HOW POLITICAL DISAGREEMENTS LEAD TO PARTICIPATION: COMPARING LESS AND MORE EXPERIENCED VOTERS IN THE CASE OF THE U.S. 2014 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
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in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
Communication

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends. As my dissertation topic revolves around both strong-tie and weak-tie networks in decision-making, I have been thinking of all the people whom I met during this academic journey. Although most disagreements I experienced were with my parents, I must admit that the most influential two people who contributed to who I am are also my admirable parents. When I started my PhD program in the Department of Communication at George Mason University in 2012, I thought that I would not need any kind of support from my parents any longer. However, it was the first null hypothesis designed to reject to complete my journey.

I am also thankful to my younger brother, who also pursues his PhD degree in biology, because he is the one who takes care of my parents in person in South Korea. I am grateful to my grandparents, who left this world before I started this journey; although women rarely received higher education in their generation, they were always proud of me and encouraged me to pursue my career. Moreover, I cannot say "thank-you" enough to my colleagues, whom I met in the Department of Communication at GMU, as well as my best friends, who are always anxious about hearing from me across time zones.

Lastly, I pray that my dissertation would be the glory of god.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

List of Tables....vii

List of Figures....viii

Abstract....ix

Chapter 1 : Political Participation as Identity-Seeking Across Disagreements....1

- Introduction....1
- What is Political Participation?....14
- Political Disagreements and Polarization: Online versus Offline....19
- Disagreements as Identity-seeking Behavior....25
- Research Model....27
- Summary and Preview of Remaining Chapters....30

Chapter 2 : The Rise of Online Political Participation....33

- Preview....33
- Political Participation: A Definition and History....35
- Online Weak-Tie Networks as Social Capital and Their Relationship to Political Expression, Disagreement, and Participation....42
- The Cross-Pressures Hypothesis....49
- Benefits of Heterogeneous Online Social Network in Terms of Political Expression, Disagreement, and Participation....53
- Conceptualization of Disagreement....58
- Disagreements Moderated by Social Media....61
- Hypotheses: Political Talk, Disagreements, and Participation....66

Chapter 3 : Quantitative Method Combining Study I and II....70

- Overview....70
- Data Collection for the Survey: Sample and Sampling....71
  - Study I: First-time Voters....71
  - Study II: Experienced Voters....72
- Measurement: Operationalization of Key Variables....73
  - Dependent Variable: Political Participation....73

Independent Variable (1): Political Talk 77
Independent Variable (2): Political Disagreements 79
Descriptive Statistics of Two Samples: Less and More Experienced Voters 84
Study I: College Students Sample 84
Study II: Experienced Voters 95
Chapter 4 : Quantitative data Analysis Combining Study I and II 99
Overview 99
Summary of Research Hypotheses 99
Testing the Hypotheses in Study I and II 101
Chapter 5 : Discussion and Suggestions for Future Research 126
Preview 126
Results and Discussion 126
Differences between the Less and More Experienced Voters 126
Disagreements within Strong-tie Networks Matter in Participation 128
Political Talk on Social Media 131
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies 133
Conclusion 137
Appendix 138
References 146

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page
Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables of College Students Sample........ 84
Table 3.2 Multiple Social Media Use of College Students Sample........ 85
Table 3.3 Social Media Use Pattern of College Students Sample........ 86
Table 3.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis (Pattern Matrix): Political Participation 89
Table 3.5 Exploratory Factor Analysis (Total Variance Explained) 89
Table 3.6 Inter-Item Correlations of Three Disagreement Scales........ 93
Table 3.7 Reliability Test of Three Scales about Disagreement........ 95
Table 3.8 Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables of MTurk Sample.... 95
Table 3.9 Multiple Social Media Use of MTurk Sample........ 97
Table 3.10 Social Media Use Pattern of MTurk Sample........ 97
Table 4.1 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Offline Political Participation 103
Table 4.2 Multiple linear Regression Analysis: Online Political Participation . 105
Table 4.4 Interaction Effects of Frequency of Political Talk and Frequency of interpersonal Disagreements on Offline Political Participation........ 108
Table 4.5 Interaction Effects of Frequency of Political Talk and Frequency of Interpersonal Disagreements on Online Political Participation........ 108

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

Figure 1.1 Trend of United States National Voter Turnout 7

Figure 1.2 Trend of Internet Use 10

Figure 1.3 Research Model 30

Figure 4.1 Moderating Effects of Face-to-face Disagreements on Offline Political Participation versus Online Political Participation 111

Figure 4.2 Moderating Effects of Mediated Disagreements on Social Media on Offline Political Participation versus Online Political Participation 113

ABSTRACT

HOW POLITICAL DISAGREEMENTS LEAD TO PARTICIPATION: COMPARING LESS AND MORE EXPERIENCED VOTERS IN THE CASE OF THE U.S. 2014 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

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George Mason University, 2016

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This study proposes that disagreements in political discourses can be a facilitator of political participation, and mediated-communication via social media encourages this tendency. It had a twofold purpose: (1) to understand the relationship between political talk, political disagreements, and political participation, and (2) to understand the types of disagreements voters experience face-to-face and online in influencing political participation. The study examines a real time political context of the 2014 midterm elections in the United States. It reviews literature in the areas of political communication focusing on the meaning of political participation in the digital era, the cross-pressures hypothesis, and political discourse in the online public sphere. Using two independent variables, political talk and political disagreements, with the dependent variable of both offline and online political participation, three sets of hypotheses were tested through quantitative research methods. For the data analysis, two different

samples were collected (1) a college student sample representing the first-time or less experienced voters, and (2) an Amazon MTurk sample representing more experienced voters. The results showed that increased political talk predicted more participation both offline and online, and that more disagreements on social media predicted greater political participation both offline and online. Although face-to-face disagreements did not predict participation directly, it moderated the positive relationship between political talk and participation.

CHAPTER 1 : POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS IDENTITY-SEEKING ACROSS DISAGREEMENTS

This is a silent shout
Handkerchief of eternal nostalgia
Waving toward the blue ocean
Pure love fluttering in the wind like a wave
Grief spreads its wings like a white heron
At the edge of the pure, upright post of ideology
Ah! Who is it?
The one who knew
To tie such a mournful, sad heart

— *"Flag" by Chi Hwan, Yu*

Introduction

In the poem at this chapter's beginning, written by a Korean poet Chi Hwan Yu when his country lost national independence, the "flag" was used as a metaphor of the sentimental mind that cannot reach Utopia, which the "blue ocean" represents. The poet summoned up emotions like "love," "grief," and "mournful, sad heart" towards "eternal nostalgia" or "ideology," which is due to a disparity between the ideal of full democracy and the reality of feeling ostracized by others due to one's political beliefs which may manifest itself as a "silent shout."

Although this poem was written about a century ago on the other side of the world, its sentiment resonated with me when looking at the news media headlines after the 2014 midterm elections in the United States that stated the following: “Voter turnout in 2014 was the lowest since WWII” (*The Washington Post*), “The Worst Voter Turnout in 72 Years” (*The New York Times*), “Voter Turnout Drops to Historic Low” (MSNBC.com), “Where Are the Millennials? Midterm Voters Skew Old” (NBC News), “2014 Midterm Election Turnout Lowest in 70 Years” (PBS), and “Midterm Turnout Down in 2014” (*U.S. News & World Report*).

As indicated by the above headlines, shortly after the midterm elections of 2014 in the United States, news coverage in media like *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and PBS reported that voter turnout was the lowest since World War II (Rappeport, 2014; The Editorial Board, 2014; DelReal, 2014; Cook, 2014; Siegel, 2014; Roth, 2014). Some politicians considered making a law requiring Americans to vote (Lijphart, 2015). This belief that voting should be required sounds ironic because the United States is a democracy, where the government is chosen or replaced through “free, fair, and competitive elections” (Diamond, 2002, p. 21). This situation also illustrates an immediate challenge that America faces. After going through significant social movements and achievements for civil rights in less than a quarter of a millennium, more people with all different backgrounds could have liberated their voices and participated in elections; however, voter turnout has been steadily decreasing for many years.

Then, what makes people less interested or indifferent to the politics in this era? Does this low voter turnout indicate political apathy? Or, should it be interpreted rather as

a “silent shout,” which is the psychological inertia one feels when being ostracized or disenfranchised due to his or her political views? Focusing on political talk and participation in the midterm elections of 2014, this study explores whether political disagreements motivate voters to participate in politics or not, and it looks particularly at political disagreements within voters’ social networks. Accordingly, this study has a twofold purpose: (1) to understand the relationship between political disagreements and participation at the interpersonal communication level, particularly with family, friends, and coworkers; and (2) to understand the differences of disagreements people experience in face to face and online in influencing political participation.

In contemporary politics, voters seem timorous in expressing their views to change or influence government personnel or policies directly. Low voter turnout, especially among young voters, reflects this trend. However, many voters liberate their voices either within their casual social networks where they can feel secure to share their views or in any mediated space like online. This study aims to investigate the benefits of heterogeneous networks (accessed via social media) where people experience a variety of opinions, and to suggest that political disagreements function as a facilitator for healthy democracy.

Thus, the focal concept of this study is political disagreements as well as political participation. When there is a lack of alignment of political views within one’s social networks, people perceive and feel different types of pressures to defend their own opinion, to articulate and reinforce positions, to seek accord, or to find common ground. In this respect, political disagreements resonate with cross-pressures identified by

Lazarsfeld and his colleagues (1948), i.e. "the conflicts and inconsistencies among the factors affecting voter decisions by driving voters in opposite directions" (p. 53). The "factors" may vary from the individual level (e.g., personality) to the societal level, such asone's socio-economic status. Accordingly, Nir (2005) suggested a concept entitled *network ambivalence*, which differs from interpersonal level, or intra-personal ambivalence (pp. 424-425). In this study, political disagreements are identified as being exposed to political views that are not in alignment with one's own view, and the degree of disagreements may vary from simply being aware of different viewpoints to becoming engaged in a heated dispute. Beyond this nominal definition, any political disagreements, communicated either verbally or nonverbally, were considered for the analysis, although verbally communicated disagreements were specifically focused upon.

Moreover, an empirical definition of political disagreements requires identifying different types of social networks since the unit of analysis in this study was the individual voter. Therefore, Granovetter's (1973) concept of "strong ties" and "weak ties," is integrated into the empirical definition of political disagreements. According to several studies (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000), primary groups and certain social groups, where members are closely interdependent and where they share personal needs and culture, tend to be highly homogenous. The relationships in these strong-tie networks generally share common beliefs, values, and norms continuously. Family or childhood friends can be a good example of strong-tie networks. On the other hand, networks that consist of less enduring social bonds are identified as "weak-tie" networks. Because weak ties typically consist of one's acquaintances, coworkers, and individuals

with whom people interact in specific, typically short duration contexts (such as online communities), members in weak-tie networks are less interdependent compared to strong-tie networks. Weak-tie networks are loose and typically larger than strong-tie networks. This study assumes that disagreements within strong-tie networks are different from disagreements within weak-tie networks in predicting political behaviors. Consequently, combining with these concepts of strong versus weak ties, the empirical definition of political disagreements is discussed further in depth in the next chapter.

As another focal concept, political participation is identified as a behavioral response in an effort to influence government actions regarding social issues. This nominal definition follows what Verba and Nie (1972), as well as Milbrath (1965), described as "behavior designed to affect the choice of governmental personnel or policies," which can be understood as a part of a wider notion of "democratic engagement" (Carpini, 2004, p. 397). For the current study, one's intention to influence government actions through a variety of activities either directly or indirectly directly was considered as political participation.

Chapter One provides a brief explication of political disagreements and participation in the new media environment and its implications for democracy. Chapter Two reviews previous studies about political disagreements that occur via social media, as well as at the interpersonal communication level in general. Specifically, it explores how each type of disagreements affects political participation differently by comparing and contrasting disagreements experienced face-to-face with those that occur on social media. Finally, it summarizes relevant hypotheses at the end of the chapter. To test

research hypotheses directly, a quantitative research method for data analysis was employed, and the sampling process for the data collection for Study I and Study II, as well as the descriptive statistics of each sample, is explained in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four the results from quantitative data analysis are presented. Specifically, the results from both Study I, using a sample of first-time or less experienced voters, and Study II, which focuses on more experienced voters, are explained in detail. Chapter Five examines the theoretical and pragmatic implications of the current study findings, limitation of the study, and suggestions for future research.

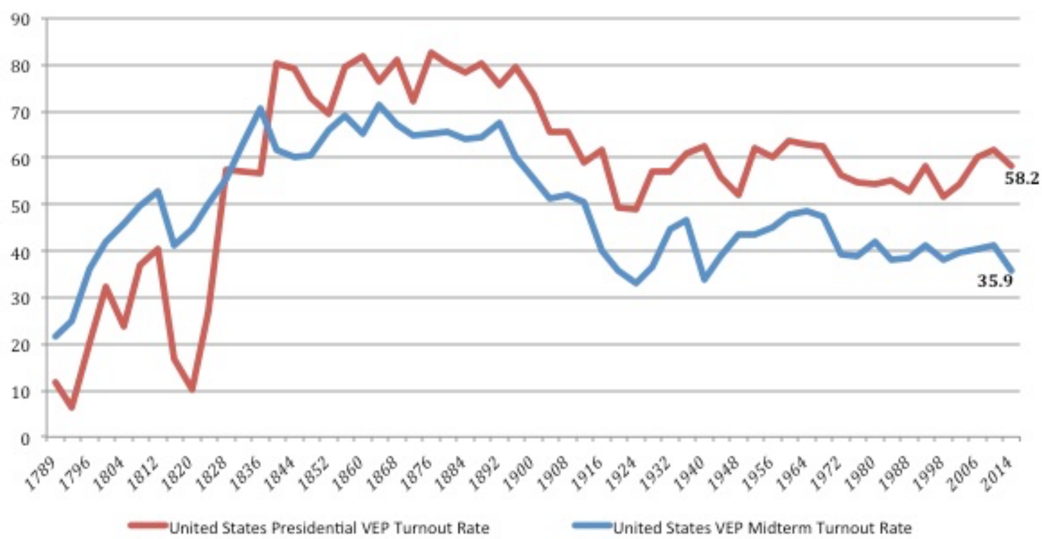
The following sections of this chapter provide an overview of the issue of declining participation in voting in U.S. elections, the increase in political discussion and exposure to diversity of political beliefs and opinions via social media in recent years, and a conceptual definition of political participation. This is followed by a preview of the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

Declining Participation in U.S. Voting and the Rise of Online Political Participation via Social Media

Statistical data (Ragsdale, 2014) show that the underlying trend of voter turnout both in the U.S. presidential elections and midterm elections has declined since the beginning of the 20th century. As is illustrated in Figure 1.1, voter turnout is declining.

This decline of voter turnout is more obvious to observe in the midterm elections, and previous studies in political science have found many reasons behind this decline of voting. First, Campbell's (1987) theory of surge and decline suggested that presidential elections are high stimulus elections where there is a "surge" in voter turnout while

midterm elections are low stimulus elections. Because midterm elections are less salient than presidential elections, turnout is usually low. Also, independent voters who refuse to affiliate with either Democratic Party or Republican Party are increasing (Chinni, 2015). This phenomenon appears to be more prominent among millennial voters. Several studies found that their party identification and actual voting are not the same (American National Election Studies, 2012; Pew Research, 2014).



Source: Ragsdale (2014).

Figure 1.1 Trend of United States National Voter Turnout

In addition to the theory of surge and decline, Knight (2014) provided two more possible reasons to explain this midterm gap: (1) "a presidential penalty," explaining that midterm voters prefer to express dissatisfaction with the president's performance or his party in evaluating the government; and (2) "a reversion to the mean in voter ideology," indicating a certain level of retroaction because voters still oscillate between two opposing political ideologies even after voting for a presidential candidate. A voter may attempt to penalize a president for not enacting policies he or she likes in the midterms by moving back to a previously rejected position.

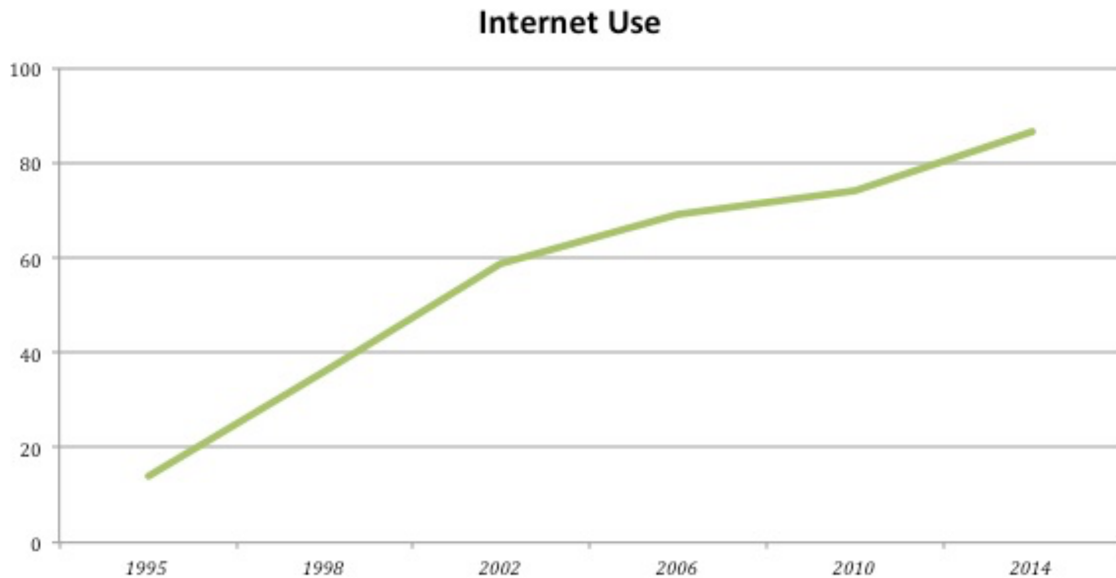
As Figure 1.1 shows, compared to presidential elections, this decline of voting in the midterm elections is common in many democratic countries, including the United States. In spite of this overall tendency, voter turnout was remarkably low in 2014 considering that there were a variety of political campaigns, including single-issue campaigns, the "Vote or Die" campaign[1], and campaigns conducted by "dark money" (e.g., groups not sharing their donor lists with the Federal Election Commission) as explained in the editorial of *the Washington Post* (Editorial Board, 2014). According to Westcott (2014) in her article published in *Newsweek*, the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) estimated that approximately $4 billion were spent on the midterm elections of 2014. This fact makes them "the most expensive midterm elections" in United States history, followed by the 2010 midterms. Cost in the next most expensive midterm

---

[1] It is a campaign aiming to get young voters to vote, and is conducted by Citizen Change, a political service group, founded by P. Diddy and backed by pop musicians like Mary J. Blige, Mariah Carey, and 50 Cent. It appeared in 2004, and has been inactive since 2006. In 2012, however, the "Vote or Die!" t-shirt concept was born by the Democratic National Convention and was used in several states like Colorado in 2014 midterm elections.

election was even $333 million less than the 2014 elections (Westcott, 2014). Regardless, the midterm elections of 2014 had the lowest voter turnout in 70 years.

Although low voter turnout may imply fewer people are engaged in politics, there are other types of political activities that have increased during this time period. For example, attending town hall meetings, filing a petition, organizing or mobilizing a campaign or protest, and sending a letter or email to politicians are all forms of exerting citizenship to influence policy-making process. Except voting, all these activities of exercising one's citizenship have become more feasible online due to technological innovations that have made these types of political participation more convenient. Several scholars have pointed out that the public sphere has been expanded into the online realm (Norris, 2001; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002). Figure 1.2 shows that Internet use has been rapidly increasing since mid-1990s. While this implies many interesting recent trends, one of them is the increasing social media use for communicating about politics.



Source: Internet Live Stats (2014).

Figure 1.2 Trend of Internet Use

According to the Pew Research Center's report, *Social Media and Voting* (2012), a considerable number of voters below age 50 reported that, via social media, they have been encouraged to vote by family members or friends, encouraged others to vote for a particular candidate, and they announced their vote to others. This tendency is very clear especially among young voters: 45% of voters below age 30 reported that they have been encouraged to vote by family and friends on social media, and 34% of voters in this age group said they have encouraged others to vote for a particular candidate on social media (p. 2). Rather than posting anything directly relevant to their voting, social media users typically share news stories or articles about policies or politicians plus their own

opinions about them—where deliberation, often invoked from simple exchange of different ideas, occurs (Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Park, 2015). These findings suggest that social media plays an important role in communicating politics more and more in this new media environment.

Historically, media have been often accused of decreasing social bonds. Looking back to when television was invented, some people were concerned that individuals would be less likely to engage in social activities and that a sense of community was weakened. As Putnam (1995) argued, "social capital" erodes—which means "the collapse of networks of interaction among individuals that imbue human life with qualities needed for community, collective action, and democratic participation" (p. 66). Next to generational change, "television" was blamed as the second most crucial culprit for a decline in social activities, including political participation.

Over the past two decades, the advent of the Internet stimulated attention from scholars, media experts, and social activists just as television did in the past. Especially regarding falling voter turnout, scholars have pointed out that voters are more likely to reinforce their stereotypes or prejudices through selective exposure to any news or information consistent with their preexisting attitudes, and that this tendency appears to be strengthened by Internet use (Sunstein, 2001; Scheufele & Nisbett, 2002; Prior, 2005; Garrett, 2009). In other words, the Internet may make it easier for voters to stick to their own views without listening to the other side. Sustein (2001) is considered a scholar who argued first that the Internet functions as an "echo chamber," where political orientation is reaffirmed (Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014, p. 318). Mutz and Martin (2001) also

pointed out that "the proliferation of Internet news sources" and "the potential they offer for tailoring news to one's own interests and prejudices" are barriers to "any exposure to differing views that does not produce instantaneous compliance," which is valuable for healthy formation of public opinion (p. 110). However, according to Scheufele and Nisbett (2002), "the role of the Internet in promoting active and informed citizenship is minimal" because of those who use the Internet do so mainly for entertainment (p. 69). Focusing on increasing media choice as a fundamental contributor of selective exposure, Prior (2005) also found that Internet use decreases political participation for those who prefer entertainment in their media use and widens the turnout gap between news and entertainment fans.

In spite of these concerns that people are more likely to seek spheres that are devoid of divergent views since they have more choices of media in seeking political news, other scholars found evidence to support the potential of the online sphere for deliberation (Mutz, 2006; Garrett, 2009; Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014). Although Mutz (2006) supported that the Internet promotes selective exposure to similar viewpoints, she pointed out that this tendency of seeking opinion-reinforcing information on the Internet is considered "politically motivated selective exposure," which eventually encourages people to participate in politics further. Garrett (2009) also found that people do not avoid news containing divergent viewpoints in the Internet; instead, the more significant motivation of selecting news stories online is to reinforce their opinion rather than to avoid any opinion challenge. In other words, this is the idea that Internet use should not be blamed for lower voter turnout, although the Internet may encourage

selective exposure. Moreover, Colleoni, Rozza, and Arvidsson (2014) found that the Internet does not always promote homophily in terms of political attitudes or ideas. Even among those who use the same social media (e.g.,Twitter), the level of homophily in political opinion typically varies to some degree.

Regarding the concern that social capital erodes as people spend more time online rather than becoming more socially engaged in their community, Shah and his associates (2002) found that people who spent more time in the Internet were more likely to attend public events and to volunteer for their community. In other words, time displacement from frequency of Internet use was not observed in their study. Also, informational use of the Internet, which differs from using the Internet for entertainment, has positive effects in civic engagement (Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001).

