given the more comparable range of offline to online items available for analysis. One of the most clear cut findings is that integration is supported for our targeted forms of participation where we see a clear blending of offline and online items. Indeed, such is the convergence of the two spheres that e-donate now moves from the party factor to join with offline donation in defining targeted participation. Conversely, independence seems to define the news factor, with offline and online items not blending at all. This finding suggests some support for the Krueger "upgrading" logic, i.e., that traditionally passive types of political engagement such as attention to news are becoming more active and genuinely participatory.

The findings for the party and expressive modes of engagement regarding independence and integration are less conclusive. The fact that donation, the

FIGURE 4 **Results and Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for the SCFA Model of E-Participation, Online and Offline Activities**

Model	N	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/DF
4 factor model (baseline, Figure 5)	1,960	0.955	0.021	1.84
4 factor model (final, Figure 6)	1,955	0.973	0.017	1.56

Source: BMRB National Face-to-Face Quota Survey of 1,960 U.K. adults, weighted data.

only relevant offline item, does not load with party activities suggests independence for this mode. However, given that the online donation items has also now moved from party to targeted mode suggests the results may conform more to Clagget and Pollock's (2006) argument that the act of donating is simply different from working for a campaign or party. The inclusion of an item measuring volunteering offline to help a party during the election would have offered a more robust test of the hypotheses, but it was not available in this dataset. For the expressive factor, the findings are more strongly suggestive of independence. While online discussion loads within the acceptable range, the R^2 value for the only offline item included in this latent construct (offline discussion) is just under the generally acceptable cut point of 0.3. In addition, we find a strong cross loading for e-petition which, while not originally anticipated as part of the expressive mode, can be seen as a public

statement of one's opinion. The offline petition item does not fit with this factor however. As with the party factor, inclusion of a wider range of items measuring more a greater variety of offline expressive behaviors (e.g., letter to editors, public speeches, wearing buttons or stickers) is needed to fully test these two hypotheses in this case.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has examined the concept and measurement of e-participation and argued that greater theoretical rigor needs to be introduced to the study of this phenomenon. In particular, before examining questions of causality and mobilizing effects, more attention should be given to specifying its underlying structural properties, as has been the case with offline

participation. Drawing on both classic studies of participation and more recent empirical analyses of online forms of political engagement, we have identified three core interrelated research questions that literature on the topic needs to address. The first focuses on whether e-participation is a multidimensional or unidimensional phenomenon—the differentiation hypothesis. Secondly, if it is multidimensional, to what extent do the types of activity identified replicate those found offline—the replication hypothesis? Third, if replication is supported, is it that online and offline activities are merging and being performed interchangeably—the integration hypothesis? Or does the medium matter and the two activities constitute separate and nonrelated spheres of action—the independence hypothesis? In addition, while not presenting a conclusive test, we have brought some evidence to bear on the question of whether the Internet is introducing new dimensions or modes of participatory activities.

Our key findings are that e-participation can be differentiated into distinct clusters of interrelated activities as is the case with offline participation. This confirmation of an underlying multidimensional structure to online participation is important from a methodological point of view since it suggests that greater discrimination is needed in selecting items to measure e-participation. The lack of specificity on this front may explain in part the lack of clear and cumulative findings about the politically mobilizing effects of Internet use. From a more substantive perspective, this disaggregation shows that despite web-based political activities taking place in a more bounded context than is the case for offline activities, they still form distinctive practices. Just because one can more easily move from signing an e-petition to contacting a politician or volunteering to help a party, this does not lead to these practices merging together and constituting a unidimensional scale of activity.

On the question of replication, our analysis has shown that offline types of political engagement are reemerging online. In regard to integration versus independence, however, the findings are mixed. Integration appears to be occurring among the more active and targeted types of participation such as contacting a politician or signing a petition. Individuals basically use whatever tools are available to undertake their chosen action. However, among forms of engagement that are typically regarded as more passive—news consumption and expressive actions—there is evidence that the medium matters, and we find stronger support for independence. In practical terms, we have speculated that this might be due to these behaviors taking on a more active, collective, and networked quality in the online environment. Posting one's opinion to a blog or social network site arguably makes a more immediate and potentially influential public statement than wearing a lapel badge. For news consumption, the greater opportunities available in the online sphere for individuals to seek out sources and share them with others may also be leading to an "upgrading" of this mode of engagement into a more active participatory form. Further research and richer data is needed to more fully investigate this proposition.

More generally, the finding that the Internet may be spawning certain types of online dominant, if not exclusive, forms of political activity is grounds for both concern and optimism. From a "digital divide" perspective, such a development carries the potential for the reinforcement of existing participatory inequalities in society in that it may mean non-Internet users are excluded from a new form of citizen empowerment (Hargittai and Walejko 2008; Mossberger et al. 2008; Norris 2001; van Dijk 2006). On a more positive note, such modes may serve to widen the pool of politically active citizens by pulling in younger people and those who shun traditional representational channels in favor of more individualistic, postmaterialist, and critical societies (Dalton 2008; Norris 2011). Perhaps an e-expressive mode of participation, for example, provides the basis for more spontaneous and irregular forms of engagement that opens the political process up to new nonstate centered issues (Stolle and Hooghe 2004).

Beyond the specific hypotheses that have been investigated here, a broader aim of this article has been to integrate the growing body of e-participation research with its "classic" counterpart and thereby advance both schools of thought. If e-participation is a multidimensional phenomenon, then our findings suggest that researchers need to abandon the "one size fits all" approach that has featured in much of the literature to date and impose greater selectivity and consistency in their attempts to measure it. Furthermore, while our results appear to confirm that offline classification schemas will continue to "work" in the Internet era, there are signs that some revision and possibly expansion to current categories may be necessary, as we see a migration of more passive types of political engagement into more active modes of participation.

Acknowledgments

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