In addition, this new space online enables people with diverse perspectives, including those with a minority opinion, to share their thoughts and discuss social issues with fewer barriers than they encounter in face to face (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Sproull, & Kiesler, 1986; Walther, 1996; Tidwell & Walther, 2002). For example, on Facebook, people can express their political ideas or party preference merely by clicking "likes" of any political candidate, party, or campaign, by clicking "share" of any political news or picture, and by posting "comment" on any political opinion or news. On Twitter, people can present their political identity simply by "following" any political candidate or party, "tweeting" any political news or information, and "re-tweeting" political candidates' tweets or pictures. It is now common to see pictures of the "I voted"

stickers people receive after voting in postings via various social media (Williams, 2014). These "I voted" stickers often function a simple motivator of reminding or encouraging others to vote, as well as voter pride (Bond et al., 2012).

The Pew Research Center's report, *Social Media and Voting* (2012), explained above, also reflects that people are still interested in politics, that they care about elections, and that they are willing to communicate politics within their social networks. There are several advantages to the Internet for voters who wish to communicate about politics: (1) political information or news is more accessible in the Internet; (2) it costs less for voters to get involved in various political events online; and (3) it is often more comfortable as well as convenient for voters to communicate with other voters by using the Internet. In sum, it may be that the negative implications of the Internet are overstated.

What is Political Participation?

Although previous studies have been concerned with the idea that the Internet may replace social activities and reduce social capital in the same ways as television (Putnam, 1995; Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Nie, 2001; Wellman, Quan-Haase, Boase, Chen, Hampton, Díaz, & Miyata, 2003), this dissertation proposes that it, in fact, expands existing public sphere where people are exposed to diverse opinions or opposing ideas frequently (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010; Nir, 2011). To find the effect of political disagreements more accurately in this new media environment, it is necessary to re-conceptualize political participation.

The term *political participation* has been used as one of the key variables in a variety of political communication studies. Theoretically, political participation is defined as behavior designed to affect the choice of governmental personnel or policies (Milbrath, 1965; Verba and Nie, 1972) as a part of a wider notion of "democratic engagement" (Carpini, 2004, p. 397). In detail, it is one's intention to influence government actions through a variety of activities, directly by affecting public policy and lawmaking or indirectly by mobilizing the public to do so (Vitak et al., 2011, p. 108). In terms of its operationalization, however, political participation has been measured in a variety of ways.

Traditional studies have focused on action-oriented participation in politics, including voting, making a donation to a political organization, contacting a public official, and memberships in political association (Lazarsfeldt et al., 1948; Verba & Nie, 1972; Leighley, 1990; Putnam, 1995; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). In addition to electoral participation, McLeod et al. (1999) focused on local political participation; they specifically differentiated the "institutionalized" form of participation, which is formal and conventional, from "nontraditional" forms of participating, such as attending a civic forum on special issues and accessing different views in a forum at the local level (p. 316). Measuring whether an individual has either "joined a national organization" or "signed a petition to help solve a national or local problem," Leighley (1990) added "cooperative participation" to voting, campaigning, and contacting as part of their operationalization of the dependent variable political participation (p. 465).

Not only the actual voting, but also the intention to vote, can also be an index of political participation. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) measured the "intention" of voting instead of actual voting behavior in their operationalization of political participation (p. 323). Carlisle and Patton (2013) also included "whether an individual publicizes the intention to vote" as one of the items measuring political activity (p. 887).

More recent studies have paid more attention to the Internet, and online political interaction has become part of the notion of political participation. Since people are involved in a wide range of political activities on the Internet, it is necessary to articulate what is considered participation and what is irrelevant. For example, recent studies support the idea that people use social media for communicating politics, and that, consequently, social media use, including supporting a political candidate or campaign, predicts political engagement (Bode, 2012; Bode, Vraga, Borah, & Shah, 2014). Bakker and De Vreese (2011) distinguished traditional participation and digital participation as two discrete forms of political participation for two reasons: (1) digital participation can be an alternative to traditional forms of participation; and (2) it can be a supplemental way of participating in politics politics (p. 3). In other words, the Internet provides more, as well as broader technical possibilities, to promote political engagement. Moreover, they found two factors, active participation and passive participation, for both forms of participation through factor analysis (p. 7). "Active digital participation" in their study covers reacting to any message on politics, discussing, and protesting, and it resonates with what Gil de Zúñiga and his colleagues (2010) labeled as "online expressive participation" (p. 42). Online expressive participation especially includes instances such

as sending an email to a politician and signing a petition online, should be considered "an active means of verbal political engagement" in this digital era (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010, p. 38).

On the other hand, analyzing time series data, Putnam (1995; 2000) focused on the formation of "social capital" from the long-term perspective—which is viewed relevant to political participation more broadly. He distinguished two forms of social capital, "bridging" and "bonding" – the former refers to social networks that bring together people of different demographic backgrounds while the latter brings together people of a similar background. By definition, heterogeneous community networks are usually considered beneficial "for building social capital, generating interpersonal trust, and reinforcing community ties" (Norris, 2002, p. 4). Although homogeneous bonding organizations also have positive sides, they may widen social gaps and exacerbate polarization especially existing in pluralist societies (Pretty, 2003; Patulny & Svendsen, 2007). The concept of social capital focuses more on the "collective" aspect rather than the expressive aspect of participation, and social trust facilitates solidarity, for example, making political institutions more responsive (Putnam, 2000). This idea encompasses a wide range of notions like networks, norms, and trust (Putnam, 1995, p. 664).

Labeling Putnam's argument as the idea of "disaffected citizenship," Hargittai and Shaw (2013) pointed out studies which support the idea of disaffected citizenship, and which argued the declining rates of youth participation in politics, should be measured by electoral participation or membership in associations. However, studies that present the "cultural displacement narrative" argue that younger generations have found

“new modes of engagement” in online communities “to connect with like-minded peers around specific issues” (Hargittai & Shaw, 2013, p. 117). Using online news rather than watching television news, as well as posting on social media rather than protesting, for example, young voters may have simply moved to a new platform of media to understand salient issues, to express and share their views, to hear others’ views, and to rally like-minded people rather than simply turned their back to politics. Since they are more likely to be digitally savvy than older generations, they prefer new media in seeking solidarity, as well as information on politics, and in investing their time and efforts to understand social issues.

Therefore, both electoral and non-electoral forms of participation need to be included in the concept of political participation for enhancing the accuracy of measurement and prediction considering characteristics of young generation. Attention to political issues, the public expression of ideas, and the public display of connections on the Internet may be a seed of political participation in this digital era in addition to a wide range of political activities expanded from offline activities like signing online petitions or mobilizing political forums online (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010; Vitek et al., 2011; Hargittai & Shaw, 2013; Bode et al., 2014). Any online activities, not virtual but relevant to real politics, reflect users’ interests in politics and predict other political activities offline. Consequently, online activities, including expressing views on social issues or political agendas, sending a messages to exchange political views, organizing or mobilizing any political forums, sharing political news or information to raise public awareness (at least within one’s social networks), and signing online petition, should not

be ignored when counting political participation. The current study suggests the need to re-conceptualize the notion of political participation by including various forms of discursive participation occurring in the Internet, and by reconsidering various participatory behaviors in politics, rather than simply separating digital participation from traditional participation in politics.

Political Disagreements and Polarization: Online versus Offline

Interpersonal disagreement in political discourse is another factor that may contribute to political participation. Interpersonal disagreement has been discussed by a number of scholars in many fields, including communication studies, political sciences, and conflict management (Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988; Rowan, 1991; Nicotera, 1993; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; Klofstad, Sokhey, & McClurg, 2013; Vraga, Thorson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Gee, 2015). However, conflicting results exist in terms of examining the influence of disagreements in interpersonal discussion on political participation. Traditional studies (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; Mutz, 2002; Mutz & Martin, 2001) showed that elements of cross-pressures and conflict avoidance negatively influenced civic engagement, which varies from any actions, for example, voting, paying taxes, or serving in the military, to maintaining civic membership, volunteering, and paying attention to public affairs. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) suggested "the cross-pressures hypothesis," positing that people are less likely to vote if they are situated between conflicting social positions. In other words, if a voter perceives that the opinion climate has diverged or even polarized in his

or her social network, including family, friends or colleagues, s/he can be the "undecided" voter or may not vote at all.

On the other hand, newer studies are more likely to find positive effects of cross-pressures (Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004; Nir, 2005; Nir, 2011). The concept of cross-pressures was originally defined as "the conflicts and inconsistencies among the factors affecting voter decisions by driving voters in opposite directions" (Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948, p. 53). One of the reasons why cross-pressures cannot fully explain the decline of political participation is established in Nir's studies (2005; 2011). First, she re-conceptualized the concept of *cross-pressures* as *network ambivalence*, which differs from individual-level ambivalence (pp. 424-425). She pointed out that Lazarsfeld and his colleagues (1948) did not distinguish internal sources from external sources of cross-pressures in their operational definition of cross-pressures. Although cross-pressures in their study predicted lateness of voting decision, this variable was, in fact, measured as a mixed concept of external components of pressures existing in one's network level and intrapersonal ambivalence. In her study, Nir (2005), network ambivalence was measured by ratings on a feeling thermometer, which enabled respondents to express their attitudes about each political candidate in terms of degrees with their attitudes corresponding to temperatures. She found that ambivalence on the intra-individual level was negatively associated with political participation as well as positively associated with time of voting decision, although network-level ambivalence had no significant effect on political participation, voting, and

time of voting decision. At least, network ambivalence (i.e., cross-pressures) was not a culprit of the decline of political participation, but individual level ambivalence was.

What she conceptualized as network ambivalence is very similar to the concept, "*network heterogeneity*" (Scheufele et al., 2004), which is defined as the diversity of people and their ideas based on social factors like gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religion. Their study found that secular networks were important in democratic citizenship and that, in particular, the motivational role of volunteer networks was strongly supported. In other words, people seek further information after interacting with people who hold dissimilar views to bolster their initial positions or reconsider their perspectives. Second, Nir (2011) also distinguished between competition, where many different ideas coexist, and opposition, where there are mainly conflicting ideas, as different levels of disagreements in political discussion. This study found that when voters are exposed to competing ideas, exposure to competition positively affected voters' decision to vote and to participate in politics whereas opposition may have a chilling effect on political involvement.

Following Nir's (2005) conceptualization, the current study focuses on the network level of cross-pressures. At the network level, moreover, who specifically supports a person's political opinion, as well as how many people support his or her opinion, may matter in communicating politics. The degree of cross-pressures would be different between those who mainly have support from family or childhood friends versus those who mainly have support from coworkers or casual acquaintances. In addition to *with whom* people disagree in their social network while talking about politics, *where*

they experienced disagreements, such as if it occurred during a face-to-face conversation or within mediated communication via social media, may matter in their decision or action in politics.

Political disagreement in computer-mediated interaction is distinguished from that occurring in face-to-face communication for many reasons: (1) the asynchronous feature of interaction, which enables a sender and a receiver of any message not necessarily to communicate simultaneously, and which reduces any possible tension that may be attributed from any face-to-face confrontation; (2) lack of social presence and social context cues, which often promotes free, fair, and unaffected conversation between communicators; and (3) the anonymity of communicators, which make communicators feel safer and more secure in communicating what they really want to say instead of what they should say than in face-to-face discussion (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Sproull, & Kiesler, 1986; Walther, 1996; Sperlich, 2001; Tidwell, & Walther, 2002; Suler, 2004).

Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) defined "social presence" as "the awareness of others in an interaction combined with an appreciation of the interpersonal aspects of that interaction," and proposed social presence theory—i.e. communication can be effective if the medium has the appropriate social presence required for proper interpersonal involvement. Thus, face-to-face communication is considered a channel with the most social presence while text-based communication has the least. When communicating through any medium, the lack of cues indicating physical presence

weakens the connection between communicators (Short et al., 1976; Walther, 1996; Tidwell, & Walther, 2002).

These distinctive characteristics of the Internet enable people to manage conflicts more effectively and to be less afraid of disapproval or punishment led by heated arguments at one's very nose (Papacharissi, 2004) In fact, several studies emphasized the potential of online communities to embody deliberative democracy, where "people can be more informed, tolerant, and reflective, and have higher quality opinions" because the Internet offers increased opportunities for voters to listen to dissimilar political views – sometimes inadvertently (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009; Brundidge, 2010; Carlisle & Patton, 2013). However, these studies did not contain any further tests of the relationship between inadvertent exposure to different ideas and political participation.

Previous studies also have not fully considered the impact of social media on voters' decision-making process across political disagreements within their social networks. Although online political activities seem less visible compared to traditional political participation, such as contributing money to political campaigns and attending a political meeting or a speech, it is necessary to study the role of social media in political communication to better understand new trends in political participation more accurately. Slotnick (2009) pointed out the political origins of Facebook by describing how Mark Zuckerberg, the chairman as well as cofounder of Facebook, was in charge of the "Get out the vote (GOTV)" campaign to increase voter turnout in the 2004 presidential election. In the 2008 presidential election, the Internet began to be used to mobilize voters and advertise political campaigns by Barack Obama, at that time a presidential

candidate. In the 2012 presidential election, more candidates used social media for their campaigns, and several candidates, including Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, announced their candidacy online first—using email, Facebook, Twitter, or Youtube (Fouhy, 2011). Based on their experiment about social influence and political mobilization in the case of this 2012 presidential election, Bond and his colleagues (2012) published an article in the journal, *Nature*. They found that messages on Facebook feeds significantly influenced voting patterns, and that close friends with real-world ties were much more influential than casual online acquaintances (p. 298).

Due to its accessibility and low-cost, the Internet may facilitate social influence in a way that either motivates or demotivates participating in various political activities and getting involved in political deliberation (Bond et al., 2012). Therefore, as recent studies suggest, the expressive use of social media in politics is an important factor to predict rising online political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010; Bode et al., 2014; Vraga, Anderson, Kotcher, & Maibach, 2015). Social media is not only used as a new arena for hearing divergent opinions, information, and news, which are primarily published by traditional media (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999), or which are filtered through social ties (Bode, 2012), but social media is also used as a public sphere for seeking social support from like-minded people (Walther & Boyd, 2002; Huckfeldt et al., 2002), which helps to mobilize any collective action or movements (Castells, 2012; Thorson, Driscoll, Ekdale, Edgerly, Thompson, Schrock, Swartzg, Vraga, & Wells, 2013). Because social media works as a buffer against any face-threatening level clash of ideas, people can articulate their disagreements towards one another. This benefit leads voters

to be more expressive online, and to change their views or attitudes toward a policy or agenda (Price, Nir, & Capella, 2006). Compared to face-to-face disagreements, therefore, mediated disagreements on social media are often considered more manageable.

Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs (2004) called this idea “discursive participation,” and suggested that expressing one’s political views may be the starting point of participation in politics. Social media has expanded this opportunity by reducing negative aspects of conflicts and by promoting various types of social capital. In this respect, social media is anticipated to be a facilitator not only for online political participation, but also for offline participation, including voting and attending any political event. Based on this rationale, the current study suggests that political participation needs to be understood more broadly by including expressive participation in politics as well as participatory behaviors through social media beyond the traditional notion of participation.

Disagreements as Identity-seeking Behavior

To understand the role of disagreements in democracy that people experience during political discourse, either online or face-to-face, the current study proposes that political disagreements among voters should be considered an identity-seeking process. To protect their own social identity, people often do not hesitate to get involved in heated arguments beyond simple conflicts attributed to different ideas. Considering that personal self-concept is attributed to perceived membership in a relevant social group, it is also important to distinguish disagreements with people having close links like a romantic partner, a best friend, or family members and disagreements with coworkers or

those whom they share a certain type of connection. When people experience political disagreements with people with close bonds, often referred to as "strong ties" (Granovetter, 1973), they seek alternative supporters for their opinion for maintaining their relationships, for protecting their personal or social identity, and for understanding their own cultural cognition of those issues.

In addition, even within the same types of networks as "strong ties," people talk about politics both face-to-face and through mediated communication using social media. Based on studies on mediated communication (Christie, et al., 1976; Walther, 1996; Walther & Boyd, 2002), it can be predicted that even with the same family members or close friends, face-to-face political talk and political talk via social media may bring a different level of effects in their behaviors overall.

According to Granovetter (1973), the "strength" of interpersonal ties is determined with several elements combined, including the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy or mutual confiding, and the reciprocal services characterizing the tie (p. 1361). Unlike family or close friends, some relationships are maintained with sporadic contact; for example, work-related ties tend to be maintained only in a work context. In weak-tie networks, people have limited expectations one another, and interact in a limited context. The pattern of this type of networks is thin in terms of the width and the depth of information they share one another. The topics they discuss less vary compared to those they discuss within stronger ties. People in stronger ties share more information about one another, and they discuss (1) more as well as a (2) wider range of topics (3) more frequently compared to what they do within weak-tie networks.

Therefore, the impact of conflicts within strong-tie networks often surpasses that within weak-tie networks.

Distinguishing social networks as being comprised either strong ties or weak ties, as well as distinguishing social presence as being communicated face-to-face or mediated via social media, the study explores how disagreements that voters experience function in the overall process of decision-making in politics. Although the impact of the Internet in politics has been discussed in previous studies, it is still unclear if the Internet undermines or reinforces deliberative democracy. Therefore, after tracking voters' identity-seeking process and understanding their political decision in this context, the current condition of democracy can be diagnosed, whether it is "equilibrium" or "stagnation," as Huckfeldt and Mendez (2008) described, and whether it is a "silent shout" or "apathy," as depicted in a poem at the beginning of Chapter One. Drawing upon previous research in these areas, the current study employed the research model presented in the following section.

Research Model

The current study proposes that political disagreements among voters should be considered an identity-seeking process to understand the function of political disagreements in democracy. During political disagreements with family members, romantic partners, or close friends, people view an issue through the lens of their identity, either personal or social.

First, disagreements motivate people to seek information and to pursue further discussion either with the same person they disagree with or with other people. Because

they tend to maintain internal consistency in their beliefs, perceptions, values, or behaviors, they feel discomfort when they hold two conflicting beliefs. According to the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), cognitive dissonance leads to any behavior for reducing this dissonance. When people hear from those with different perspectives in political agenda, they not only learn new ideas or information, but also attempt to reaffirm their stance on that agenda. In this process, political knowledge plays a key role. Political knowledge is relevant to media use; which type of media they use predicts the level of their political knowledge to some extent (Scheufele et al., 2004). Previous studies found that people, using media to learn public affairs rather than to be entertained, tend to be more knowledgeable and to participate in politics more frequently (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Scheufele et al., 2004).

Political disagreements also contain affective dimensions, mainly driven by unpleasant feelings or discomfort due to a strained atmosphere. Heated arguments occur when people have strong motivation to protect their values or beliefs. This heated atmosphere occurs not only because of their need for cognition to understand the differences, but also because of their need for emotional support to reaffirm that they are not alone. What Kahan (2012) calls “cultural cognition” is the way in which social context and the group identities invoked by messages or experiences are perceived. Also, depending upon their experiences, if people could reaffirm that they have support within their networks after disagreements occurred, positive emotions like relief and security may offset any negative mood, which was previously out of humor.

Lastly, cognitive dissonance often leads to actions in addition to any attitudinal change. Previous studies presented that the more people talk about politics, the more likely they are exposed to disagreements (Huckfeldt et al., 2002; Huckfeldt, 2007). This study aims to find if participatory behaviors increase, or decrease, or remain same as voters experience more disagreements in politics. Do disagreements in political discussion motivate voters to express their own opinion more actively? Or, do political disagreements discourage voters to justify their views in public? Are voters less invigorated to engage in politics if they are exposed to cross-pressures?

Moreover, as a new platform to reduce tension in communicating controversial issues without threatening their "faces," social media encourages their political communication specifically with family members or friends, and it reinforces their motivation to get involved in politics. "Conflict avoidance" is often found in political discussion with their family members and friends face-to-face, however, social media reduces this risk of losing "faces" in conflicts. If political disagreements are moderated by new media technology, do voters engage more in politics?

As Figure 1.3 presents below, this study offers a research model, mainly investigating the role of political disagreements in the relationship between political discussion and participation. Political disagreements are suspected to moderate this relationship, but the effect may vary depending upon (1) whom people disagreed with, and (2) where they disagreed. In other words, the role of disagreements at the interpersonal level, and the role of mediated disagreements via social media are studied. Specifically, different types of interpersonal-level disagreements are identified: did disagreements exist more

intensively within one's strong-tie networks, like with parents, siblings, or close friends, than other people experience? If so, the impact of disagreements may be more influential in their political participation, and if not, the effect of disagreement may have less impact on political participation.

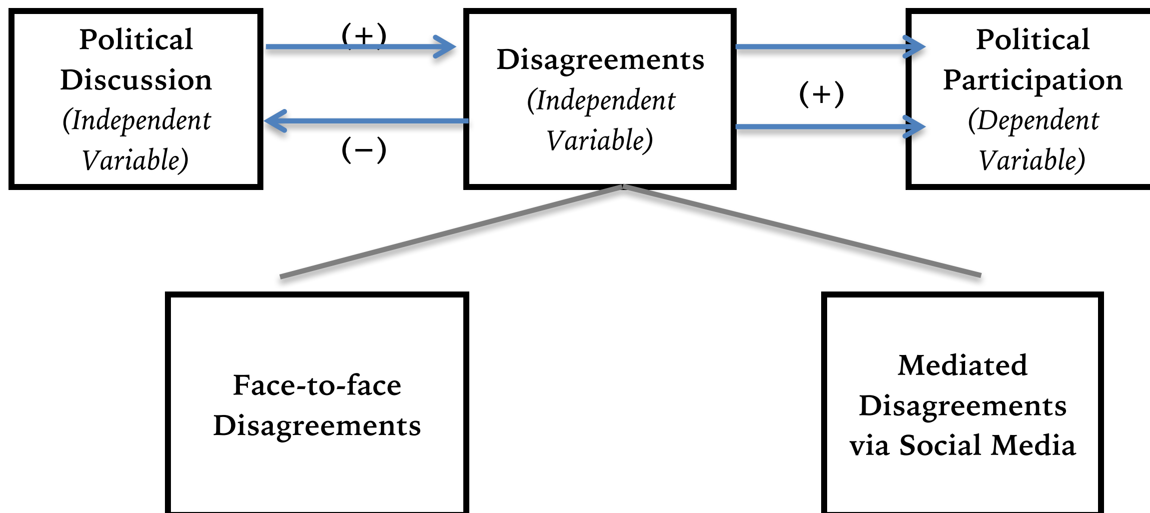


Figure 1.3 Research Model

Summary and Preview of Remaining Chapters

To explore political disagreements and their impact on political participation in depth, this research follows several steps. In Chapter One, the conceptual background of this study as well as how key variables have been operationalized in previous studies was provided. Also, among the focal concepts, the dependent variable, *political participation*, and key predictors, revolving around *political disagreements* across one's social networks and social media use, which could affect political participation in the elections

in the United States, have been identified briefly. In Figure 1.3, a conceptual model for the current study is provided, and additional information about these key variables as well as how they were operationalized in the current study are explained further in the following chapters within this framework.

In Chapter Two, previous studies on political participation, as well as on the impact of political disagreements that exist within one's social networks, are reviewed and discussed. First, the key dependent variable in this study, *political participation,* is explicated since social media have changed the pattern of political activities especially among young voters. Second, it discusses disagreements in interpersonal communication focusing on the cross-pressures hypothesis. Third, it focuses on the impact of "mediated" disagreements, especially via social media, compared to face-to-face political disagreements.

In addition, the role of social media in politics is elucidated. Unlike traditional mass media, social media is distinctive for its benefits of interpersonal communication and mediated communication. Based on this literature review, two other sets of hypotheses, focusing on "where voters disagree—either face-to-face or on social media" are established. Because social presence is considered in this section, as the dependent variable, online political participation, as well as political participation in general, is tested.

In Chapter Three, the quantitative research methods for the current study are discussed in detail. In an effort to increase the scope of the study, two surveys were conducted: Study I focused less experienced voters, recruited from undergraduate

students, while Study II focused on more experienced voters, recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk program. The questionnaire, used for the web-based survey in both Study I and Study II, is included as an appendix at the end of this dissertation.

In Chapter Four, the four sets of hypotheses, presented earlier in Chapter Two, are summarized at the beginning, and then tested directly through quantitative data analysis. Moreover, the results from both quantitative datasets of Study I and Study II are analyzed and discussed with tables and figures in detail.

Integrating results from quantitative data analysis in Study I and Study II, Chapter Five provides general discussion. It discusses the summary of the results, its implications for theory and practice, and the limitations of this study. Also, several suggestions for future research are provided.

CHAPTER 2 : THE RISE OF ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Preview

Political communication scholars have studied how social networks affect political behavior. Traditional studies are more likely to say that conflicting ideas within one's social networks deter decision-making in general (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948; Mutz, 2002; Mutz & Martin, 2001). This negative effect of disagreements in one's social networks is labeled as the "cross-pressures hypothesis," positing that people are less likely to vote if they are situated between conflicting social positions (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). If there are an equal number of both supporters of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in one's social network, a person is more likely to be an "undecided" voter or may not vote at all, according to this view.

Newer studies, however, tend to support the positive effects of network heterogeneity (Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004; Nir, 2005; Nir, 2011). Non-voting, as well as delayed decision-making, is not attributed to different ideas themselves existing in voters' networks. Rather than network ambivalence, the source of delayed voting decisions and participation is interpersonal as well as intrapersonal ambivalence (Nir, 2005). This finding implies that one of the most important functions of social networks for voters is to seek information both directly and indirectly related to politics.

The rise of access to weaker tie networks, which the Internet has enabled thus far, including within nonpolitical groups, voluntary groups, or interest-based associations, not only increases the opportunity to learn new information on social issues, but also provides chances to exchange different perspectives on political issues (Scheufele et al., 2004; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009; Brundidge, 2010), either intentionally or unintentionally. Participants in weak-tie networks tend to expect short-term relationships one another, and engage more in casual talks or any informal type of talks. Weak tie networks are more vulnerable to dissolution and reformulation than stronger ties. Due to the heterogeneity of weak tie networks, people may be exposed to various viewpoints on social issues since stronger ties tend to be form based on demographic and background similarity. These weak ties have the potential to widen one's view, deepen one's understanding of those issues, bridge people with different perspectives, and support those with minority opinions.

New technology in communication as well as transportation has brought more opportunities for voters to be exposed to different opinions when discussing salient issues. This change, of course, may have a reverse effect as some scholars have stated (Prior, 2005; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick, & Walker, 2008). For example, as media choice increases both in terms of both number and the variety, content preferences matter most when people decide to consume media content. The audience selects media content mainly based on their preferences rather than any other factors like the cross-pressures, and thereby they tend to be exposed to their preferred messages. This tendency may imply that people seek information that supports and reinforces their

original view across different platforms of media. As Bennett and Iyengar (2008) explained, information "stratamentation," which means "stratification" and "fragmentation" of information at the same time, has been ongoing since media choices proliferate (p. 717). As birds of a feather flock together, people tend to seek like-minded people to form communities of shared interests using the Internet as (Wellman, 2001, p. 231).

Setting selective exposure to mass media aside, the current study focuses on the trend that more diverse online social networks may lead to more opportunities to talk about politics at the interpersonal communication level. However, there are still contradictory results found in studies about the effect of heterogeneous online social networks on political participation. To understand the impact of political disagreements across a variety of social networks either face-to-face or online more clearly, this chapter reviews literature on political participation, weak-tie networks as social capital, the cross-pressure hypothesis, the benefits of heterogeneous social networks, and political disagreements moderated through social media.

Political Participation: A Definition and History

Political participation is the key dependent variable in this study. Before discussing key predictors of participation in politics, the concept of political participation should be defined first, and the elements constructing this concept should be explicated further. Although a large number of scholars have defined political participation, they tend to focus on the different aspects of participation depending on the goal of their study (Verba & Nie, 1972; Putnam, 1995; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Gil de Zúñiga et

al., 2009; Bakker & De Vreese, 2011; Vitak et al., 2011; Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Bode et al., 2014). While traditional studies tend to focus on voting, social memberships, and other civic activities like attending a town hall meeting, newer studies are more likely to focus on a variety of online activities relevant to politics. In other words, as we saw in Chapter One, political participation is defined more broadly in this new media environment.

In theory, online political activities are considered similar to traditional political activities, and consequently, studies focusing on social media or online forums suggest that online political communication can replace or can be complementary to traditional ones (Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Price, Nir, & Capella, 2006; Gil de Zúñiga, et al., 2011). However, because there is a wide range of online political activities, the existing results are contradictory. Whether online political activities can be understood as the extension of traditional political participation still needs more empirical evidence.

These contradictory findings are mainly attributed to the inconsistent conceptualizations of political participation, and the incongruent conceptualizations are fundamentally led by the concerns about the nature of democracy. Scholars have pointed out that low trust in media, low political efficacy, and low interests in government or public affairs represent weakened democracy in the United States (Carpini & Keeter, 1997; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). In this context, the decline of voting is considered as a serious and emergent issue that the United States faces because voting has been one of the major indices of measuring political life (Ragsdale, 2014). Members of the news media, scholars in many other disciplines, and politicians have been concerned about low

voter turnout, especially among the young population (Putnam, 1995; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Papacharissi, 2010; Mutz, 2012). Considering that voting is the basic, as well as major, action of exerting citizenship, low turnout among young voters may suggest a generational gap in understanding what it means to be a U.S. citizen. Because low voter turnout is not only a problem limited to the young population, but also it crosses all generations, it implies that the meaning of citizenship has been changed in general. As Hargittai and Shaw (2013) described "disaffected citizenship," the decline of electoral participation and membership in associations indicates "the withdrawal from the public life" among young generations (pp. 116-117).

On the other hand, other scholars have been skeptical of this diagnosis, and provide "cultural displacement" narratives (Zukin, et al., 2006; Papacharissi, 2010; Hargittai & Shaw, 2013). Erosion of electoral participation or social memberships is not evidence of young voters' indifference in politics, but new trends in "actualizing citizenship" (Bennett, et al., 2011, p. 839) through the networked "private sphere" (Papacharissi, 2010). Considering that "the defining characteristic of public life" is "simultaneous presence of multiple perspectives" (Nir, 2005, p. 422), it may be a hasty conclusion or prejudgment to say that young voters are not interested in public affairs. The meaning of "public" has been changed as new communication technology has been developed.

This theoretical approach is also supported by empirical evidence suggesting that this new pattern of political behaviors is common among younger generations. Even though voting is still one of the key indices for estimating political participation, other

factors, including environmental changes, socioeconomic changes, and changes in the electoral system, may influence the actual voting. For example, college students are usually first-time voters, or at least, less experienced voters, and many of them live apart from their family for the first time in their lives (Quarles, 1979; Bhatti & Hansen, 2012). Many college students go back home to their parents who are registered voters in a different state from where they study during breaks, and so they remain as registered voters in their home state rather than in the state where they currently reside while attending college. They may need to go through an unfamiliar process to vote in the elections held in the state where they are attending school, and in this process, many of them give up voting. It is almost unrealistic for them to travel to their parents' house to vote on the day of elections, however, for voter registration, it is necessary to change their address to the place they live during the elections. In this aspect, not voting may simply reflect the complexity of the current electoral system rather than indicating lack of participation. Therefore, whether voters intend to vote is as important as whether they voted to estimate political participation (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Carlisle & Patton, 2013).

To summarize, low turnout may reflect several possible scenarios, which are (1) that voters decide not to vote; (2) that voters are indecisive about voting; (3) that voters have no interest in voting; or (4) that voters cannot go to the polls due to physical barriers like distance or complicated process. In the case of the first scenario, non-participation reflects "no intention to vote," as well as not voting itself, although the reasons why people are unwilling to vote may vary. Their decision to not vote may mean there is no

candidate, policy, or party they want to support in the elections. Some of them may be anarchists, but still get involved in activities having political implications (e.g., the Occupy Wall Street movement protesting against social and economic inequality around the world (Castells, 2012; Thorson, Driscoll, Ekdale, Edgerly, Thompson, Schrock, Swartzg, Vraga, & Wells, 2013). The second scenario may imply other factors, such as political knowledge, intrapersonal ambivalence, or the cross-pressures existing in one's social networks (Lazarsfeldt et al., 1948; Mutz, 2002; Nir, 2005). Some may remain indecisive or skeptical due to uncertainty or distrust while others may also learn something after the elections and make a decision to vote next time. Although lack of knowledge or confidence may delay deciding about whom to vote for in the elections, they may vote in subsequent elections. However, if this uncertain state is continued, people may become indifferent to politics. Many scholars pointed out that mass media exacerbate this idea that voters are politically apathetic and inert (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 2000; Prior, 2005; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Mutz, 2012). The last scenario suggests that uncontrollable environmental factors may prevent voters from going to the polls. It implies that measuring "intention to vote" as political participation may be necessary for accurate understanding of their actual participation. In this case, although these voters do not contribute to actual turnout, they may be substantial supporters for a specific candidate, policy, or a party.

Taking these possible scenarios into consideration, the notion of political participation needs to be re-conceptualized for accuracy. Simply voting or intention to vote only tells a limited part of political participation in this contemporary era.

Theoretically, political participation has been defined as behavior designed to affect the choice of governmental personnel or policies (Milbrath, 1965; Verba & Nie, 1972; Carpini, 2004; Vitak et al., 2011). Verba and Nie (1972) distinguished four kinds of political participation: voting, campaigning, communal activity, and interaction with a public official to achieve a personal goal. Their key element of identifying political participation was its activeness, and based on their criteria, six forms of participation were identified: (1) inactive participants who rarely vote neither get involved in organizations nor even talk much about politics; (2) voting specialists who vote but participate little in politics; (3) campaigners who not only vote but also like to get involved in campaign activities; (4) communalists who tend to reserve their energies for community activities of a nonpartisan kind; (5) parochial participants who do not vote and stay out of election campaigns and civic associations, but who are willing to contract local officials about specific or personal problems; and (6) complete activists who actively promote a political party, philosophy, or issues they personally care about (pp. 77-81). This segmentation of political participation supports the idea that simply voting or nonvoting does not fully explain political participation.

Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie (1993b) also pointed out that voters and nonvoters are different in their demographic attributes, while their attitudes toward policy are not distinctive. Socioeconomic factors like education level are key predictors of voting, but those who did not vote for various reasons also have their views in social issues or policies. The latter's voice is not counted if researchers measure only voter turnout. Furthermore, Verba et al. (1993b) considered that nonpolitical social

institutions, for example, voluntary associations, workplaces, or religious organizations, provide resources facilitating political resources (p. 456). Although voting may be the ultimate outcome of voters' interests in politics, there is a wide range of behaviors indicating that they are interested in politics and that they can be substantial supporters for political candidates, parties, or policies, regardless of whether they voted or not.

As Verba and his colleagues (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1993b) stated across publications, different population groups tend to engage in different types of participation. For example, African-American voters were less likely to report voting or donating, but were more likely to report working for a campaign than Anglo-Whites. Also, voters in both ethnic groups tended to support a political candidate having the same ethnic background as theirs. In the article, *Citizen Activity: Who Participates? What Do They Say?* (Verba et al., 1993a), Verba and his colleagues concluded that diverse political activities, including information-rich acts where "an explicit message can be sent to policy makers," for example, "contacting, protesting, campaign work or contributions accompanied by a communication, informal community activity, and voluntary service on a local board" should be considered in addition to voting (p. 312). In other words, various political activities that raise the awareness of social issues among voters, that encourage other voters to participate in politics, and that deliver precise messages to policy makers either directly or indirectly are considered political participation.

Online Weak-Tie Networks as Social Capital and Their Relationship to Political Expression, Disagreement, and Participation

Focusing on mostly voting or donation as in their operationalization of political participation, previous scholars have had concerns about the decline of social capital, which implies weakened social networks and interaction among community members (Putnam, 1995; 2000; Norris, 2002). Putnam (2000) distinguished bridging social capital from bonding social capital. Both contribute to the community, but each has a different function. He defined "bridging" social capital as networks that are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages" while "bonding" social capital as networks that are "inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Putnam pointed out that excessive in-group trust in "super-glued networks" may destroy public goods through aggressively excluding other groups; for example, criminal networks, terrorist groups, or groups of people prevent each other from social mobilization (p. 21). Although bridging social capital was more emphasized as a positive resource for democracy rather than bonding social capital in his studies, his concerns of declining social capital are relevant to both types of social capital. He argued that most forms of social capital have declined since World War II although their declines varied in their timing (Putnam, 2002).

Bonding social capital corresponds with Granovetter's (1973) concept of "strong ties," which consist of one's family and close friends and which are densely knit. On the other hand, bridging social capital refers to relationships to lead people to tangible outcomes, for instance, novel information from distant connections and broader

worldviews. It is equivalent to Granovetter's "weak ties" within social networks, which consist of one's acquaintances with a low-density. Compared to strong-tie networks, they are less likely to be socially involved with one another, and the possible relational lines in weak-tie networks are not always present. The cohesive power of weak ties in seeking non-redundant information or in building a career is especially emphasized in his study. In detail, weak-tie networks, which are usually larger than strong-tie networks, allow people to access information and other resources not available in their immediate circle of contacts, and thereby, they facilitate political participation (Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011).

Although these concepts are helpful in understanding the overall dynamics of various social networks intertwined and co-existing in society, new trends of engaging in politics within and across different types of social networks are not fully considered. Many studies published before the 21st century did not have a chance to consider the world intertwined with the Internet. Putnam (2002) wrote that there are new forms of social capital, which tend to be informal, fluid, and personal; for example, Internet communication and new social movements focusing on a narrow set of interests. However, his conceptualization did not fully cover characteristics of these forms of social capital. There are social activities that only exist on the Internet apart from the offline world; however, social activities, extending from online to offline after being mobilized, also exist. One of the examples illustrating new forms of social capital on the Internet is "fandom," which is defined by Henry Jenkins (2010) as "the social structures and cultural practices created by the most passionately engaged consumers of mass media properties."

Fandom starts from the grassroots level; those who have strong attachment to any media content like a novel, television show, or movie form a community or union in the Internet voluntarily although they do not know each other. It often leads to broad participation, including influencing producers to change the original scenario of their products or creating their own user-generated contents.

When it comes to politics, also, there are many examples of online political discussions encouraging people to be engaged in politics in real life. A candlelight vigil or flash mob reflects this potential of online political discussions based on the heterogeneity of social networks. For example, a candlelight vigil is the peaceful assembly of people carrying candles after sunset to raise awareness among citizens, to draw media attention, to mark an historic, memorial anniversary, and to show support. They are often observed across countries. Consider the 9/11 candlelight vigil in the United States, a vigil in Finland after the September 23, 2008 shooting incident, candlelight vigil for peace in Syria, candlelight vigil for Ukraine, and candlelight vigil in South Korea to mourn over the Sewol ferry disaster. Vigils and flash mobs carry because through them people express their opposition to the current government, and their comments are shared on online discussions across various online communities. Some online communities were newly created to mobilize the public, and other online communities have gone through a transition in their functions or topics when specific social issues arise (Yoon et al., 2008). As these examples show, political participation among citizens also tends to be maximized in emergency situations or when physical hazards detected. Collective behaviors, including a candlelight vigil and a protest, are

more relevant to "hot cognition," mainly based on empathetic communication, rather than "cool consideration," where voters are considered "affect-free calculators" who can evaluate candidates or their policies evenly if they are simply given enough information (Redlawsk, 2002, p. 1041).

In other words, the Internet has enabled new modes of participating in politics in various ways. It includes online activities, such as watching a political debate online, signing an online petition, attending an online forum about the elections, writing an e-mail to a government official or local newspaper, posting any information, opinion, or picture implying political messages online, or sharing them through social media. As these examples show, most participatory activities occurring online are, in fact, the extended version of traditional modes of participation, including contributing money to a political campaign, attending a political meeting/rally/speech, working for a political party or candidate, holding political office like student government, or displaying a campaign button/sticker/sign (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010; Vitak et al., 2011; Bode et al., 2014). In sum, traditional modes of political participation are found in the Internet, and reversely, online activities of participating in politics are often extended to the offline world as well.

Moreover, the Internet has offered users more options to disclose their personal information or preferences relevant to politics. External pressures for a minority of voters, limiting expressing their views in public, may be reduced or even eliminated on the Internet. Considering this aspect, expressing one's opinion to others either face-to-face or via social media should be considered an early version of participating in politics

compared to being completely silent or muted. To be exposed to others, as well as to make others be exposed, is the beginning of developing their identity and relating them to politics. Therefore, the public display of party preference or political ideology on social media needs to be considered a part of political participation, called “online expressive participation” (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). As Gil de Zúñiga and his colleagues (2010) stated, compared to traditional formats of participation, the lower cost as well as the ease of mobilizing networks or resources, through various communication channels like videos or blogs, is the advantage of online expressive participation. Social network sites have increased the number of weak ties a user might be able to maintain with fewer costs but more accessibility (Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008). When people with a minority view supporting a certain agenda or policy feel empowered online, they can form solidarity in the easier and faster way. As Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2010) wrote online expressive participation is “an active means of verbal political engagement.” Therefore, self-disclosure, relevant to politics in the Internet, is the starting point of developing a social identity that leads to political participation (p. 38).

Price, Nir, and Capella (2006) contend that online expressive participation needs to be considered political participation. In their study, two mechanisms were found in online discussions: “normative social influence” and “informative social influence.” The former is relevant to the tendency of conforming to the positive expectations of others while the latter occurs when people learn some “valid evidence about reality” from others or from discovering that they disagree with others (p. 5). The attitudinal changes, which may lead to behavioral changes, happened not only through group norms, but also

through the group's argumentative climate while comparing their views to others. Mere statements, as well as arguments, influenced other people to express their opinions and further affected opinion change after discussion. In other words, one's expression of political view or preference is a facilitator and moderator of others' attitudinal changes as well as expressing their ideas.

Other studies show that collective aspects of online communication should receive more attention. Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs (2004) used the notion of "discursive participation," which embraces various forms of public deliberation or public talks, not only to show the benefit of public deliberation, but also to suggest the potential of online deliberation. Characterized as discourse with other citizens, including talking, discussing, debating, and deliberating in their study, these types of discourse are considered a form of participation because they offer the opportunity for citizens "to develop and express their views, learn the positions of others, identify shared concerns and preferences, and come to understand and reach judgments about matters of public concern" (pp. 318-319). New communication technologies, furthermore, have become an effective tool for active verbal engagement in politics.

Although Carpini et al. (2004) did not test this idea in their study empirically, their argument is supported by empirical evidence presented by other scholars, who argued that online communication values the aspect of solidarity rather than solitariness (Gil de Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). Moreover, as Vraga, Anderson, Kotcher, and Maibach (2015) distinguished, "consumptive" forms of social media use, including reading others' postings or informative news feeds are

different from "expressive" use of social media, which requires people to contribute to communicative action as the main agents (p. 202). Beyond just focusing on turnout or donation, this diversified measurement can reflect both direct and indirect political participation because the latency of its effects can also be considered. Reflecting this new trend, Vitak and his colleagues (2011) defined political participation as one's intention to influence government actions through a variety of activities, directly by affecting public policy and lawmaking or indirectly by mobilizing the public to do so (p. 108).

How do these political activities work during election campaigns? During the presidential elections in the United States in 2008, and in 2012, there were a number of grass-roots campaign contributions and online donations. According to Pew Research Internet Project, two published reports, *The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008*, and *Social Media and Political Engagement 2012*, include results presenting the growing population of consuming political news and campaign information online, of communicating with others about politics using the Internet, and of sharing or receiving campaign information using mediated-communication technology like social media, email, instant messaging, or text messages. Thus, online political engagement is a new index of measuring political participation in itself, and it also leads to offline civic engagement (Vitak et al., 2011).

Because offline participation in politics is often attributed to online political activities, the current study adopts one of Bakker and De Vreese's (2011) ideas of participation: traditional versus digital. Their concept of "active digital participation," more active forms of participation, was measured by questions on the frequency of

reacting online to a message or an article on the Internet, signing online petitions, and participating in online polls. This measurement says that Bakker and De Vreese's (2011) "active digital participation" is equivalent with "online expressive participation" in Gil de Zúñiga and his colleagues' study (2010), which includes various activities like reacting to any message on politics, discussing, and protesting. In addition, Bode and her colleagues (2014) found that "political SNS (social networking sites) use" predicts online expression and that it either directly or indirectly implies political participation. They conceptualized political SNS use as "using a social networking site for explicitly political purposes such as displaying a political preference on one's profile page, or becoming a 'fan' of a politician" (p. 415).

The Cross-Pressures Hypothesis

In political communication studies, increasing disagreements have generally been considered a source of voter indecision. Political disagreements in interpersonal communication are one of the key factors that may contribute to political participation. Since Lazarsfeld and his Columbia University colleagues (1948) conducted a series of studies investigating how public opinion is formed and influenced in politics, a wide variety of communication scholars have studied this process by re-conceptualizing and measuring key variables of network heterogeneity and political participation.

Originally, the "cross-pressures" hypothesis (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948) posited that people are less likely to vote or postpone their decision if they are situated between conflicting social positions. According to Lazarsfeld et al. (1948),

partisan voters are more likely to hear from the candidate or the party they support than from one they do not support. This pattern was labeled as "exposure to in-group appeals," which implies that network heterogeneity may not be helpful for encouraging the public to be participatory in political issues. This hypothesis is also supported by the "cognitive dissonance theory" (Festinger, 1957) explaining that people feel dissonance when confronted with information inconsistent with their beliefs, and that they seek consonance by misperception and rejecting or refuting the information. Hence, by Lazarsfeld and his associates' study (1948), a conclusion is driven that it is the primary effect of a campaign to reinforce the party affiliation or to reactivate the political predispositions among the majority of voters rather than to convert them.

Mutz (2002) extended and refined Lazarsfeldt et al. (1948). Labeled as a "theory of political cross-pressures," Mutz's argument is that two interrelated processes, "ambivalence" and "social accountability pressures," lead people with heterogeneous networks to be less involved in political processes. Beyond examining the negative impact of crosscutting networks, Mutz's study showed why crosscutting networks limit political participation – people distance themselves from political actions and retrieve from participatory behaviors because of a desire to avoid putting their social relationships at risk, namely, because of a fear of damaging their interpersonal relationships (p. 851).

In an earlier study, moreover, Mutz and Martin (2001) focused on both interpersonal communication and mass media as sources of exposure to crosscutting political views. They suggested that perceived disagreement, different from objectively

assessed disagreement, is a more appropriate measurement for testing the cross-pressures hypothesis. According to their study, perceived disagreements with mainstream news media like television newspapers were especially high compared to interpersonal disagreements, and this is explained by the "impersonality" of mass media – people who use mass media as the important source of exposure to dissimilar views tend to feel less comfort with face-to-face controversy (p. 109). This was also supported by the finding in the case of interpersonal communication that individuals were more likely to consider different ideas while talking with people who are not intimate. In other words, people feel more comfortable debating political issues with people who are tied to them weakly or in heterogeneous social networks than they do discussing their ideas with close family, friends, and associates.

This result is consistent with Granovetter's view (1973; 1983) of weak ties. In weak-tie relationships, people can discuss rather sensitive, controversial issues with less fear or strain of being at odds with the person. However, Mutz and Martin (2001) did not examine the impact of disagreements in one's social network and in mass media on political engagement.

Setting its impact on political participation aside, some scholars focused on the relationship between the frequency of political discussions and disagreements (Huckfeldt & Mendez, 2008; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2012). Gerber et al. (2012) noted that how disagreements in the interpersonal relationships constrict one's further conversation with that partner. The results show that reported agreement on a given topic

like politics predicts how often that topic is discussed. Unlike previous studies on interpersonal disagreements in politics, Gerber et al. (2012) also paid attention to the effect of an individual's general personality dispositions in exposure to disagreement. Among the Big Five traits of personality dispositions, people with certain personality traits, for example, "Extraversion," "Agreeableness," and "Emotional Stability," were more likely to discuss politics than any other topics in the familial network. However, none of these traits were relevant to the frequency of political talk in non-family networks.

According to Gerber and his associates (2012), people discuss politics frequently during the election period, and they talk even more when their partner is perceived as politically like-minded. This relationship between the frequency of political talk and that of disagreements is consistent with what Huckfeldt and Mendez (2008) found and labeled as a "stable equilibrium relationship" (p. 94) – more political talk increases the possibility of experiencing political disagreements whereas more disagreements lead to censored patterns of communication and reduces the frequency of political discussions. Following these dynamics, political disagreements within the patterns of communication persistently exist in society. However, as Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague (2002) pointed out earlier, "a bias in favor of majority sentiment" makes disagreement, existing in the society, less visible or less public (p. 17). In other words, disagreements are sustained, but remains unexpressed. According to Huckfeldt et al. (2002), moreover, "the permeability of networks created by weak social ties" is where disagreements tend to be expressed depending upon (p. 17).

Benefits of Heterogeneous Online Social Network in Terms of Political Expression, Disagreement, and Participation

However, the effect of cross-pressures varies across each type of relationship, from intimate relationships, including family or close friends, to relationships of circumstance or coworkers. Several studies showed that people tend to avoid disagreements with people in their social networks, especially in "strong ties" (Granovetter, 1973; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Mutz, 2002). Granovetter (1973) pointed out that the "low density" in weak social ties, where people experience not only disagreement, but also social support often, is the defining characteristic of political communication networks in the contemporary era. In this case, the minority opinion can survive through disagreements (Huckfeldt et al., 2002), and disagreements contribute to encouraging disagreements (Huckfeldt, 2007).

Nir (2005) also argued that the culprit for diminishing political participation is not network ambivalence, but individual-level ambivalence. The original concept of "cross-pressures" in the Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) study, was defined as "the conflicts and inconsistencies among the factors affecting voter decisions by driving voters in opposite directions" (p. 53), which exist in the public sphere of a democratic society. As Nir (2005) pointed out, "the simultaneous presence of multiple perspectives is the defining characteristic of public life" (p. 422). She also stated, "visibility, which is awareness of multiple viewpoints, and common access to those ideas are the two facets of publicness defining public life in its effect on collective choices in politics" (p. 422). Plurality of

alternative viewpoints is “the meaning of public life, compared to which even the richest and most satisfying family life can offer only the prolongation and multiplication of one’s own position, with its attending aspects and perspectives” (Arendt, 1958). Based on this theoretical framework, Nir (2005) suggested an alternative concept, “network ambivalence,” which differs from interpersonal level or intrapersonal ambivalence based on the feeling thermometer ratings of the leading candidates, and interpersonal level ambivalence was the source of resisting decisions about voting and participation, not network ambivalence.

Although people are often unconsciously exposed to different perspectives in their daily lives, they rarely think about this carefully until those ideas conflict with their own or until this series of disagreements is publicized in a larger network. As Noelle-Neumann (1974) asserted, once people perceive their opinion is different or opposed to what the majority thinks, fear of isolation makes them hesitate to express those unpopular views in public. The tendency to conform the majority opinion, moreover, reinforces this process, labeled “spiral of silence.” Thus, “how visible, and consequently public, a variety of ideas are” can be the fundamental criteria to identify disagreements that exist within the society (Nir, 2005, p. 422).

In addition, Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn (2004) criticized the weakness of the logical basis of the argument that cross-pressures limit political participation because of conflict avoidance by citizens. They argued that election campaigns stimulate political discussions, make candidate preference “socially visible,” and that this encourages voters

to have their own political preferences as social pressures. During a campaign, voters are exposed to a variety of communication strategies to persuade them, especially undecided voters with much ambivalence in their social networks. However, Huckfeldt et al. (2004) wrote whether "a process of group conformity" eliminates political disagreements within their social networks has neither been clearly explained nor proved yet (p. 67). Their research specifically measured both "interest" in the campaign and "turnout" as political participation, while differentiating two types of disagreements as "disagreements between the respondent and the discussants" and "disagreements among discussants." Although there was "a marginally discernible negative effect" on interest led by disagreements among discussants, turnout was not reduced by either type of disagreements. Thus, disagreements themselves or the heterogeneity of social network seems not responsible for the withdrawal of civic engagement.

Moreover, Scheufele et al. (2004) identified several functions of network heterogeneity, which led to different outcomes. First, focusing on the "political learning" function of network heterogeneity, increased political knowledge is positively related to more active participation in various political activities. Second, the "motivation-for-information" function supports the links between hard news media use and political participation. When people are exposed to contradictory information through their social networks, they tend to seek more information in other sources, especially mass media, for supporting or even reconsidering their original political fences. According to Scheufele and his colleagues, specific types of discussion networks, for instance, work-based, volunteer-based, and church-based networks matter in predicting political participation

among citizens and in mobilizing citizens although they all link to network heterogeneity. Secular networks were proved to be important in democratic citizenship, and especially, the motivational role of volunteer networks was strongly supported. This result can be explained by McClurg's study (2003), which presented that even "informal" social interaction plays a role in political participation. He argued that social interaction increases the political activity by creating opportunities for voters to gather information about politics beyond personal resource constraints.

According to Scheufele et al. (2004), however, institutionally religious-based discussions had limited effects on political knowledge and participatory behavior through network heterogeneity. This finding may exist because of religion's belief-based dimension that leads members to be selective in information seeking; consequently membership in religious institutions, including churches, synagogues, or mosques may be less efficacious in encouraging consideration of political ideas, but their structural dimensions offer a chance of being exposed to dissimilar notions.

Still skeptical about the function of network heterogeneity because of mass media, Mutz (2006) provided perceptive theoretical considerations on the role of mass media in political polarization on audiences. She pointed out that more diversified media content and channels let the public stay in like-minded networks and reinforce their original perspectives. In other words, the proliferation of channels and the increasing accessibility to diversity viewpoints did not guarantee political polarization to be reduced. It is not because of selective "exposure," but because of selective "interpretation" of new

information as well as a greater variety of information sources (p. 230).

To refute Mutz's criticism that levels of disagreements within communication network were "overstated," Huckfeldt and Mendez (2008) wrote about the dynamic of political disagreements and political discussions and its impact (p. 87). According to their study, people are likely to experience political disagreements as the frequency of discussing politics within their social network increases; however, as the frequency of disagreements increases, they are less likely to engage in political discussions in turn. In other words, the more people talk about politics, the more they argue; but the more they argue, the less they want to talk about politics. This dynamic of political disagreements and political discussions, paradoxically, presents its "stable equilibrium relationship" and explains why political disagreements continuously exist within their social networks and in daily interpersonal communication (p. 94).

Moreover, Nir (2011) distinguished "competition," where many different ideas coexist, from "opposition," where there are only ideas conflicting against one's own opinion, as the different type of disagreements in political discussions. In her study, especially, the results presented that competition positively influenced voters' decision-making and political participation. If a "true partner" supports a voter's opinion as a like-minded person and a voter is not an isolated "sole opinion holder" any more, the "rate of conformity" as well as the "rate of pro-majority errors" in decision-making drops (p. 676). Instead, voters feel more confident in expressing their views about politics. These advantages of competition, which is different from isolation or opposition, in political

discussions are mainly attributed to the fact that a voter can be cognitively, affectively, and motivationally stimulated to engage in politics because of competing ideas. This competition of ideas also invigorates voters to be participatory in politics because people, especially those high in extroversion, even often “welcome disagreement” (p. 677). Examining when social networks promote interest-based voting in the United States, Sokhey and McClurg (2012) found that heterogeneous networks accelerate connections between individuals’ voting decisions and their preferences when unambiguous information regarding candidates exists. In other words, heterogeneous social networks, in fact, encourage citizens to make “correct” voting decisions.

Conceptualization of Disagreement

Focusing on interpersonal communication or mediated communication rather than mass communication, the current study suggests a refined conceptualization of a political disagreement based on reviewing previous research. Adopting Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague’s work (2004), this study defines a political disagreement “in terms of interaction among citizens who hold divergent viewpoints and perspectives regarding politics” (p. 5).

Although many scholars have considered various aspects of disagreements in measurement, a different emphasis on each aspect of disagreements leads to “disagreements about disagreement” as Klofstad, Sokhey, and McClurg (2013) labeled. Contradictory results exist in research on the influence of disagreement avoidance in interpersonal discussions or, as Lazarsfeldt et al. (1948) and Mutz (2002) would describe them, cross-pressures on political participation.

First, *types of disagreements* are identified in this study. Interpersonal disagreement was measured within two intertwined contexts: (1) ***with whom*** people experienced disagreements (i.e. disagreements with *family members*, *friends*, and *coworkers*) and (2) ***where*** people experienced disagreements (i.e. during *face-to-face* conversation versus mediated communication via *social media*). Consequently, each question is asked to answer the *frequency* of disagreements with family members offline, friends offline, coworkers offline, family members on social media, friends on social media, and coworkers on social media respectively.

In addition, *levels of disagreements* are identified as follows: (1) exposure to dissimilar political views (or exposure to disagreements), and (2) arguments. *Exposure to dissimilar political views* (or *exposure to disagreements*) was measured by "listening to dissimilar political opinions" (Q8) [2], and *argument* was measured by "arguing to express disagreements with the political opinions" (Q9)[3]. Regarding *arguments*, (3) another scale, *issue-specific arguments,* was measured by "arguing about the issue s/he thinks the most important in 2014 midterm elections" (Q13)[4] separately. For example, respondents are asked to answer about their experience of arguments with family, friends, and coworkers about the issue they think most important in the midterm elections of 2014.

[2] Q8. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you listen to dissimilar political opinions of: (a) family members offline (b) friends offline (c) co-workers offline (d) family members on social media (e) friends on social media (f) co-workers on social media

[3] Q9. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you argue to express disagreement with the political opinions of: (a) family members offline (b) friends offline (c) co-workers offline (d) family members on social media (e) friends on social media (f) co-workers on social media

[4] Q13. How often did you argue about the issue that you picked in Q11 with: (a) family members offline (b) friends offline (c) co-workers offline (d) family members on social media (e) friends on social media (f) co-workers on social media

Q11. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, what do you think was the most important issue? 1) Economy and employment, 2) Obamacare (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act), 3) Climate change, 4) Foreign policy (Middle East, Ukraine and Russia, US-China relations, etc.), 5) Other

Regarding *levels of disagreement*, feeling thermometer ratings of two major parties, Republican Party and Democratic Party, are included lastly (Q21[5], Q22[6]). These two questions are used for measuring "cross-pressures" in party preference. For example, this study assumes that cross-pressures exist if a respondent answered that s/he leans to "liberal[7]" in the question about "political orientation" (Q29[8]) and that people in his/her social networks treated Republican Party "favorably[9]" (Q21) and that people in his/her social networks treated Democratic Party "unfavorably[10]" (Q22). Also, if a respondent answered that s/he leans to "conservative" in the question about "political orientation" (Q29) and that people in his/her social networks treated Republican Party "unfavorably[11]" (Q21) and that people in his/her social networks treated Democratic Party "favorably,[12]" it is considered that cross-pressures exist.

It is rather a cumbersome process, however, to calculate cross-pressures accurately, it is better to use individual measurements or to disaggregate summary

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[5] Q21. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how favorably do you think the Republican Party was treated by: (a) family members offline (b) friends offline (c) co-workers offline (d) family members on social media (e) friends on social media (f) co-workers on social media

[6] Q22. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how favorably do you think the Democratic Party was treated by: (a) family members offline (b) friends offline (c) co-workers offline (d) family members on social media (e) friends on social media (f) co-workers on social media

[7] In other words, if s/he answered "1~3" for Q29, s/he leans to "liberal" while answering 5~7 for Q29, s/he leans to "conservative."

[8] Q29. Generally speaking, what is your political preference? Answer using 1-7 point scale: 1 (Very Liberal) 4 (Moderate) 7 (Conservative).

[9] In other words, if s/he answered "5~7" for Q21 considering that Q21 uses 1-7 point scale as follows: 1 (very unfavorable), 2-3 (unfavorable), 4 (neither favorable nor unfavorable), 5-6 (favorable), 7 (very favorable).

[10] In other words, if s/he answered "1~3" for Q22 considering that Q22 uses 1-7 point scale as follows: 1 (very unfavorable), 2-3 (unfavorable), 4 (neither favorable nor unfavorable), 5-6 (favorable), 7 (very favorable).

[11] In other words, if s/he answered "1~3" for Q21 considering that Q21 uses 1-7 point scale as follows: 1 (very unfavorable), 2-3 (unfavorable), 4 (neither favorable nor unfavorable), 5-6 (favorable), 7 (very favorable).

[12] In other words, if s/he answered "5~7" for Q22 considering that Q22 uses 1-7 point scale as follows: 1 (very unfavorable), 2-3 (unfavorable), 4 (neither favorable nor unfavorable), 5-6 (favorable), 7 (very favorable).

statistics rather than to use aggregate data (Mutz, 2002). For example, Mutz (2002) operationalized "cross-cutting exposure" from measures of which candidate a respondent supports relative to the perceived support of each candidate by the discussants. In detail, it is measured by the question, "Which candidate do you think a discussant supported in the presidential election this year?" and a respondent's answer is categorized into three types as follows: "(0) absolute agreement when a respondent and a discussant concur, (1) mixed when either a respondent or a discussant is independent/neutral, and (2) disagreement when a respondent and a discussant disagree)" (p. 854). She broke down "the characteristics of networks into three separate variables representing their size, frequency of political discussion, and degree of heterogeneity" and disaggregated "the six participation items in the CNEP survey into those that do or do not involve direct confrontation with those of opposing views" in measuring cross-pressures in her study (p. 843).

Disagreements Moderated by Social Media

As explained in the previous section, controversy concerning the disagreement effect in democratic societies can be summarized as the following question—which one is the most influential in shaping our perception of political issues: our opinion as the autonomous constituent, mass media, or interpersonal relationships? Leaving the effect of mass media out of discussion, this study focuses on political talk at the interpersonal communication level, either face-to-face or mediated by the Internet, across different types of social networks.

The debate about this question is now getting more complicated because of the advent of new media, especially the Internet. As a number of scholars have discussed, the Internet has reshaped ways of thinking, relationships, lifestyle, and societal structure in terms of their quality as well as quantity (Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Nie, 2001; Wellman et al., 2003). Essentially, the Internet offers great opportunities to be exposed to a variety of ideas either by consuming news or by interacting with others regardless of social status of the discussants (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009; Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Moreover, it encourages the mobilization of like-minded people who support the same political candidate or who support the same side of governmental policy (Wellman, 2001; Norris, 2002). This function of mobilizing like-minded people, however, is criticized at the same time because they are rather exposed to one-sided arguments, only reinforcing their initial predilections (Wojcieszak, 2010). Rather than neutralizing the opposing ideas, the Internet is more likely to serve as a medium maximizing, amplifying, and intensifying ideological conflicts because of “online disinhibition effect” (Suler, 2004).

The concept, online disinhibition effect, refers to the view that a disagreement in cyberspace is different from that in face-to-face discussions. Because of the anonymity and invisibility as well as the minimized status and authority, people are less likely to be afraid of disapproval or punishment led by heated arguments and less reluctant to say what they really want (Suler, 2004). Also, due to its “asynchronicity,” they can easily avoid conforming to social norms, including civility and the reciprocity of self-disclosure, during online discussion. These characteristics of the Internet contribute to

increasing the probability and the frequency of being exposed to dissimilar ideas and experiencing political disagreements, especially in terms of quantity.

Sproull and Kiesler's study (1986) also explains this tendency that minority opinions are more likely to survive online rather than face-to-face communication setting. They stated that computer-mediated communication reduces "social context cues" which may imply socioeconomic or hierarchical status and physical environment. Therefore, messages in the Internet are more likely to be considered "impersonal" rather than "interpersonal" or "socio-emotional" as social presence declines (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Walther, 1996; Tidwell & Walther, 2002).

Although previous studies on political disagreements focused on negative aspects of disagreements, for example, reoccurring conflicts, leading to cognitive discomfort, tension, and unpleasant feelings (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; Mutz, 2006), Sperlich (2001) suggested "various forms of deliberate stimulus, adventure-seeking, voluntary risk-taking and exploratory behavior" should be also considered another side of cross-pressures (p. 3015). This positive side of cross-pressures can be more easily observed in online discussions rather than in face-to-face discussions.

For example, Wojcieszak and Mutz (2009) examined whether selective exposure facilitates seeking like-minded views in political discussion groups compared to other kinds of online discussion groups like leisure groups, religious groups, or professional groups. They found people who are less interested in politics, as well as those highly involved in political issues, have chances to encounter dissimilar perspectives in online discussions. More in detail, political chat rooms and message boards presented their

limitation in contributing to promoting crosscutting discourse while “nonpolitically motivated exchanges” in nonpolitical online groups, revolving around fashion trends, technological gadgets, or sitcom characters, offer unanticipated chances to be exposed to dissimilar political views.

Thus, these results showed that deliberative democracy, where “people can be more informed, tolerant, and reflective, and have higher quality opinions,” is more likely to occur within nonpolitical online groups (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009, p. 49). In other words, political discussions occurring within nonpolitical online groups often involve disagreements among participants. Because of what they say is a “conservative” estimate of the amount of actual political disagreements in their measurement, it is not simple to generalize this result. However, this result implies the Internet’s potential as a deliberative forum. The casual political talk in nonpolitical online groups suggests the potential to accomplish the ideal heterogeneity of social networks, which is expected to invigorate political participation in the end.

This study also suggests that experiencing disagreements, as well as exposure to various viewpoints, serves democracy as an accelerant within “nonpolitical groups,” which sometimes consist of family or friends whom participants already have trust and solidarity established with or have known each other for a long time – mainly people in “strong-tie networks.” In this context, it would be also important to distinguish the effect of disagreements with family and friends from the effect of disagreements with those of less or no relationships like *Facebook-only* friends or family members whom people only talk to via social media without meeting face to face at all.

The limitations of online political groups, found in their study (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009), suggest that political talk is in effect when it occurs within social networks, which are established beforehand and which are diverse especially in terms of the intimacy. Among all forms of online political discussions, those occurring within social networks or those in nonpolitical groups contribute more to promoting cross-cutting discourses than those occurring within political groups. It is not only because a limited demographic group among total Internet users has memberships in online political groups, but also because people in these groups agree with one another from the starting point (p. 50). In other words, not deliberate exposure, but inadvertent exposure to different political views is a powerful spur to deliberative democracy.

Brundidge (2010) also supported this notion of unintentional exposure to dissimilar ideas. She found that through “inadvertent exposure,” Internet use contributes to an increase in the heterogeneity of political discussion networks (p. 685). She argued that both online and offline exposure to political difference is neither solely a function of human selectivity nor structurally weakened social boundaries. Instead, three factors, including the structural boundaries of the contemporary public sphere, selective exposure processes, and individual differences, are combined to facilitate opportunities for inadvertent exposure to political difference. In her study, online political discussions and online news presented “small but significant” relationships to the overall heterogeneity of political discussion networks, and the impact of online political discussions was especially direct (p. 692). Online news use also influences the heterogeneity of political discussion networks both directly and indirectly. In terms of the function of online

discussion forums, this evidence is complementary to what Wojcieszak and Mutz (2009) presented. Brundidge's study (2010) indicated that Internet use encourages people to actively seek different opinions from their own instead of looking for politically homogeneous groups.

Hypotheses: Political Talk, Disagreements, and Participation

To summarize, three focal concepts in the current study are political talk, political disagreements, and political participation. Using *political participation* as the dependent variable (DV), each hypothesis is tested to predict either (a) *offline* political participation or (b) *online* political participation. This study assumes that if disagreements lead to offline political participation, they also lead to online political participation, and vice versa—i.e. although the direction of predicting both types of political participation is presumed to be same, the strength of the relationships will differ.

Previous research suggests that people are more likely to participate in politics as they talk about politics more frequently (Huckfeldt & Mendez, 2008; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). Therefore, the first hypothesis is presented, focusing on the independent variable (IV) *the frequency of political talk,* as follows:

H1a. *The more often voters talked about politics within their interpersonal relationships, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H1b. *The more often voters talked about politics within their interpersonal relationships, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

In addition, previous studies suggest that people are more likely to engage in political activities as they experience disagreements more frequently while talking about politics (McClurg, 2003; Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Scheufele et al., 2004; Nir, 2005; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010; Nir, 2011; Vitek et al., 2011; Hargittai & Shaw, 2013; Bode et al., 2014). Since disagreements can survive more easily through computer-mediated communication than in face-to-face interaction, online political participation (*H2b, H2d, H3b, H3d*), as well as offline political participation (*H2a, H2c, H3a, H3c*), is considered the dependent variable as in the case of the first sets of hypotheses.

In this study, a disagreement on social media is specifically conceptualized as an "interpersonal" disagreement with family members, friends, or coworkers on social media rather than an "impersonal" disagreement on social media. It enables this study to focus on "interpersonal factors," including opinion leaders or peer pressure, instead of "re-tweeted messages by media conglomerates." This conceptualization of interpersonal disagreement is used in this study because people tend to talk about politics with people whom they are aware of beforehand and those whom they already trust.

Measuring (1) different levels of disagreement, either simple exposure to dissimilar political ideas or engaging in arguments about a specific issue people think most salient; as well as measuring (2) different types of disagreements, either face-to-face disagreements or mediated disagreements on social media, the following two sets of hypotheses are tested further: the second sets of hypotheses (H2) focus on exposure to dissimilar political views, comparing the case of face-to-face (*H2a, H2b*) and social media (*H2c, H2d*), as the independent variable (IV) while the third sets of hypotheses

(H3) focus on issue-specific argument on the most salient issue, comparing the case of face-to-face (*H3a, H3b*) and social media (*H3c, H3d*), as the independent variable (IV).

H2a. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H2b. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

H2c. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships on social media, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H2d. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships on social media, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

H3a. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue*[13] *face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

[13] "The most salient social issue" was measured as follows:
Q11. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, what do you think was the most important issue: (1) Economy and employment, (2) Obamacare (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act), (3) Climate change, (4) Foreign policy (Middle East, Ukraine and Russia, US-China relations, etc.), and (5) Others (Please write: _________)

H3b. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

H3c. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue on social media, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H3d. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue on social media, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

In addition, the results will be clearer if it is tested among voters who experienced disagreements on social media more frequently than disagreements encountered in other ways. In other words, these hypotheses will be tested repeatedly focusing on a group of respondents who answered "always" for the items about experiencing "face-to-face" disagreements in the key questions about disagreements (Q8, Q13)[14].

[14] *Q8: In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you listen to dissimilar political opinions of*, as well as *Q13: How often did you argue about the issue that you picked in Q11 with:* (a) family members offline (b) friends offline (c) co-workers offline (d) family members on social media (e) friends on social media (f) co-workers on social media

CHAPTER 3 : QUANTITATIVE METHOD COMBINING STUDY I AND II

Overview

To test the hypotheses summarized in Chapter Two, this study employed quantitative research methods using a survey questionnaire regarding the 2014 midterm elections in the United States. This chapter especially focuses on explaining quantitative methods while Chapter Four focuses on explaining the results as well as the process of quantitative data analysis for testing hypotheses directly.

For the survey, participants were asked to answer, in total, 28 questions about their political discussion and participation from either the paper version or the online version (https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/midtermelections) of the survey using a questionnaire. The results of the surveys were statistically analyzed using SPSS version 21.0, statistical data analysis software. The overall study consisted of two separate studies of two different populations: Study I recruited college students registered in basic courses of George Mason University, located in Fairfax, Virginia, mainly consisting of the first-time or less experienced voters; while Study II recruited participants online from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) program (https://www.mturk.com/mturk), a program that taps individuals likely to belong to a wide array of age groups above age 18. A paper version of the survey was used partially in the case of college students sample.

Both Study I and Study II used a non-probability convenience sampling for recruiting the respondents who participated in the survey.

Data Collection for the Survey: Sample and Sampling

Study I: First-time Voters

To test the hypotheses, this study used a college student sample. Prior to disseminating the survey to the college students, a paper and pencil version of the survey was pilot-tested using 30 undergraduate students in December, 2014, just one month after the U.S. midterm elections, held on November 4th. The students reported no problems with the questionnaire. Second, an online survey, hosted on Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), with the same questionnaire was conducted for three months from December, 2014 through February, 2015, to 300 undergraduate students enrolled in basic courses in the spring 2015 semester at George Mason University, *COMM100: Public Speaking* and *COMM101: Interpersonal and Group Interaction*, which are required as introductory communication courses for all undergraduate students.

The undergraduate student sample was considered to be a good context for recruiting less experienced voters for several reasons. For example, students who were enrolled in these basic courses were lower-level undergraduate students who were most likely not eligible to vote due to being underage in the presidential election of 2012. Moreover, because most of these students likely have left home for the first time to attend college, it is likely that parental influence had been largely replaced with their peers' influence (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012) as well as political campaign or news on mass media (Quarles, 1979). In addition, less experienced voters are often considered more sensitive

to new information than experienced voters. Austin and Pinkleton (1995) also stated that although undergraduate students are typically first-time voters,[15] they are less likely to vote than any other age group. Additionally, those who complete a college degree vote twice as much as citizens without a college degree. These studies suggest thattesting the hypotheses on the relationship between political communication and *participation* using an undergraduate college student sample is likely to yield high numbers of first time voters. Finally,, the undergraduate student population at George Mason University is well known for its diversity[16] among all the colleges and universities in the United States, and this allowed for a more generalizable sample compared to recruiting undergraduate students from an institution with a less diverse student population.

In sum, combining both versions, 326 college students participated in this survey, however, excluding several cases[17] as well as missing values, 299 respondents were used in the final sample for Study I.

Study II: Experienced Voters

Because college student samples are usually criticized in terms of not being representative enough to generalize the results of the study to the general population in the United States, this study also used a second convenience sample utilizing Amazon's Mechanical Turk in an attempt to potentially reach more experienced voters. Amazon's Mechanical Turk (www.MTurk.com) is a new website for crowdsourcing data collection.

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[15] Although their study used a college student sample for testing hypotheses, their study is meaningful in the case of first-time voters who were not eligible for voting until then because of citizenship status.
[16] https://odime.gmu.edu/diversity-at-mason/
[17] Most cases with missing value were incomplete answers. But several cases were deleted although they were complete answers; for example, interviewees for a qualitative data study completed this survey as well. Because they are not college students, their answers were excluded from the final sample for quantitative data analysis.

Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling (2011) found that, demographically, MTurk participants are more heterogeneous than general Internet samples as well as typical American college student samples. Although participants can be rapidly recruited with lower expenses, data quality has not been found to be affected by compensation rates, and the data has been found to be considered to be as reliable as those obtained via traditional methods (Buhrmester, et al., 2011; Miller, Saunders, & Farhart, 2015).

Using this MTurk data collection program, this study used an online survey, hosted on Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) as well, with the same questionnaire used in Study I, and collected completed surveys from 215 respondents via MTurk during March 2015.

Measurement: Operationalization of Key Variables

Based on previous studies on political disagreements and participation, this study pays attention to three focal concepts: political talk, political disagreements, and political participation. Political participation was used as the dependent variable (DV), while both political talk and political disagreements were used as the independent variables (IVs).

Dependent Variable: Political Participation

First, political participation is theoretically defined as behavior designed to affect the choice of governmental personnel or policies (Milbrath, 1965; Verba & Nie, 1972), and, in detail, as one's intention to influence government actions through a variety of activities, directly by affecting public policy and lawmaking or indirectly by mobilizing the public to do so (Vitak et al., 2011, p. 108). In terms of operationalization, however, it has been measured in a various way.

To consider factors influencing the relationship between political disagreement and participation more clearly, political participation is conceptualized either offline participation or online participation[18]. Offline political participation is defined as participation that would mainly occur face to face; for example, voting, campaigning, donating, protesting, signing a petition, contacting a politician or an editor of the press, and attending a rally, speech, or town hall meeting are categorized offline participation. Previous studies have focused on each aspect of offline political participation, for example, “electoral” participation (McClurg, 2003; McClurg, 2006), “local” participation (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999), or “cooperative” participation (Leighley, 1990).

This type of participation is often extended into online space; for example, there are various online campaigns through email and social media like YouTube or Twitter. People can make a contribution to a politician or a political affiliation online as they do offline. Micro-donors, especially, tend to prefer making a donation online to offline (Pew Research Center, 2009)[19]. Some forums or town hall meetings are held virtually. Also, people can create or sign online petition instead of any paper-and-pencil version of petition, and send an email to a politician instead of contacting in person. Bakker and De Vreese (2011) distinguished traditional participation and digital participation as two discrete forms of political participation not only because digital participation can be alternative to traditional forms of participation, but also because it can be another way of participating politics (p. 3). In other words, the Internet provides “more,” as well as

[18] This idea is later supported by the result from exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in Table 3.4.
[19] http://www.pewinternet.org/2009/09/01/the-demographics-of-online-and-offline-political-participation/

"broader" technical possibilities to promote political engagement as Gil de Zúñiga, Veenstra, Vraga, and Shah (2010) labeled as "online expressive participation" (p. 42).

Hoffman, Jones, and Young (2013) also found that citizens perceive and perform either online or offline political behaviors as having different purposes. Online participation is more likely to be motivated as "an effective means of communicating information to others" while offline participation is considered as political behaviors that "directly influence government" (p. 2255). According to their study, "participatory" behaviors and "communicative" behaviors in politics were conceptualized "mutually exclusive" in the context of *offline*, however, the distinction between these two types is rather blurred in the *online* context. In other words, *offline* political behaviors are generally perceived as a good way of both influencing the government directly and communicating information to others indirectly.

As their study presented, participatory and communicative behaviors were clearly distinguished in offline participation, but not in online participation[20]. It helps to understand the clear difference between *offline* participation and *online* participation in terms of its characteristics—i.e. online participation contains expressiveness or "communicativeness" in itself compared to offline participation.

Therefore, this study suggests that *online* political participation[21] revolves around

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[20] It was also found here in this study in Table 3.5.

[21] An average score of the following items was calculated for online political participation: (1) Posted a link about politics, (2) Posted a status update on politics, (3) Posted a wall comment about politics, (4) Discussed political information in a Facebook message, (5) Discussed political information using Facebook's instant messaging system, (6) Posted information about the

communicative participation while *offline* political participation[22] is more action-oriented; in this context, where public display of political preference and perspectives can be the starting point of participation, social media use for communicating politics is included as a part of the scale *online political participation*.

Following this operational definition, interval scales of offline and online political participation were used for measurement. The original scale of political participation consisted of 20 items, which integrated eight items of *political participation* (Q19), including "Sent an email to the editor of a newspaper/magazine," "Used email to contact a politician," "Signed an online petition," "Became a fan or a follower of a politician on social media," "Worked for a political candidate or party," "Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech," "Contributed money to a political campaign or candidate," and "Posted information about the campaign on your social media feeds" (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010) with 13 items of *online political participation* (Q20), including "Posted a link about politics," "Posted a wall comment about politics," "Posted a status update on politics," "Discussed political information in a Facebook message," "Discussed political information using Facebook's instant messaging system," "Posted a photo about politics," "Joined or left a group about politics," "RSVP-ed for a political event," "Took a quiz that about politics," "Posted a Facebook Note about politics," "Added or deleted political information from their Facebook profile," "Added or deleted an application that

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campaign on your social media feeds, (7) Posted a photo about politics, (8) Signed an online petition, and (9) Became a fan or a follower of a politician on social media

[22] An average score of the following items was calculated for offline political participation: (1) Worked for a political candidate or party, (2) Contributed money to a political campaign or candidate, (3) Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech

deals with politics," and "Became a 'fan' of a political candidate or group" (Vitak et al., 2011). However, based on exploratory factor analysis, only 11 items among 20 items were included at the final: 8 items for online political participation and 3 items for offline political participation. Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 present the result of exploratory factor analysis, and the result of reliability test for these dependent variables is summarized subsequently.

Independent Variable (1): Political Talk

Then the following question arises: what is different between *expressive participation* and *simply engaging in political talk?* When it comes to "communicating politics," this study focuses on "inadvertent" exposure to politically different views on various social issues. While talking about politics, people may experience disagreements or may not—i.e., disagreements may be expected, but they may not be predicted. If people engage in political talk with the intention of influencing that conversation partner, such action has a higher probability of leading to political disagreements, and it may motivate him/her to be active in political participation either offline or online.

Then, what is not political talk? Although political talk embraces a chance to be exposed to dissimilar views and to be engaged in arguments further, this study excludes the context of any public events, where a speaker is a main communicator, and where any two-way, transactional communication is limited. Different from these political "talks", which indicate meetings or conferences, political "talk" is a casual, mainly sociable, conversation. Not only giving political talks, but also attending or listening to political talks is excluded from this concept of political talk.

Political talk often occurs within informal discussion networks, where people are inadvertently exposed to different views on political issues (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009; Brundidge, 2010; Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Scheufele (2000) pointed out that the notion of *political discussion* has been used as a multidimensional construct based on locale, conversational partners or content of conversation, and distinguished *political talk*, relatively focusing on exchanging information, from *casual conversation*, mainly contains human-interest or leisure-related issues (p. 728). However, this study uses political talk as a multidimensional construct embracing the routineness of political talk, as well as informed discussion about politics—because each aspect of political talk has a potential to contribute to shaping one's political view. For example, casual conversations are also important in creating non-political ties among voters (Scheufele, 2000; Brundidge, 2010; Eveland & Hutchens, 2013).

In the current study, political talk was measured as the frequency of talking about politics within one's social networks, including parents, siblings, friends, and coworkers, as the Election Day approached. *The frequency of political talk* was measured in Q6 and Q7 with the 7-point Likert scale from "1=Never" to "7=Always." In Q6, the question was stated, "In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you talk about politics with: (a) family, (b) friends, (c) romantic partners, (d) coworkers, (e) acquaintances, (f) strangers?" while, in Q7, the question was asked, "In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you talk about politics: (a) face-to-face, (b) on the phone, (c) on the Internet?" In other words, while Q6 measured *with whom* they talked about politics, either within their strong-tie networks (family, friends, romantic

partners) as well as their weak-tie networks (coworkers, acquaintances, strangers), Q7 measured *where* political talk occur, either during "face-to-face" communication or during mediated communication on the "phone" or the "Internet." After reliability test, Cronbach's α of the scale *political talk,* measured by Q6, was .800, which shows good internal consistency. However, Cronbach's α of the scale *political talk*, measured by Q7, was .675—which was questionable. Therefore, only *political talk* measured by Q6, not by Q7, was used in further analysis to test hypotheses.

Going back to the question, while political talk occurs inadvertently and unintentionally, it may escalate expressive participation if either party displays his/her own view in public beyond one's primary conversation with that partner. Therefore, this study assumes that (1) communicating politics with "the same person frequently," as well as (2) a transient, sporadic conversation with "people with various views," lead to expressive participation—i.e. not only the frequency of political talk, but also the variety of people whom respondents engage in political talk matters in their participation.

Independent Variable (2): Political Disagreements

Nir (2005) pointed out that "the simultaneous presence of multiple perspectives is the defining characteristic of public life" (p. 422). The notion, plurality of alternative viewpoints, referes to "the meaning of public life, compared to which even the richest and most satisfying family life can offer only the prolongation and multiplication of one's own position, with its attending aspects and perspectives" (Arendt, 1958). Political disagreements essentially exist within almost all kinds of social networks in democratic society. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948), on the other hand, suggested "the

cross-pressures hypothesis," positing that people are less likely to vote if they are situated between conflicting social positions—i.e. the side effect of disagreements. However, their study did not distinguish intrapersonal-level ambivalence from network-level ambivalence (Nir, 2005). Based on new studies that found the positive aspect of network heterogeneity (Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004; Nir, 2005; Nir, 2011), this study proposes that frequent exposure to different perspectives motivates voters to express their views, as well as to exert their citizenship, which eventually helps them to secure social boundaries, or at least to manage their boundaries.

In terms of its operational definition, as it was briefly explained in Chapter Two, three different levels of disagreements were measured as follows: *(a) exposure to dissimilar political views, (b) arguments, and (c) issue-specific arguments*. The least level of disagreements was identified as the variable *exposure to dissimilar political views*, and measured by "listening to dissimilar political opinions" (Q8), and the variable *arguments* was measured by "arguing to express disagreements with the political opinions" (Q9). Regarding the frequency of arguments, *issue salience* was measured as well. What respondents thought the most important issue in the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014 was asked, and measured with the 7-point Likert scale from "1=not important at all" to "7=extremely important." Specifically, they were asked, in question (Q11), "In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, what do you think was the most important issue?" Respondents chose one of the following options: 1) Economy and employment, 2) Obamacare (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act), 3) Climate

change, 4) Foreign policy (Middle East, Ukraine and Russia, US-China relations, etc.), 5) Other. Regarding the next question (Q12), "How important was your issue from Q11," a 7-point Likert scale was used from "1: Not Important At All, 2-3: Less Important, 4: Somehow Important, 5-6: Very Important, 7: Extremely Important."

The inter-item correlation between these three different scales of disagreements was tested and summarized in Table 3.6.[23] Moreover, two different types of disagreements were integrated into these measurements as follows: (1) face-to-face disagreements (offline), and (2) mediated disagreements on social media (online).

Regarding *levels of disagreement*, feeling thermometer ratings of two major parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, were included as well (Q21, Q22). For example, a battery of questions was asked as follows: "how favorably do you think the Republican/Democratic Party was treated by: (a) family offline, (b) friends offline, (c) coworkers offline, (d) family online, (e) friends online, (f) coworkers online?" Each item was measured with the 7-point Likert scale, from "1=Very Unfavorable" to "7=Very Favorable." If a respondent answered "1~3" for Q28, s/he leaned to "liberal" in political orientation while answering "5~7" was interpreted as leaning to "conservative." If a respondent leaned to "liberal" although his or her social networks were more

[23] As summarized later in Table 3.6, the inter-item correlation "between (a) and (b)" or "between (b) and (c)" were too high to be used as a different scale; however, inter-item correlation "between (a) and (c)" was low enough to use as a different scale that measures a different level of disagreements. Consequently, only two disagreement scales, (a) exposure to dissimilar political views, and (c) arguing about the most salient social issue (issue-specific arguments), were chosen to test the relationship between disagreements and political participation although the scale of (b) arguments was excluded from the notion of disagreements in this study.

favorable towards the Republican Party, it was assumed that s/he was under cross-pressures.

To distinguish mediated political disagreements on social media from online expressive political participation, social media use was measured for solving multicollinearity issue[24]. Not only *the frequency of social media* a respondent uses, but also *the number or types of social media* a respondent uses was computed based on their answers. It was measured in Q1, "What kind of online social media do you currently use? Mark all the answers that apply." Respondents could choose multiple answers from the following options: "1) Facebook, 2) Twitter, 3) Google+, 4) LinkedIn, 5) Blog, 6) Other, 7) None." This was a partially open-ended question because respondents could list any social media. This variable enables further analysis between *single-type social media users* and *multiple-type social media users*.

Studies about "uses and gratifications theory" have presented that different social media fulfill different user needs, and that users choose more than one type of social media for their goals consequently (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; LaRose, Eastin, & Lin, 2004; Ellison et. al., 2007; Ray, 2007; Boyd, 2008). According to 2009 Pew Research study, people using the Internet and social media had about 20% more diverse social networks compared to non-users (Hampton, Sessions, Her, & Rainie, 2009). As non-users were found different from social media users in terms of the social networks, multiple-type social media users may be different from non-users, as well as from single-

[24] Although it is not directly relevant to testing hypotheses, three variables online political participation, mediated disagreements via social media, and political SNS use are empirically tested if they are mutually exclusive—there was no multicolinearity issue found statistically.

type social media users, in their patterns of consuming newsfeed, communicating politics, and their participatory behaviors. In addition, multiple social media use is on the rise: 2014 Pew Research study found that more than a half of online adults (52%) were using multiple social media (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2014).

This study also reaffirmed that Facebook still remains as "the most popular social media" that most people (71%) use, and that Twitter and Pinterest users increased across a variety of demographic groups. Facebook and Twitter are still commonly used across various demographic groups, and get attention from academia as well as from media industry more than any other social media, and consequently, so they were included in measuring *political SNS use* further. This independent variable, *political SNS use*, was measured by asking if participants "shared" any political information on their social media, specifically Facebook or Twitter, account during this midterm election campaign. Combining four items, "post politics on Facebook[25] (Q2)," "share politics on Facebook[26] (Q3)," "follow politics on Twitter[27] (Q4)," and "retweet politics in Twitter[28] (Q5)," the ordinal scale was computed, and after reliability test, Cronbach's α of this scale was .833—which indicates good internal consistency.

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[25] In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "post" any comments relevant to politics on *Facebook*? If so, how frequently? 1) Never, 2) Rarely, 3) Often, 4) Very often
[26] In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "share" any comments relevant to politics on *Facebook*? If so, how frequently? 1) never, 2) rarely, 3) often, 4) very often
[27] In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "follow" any pages relevant to politics on *Twitter*? If so, how frequently? 1) never, 2) rarely, 3) often, 4) very often
[28] In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "re-tweet" any posts relevant to politics on *Twitter*? If so, how frequently? 1) never, 2) rarely, 3) often, 4) very often

Descriptive Statistics of Two Samples: Less and More Experienced Voters

Before discussing the results from the more advanced quantitative data analyses, the descriptive statistics for the two samples used in this study are summarized and explained in this section. The first sample, collected from college students, was considered to be less experienced voters while the second sample, collected from Amazon MTurk program, was considered experienced voters mainly because of demographic differences like age, education, and income. When testing the reliability as well as the validity of the key dependent variable *political participation*, as well as the key independent variable *political disagreement*, both samples were combined.

Study I: College Students Sample

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables of College Students Sample

		N	Valid %
Gender	Male	134	44.8
	Female	164	54.8
Age	17~19	180	59.0
	20~29	101	33.1
	30~39	16	5.2
	40~	8	2.6
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	148	49.5
	Asian	78	26.1
	Hispanic/Latino or Others	53	17.7
	Black/African American	20	6.7
Education	Did Not Complete High School	2	.7
	High School/GED	108	36.1
	Some College	166	55.5
	Bachelor's Degree	21	7.0
	Master's Degree	0	0
	Advanced Graduate work/Ph.D	0	0
	Not Sure	2	.7

Income	Under $25,000	55	18.5
	$25,000 - $39,999	29	9.7
	$40,000 - $49,999	32	10.7
	$50,000 - $74,999	51	17.1
	$75,000 - $99,999	36	12.1
	Over $100,000	95	31.9
Total		299	100

As summarized in Table 3.1, the college students sample leaned female (54.8%) and White/Caucasian (49.5%) with a mean age of 21 years. Although it leaned to middle income ($50000 – $74,999), annual income that respondents reported in this study I was household income rather than their own income—which is the reason why it cannot be compared with income of MTurk sample directly.

Among 299 college students, only 13 participants (4.3%) did not use any kind of social media at all. Table 3.2 shows that, two-thirds of respondents were multiple social media users (68.2%), who used more than two kinds of social media. Also, less than a half of respondents (40.5%) used more than three kinds of social media.

Table 3.2 Multiple Social Media Use of College Students Sample

# of Social Media		Frequency	Valid %
	0	13	4.3
	1	82	27.4
	2	83	27.8
	3	77	25.8
	4	32	10.7
	5	9	3.0
	6	2	.7
	10	1	.3
Total		299	100.0

Table 3.3 also confirms that most respondents used social media. Respondents tended to be Facebook users (87.3%), and that slightly less than a half of respondents (44.8%) used Twitter. Interestingly, although Instagram was not listed in the multiple choices in the original questionnaire, many respondents (23.7%) wrote Instagram in a blank, "Other (Please write: _______)" separately. Although Table 3.3 does not include this information, 91.0% of respondents (N=299) reported having either a Facebook account or Twitter account. Several questions mentioning only Facebook or Twitter as representative social media were valid for further analysis.

Table 3.3 Social Media Use Pattern of College Students Sample

	Frequency	**Valid %**
Non-*Facebook* user	38	12.7
Facebook user	261	87.3
Non-*Twitter* user	165	55.2
Twitter user	134	44.8
Non-Instagram user[29]	227	76.3
Instagram user	72	23.7
Non-Google+ user	241	80.6
Google+ user	58	19.4
Non-LinkedIn user	254	84.9
LinkedIn user	45	15.1
Total	**299**	**100**

Regarding the key dependent variable, *political participation*, both the reliability and the validity of each scale needed to be tested before any advanced statistical analysis

[29] In the original survey, there is no option of "Instagram" among multiple choices, however, many of respondents who chose "Others," namely, any other kind of social media not listed in the survey, specified that they use "Instagram." Based on their answers to this open-ended question, Instagram is listed as the third most popular social media among respondents.

was performed to test the hypotheses. Therefore, the basic reliability analysis as well as an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the scale of *political participation* was performed. Since both Study I and Study II used this same scale as the key dependent variable, the reliability of this interval scale of *political participation* was tested for the merged sample, combining college students sample and MTurk sample.

First, an exploratory factor analysis was performed to characterize the correlations between each item, measured for a scale of political participation. Although 20 items were included in this scale at the stage of operationalization and measurement, combining eight items of *participation*[30] and 12 items of *online participation*, three items were deleted for the consistency of this scale based on the result of exploratory factor analysis; an item, "(10) Joined or left a group about politics," did not load on any factor, and factor loadings of two items, including "(19) Added or deleted political information from their Facebook profile," and "(20) Added or deleted an application that deals with politics," were only negative.

Interestingly, the results showed that "email communication"—in the case of two items, "Sent an email to the editor of a newspaper/magazine" and "Used email to contact a politician"—was correlated with "offline" participation rather than "online" participation. It implies that the action of sending email directly to politicians, as well as editors of the press, tended to follow offline participation: for example, those who sent emails to editors of a newspaper/magazine were likely to be long-term subscribers of that newspaper/magazine, who had been engaged in political campaigns. In addition, email is

[30] This scale with eight items measures overall political participation, either offline or online. However, the other scale with 13 items measures online political participation only.

perceived as an electronic version of letters, and it is considered different from exchanging short, immediate messages on social media or instant messaging. In this context, it is understandable that another item "RSVP-ed for a political event" was also categorized as offline participation although "RSVP" is used mainly through email communication. In other words, these three items have face validity as "online political participation," but have content validity as "offline political participation" as the result of factor analysis shows. It may mislead the results while testing hypotheses, and consequently, these three items were also deleted in the following, advanced analysis.

Based on the result, two items were deleted additionally: one was "Took a quiz that about politics," which had a small factor loading below .4, and the other was "Posted a Facebook Note about politics[31]," which also had small factor loadings, even for both factors of offline and online participation. Also, "Became a fan or a follower of a politician on social media" had loadings for both factors—which may mislead the result in testing hypotheses, and consequently, it was deleted as well.

After deleting several items, based on the results of the factor analysis, the final 11 items were included for the scale *political participation*. Factor analysis was conducted again with these final items, and the result is summarized in Table 3.4 and Table 3.5.

[31] Considering that a message like "Facebook Note" is as long as one's diary, or as rich as any blog posting, this activity often presents a writer's exponential interest in politics, which may suggest any prior involvement in politics. Consequently, it may be not recognized as online-only participation.

Table 3.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis (Pattern Matrix): Political Participation

	Factor	
	Online	**Offline**
Posted a link about politics	.944	
Posted a wall comment about politics	.918	
Posted a status update on politics	.915	
Discussed political information in a Facebook message	.802	
Discussed political information using Facebook's instant messaging system	.801	
Posted a photo about politics	.645	
Posted information about the campaign on your social media feeds	.623	
Signed an online petition	.598	
Worked for a political candidate or party		.953
Contributed money to a political campaign or candidate		.747
Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech		.679

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring (N=499).

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 3.5 Exploratory Factor Analysis (Total Variance Explained)

Factor	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**			**Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings***
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	6.664	60.586	60.586	6.346	57.695	57.695	6.085
2	1.297	11.792	72.377	.996	9.056	66.75	4.239
3	.598	5.432	77.809				
4	.547	4.977	82.786				
5	.435	3.956	86.742				
6	.398	3.622	90.365				
7	.287	2.607	92.971				
8	.262	2.386	95.357				
9	.213	1.933	97.29				
10	.163	1.479	98.77				

11	.135	1.23	100

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
*When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

As a result of KMO and Bartlett's Test, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .916, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed Approximate Chi-Square 4275.447 (df = 55, p < .000)—which indicates that this combined sample was appropriate for exploratory factor analysis. As summarized in Table 3.4, two factors were found with factor loadings larger than .4 after deleting three items above: the first factor is labeled "online" participation while the second factor is considered "offline" participation.

Regarding the first factor *online participation*, seven items specifically, "Posted a link about politics," "Posted a wall comment about politics," "Posted a status update on politics," "Discussed political information in a Facebook message," "Discussed political information using Facebook's instant messaging system," "Posted information about the campaign on your social media feeds," and "Posted a photo about politics," had loadings larger than .6. The other item of *online participation* "Signed an online petition" had loadings smaller than .6. Regarding the second factor *offline participation*, all three items specifically "Worked for a political candidate or party," "Contributed money to a political campaign or candidate," and "Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech," had loadings larger than .6.

To summarize the results of the exploratory factor analysis, there were clearly two

types of participation found: *online* and *offline* participation. In addition to this online versus offline participation, factor loadings explained different levels of expressiveness in online political participation to some extent. This result resonates with Bakker and De Vreese's study (2011), which suggested two forms of participation, "traditional" versus "digital," and two factors of participation, "passive" versus "active," were intercrossed. Hoffman, Jones, and Young (2013) also found that citizens perceive and perform either online or offline political behaviors as having different purposes. Online participation is more likely to be motivated as "an effective means of communicating information to others" while offline participation is considered as political behaviors that "directly influence government" (p. 2255). Hoffman et al. (2013) pointed out, although "participatory" behaviors and "communicative" behaviors in politics were conceptualized "mutually exclusive" in the context of offline, the distinction between these two types is rather blurred in the "online" context. In other words, *offline* political behaviors are generally perceived as a good way of both influencing the government directly and communicating information to others indirectly. As their study presented, it was also found here in this study that participatory and communicative behaviors were clearly distinguished in offline participation, but not in online participation. It helps to understand the clear difference between *offline* participation and *online* participation in terms of its characteristics—i.e. online participation contains expressiveness or "communicativeness" in itself compared to offline participation.

In terms of the factor loadings, theses interval scales of *offline* participation and *online* participation appear to different dependent variables for further analysis in testing

hypotheses.

The reliability on this scale, consisting of 12 items, was tested; Cronbach's α of the interval scale of *political participation* was .935, and Cronbach's α based on Standardized Items was .936—which indicates excellent reliability (Kline, 1999). The scale mean was 18.3, and standard deviation was 10.21. Therefore, the interval scale of *political participation* is considered "reliable," and was included in the advanced statistical model for testing hypotheses for each sample separately.

Moreover, following the result from factor analysis summarized in Table 3.4, the reliability on each subscale, *online participation*[32] and *offline participation*[33], was tested. Cronbach's α of the interval scale of *online participation* was .935, and Cronbach's α based on Standardized Items was .936—which indicates excellent reliability. The scale mean was 14.51, and standard deviation was 8.697. On the other hand, Cronbach's α of the interval scale of *offline participation* was .831 and Cronbach's α based on Standardized Items was .842—which indicates good reliability. The scale mean was 3.77, and standard deviation was 2.133.

Regarding the key independent variable *political disagreement*, three different scales were used for testing hypotheses: (1) exposure to disagreement, (2) argument, and

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[32] This scale consists of nine items as follows: "Posted a link about politics," "Posted a wall comment about politics," "Posted a status update on politics," "Discussed political information in a Facebook message," "Discussed political information using Facebook's instant messaging system," "Posted information about the campaign on your social media feeds," "Posted a photo about politics," "Signed an online petition," and "Became a fan or a follower of a politician on social media."
[33] This scale consists of six items as follows: "Worked for a political candidate or party," "Contributed money to a political campaign or candidate," "Sent an email to the editor of a newspaper/magazine," "RSVP-ed for a political event," "Used email to contact a politician," and "Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech."

(3) argument about the most salient issue. In this section, the inter-item correlation of these three scales was calculated to confirm that each scale measures a different level of disagreement. Table 3.6 summarizes the results of the inter-item correlation.

As Table 3.6 shows, the inter-item correlation between the scale "Exposure to Disagreement (E)" and the scale "Argument (A)," as well as the inter-item correlation between the scale "Argument (A)" and the scale "Issue-specific Argument (I)," was too high (> .5) to be considered as a separate scale. On the other hand, the inter-item correlation between the scale "Exposure to Disagreement (E)" and the scale "Issue-specific Argument (I)" was low enough (≤ .5) to be considered as a different scale that measures a different level of disagreements. As a result, this study used two scales, *Exposure to Disagreements (E)* and *Issue-specific Argument (I)*, for advanced statistical analysis to test hypotheses because they are the key independent variable.

Table 3.6 Inter-Item Correlations of Three Disagreement Scales[34]

	Exposure to Disagreement						**Argument**						**Issue-specific Argument**					
	E1	**E2**	**E3**	**E4**	**E5**	**E6**	**A1**	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**	**A5**	**A6**	**I1**	**I2**	**I3**	**I4**	**I5**	**I6**
E1																		
E2	.69																	
E3	.48	.61																
E4	.50	.50	.43															
E5	.42	.51	.31	.63														

[34] Each item indicates as follows – E: Exposure to Disagreement, A: Argument, I: Issue-specific Argument, 1: Family Offline, 2: Friends Offline, 3: Coworkers Offline, 4: Family Online, 5: Friends Online, 6: Coworkers Online

E6	.36	.43	.55	.56	.53												
A1	.60	.45	.41	.46	.31	.33											
A2	.48	.65	.48	.40	.38	.37	.70										
A3	.31	.40	.62	.32	.21	.46	.53	.63									
A4	.32	.31	.33	.57	.36	.42	.56	.51	.58								
A5	.31	.38	.33	.44	.51	.42	.50	.63	.52	.74							
A6	.21	.26	.42	.38	.28	.58	.38	.45	.68	.68	.64						
I1	.46	.34	.26	.28	.24	.28	.54	.43	.34	.38	.35	.29					
I2	.37	.48	.31	.25	.31	.27	.44	.59	.38	.31	.42	.29	.67				
I3	.27	.30	.52	.26	.19	.47	.32	.40	.57	.38	.33	.48	.47	.55			
I4	.28	.28	.27	.52	.34	.37	.37	.36	.40	.66	.53	.49	.49	.47	.47		
I5	.26	.32	.24	.39	.46	.34	.37	.47	.35	.54	.74	.48	.42	.55	.40	.74	
I6	.22	.26	.40	.37	.26	.49	.29	.37	.53	.49	.47	.64	.35	.40	.64	.70	.62

Combining 12 items of two different levels of disagreement, *exposure to disagreements (E)* and *issue-specific argument (I*), both face-to-face disagreements and disagreements on social media, an average score of *interpersonal disagreements* was calculated and used for further analysis. Among total 12 items, only six items measuring face-to-face disagreements (both E and I) were averaged while the rest six items measuring mediated disagreements via social media (both E and I) were averaged separately. Each was used as (1) an average score of *face-to-face disagreements* and (2) *mediated disagreements on social media.* Reliability test was conducted for these three scales of disagreements.

Table 3.7 Reliability Test of Three Scales about Disagreement

	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α based on Standardized Items	Mean	SD
Interpersonal disagreement	.894	.897	2.21	.963
Face-to-face disagreement	.833	.833	2.42	1.080
Mediated disagreement on social media	.847	.854	1.98	1.032

Table 3.7 shows a summary of the results from the reliability test. The results indicate excellent reliability of all three scales about disagreement.

Study II: Experienced Voters

The same process of testing reliability, as well as validity, of the same scales as Study I used was employed in Study II. Amazon MTurk sample in Study II mostly consisted of experienced voters.

Table 3.8 Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables of MTurk Sample

		N	Valid %
Gender	Male	111	51.6
	Female	103	47.9
Age	17~19	0	.0
	20~29	70	32.7
	30~39	77	36.0
	40~	67	31.3
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	163	75.8
	Asian	22	10.2
	Hispanic/Latino or Others	17	7.9
	Black/African American	13	6.0
Education	Did Not Complete High School	2	.9
	High School/GED	21	9.8
	Some College	90	42.1
	Bachelor's Degree	83	38.8

	Master's Degree	12	5.6
	Advanced Graduate work/Ph.D	6	2.8
	Not Sure	0	.0
Income	Under $25,000	44	20.6
	$25,000 - $39,999	66	30.8
	$40,000 - $49,999	27	12.6
	$50,000 - $74,999	47	22.0
	$75,000 - $99,999	18	8.4
	Over $100,000	12	5.6
Total		215	100

As summarized in Table 3.6, experienced voters were somewhat more likely to be male (51.6%), white/Caucasian (75.8%), having some college (42.1%) or BA degree (38.8%) with a mean age of 36 years. Regarding household income, it leaned to lower income ($25,000 - $39,999; 51.4%). As expected, compared to the college student sample, this sample was more diverse in terms of most demographic variables, including gender, age, education level, and income, while the college student sample was much more diverse in ethnicity.

Regarding social media use, only nine participants (4.2%) among the 215 respondents did not use any kind of social media at all. Table 3.7 shows that, two-thirds of respondents were multiple social media users (67.9%), who used more than two kinds of social media. Also, less than half of the respondents (35.8%) used more than three kinds of social media. The pattern of social media use was very similar with the result drawn from the college student sample[35].

[35] However, compared to college students sample, respondents in MTurk sample rarely filled out a blank with “Others (Please write: _________)”. Consequently, the ratio of Instagram users could not be compared.

Table 3.9 Multiple Social Media Use of MTurk Sample

# of Social Media	Frequency	Valid %
0	9	4.2
1	60	27.9
2	69	32.1
3	50	23.3
4	22	1.2
5	5	2.3
Total	215	100

Table 3.8 shows that respondents tended to be Facebook users (89.8%), and that more than a half of respondents (58.1%) used Twitter. Although it is not reported in Table 3.8, 94.0% of respondents (N=215) reported having either a Facebook account or Twitter account. Therefore, several questions (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5), which mentioned only Facebook or Twitter as representative social media, were considered valid for further analysis in this MTurk sample as well.

Table 3.10 Social Media Use Pattern of MTurk Sample

	Frequency	Valid %
Non-*Facebook* user	22	1.2
Facebook user	193	89.8
Non-*Twitter* user	90	41.9
Twitter user	125	58.1
Non-Google+ user	160	74.4
Google+ user	55	25.6
Non-LinkedIn user	151	7.2
LinkedIn user	64	29.8
Non-Blog user	191	88.8
Blog user	24	11.2
Total	**215**	**100**

Because both scales of *political participation* as the key dependent variable were "reliable" and "valid," when they were tested in the total sample (N=497), combining two different samples in Study I and Study II, they were used for advanced statistical analysis for testing hypotheses directly in each study. In addition, for the key independent variables, two scales of political disagreements were used: *exposure to disagreements* and *issue-specific argument*.

CHAPTER 4 : QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS COMBINING STUDY I AND II

Overview

In Chapter Four, the whole process of quantitative data analysis for directly testing hypotheses in both Study I and Study II is explained. First, the research hypotheses tested in both studies are summarized. Then, the results of advanced statistical analysis for testing these hypotheses in Study I and II are explained in detail together.

Summary of Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses and question are summarized in order as follows:

H1a. *The more often voters talked about politics within their interpersonal relationships, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H1b. *The more often voters talked about politics within their interpersonal relationships, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

H2a. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H2b. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

H2c. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships on social media, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H2d. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships on social media, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

H3a. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue*[36] *face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H3b. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

H3c. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue on social media, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

H3d. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue on social media, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

[36] "The most salient social issue" was measured as follows:
Q11. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, what do you think was the most important issue: (1) Economy and employment, (2) Obamacare (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act), (3) Climate change, (4) Foreign policy (Middle East, Ukraine and Russia, US-China relations, etc.), and (5) Others (Please write: _________)

Testing the Hypotheses in Study I and II

To test all the hypotheses together, a hierarchical multiple linear regression model was used. As Field (2012) recommended, predictors were entered in an order as a confirmatory method for minimizing "suppressor effects," occurring when a predictor has a significant effect only when another variable is held constant, rather than a stepwise method, which may be useful in exploratory model building (p. 323). Table 4.1 summarizes standardized coefficients of predictors of political participation with the R Square value of each final model[37]. As predictors of political participation, two scales of disagreements were used: one is (1) exposure to dissimilar opinions within one's social networks either face-to-face or on social media[38], and the other is (2) arguments about a specific issue, which a respondent thinks most important in the elections, within one's social networks either face-to-face or on social media[39]. In addition to these same predictors, other predictors like gender, age, ethnicity[40], political orientation, the number of social media, and the frequency of political talk were included in the regression model as well[41]. In each regression analysis, four models were generated for Study I and Study II respectively, but for efficiency, only the final models are reported.

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[37] The reason why only final models were reported here is because it includes all predictors with the highest (Adjusted) R square among all four models generated.

[38] Q8. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you *listen to* dissimilar political opinions of: (1) family members offline, (2) friends offline, (3) coworkers offline, (4) family members on social media, (5) friends on social media, (6) coworkers on social media (Answer from 1: Never to 7: Always, the 7-point Likert scale)

[39] Q13. How often did you argue about the issue that you picked in Q11 with: (1) family members offline, (2) friends offline, (3) coworkers offline, (4) family members on social media, (5) friends on social media, (6) coworkers on social media (Answer from 1: Never to 7: Always, the 7-point Likert scale)

[40] Since ethnicity is a categorical variable, each category of ethnicity, including *white, black, asian*, and *Hispanic or others*, was dummy coded; and in terms of the size (*n*), *white* was excluded as a reference group.

[41] See the 7th footnote regarding multicollinearity test.

As Table 4.1 shows, no demographic variable was a meaningful predictor of offline political participation in both studies. In both samples[42], the frequency of political talk was a significant predictor of political participation in a positive direction, and consequently, ***H1a***[43] is supported. Regarding disagreement scales[44], *exposure to disagreements* was not significant in predicting offline political participation in both studies; consequently, ***H2a*** and ***H2c*** were not supported.[45] On the other hand *issue-specific arguments* predicted offline political participation positively when it occurred *with friends on social media* only in Study II. Therefore, ***H3a*** was not supported, but the results supported ***H3c***.[46]

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[42] Study I uses the college students sample, and so the results can be interpreted as patterns of the first-time voters. On the other hand, respondents in Study II are considered as more experienced voters.

[43] ***H1a.*** *The more often voters talked about politics within their interpersonal relationships, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

[44] (Regarding the 15th footnote) In the original regression model, *political SNS use* was included: the scale of *political SNS use* of Facebook and Twitter was tested "reliable" because Cronbach's α was .836. Although it was found as a predictor of participation both in Study I ($\beta = .291$, $p < .001$) and Study II ($\beta = .461$, $p < .001$), *political SNS use* was excluded in this final dissertation for testing hypotheses more directly. See 15th footnote regarding this issue.

[45] ***H2a.*** *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*
H2c. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships on social media, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

[46] ***H3a.*** *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue[46] face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*
H3c. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue on social media, the more likely they will get involved in offline political participation.*

Table 4.1 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Offline Political Participation

Model		Standardized Coefficients β	
		Study I[47] *(N=281)*	**Study II**[48] *(N=201)*
1	(Constant)		
	Gender	n.s.	n.s.
	Age	n.s.	n.s.
	BA degree	n.s.	n.s.
	Income	n.s.	n.s.
	Ethnicity		
	White (reference group)		
	Black	n.s.	n.s.
	Asian	n.s.	n.s.
	Hispanic and Others	n.s.	n.s.
	R^2	*.036*	*.040*
2	Political Orientation	n.s.	n.s.
	The Number of Social Media Use	n.s.	n.s.
	The Frequency of Political Talk	.367***	.206*
	R^2	*.208*	*.301*
3	Dissimilar political views from family members offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from friends offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from coworkers offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from family members social media	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from friends on social media	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from coworkers on social media	n.s.	n.s.
	R^2	*.223*	*.387*
4	Issue-specific Argument with family members offline	-.143	n.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with friends offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with coworkers offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with family members on social media	n.s.	n.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with friends on social media	n.s.	.257*
	Issue-specific Argument with coworkers on social media	n.s.	n.s.
	R^2	*26.5%*	*51.5%*
	Adjusted R^2	*20.2%*	*45.6%*
	F	*4.223****	*8.606****
Mean (SD) of Offline Political Participation (DV)		1.30 (.759)	1.21 (.678)

n.s. = not significant, *p < .05, **p < .005, ***p < .001.

[47] Regarding multicollinearity of Study I sample, VIF values of all predictors are less than 4, and each predictor is distributed across different eigenvalues.

[48] In checking multicollinearity of Study II sample, VIF values of all predictors were less than 6, and each predictor was distributed across different eigenvalues. However, "issue-specific with family on social media" had tolerance below .2. Consequently, although there was no muticollinearity found in this regression, this might have a potential problem. Therefore, additional statistics were tested, and it was found that *political SNS use (of Facebook and Twitter)* reduced the explanation power of *disagreement* scales in the 3rd and 4th model although there was no multicollinearity issue found in the test. As a result, *political SNS* was excluded from predictors in these regression analyses.

The same process of multiple regression analysis was performed to find predictors specifically for *online political participation*. As the result of the factor analysis summarized in Chapter Three, only 8 items out of 15 items were included in an average score of online political participation. In both samples, frequency of political talk predicted online political participation in a positive direction as Table 4.2 shows. Therefore, ***H1b***[49] was supported.

The number of social media used did not predict online participation, but political orientation was a significant predictor of online political participation only in Study II—i.e. the experienced voters are less likely to participate in online political activities if they lean towards "conservative."

Regarding the two scales of *disagreements*, *exposure to dissimilar political views* was not a significant predictor of online political participation at all in Study I while *exposure to dissimilar political views of friends on social media* was found to be a factor in predicting online participation in Study II. Therefore, ***H2b*** was not supported, but the findings supported ***H2d***[50]. In the case of issue-specific arguments, *issue-specific arguments with friends on social media* was a significant predictor of online participation in both samples. *Issue-specific arguments with coworkers on social media* was a

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[49] ***H1b.*** *The more often voters talked about politics within their interpersonal relationships, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

[50] ***H2b.*** *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*
H2d. *The more often voters are exposed to dissimilar political views within their interpersonal relationships on social media, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*

predictor of online participation only in Study II, and *issue-specific arguments with family members offline* was found to predict online participation negatively only in Study I. Consequently, ***H3b*** was not supported, but there was support for ***H3d***.[51]

Table 4.2 Multiple linear Regression Analysis: Online Political Participation

Model		Standardized Coefficients β	
		Study I[52] (N=272)	Study II[53] (N=194)
1	(Constant)		
	Gender	n.s.	n.s.
	Age	n.s.	n.s.
	BA degree	.128*	n.s.
	Income	n.s.	n.s.
	Ethnicity		
	White (reference group)	n.s.	n.s.
	Black	n.s.	.164**
	Asian	n.s.	n.s.
	Hispanic or Others	n.s.	n.s.
	R^2	*.022*	*.035*
2	Political Orientation	n.s.	-.114*
	The Number of Social Media Use	n.s.	n.s.
	Frequency of Political talk	.372***	.415***
	R^2	*.314*	*.419*
3	Dissimilar political views from family members offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from friends offline	-.158	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from coworkers offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from family members social media	n.s.	n.s.
	Dissimilar political views from friends on social media	n.s.	.209**

[51] ***H3b.*** *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue face-to-face, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*
H3d. *The more often voters argued with others about their most salient social issue on social media, the more likely they will get involved in online political participation.*
[52] In terms of multicollinearity of Study I sample, except "education," VIF values of all predictors were less than 4, and each predictor was distributed across different eigenvalues.
[53] In checking multicollinearity of Study II, VIF values of all predictors were less than 4, and each predictor was distributed across different eigenvalues. However, two items in issue-specific argument (e.g. issue-specific arguments with family on social media/friends on social media) had tolerance below .2. Consequently, although there was no muticollinearity in this regression, the scale of issue-specific argument scale may have a potential problem.

	Dissimilar political views from coworkers on social media	n.s.	n.s.
	R^2	*.373*	*.500*
4	Issue-specific Argument with family members offline	-.179**	n.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with friends offline	n.s.	n.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with coworkers offline	n.s.	n`.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with family members on social media	.147	n.s.
	Issue-specific Argument with friends on social media	.285***	.316**
	Issue-specific Argument with coworkers on social media	n.s.	.221*
	R^2	*47.3%*	*58.6%*
	Adjusted R^2	*42.6%*	*53.3%*
	F	*10.144*** **	*11.007****
Mean (SD) of Online Political Participation (DV)		1.18 (.693)	1.47 (.915)

n.s. = not significant, *p < .05, **p < .005, ***p < .001.

To summarize Table 4.1 and Table 4.2, the results in Study I and in Study II present different patterns, as well as consistent patterns, of political communication and participation. Among the less experienced voters, the consistent predictor of political participation was how frequently they argued with their family members face-to-face about a specific issue they think the most important in the midterm elections—i.e. young voters who experienced face-to-face issue-specific arguments with family members were *less* likely to participate in politics either offline or online. However, the result was not significant in the experienced voters sample.

On the other hand, *issue-specific arguments with friends on social media* positively influenced political participation both offline and online among experienced voters while it positively influenced online participation, but not offline participation, among first-time voters. *Issue-specific arguments with coworkers* on social media positively influenced online participation only among experienced voters. In conclusion,

disagreements do not always predict political participation positively—face-to-face disagreements with family members may constrict young voters' engagement in politics.

Unlike disagreements, the frequency of political talk was a very strong, consistent predictor of both offline and online participation in both samples. Therefore, additional analysis was conducted to test if any specific type of disagreements modifies this relationship. In other words, whether the relationship between "political talk" and "political participation" varies by the frequency of "disagreements" or not was tested through PROCESS Model, developed by Andrew F. Hayes (2015). Using an average score of political participation, offline and online, as a dependent variable respectively, each model included an independent variable of political talk, a moderator variable of disagreements, and several covariates, including gender, age, income, education, four dichotomized variables of ethnicity, and political orientation.

After using the PROCESS model to test for moderation, "disagreements" was a statistically significant moderator only in MTurk sample of Study II. However, in the college students' sample of Study I, "disagreements" was neither a moderator nor a predictor. Therefore, only the results of Study II are summarized in Table 4.4, Table 4.5, Figure 4.1, and Figure 4.2. The Johnson-Neyman technique (year) was used for testing significant interactions in each model.

Table 4.3 Interaction Effects of Frequency of Political Talk and Frequency of interpersonal Disagreements on Offline Political Participation[54]

	b	SE B	*T*	*p*
Constant	1.15 [.827, 1.473]	.164	7.024	p < .001
Interpersonal Disagreement (a)	.114* [.001, .227]	.057	1.985	p < .05
Political talk (b)	.155*** [.075, .235]	.040	3.827	p < .001
(a) x (b)	.246*** [.157, .335]	.045	5.469	p < .001
Gender	-.054 [-.160, .051]	.053	-1.021	p = .309
Age	.00 [-.005, .006]	.003	.148	p = .882
Education	-.004 [-.093, .084]	.045	-.094	p = .925
Income	-.006 [-.050, .038]	.022	-.252	p = .801
Asian[55]	.294 [-.085, .673]	.192	1.532	p = .127
Hispanic/Others	-.003 [-.125, .119]	.062	-.052	p = .959
Black	.152 [-.063, .366]	.109	1.395	p = .165
Political Orientation	-.012 [-.049, .026]	.019	-.618	p = .538

*p < .05, ***p < .001.

Table 4.4 Interaction Effects of Frequency of Political Talk and Frequency of Interpersonal Disagreements on Online Political Participation[56]

	b	SE B	*t*	*p*
Constant	1.735 [1.110, 2.359]	.317	5.480	p < .001
Interpersonal	.287**	.091	3.852	p < .005

[54] (Model Summary) R= .828, R^2= .685, MSE= .153, F= 6.387, df1= 11, df2= 189, p < .001

[55] In this study, the variable "ethnicity" was dummy-coded, and "white" was used as a reference group. According to Hayes (2015), the choice of reference group does not make any difference for "the test of moderation" because it has no influence to the results, however, values of the regression coefficients in the model may be changed (p. 3). In this PROCESS model of testing moderation, as he indicated, excluding "white" as a reference group made a very small or no change in *b* coefficients.

[56] (Model Summary) R= .720, R^2= .519, MSE= .427, F= 10.416, df1= 11, df2= 182, p < .001

Disagreement (a)	[.107, .467]			
Political talk (b)	.345*** [.168, .522]	.090	3.152	p < .001
(a) x (b)	.093* [.008, .179]	.043	2.150	p < .05
Gender	.065 [-.116, .246]	.092	.710	p = .479
Age	.004 [-.007, .015]	.006	.699	p = .486
Education	-.083 [-.226, .060]	.072	-1.149	p = .252
Income	-.048 [-.118, .022]	.035	-1.348	p = .179
Asian[57]	.243 [-.039, .525]	.143	1.700	p = .091
Hispanic/Others	-.021 [-.337, .296]	.160	-.128	p = .898
Black	.768* [.080, 1.456]	.349	2.203	p < .05
Political Orientation	-.064 [-.135, .007]	.036	-1.775	p = .078

*p < .05, ***p < .001.

Each dependent variable used in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 was offline political participation and online participation respectively. Both Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 show that the frequency of political talk predicted offline and online political participation in a positive direction, and this relationship *varied by* the frequency of overall interpersonal disagreements. The frequency of overall interpersonal disagreements also predicted both offline and online participation in a positive direction in itself. Therefore, the variable of *interpersonal disagreements* was observed not only as a predictor, but also as a

[57] In this study, the variable “ethnicity” was dummy-coded, and “white” was used as a reference group. According to Hayes (2015), the choice of reference group does not make any difference for “the test of moderation” because it has no influence to the results, however, values of the regression coefficients in the model may be changed (p. 3). In this PROCESS model of testing moderation, as he indicated, excluding “white” as a reference group made a very small or no change in *b* coefficients.

“moderator,” which “modifies the strength or direction of a causal relationship” (p. 379), between the frequency of *political talk* and *political participation*.

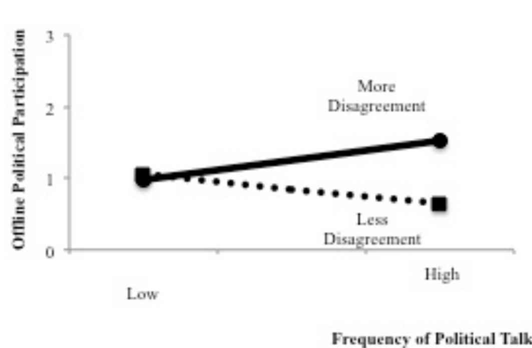
A moderation effect is defined as “a causal model that postulates *when* or *for whom* an independent variable most strongly, or weakly, causes a dependent variable” (p. 370). Among different types of *interpersonal disagreements*, “*face-to-face disagreements,*” as well as “*mediated disagreements on social media,*” was tested if it moderates the relationship between political talk and offline or online participation. Therefore, two additional disagreement scales, whose reliability tests were summarized in Table 4.3, were included in this same PROCESS model each.

First, the case of face-to-face disagreements in the relationship between political talk and participation was analyzed (See Figure 4.1). In the relationship between political talk and offline political participation (Figure *A*), there was a big difference between a group of respondents who experienced interpersonal disagreements face-to-face more frequently (More Disagreements) and a group of respondents who experienced less (Less Disagreements) as follows: those who experienced face-to-face disagreements more frequently than others (More Disagreements) were *more* likely to participate in politics *offline* as they talked about politics more frequently while those who experienced face-to-face disagreements less frequently than others (Less Disagreements) were *less* likely to participate in politics *offline* as they talked about politics more frequently ($\beta = .233$, $p < .001$)[58]. In other words, face-to-face disagreements were only a moderator of the relationship between political talk and offline political participation—they modified the

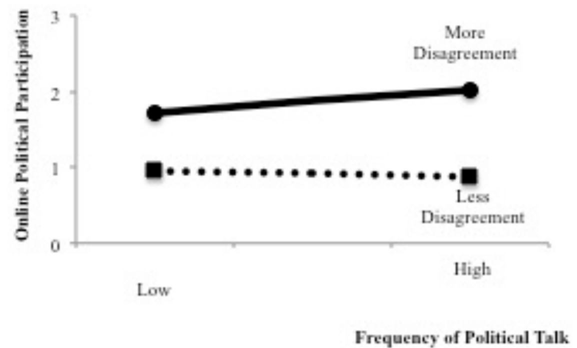
[58] Figure 4.1. *A* presents this result.

"direction" of this relationship either positively or negatively. Because face-to-face disagreement itself neither predicted offline nor online participation significantly, this result suggests "causal interaction" (Wu & Zumbo, 2007) between the frequency of political talk and offline political participation. However, this moderating role of face-to-face disagreements was not significant in the case of online political participation (β= .098, p = .058).[59]

A. DV: Offline Political Participation (y)[60]



B. DV: Online Political Participation (y)[61]



(x): Frequency of Political talk (IV), (m): Frequency of Face-to-face Disagreements

Figure 4.1 Moderating Effects of Face-to-face Disagreements on Offline Political Participation versus Online Political Participation

Second, the role of mediated disagreements via social media in the relationship between political talk and participation was also tested, and summarized visually in Figure 4.2. In the relationship between political talk and offline political participation

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[59] Figure 4.1. *B* presents this result.
[60] (Model Summary) R^2= .61 ($p < .001$)
[61] (Model Summary) R^2= .44 ($p < .001$)

(Figure *A*), there was a big difference between a group of respondents who experienced disagreements on social media more frequently (More Disagreements) and a group of respondents who experienced less (Less Disagreements) as follows: those who experienced disagreements on social media more frequently than others (More Disagreements) were *more* likely to participate in politics *offline* as they talked about politics more frequently while those who experienced disagreements on social media less frequently than others (Less Disagreements) were *less* likely to participate in politics *offline* as they talked about politics more frequently (β= .250, p < .001)[62]. This mediated disagreements on social media also predicted online participation in itself although the effect size was not significant enough (β= .082, p = .080). In other words, disagreements not only predicted offline participation, but also "changed the direction" of the relationship between political talk and offline participation. This moderating role of mediated disagreements on social media was also significant enough in the case of online political participation (β= .107, p < .005).[63] Mediated disagreements on social media also predicted online participation positively (β= .291, p < .001).

To summarize Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2, people who experienced disagreements on social media more frequently than others tend to participate in politics either offline or online; however, face-to-face disagreements did not influence offline or online political participation in itself. However, both types of disagreements, either face-to-face or on social media, played a role of a moderator in the relationship between political talk and

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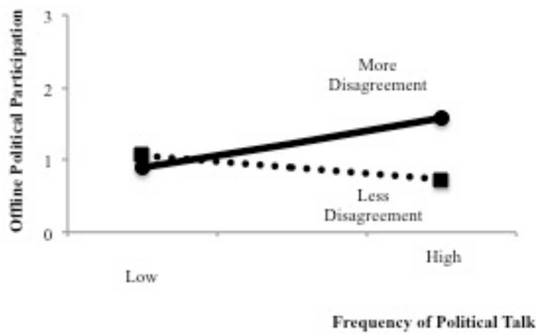
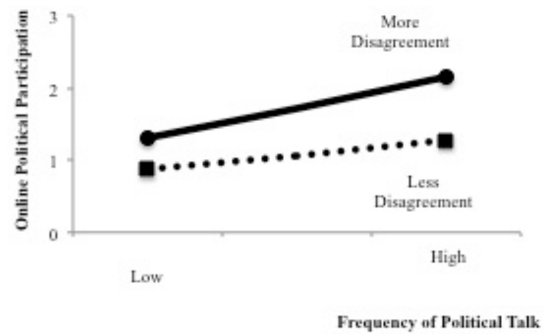
[62] Figure 4.2. *A* presents this result.
[63] Figure 4.2. *B* presents this result.

participation. Moreover, this moderation effect was larger in the case of offline participation than in the case of online participation. Both disagreements, either face-to-face or on social media, "strengthened" the positive relationship between political talk and *offline* participation more remarkably than the relationship between political talk and *online* participation.

A. DV: Offline Political Participation (y)[64]



B. DV: Online Political Participation (y)[65]



(x): Frequency of Political talk (IV), (m): Mediated Disagreements on Social Media

Figure 4.2 Moderating Effects of Mediated Disagreements on Social Media on Offline Political Participation versus Online Political Participation

To clarify, each segmented type of disagreements was analyzed whether it moderated the relationship between political talk and participation as well. For example, two different factors that consist of disagreement scales were included respectively: (1) *degree* of disagreements—exposure to dissimilar political views (E), and issue-specific

[64] (Model Summary) R^2= .71 ($p < .001$)
[65] (Model Summary) R^2= .57 ($p < .001$)

argument (I), and (2) *where* they disagreed—face-to-face or on social media. First, although none of the 6 types[66] of *exposure to dissimilar political views* was a predictor of *offline* political participation individually, all of them were a moderator of the relationship between political talk and *offline* participation. Especially, *exposure to dissimilar political views* of family on social media and that of friends on social media were predictors of *online* participation; moreover, exposure to dissimilar political views on social media (with family, friends, coworkers all) was a moderator of the relationship between political talk and *online* participation each. Second, none of 6 types of *issue-specific arguments* was a predictor of offline political participation individually, all of them were a moderator of the relationship between political talk and *offline* participation. Especially, issue-specific arguments with family on social media and that with friends on social media were predictors of *online* political participation; moreover, issue-specific arguments with family offline and online, friends offline and online, and coworkers offline (except coworkers online) "modified" the direction of the relationship between political talk and *online* participation each.

These results suggested that not all of these 12 items was a predictor of *offline* political participation, but that they all were a moderator of *offline* political participation. In other words, each different type of disagreements, except issue-specific arguments with coworkers on social media, "strengthened" the positive relationship between political talk and political participation offline or online. In detail, in predicting *offline* political participation, the β coefficient of the interaction between political talk and

[66] family offline, friends offline, coworkers offline, family online, friends online, coworkers online

exposure to dissimilar political views of family offline was .165 ($p < .05$), *family online* was .174 ($p < .005$), *friends offline* was .170 ($p < .05$), *friends online* was .177 ($p < 005$), *coworkers offline* was .174 ($p < .05$), and *coworkers online* was .219 ($p < .005$). In predicting *offline* political participation, the β coefficient of the interaction between political talk and *issue-specific arguments with family offline* was .169 ($p < .05$), *family online* was .232 ($p < .001$), *friends offline* was .187 ($p < .005$), *friends online* was .198 ($p < 005$), *coworkers offline* was .233 ($p < .001$), and *coworkers online* was .249 ($p < .001$).

In predicting *online* political participation, on the other hand, the β coefficient of the interaction between political talk and *exposure to dissimilar political views* "face-to-face" was not significant in any networks, family, friends, or coworkers, but that on "social media" was significant. In detail, the β coefficient of the interaction between political talk and *exposure to dissimilar political views* of family online was .105 ($p < .05$), friends online was .145 ($p < .001$), and coworkers online was .097 ($p < .05$). In other words, *exposure to dissimilar views of family, friends, and coworkers on social media* "strengthened" the positive relationship between political talk and online participation. In predicting *online* participation, the β coefficient of the interaction between political talk and *issue-specific arguments* with family offline was .105 ($p < .05$), family online was .116 ($p < .001$), friends offline was .099 ($p < .05$), friends online was .111 ($p < .001$), and coworkers offline was .100 ($p < .05$).

To summarize the results of testing moderation, as the experienced voters talked about politics frequently, the positive effect of disagreements was more amplified if disagreements occurred on social media rather than face-to-face.

Because a variable of *disagreements* was found as a moderator mainly in predicting offline political participation, additional analysis was focused more on offline participation. Instead of the interval scale of offline political participation, three nominal variables of (1) voting, (2) encouraging others to vote, and (3) volunteering, were used as each dependent variable[67] and two scales of disagreement, exposure to disagreements and issue-specific argument, were used as independent variables in the logistic regression model.

Table 4.6 summarizes the result in Study I while Table 4.7 is the result in Study II. In both studies, no significant result was found in predicting "volunteering," and therefore, only results regarding "vote" and "encourage others to vote" are reported below. Also, of two levels of disagreement, the effect of issue-specific arguments was not statistically significant in predicting either "vote" or "encouraging others to vote" in both Study I and II.

[67] These three questions, Q16 "Did you vote in the midterm elections of 2014?" Q17 "Were you a political volunteer during the midterm elections of 2014?" Q18 "Did you encourage your family, friends, or colleagues to vote in the midterm elections of 2014?" were asked as yes/no closed-ended questions.

Table 4.6 Logistic Regression: Study I

A. Dependent Variable "Vote"

Classification Table

Observed		Predicted "Voted" Yes	Predicted "Voted" No	Predicted Percentage Correct
"Voted"	**Yes**	12	65	15.6
	No	3	201	98.5
Overall Percentage				75.8

Note: The cut value is .500.

Variables in the Equation

			B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	EXP(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Lower	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Upper
Exposure to Disagreement	face-to-face	family	-.172	.121	2.012	1	.156	.842	.664	1.068
		friends	-.102	.136	.563	1	.453	.903	.692	1.179
		coworkers	.223	.158	1.994	1	.158	1.250	.917	1.704
	on social media	family	.312	.206	2.281	1	.131	1.366	.911	2.047
		friends	-.035	.154	.051	1	.821	.966	.714	1.306
		coworkers	-.226	.210	1.156	1	.282	.798	.528	1.204
Issue-specific Argument	face-to-face	family	-.151	.124	1.483	1	.223	.860	.674	1.096
		friends	.062	.152	.166	1	.684	1.064	.790	1.432
		coworkers	-.402	.163	6.103	1	.013	.669	.486	.920
	on social media	family	-.012	.150	.006	1	.936	.988	.736	1.326
		friends	.080	.122	.426	1	.514	1.083	.853	1.375
		coworkers	.334	.177	3.556	1	.059	1.396	.987	1.974
	Constant		1.552	.373	17.352	1	.000	4.723		

Note: (Hosmer and Lemeshow Test) 12.42 (Cox & Snell R Square) .07 (Nagelkerke R Square) .11 (Omnibus Test) Model $\chi 2(1) = 21.68$

B. Dependent Variable "Encourage Others"

Classification Table

Observed		Predicted: "Voted" Yes	Predicted: "Voted" No	Predicted: Percentage Correct
"Voted"	**Yes**	81	49	62.3
	No	35	116	76.8
Overall Percentage				70.1

Note: The cut value is .500.

Variables in the Equation

			B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	EXP(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Lower	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Upper
Exposure to Disagreement	face-to-face	family	.092	.120	.581	1	.446	1.096	.866	1.387
		friends	-.150	.139	1.167	1	.280	.861	.656	1.130
		coworkers	-.288	.156	3.379	1	.066	.750	.552	1.019
	on social media	family	-.142	.137	1.068	1	.301	.868	.663	1.136
		friends	-.190	.111	2.911	1	.088	.827	.665	1.029
		coworkers	.377	.164	5.269	1	.022	1.457	1.057	2.010
Issue-specific Argument	face-to-face	family	-.141	.114	1.518	1	.218	.869	.694	1.087
		friends	-.059	.131	.204	1	.651	.942	.729	1.219
		coworkers	-.117	.154	.570	1	.450	.890	.657	1.205
	on social media	family	.066	.201	.107	1	.743	1.068	.721	1.582
		friends	-.042	.144	.086	1	.769	.959	.724	1.270
		coworkers	-.311	.222	1.950	1	.163	.733	.474	1.134
Constant			2.205	.388	32.299	1	.000	9.069	2.205	.388

Note: (Hosmer and Lemeshow Test) 11.02 (Cox & Snell R Square) .158 (Nagelkerke R Square) .211 (Omnibus Test) Model $\chi 2(1) = 48.29$

In Study I, those who argued about "the specific issue[68]" with coworkers on social media are 1.396 times more likely to "vote" although the effect size is not significant enough (p= .059). But those who argued about "the specific issue," namely, "the most important issue" with coworkers face-to-face are .669 times less likely to "vote" than those who are not ($p < .05$). Moreover, those who are exposed to disagreements with coworkers on social media are 1.457 times more likely to "encourage others to vote" than others ($p < .05$).

In Study II, on the other hand, those who are exposed to disagreements with friends on social media are .675 times less likely to "vote" than others, and those who are exposed to disagreements with coworkers on social media are 1.431 times more likely to "encourage others to vote" than those who are not.

[68] The issue they think the most important in the midterm elections

Table 4.7 Logistic Regression: Study II

A. Dependent Variable "Vote"

Classification Table

Observed			Predicted "Voted" Yes	Predicted "Voted" No	Predicted Percentage Correct
Step 1	**"Voted"**	**Yes**	89	30	74.8
		No	39	49	55.7
	Overall Percentage				66.7

Note: The cut value is .500.

Variables in the Equation

				B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	EXP(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Lower	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Upper
Step 1*	Exposure to Disagreement	face-to-face	family	-.309	.194	2.542	1	.111	.734	.502	1.073
			friends	.368	.226	2.658	1	.103	1.445	.928	2.248
			coworkers	-.026	.183	.020	1	.888	.974	.680	1.396
		on social media	family	-.422	.226	3.496	1	.062	.656	.421	1.021
			friends	-.393	.200	3.866	1	.049	.675	.456	.999
			coworkers	.141	.204	.482	1	.487	1.152	.773	1.717
	Issue-specific Argument	face-to-face	family	.267	.195	1.877	1	.171	1.306	.891	1.915
			friends	-.232	.198	1.374	1	.241	.793	.538	1.169
			coworkers	.113	.296	.147	1	.702	1.120	.627	2.000
		on social media	family	.533	.309	2.975	1	.085	1.703	.930	3.120
			friends	-.253	.256	.980	1	.322	.776	.470	1.282
			coworkers	-.482	.308	2.461	1	.117	.617	.338	1.128
		Constant		1.286	.450	8.170	1	.004	3.618		

Note: (Omnibus Test) 9.78 (Hosmer and Lemeshow Test) .17 (Cox & Snell R Square) .22 (Nagelkerke R Square) Model $\chi2(1) = 37.6$

B. Dependent Variable "Encourage Others"

Classification Table

Observed			Predicted		
			"Voted"		Percentage Correct
			Yes	No	
Step 1	**"Voted"**	**Yes**	76	59	56.3
		No	36	123	77.4
	Overall Percentage				67.7

Note: The cut value is .500.

Variables in the Equation

				B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	EXP(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Lower	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Upper
Step 1*	Exposure to Disagreement	face-to-face	family	.024	.114	.044	1	.834	1.024	.819	1.281
			friends	-.111	.135	.676	1	.411	.895	.687	1.166
			coworkers	-.206	.142	2.102	1	.147	.814	.616	1.075
		on social media	family	-.186	.133	1.947	1	.163	.83	.639	1.078
			friends	-.149	.105	2	1	.157	.861	.701	1.059
			coworkers	.358	.158	5.147	1	.023	1.431	1.050	1.950
	Issue-specific Argument	face-to-face	family	-.128	.112	1.317	1	.251	.88	.706	1.095
			friends	-.072	.128	.319	1	.572	.93	.724	1.196
			coworkers	-.144	.15	.922	1	.337	.865	.644	1.162
		on social media	family	.056	.195	.083	1	.773	1.058	.721	1.552
			friends	-.048	.141	.114	1	.736	.953	.723	1.258
			coworkers	-.183	.209	.77	1	.380	.833	.553	1.254
		Constant		2.053	.37	3.828	1	0	4.466	0	7.791

Note: (Omnibus Test) 6.73 (Hosmer and Lemeshow Test) .14 (Cox & Snell R Square) .19 (Nagelkerke R Square) Model $\chi2(1) = 21.51$

Based on a series of logistic regression analyses, voters in both studies tended to encourage others to vote when they were exposed to disagreements with coworkers on social media. In predicting "vote," those who argued the most important issue with coworkers "face-to-face" were less likely to vote while those who argued that issue with coworkers "on social media" were more likely to vote in Study I. On the other hand, voters were less likely to vote if being exposed to disagreements with "friends on social media" in Study II.

Considering the age factor, the college student sample in Study I represents less experienced voters, many of whom have started their journey to find their voices, independent from their parents or other family members, while MTurk sample in Study II represents more experienced voters, who are expected to have more resources as well as more flexible capability to articulate their political stance accurately than the less experienced voters.

To summarize the results of quantitative data analysis to test hypotheses,[69] the experienced voters in Study II were more likely to get involved in political participation as they experienced disagreements during political discourse at the interpersonal communication level through either face-to-face or on social media. As Table 4.4 and Figure 4.1 summarize, this tendency was not found among the less experienced voters of Study I; however, Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 present the tendency of the less experienced voters' online participation was encouraged by disagreements with friends on social media, but discouraged by disagreements with family face-to-face. In other words,

[69] Hypotheses tested are summarized at the beginning of this chapter.

disagreements with their peers using social media tended to encourage them to be more "communicative" in politics while disagreements with their family in person worked in the opposite way. In the case of the experienced voters, disagreements with friends or coworkers on social media tended to encourage them to participate in politics either offline or online.

As replicated multiple times in this chapter, ***H1a*** and ***H1b*** about the relationship between frequency of political talk and political participation were all supported. For both less and more experienced voters, the more frequently they talked about politics, the more likely they were to participate in politics either offline or online.

Distinguishing two different levels of disagreements, exposure to dissimilar political views and arguments about the most salient issue they consider, ***H2*** and ***H3*** were established and tested separately. The result of exposure to dissimilar political views was less significant compared to the result of issue-specific arguments. ***H2a*** about face-to-face disagreements and *offline* participation, as well as ***H2c*** about mediated disagreements on social media and *offline* participation, was rejected; on the other hand, ***H3a*** about face-to-face disagreements and *offline* participation was rejected while ***H3c*** about mediated disagreements on social media and *offline* participation was not.

Regarding *online* political participation, both ***H2b*** and ***H3b*** about face-to-face disagreements and online participation were rejected. Face-to-face disagreements did not predict online participation significantly in most cases, and moreover, face-to-face disagreements with family even tended to discourage online participation.

In addition, when focusing on "vote" behavior, experiencing disagreements with coworkers was a significant predictor among the less experienced voters. Interestingly, face-to-face disagreements with coworkers predicted their "vote" negatively while mediated disagreements with coworkers on social media did positively. Considering that disagreements with coworkers on social media predicted their likelihood of reporting that they "encourage others to vote" and was also positive among the less experienced voters, "mediated disagreements with coworkers on social media" itself might implicitly signify these young voters' action beyond their interests in politics.

Face-to-face disagreements itself did not predict participation both offline and online significantly in any sample. However, face-to-face disagreements moderated the positive relationship between political talk and participation, both offline and online, in the experienced voters sample. Regarding online political participation, presented in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2, the positive relationship between political talk and participation was strengthened as people experienced disagreements more frequently either on social media or face-to-face among experienced voters, but not in the case of the first-time voters.

Regarding ***H2d*** and ***H3d*** about mediated disagreements on social media and online participation, it is hard to simply reject these two hypotheses—because in both samples, issue-specific disagreements with friends on social media predicted online political participation positively. Moreover, in the case of experienced voters, exposure to dissimilar political views of friends on social media, as well as issue-specific disagreements with coworkers on social media, predicted online participation positively.

Disagreements with peers using social media not only strengthened the positive relationship between political talk and participation, but also led to participation in itself.

Additionally, using feeling thermometers of two political parties, this study generated an index of cross-pressures, a concept discussed in Chapter Three. However, the size of each group having cross-pressures in terms of party preference was too small to perform additional advanced statistical analysis.

CHAPTER 5 : DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Preview

As indicated in the first chapter, this study had a twofold purpose: (1) to understand the relationship between political disagreements and participation in the interpersonal communication level, and (2) to understand the differences of disagreements people experience face-to-face and online in influencing political participation. The goals of this research were reviewed in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, descriptive statistics of the sample as well as the sampling process were explained and summarized. In Chapter Four, hypotheses were tested directly through quantitative data analysis using two datasets: one was from a college students sample, and the other was from MTurk sample. Using two different samples, the results can help to compare first-time voters and experienced voters. Chapter Five not only summarizes the results briefly, but also discusses the implications of results in depth. Moreover, several limitations of this study are explained, and lastly, suggestions for future research on political disagreements and participation are provided.

Results and Discussion

Differences between the Less and More Experienced Voters

As indicated before, this dissertation used two studies: Study I used a college students sample and Study II used an Amazon's MTurk sample. While the college

students sample was more diverse the MTurk sample in terms of ethnicity, the MTurk sample was more diverse than students sample in terms of gender, age, education, and income. The results from Study I mainly characterize political communication and participation among the less experienced voters, while those from Study II were about more experienced voters.

As previous studies showed (Huckfeldt & Mendez, 2008; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009), the positive relationship between frequency of political talk and participation was confirmed in this study. Compared to other studies, this study distinguished offline political participation from online political participation, and this positive effect of political talk was found not only in offline participation, including attending a forum or speech, but also in online participation like engaging in expressive participation using social media.

More importantly found in this study, this relationship of political talk and participation was either modified or strengthened by experiencing disagreements within one's social networks. People who experienced disagreements more frequently than others were more likely to participate in politics both online and offline as they talked about politics more frequently; however, those who experienced disagreements less frequently than others were less likely to participate in politics as they talked about politics more frequently. As Huckfeldt and Mendez (2008) pointed out that more political discussion leads to more disagreements while more disagreements constrict further discussion, previous studies have focused on the chilling effects that experiencing disagreements in their discussion networks and participation. However, this study found

that disagreements facilitate the tendency that more political talk motivates voters to participate in politics more frequently, and moreover, experiencing disagreements simply affect voters to express and be more active in exercising their citizenship.

Throughout quantitative data analysis, two trends in the data were continuously emphasized—i.e. (1) *how intense* disagreements were, simply being exposed to dissimilar views or engaging in arguments about the salient issues; and (2) *where* disagreements occurred, either face to face or in social media. To summarize the results, *where* people experienced disagreements mattered in their political participation.

Disagreements within Strong-tie Networks Matter in Participation

First, although whether disagreements within strong-tie versus weak-tie networks influence participation was not one of the main questions that this study aims to answer, there was a consistent tendency that disagreements with family members offline was associated with less political participation among less experienced voters. It is interesting because less experienced voters were more influenced by disagreements with family members while experienced voters were more influenced by close friends.[70] For example, *face-to-face issue-specific arguments with family members* consistently had a deterrent effect that discouraged or delayed the less experienced voters' political participation—both offline and online participation, although this chilling effect was not found among experienced voters.

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[70] Although it is not reported in this dissertation, the results from qualitative data analysis suggested evidence that cultural values influenced one's political talk and managing disagreements with family members. Exploring or managing disagreement explicitly is preferred in the host culture in the United States, but interviewees who recently immigrated from places with different cultural values showed preference of avoiding face-to-face disagreement. It can be explored and discussed in future studies.

However, *social media* may be a way of communicating disagreements more effectively for a family who experiences disagreements across generations—i.e., between parents and their teenagers, between an uncle with extreme views and his niece or nephew, or between a zealot grandmother and her grandchild. For clarifying the effect of mediated communication, more elaborate conceptualization of social media is needed in future studies. When being exposed to dissimilar political views or arguing the most salient issue with family members occurred *on social media*, this relationship between disagreements with family members and political participation may be changed.

On the other hand, the experienced voters were more likely to get involved in political participation as they experienced disagreements during political discourse at the interpersonal communication level. This positive effect of interpersonal disagreements on participation was found *wherever* they experienced disagreements, either face-to-face or on social media. The more they experienced, the more they were open to disagreements, and the more frequently they engaged in politics—perhaps because they have learned how to form their opinion on political issues, how to express disagreements in political discussion, and how to persuade others in political communication. Experienced voters did not hesitate to express their disagreements to others when they were exposed to dissimilar views. They were not afraid of confronting arguments because they were well connected. They have built strong as well as reliable networks within both strong ties and weak ties.

The impact of disagreements with people in voters' strong ties affected their political participation. Compared to experienced voters, what predicted political

participation among the less experienced voters consistently was as follows: how frequently they argued with their family members on social media about a specific issue they think the most important in the midterm elections. This pattern predicted participation, including online participation, even negatively. However, for experienced voters, as they talked about politics frequently, the positive effect of disagreements was more powerful when it occurred on social media rather than face-to-face (*where disagreements occurred*). This difference of the disagreements effect within family members between the less and more experienced voters was also consistent.

Young voters' social networks are not as strong as experienced voters. They begin to diverge from their relationships of circumstance; for example, after they move to another city or state for studying, they may lose connections with old friends or an old neighborhood. Instead, they start building new relationships with college friends, mutual friends in various social activities, and coworkers in part-time jobs. As they expand their social networks, disagreements or arguments are likely, especially with their old networks, including family members. As the results showed in Chapter Four, the less experienced voters' participation tended to be discouraged when they argued about a salient issue that they think most important with their family members face-to-face. However, it was encouraged when this disagreeing moment was with friends on social media. When focusing on "voting," face-to-face disagreements with coworkers discouraged them to vote while mediated disagreements with coworkers on social media encouraged them to vote. In conclusion, face-to-face disagreements brought the chilling

effect for less experienced voters and was associated with their reporting less chance of participating in politics.

In other words, among less experienced voters, disagreements with their peers tended to encourage them to be more "communicative" in politics, and disagreements with their family tended to encourage them more "action-oriented" in politics after all. In the case of the experienced voters, on the other hand, "specifically with whom" they disagreed was not a significant predictor of political participation. Regardless of prior voting experiences, experiencing disagreements with their friends on social media tended to encourage their participating in politics both offline and online. Considering this difference of the effect of disagreements with family, friends, and coworkers, future studies can focus more on network types, including strong-tie and weak-tie networks in investigating this disagreements effect.

Political Talk on Social Media

In general, how frequently people talked about politics also matters in their participating in politics in both studies. The frequency of political talk predicted political participation positively either offline or online in both studies. Frequent political talk increase the opportunity to be exposed to dissimilar views in political issues, and a certain type of disagreements or arguments may discourage voters to engage in further political talk. As Huckfeldt and Mendez (2008) discussed a "stable equilibrium relationship" (p. 94) between political discussion and disagreements, political disagreements within the patterns of communication persistently exist in society. In politics, communication is inevitable, and so is a disagreement.

Face-to-face disagreements were not a positive predictor, in themselves, of political participation in any sample—neither offline nor online political participation. However, among experienced voters, face-to-face disagreements only “moderated” the positive relationship between political talk and participation. On the other hand, regarding disagreements on social media, both the less and more experienced voters were more likely to participate in politics as they experienced mediated disagreements on social media. In other words, experiencing disagreements on social media not only “moderated” the positive relationship between political talk and participation, but also “predicted positively” political participation in itself. Engaging in any heated arguments using social media already indicates one’s interests or involvement in politics. Comparing this difference between the effect of face-to-face disagreements and disagreements on social media, it can be concluded that *where* people experienced disagreements is influential in their participating in politics. The non-significant results in the case of face-to-face disagreements in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 may support the cross-pressures hypothesis—when voters are situated in conflicting political views in their social networks face to face, some may participate in politics, but others may not.

As previous studies indicated, social media have brought electors more opportunity to share political knowledge and opinions whenever, as well as wherever, they want to. Face-to-face disagreements occur sporadically or unexpectedly, however, experiencing disagreements via social media implies that different ideas are exchanged through more explicit, documented, and thus, condensed messages. This finding enables

the conclusion that "active" use of social media may be associated with more kinds of political activities among voters—no matter how many kinds of social media they use.

The number of social media participants reported using was not influential in itself in predicting political participation because, unlike Facebook or Twitter, many social media, including LinkedIn, Google Plus+, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Vine, focus on non-political functions. For example, Instagram, Pinterest, or Tumblr are mainly used for uploading, editing, and sharing personal, individualized images with an instant message rather than posting a deliberative comment on social issues or demanding solidarity. This aspect of social media use can be one of the culprits that harm social capital inversely by diverting voters' attention to more personal, individualistic, and less social matters rather than encouraging them to engage in deliberation. On the other hand, LinkedIn and Google Plus+ are more for career-oriented or career-driven networking.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

This study had a number of limitations, and these are discussed in detail along with directions for future research in the following section.

First, while this study used two samples to understand the mechanism of disagreements, focusing on *whom* participants disagree with and *where* they disagree, the question of how voters deal with conflicts in articulating their different opinions could not be analyzed sufficiently.

Another limitation is that although cross-pressures were discussed in the method section of Chapter Three, and assessed using feeling thermometers to capture

respondents' views of the two political parties, it was not possible to analyze the impact of cross pressures. The size of each group, identified to have cross-pressures in terms of party preference, was too small to perform additional advanced statistical analysis. For example, there were fewer than 20 respondents who were identified to have cross-pressures within their social networks through computing variables measured. Future studies can test the cross-pressures hypothesis using aggregate data from surveys like the American National Election Studies through computing variables existing, or they can analyze voters who experienced "extreme" cases of disagreements from any much bigger sample than that in this study.

Third, although two studies were conducted with two different samples, which represent the less and more experienced voters respectively, there is a limitation in these samples. Neither college students sample nor experienced voters sample was recruited through probability sampling. Both were collected through convenience sampling, and convenience sampling limits generalizing the results found in this study. Moreover, although many college students in the sample were first-time voters, a few respondents wrote the reason why they did not vote in the presidential election in 2012 was because they were not eligible to vote in the United States—not because of being underage, but because of other reasons.

Fourth, this study aimed to compare less experienced or first-time voters with more experienced voters in their political talk, political disagreements, and political participation in the case of 2014 midterm elections in the United States, however, several respondents were not eligible to vote in the United States because of non-U.S.

citizenship. Although a pencil and paper version of pilot study included one question to ask if a respondent is a U.S. citizen or not, this question was excluded in the main survey. The main survey simply assumed that respondents were U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote and did not include any question to check if they are U.S. citizens or not. For example, MTurk respondents have to be U.S. residents, but it does not mean they are eligible to vote in the United States. Moreover, any question was asked to check if a respondent was a first-time voter in the midterm elections of 2014. Considering the age of a respondent, this study assumed that most of the respondents were first-time voters in 2014 elections, however, some college students might have voted in the presidential election of 2012. Also, in the experienced voters sample, a few respondents might be first-time voters in 2014 elections for some reasons. For example, one of the participants in this study mentioned that she had never voted until the midterm elections of 2014 because she did not value voting as a citizen—although she has been a U.S. citizen for almost three decades. In this respect, this result in this study has limitations in generalization.

Future studies should consider exploring cultural elements when studying online political disagreements and participation. Depending on the stage of acculturation, a first generation and a second generation of immigrants may be different in managing interpersonal conflicts in political talk as well as in their political ideology. For example, many first generations of Korean-American immigrants tend to support politically conservative views while their children who were born and grew up in the United States are more diverse in political ideology or party preference (Light, & Bonacich, 1991).

The degree to which they have been assimilated to the host culture, in terms of language especially, reflects the differences across generations even among the same cultural population in political ideology or political preference. People who do not speak the dominant language fluently are less likely to be engaged in politics than those who speak that language fluently (Chaffee, Nass, & Yang, 1990).

Although informed voters' voting is important as most of the campaigners aim to influence these voters, costly campaigns may have missed the under-represented repetitively and successively. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) argued, "Americans have no desire to be deeply engaged in the political process," but there is still a possibility of "stealth democracy" in society. They defined "stealth democracy" as a system where policy-making and pre-decision deliberation of policy are left to "objective but largely invisible and unaccountable elites" (p. 239). In other words, not only how political disagreements lead to political participation, but also how cultural identities moderate political disagreements need to be covered in future studies.

In addition, it needs to probe further the nature of the issue-specific disagreements that were associated with greater political participation. Although salient issues that respondents chose in the survey imply that a particular issue may be a causal factor for voters to argue about it and to be motivated to participate in some way, the reason behind this phenomenon was not explained in depth. Among experienced voters, greater disagreement about a single issue was associated with reported amounts of greater political participation, however, it is also important to understand the reason why it

worked that way. Consequently, the reason why any single-issue disagreement was associated with political participation deserves further study.

Conclusion

John Milton, the seventeenth-century defender of press freedom, famously wrote "opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making" (1644). If we assume by "opinion" Milton meant to include disagreement, we might say that this study's results are consistent with Milton's support for free expression about politics. In a sample of experienced voters, mainly consisting of U.S. residents, this study found that increased political talk predicted more participation both offline and online, and more disagreements on social media predicted greater political participation both offline and online, where offline participation includes behaviors such as voting and working on a candidate's campaign. These results suggest that, especially among experienced voters, disagreement in political talk is not a deterrent to participation in the political process but may have a stimulative effect for those who participate in in the political process through voting, working on campaigns, or contributing money to a campaign. They also suggest that experiencing disagreements may be a stimulus, rather than a deterrent, to engaging in political discussion online. In an era where there is talk of people trying to shield themselves from upsetting political topics, these results suggest that, regarding issue-oriented disagreements, disagreement about politics among experienced voters may be helpful to the political decision-making among U.S. citizens make and may be associated with likelihood of voting.

APPENDIX

Title: Political Communication and Participation in the Midterm Elections of 2014

◈ (Q1~Q5) Questions about social media usage in the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014

Q1. What kind of online social media do you currently use? Mark all the answers that apply.

1) Facebook
2) Twitter
3) Google+
4) LinkedIn
5) Blog
6) Other (Please write: __________________)
7) None

Q2. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "post" any comments relevant to politics on *Facebook*? If so, how frequently?

1) never
2) rarely
3) often
4) very often

Q3. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "share" any comments relevant to politics on *Facebook*? If so, how frequently?

1) never
2) rarely
3) often
4) very often

Q4. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "follow" any pages relevant to politics on *Twitter*? If so, how frequently?

1) never
2) rarely
3) often
4) very often

Q5. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, did you "re-tweet" any posts relevant to politics on *Twitter*? If so, how frequently?

1) never
2) rarely
3) often
4) very often

◈ (Q6~Q10) Questions regarding disagreement about the midterm elections of 2014

(1-7 point scale: 1 never, 2-3 seldom, 4 sometimes, 5-6 often, 7 always)

Q6. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you talk about politics with:

	1 (never)	**2** (sometimes)	**3**	**4**	**5** (often)	**6**	**7** (always)
a. family members							
b. friends							
c. romantic partners							
d. co-workers							
e. acquaintances							
f. strangers							

Q7. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you talk about politics:

	1 (never)	**2** (sometimes)	**3**	**4**	**5** (often)	**6**	**7** (always)
a. face-to-face							
b. on the phone							
c. on the Internet							

Q8. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you **listen to** dissimilar political opinions of:

	1 (never)	**2** (sometimes)	**3**	**4**	**5** (often)	**6**	**7** (always)
a. family members offline							
b. friends offline							
c. co-workers offline							
d. family members on social media							
e. friends on social media							
f. co-workers on social media							

Q9. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you **argue** to express disagreements with the political opinions of:

	1 (never)	2 (sometimes)	3	4 (often)	5	6	7 (always)
a. family members offline							
b. friends offline							
c. co-workers offline							
d. family members on social media							
e. friends on social media							
f. co-workers on social media							

Q10. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you disagree with political views in mass media?

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
a. online & print newspapers							
b. television							
c. radio							

◈ (Q11~13) Questions about issue importance in the midterm elections of 2014

Q11. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, what do you think was the most important issue?

1) Economy and employment
2) Obamacare (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act)
3) Climate change
4) Foreign policy (Middle East, Ukraine and Russia, US-China relations, etc.)
5) Other (Please write: ____)

Q12. How important was your issue from Q11?
(1-7 point scale: 1 not important at all, 2-3 less important, 4 somehow important, 5-6 very important, 7 extremely important)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(Not at all)			**(Somewhat Important)**			**(Extremely Important)**

Q13. How often did you **argue** about the issue that you picked in Q11 with:

	1 (never)	2	3 (sometimes)	4	5 (often)	6	7 (always)
a. family members offline							
b. friends offline							
c. co-workers offline							
d. family members on social media							
e. friends on social media							
f. co-workers on social media							
g. opinions in newspapers							
h. opinions on television							
i. opinions on the radio							

◈ (Q14~Q20) Questions about the midterm elections of 2014 and political participation

Q14. In 2012 US presidential election, which one of the candidates did you vote for?

1) Barack Obama (Democratic)
2) Mitt Romney (Republican)
3) Gary Johnson (Libertarian)
4) Jill Stein (Green)
5) Virgil Goode (Constitution)
6) Roseanne Barr (Peace and Freedom)
7) Rocky Anderson (Justice)
8) Tom Hoefling (America's)
9) None (Please go to Q14-1.)

Q14-1. If you answered “9) None” for Q14, Why did you not vote in 2012 Presidential Election? Please write your reason:

____

Q15. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, which political party did you prefer?

1) Republican Party
2) Democratic Party
3) Others (Please write: ___________________)
4) More than one (Please write: ________________________)
5) None

Q16. Did you vote in the midterm elections of 2014?

1) Yes, I did vote.

2) No, I did not vote.

Q17. Were you a political volunteer during the midterm elections of 2014?
1) Yes, I was a volunteer.
2) No, I was not a volunteer.

Q18. Did you encourage your family, friends, or colleagues to vote in the midterm elections of 2014?
1) Yes, I did.
2) No, I did not.

Q19. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you engage in the following activities?

	1 (never)	2	3 (sometimes)	4	5 (often)	6	7 (always)
a. Sent an email to the editor of a newspaper/magazine							
b. Used email to contact a politician							
c. Signed an online petition							
d. Became a fan or a follower of a politician on social media							
e. Worked for a political candidate or party							
f. Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech							
g. Contributed money to a political campaign or candidate							
h. Posted information about the campaign on your social media feeds							

Q20. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how often did you engage in the following online activities?

	1 (never)	2 (sometimes)	3	4	5 (often)	6	7 (always)
a. Added or deleted political information from their Facebook profile							
b. Added or deleted an application that deals with politics							
c. Became a "fan" of a political candidate or group							
d. Discussed political information in a Facebook message							
e. Discussed political information using Facebook's instant messaging system							
f. Joined or left a group about politics							
g. Posted a status update on politics							
h. Posted a photo about politics							
i. Posted a wall comment about politics							
j. Posted a link about politics							
k. Posted a Facebook Note about politics							
l. RSVP-ed for a political event							
n. Took a quiz that about politics							

◈ (Q21~Q22) Questions about media portrayal and thermometer ratings of each candidate

(1-7 point scale: 1 very unfavorable, 2-3 unfavorable, 4 neither favorable nor unfavorable, 5-6 favorable, 7 very favorable)

Q21. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how favorably do you think the **Republican Party** was treated by:

	1 (very unfavorable)	2	3	4	5	6 (very favorable)	7
a. family members offline							

b. friends offline							
c. co-workers offline							
d. family members on social media							
e. friends on social media							
f. co-workers on social media							
g. newspapers							
h. television							
i. radio							

Q22. In the lead up to the midterm elections of 2014, how favorably do you think the **Democratic Party** was treated by:

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
	(very unfavorable)					(very favorable)	
a. family members offline							
b. friends offline							
c. co-workers offline							
d. family members on social media							
e. friends on social media							
f. co-workers on social media							
g. newspapers							
h. television							
i. radio							

◈ (Q23~Q29) Questions about demographics

Q23. What is your gender?
1) Male
2) Female
3) Other (Please write your gender identity if it is not listed above: ______________________)

Q24. What is your age?

____

Q25. What is your ethnicity?
1) American Indian or Alaska Native
2) Asian
3) Black/African American
4) White/Caucasian

5) Hispanic/Latino
6) Non Hispanic
7) Other (Please write your ethnicity if it is not listed above: ________________________)

Q26. What is the highest level of education you completed?
1) Did Not Complete High School
2) High School/GED
3) Some College
4) Bachelor's Degree
5) Master's Degree
6) Advanced Graduate work/Ph.D
7) Not Sure

Q27. What is your household annual income?
1) Under $25,000
2) $25,000 - $39,999
3) $40,000 - $49,999
4) $50,000 - $74,999
5) $75,000 - $99,999
6) Over $100,000

Q28. Generally speaking, what is your political preference?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(very liberal)			**(moderate)**			**(very conservative)**

***Thank you for participating in this study☺**

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BIOGRAPHY

Hyun Kyung Oh graduated from Banpo High School, located in Seoul, South Korea in 2000. She received her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Communication from Seoul National University in 2004 and 2007 each. She moved to New York City in the United States for research in 2008. Awarded the graduate assistantship at the Donald McGannon Center to help support another master's degree work in Communication and Media Studies at Fordham University, she was involved in several research projects related to media economics, media diversity, and localism. She assisted Dr. Napoli with the production of his book *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences (2011)*, published by Columbia University Press, and based on this experience, she helped publish a translated version of this book, *수용자 진화: 신기술과 미디어 수용자의 변화(2013),* published by Nanam Publishing House, in Korean as the 2nd translator. She received her 2nd Master of Arts from Fordham in 2010. Afterwards, she went back to Korea, and was employed as a researcher in MBZON mobile research company for about a year. She decided to study her PhD in the United States, and moved to Fairfax in Virginia for starting a doctoral program in the Department of Communication at George Mason University in 2012.