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# Character Count or Vote Count: How Social Media Has Shaped Modern Politics and Challenged the Meaning of Civic Engagement

Hannah Scott

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The University of Southern Mississippi

Character Count or Vote Count: How Social Media Has Shaped Modern Politics and  
Challenged the Meaning of Civic Engagement

by

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A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
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## **Abstract**

Social media has taken the world and compressed it into a single button for all to access. As tactics and protocol has already changed, social media has reached its invisible hand into modern U.S. politics and has altered the landscape of political action. Through surveys, article analysis, and social media observation, this study examined how social media has changed modern civic engagement, if social media can even be considered civic ‘engagement’, and how it has separated itself from ‘traditional’ civic engagement. Through previous literature and a conducted survey, the finding of this study suggest that social media not only positively affects civic engagement and those politically engaging, but also creates opportunities for community that result in meaningful physical political action. As social media will continue to grow in American political culture, it is important to understand social media’s future in politics and to learn how to effectively use social media for causes, agendas, candidates, and other political purposes.

Keywords: social media, civic engagement, political communication, clicktivism, participation, U.S. politics

To my Mom,

Thanks for getting on to me the thirty-six times I called and I said I wanted  
to quit.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Southern Miss to The Top!

## Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	viii
List of Illustrations.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	3
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	8
Chapter 4: Results.....	11
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	18
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	20
References.....	22
Appendix.....	24

## **List of Tables**

Table 1. Intent .....	27
Table 2. Attendance per Media.....	28
Table 3. Support per Media.....	29
Table 4. Physical.....	30
Table 5. Summary.....	31

## List of Illustrations

Illustration 1. Race.....	11
Illustration 2. Gender.....	12
Illustration 3. Age.....	13
Illustration 4. Education.....	13



## Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the American Psychological Association, civic engagement is defined as “individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern”. Traditional forms of political civic engagement that we think of include phone banking, canvassing, voting, and raising funds or awareness for a candidate or campaign. While these forms of civic engagement are still popular and used, there is a new form of civic engagement that is changing the face of United States politics. The ever-growing presence of social media in civic engagement is altering it to something that will more than likely be a permanent part of our political culture.

With a US president that has a social media platform of 59.6 million followers on Twitter alone (his predecessor had an impressive 106 million), social media’s role in political communication and participation is all but concrete in our political culture. Engagement and activity through social media have become a natural part of political participation in many American households. Of social media users, 66% use their accounts as platforms for civic action and political participation, encouraging others to act on behalf of or support current issues online (Rainie et al.2012). Social media has taken every campaign slogan, finance report, television ad, and many other pieces of propaganda, and put it at the fingertips of almost every American. Politicians know this and must adapt to this new form of information gathering.

Although social media presence in political participation is increasing, there is the question of consequences in this “clicktivism” culture: Does social media in civic engagement lead to meaningful and active participation, or is it just a series of electronic opinion sharing? (Koc-Michalska et al.2016). With this question being the product of

gaps in the research, large amounts of literature and my own survey data, I hypothesize that the more frequent the use of social media, both informational and political, the more active one is in meaningfully participating in their surrounding political culture.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

While the literature in this field is similar thematically, each piece is unique in the way researchers approach the combination of social media and civic engagement. Some of the “oldest” literature in this field is from as early as 2004. Social media has grown exponentially since then, but the foundation of the literature still applies. Most of the literature around social media and civic engagement that currently exists often involves one or more the following themes: social capital and positive relationships, and the new literature of social media in civic engagement and clicktivism.

### Social Media and Civic Engagement

Social media in civic engagement is viewed as a powerful tool to connect individuals and groups alike. One article that looks specifically at advocacy groups and their use of social media expressed a summary that accurately describes both sides of the literary argument. There is an argument for the connectedness of this new movement as well as the potential dangers found in the wide web of social media; the vast and continuously growing landscape of the internet can be too large for the continuation of online democracy (Obar et al.2012). It also researches social media as a political perspective and not just as a tool. Adding a sense of emotion or human interest to social media could increase positive attitudes and responses towards it. Along with providing a somewhat unique perspective on viewing social media, it provided a definition of civic engagement that I had not seen in previous readings. Here civic engagement is the act of “moving an individual away from disinterest, distraction, ignorance, and apathy and towards education, understanding, motivation, and action” (Obar et al.2012, p. 2-3).

They also discuss civic engagement as a social relationship instead of a simple act of service.

2008 was a very important year in this new field of research. With the launch of something as highly trafficked as Former President Barack Obama's first campaign website, a new era of campaign rallying began. Younger age groups began to gather news and information from sites like these instead of newspaper outlets.

However, high traffic does not necessarily equal high participation but instead could result in an increase in shared information. Young adults that may not be interested in politics can get political information through their online network of friends and acquaintances, and this may generate greater political interest. Alternatively, greater interest may be generated by the sense of virtual community that can develop on these sites around a political idea or leader (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010). This sense of virtual community creates a sense of belonging with the individual and surrounding political culture. When individuals feel this way, they want to put back into society. These positive relationships create a large amount of political social capital, which would serve as a motivation for individuals to participate, at least through social media.

### Social Capital and Positive Relationships

Social capital and positive relationships are viewed as motivations for engagement through social media. Social capital specifically can often be too broad to define, but for research purposes and in the literature, defined similarly as Dr. Nan Lin does in his 2002 book, *A Social Theory*: a multidimensional construct that includes civic participation, political engagement, life satisfaction, and social trust. Simply, social

capital is a blanket term for the resources available to people through their social interaction.

Political consumerism is a specific form of social capital that is pursued by individuals at one point or another. In 2014, an article found a surprising relationship between consumerism, civic engagement, and social media. While social media is important, it “mediates a relationship between [social media] and political consumerism, but not the relationship between [social media] and traditional forms of political participation... [this] should be conceptualized in light of theories of civic engagement, not simply traditional political participation” (de Zuniga et al.2014). While it shows that social capital in the form of service has more of an influence on political consumerism than social media, it still shows the importance of positive attitudes with both variables.

The availability of these resources also creates a sense of comfort and trust amongst participating individuals. This trust fosters a strong and connected society and makes political institutions and officials more responsive to the public. Because of this exchange of social capital, it creates a more effective democracy online and offline (Gil de Zuniga et al.2012). The evidence of positive relationships found amongst this research of social capital is part of the academic rationale behind my hypothesis.

### Clicktivism

Although there are a very few academic resources on clicktivism (Clicktivism: A Systematic Heuristic by Max Halupka (2014), From Clicktivism to Web-Storytelling. Audiences from TV politics to Web participation by Giorgia Pavia (2011), and a few Master’s dissertations here and there to name a few), it is still an essential facet to the

new research of social media and civic engagement. Clicktivism is defined as “the use of social media and other online methods to promote a cause” and can be used to label actions such as facilitating protest, creating online parody and satire, and committing acts of hacktivism (Clicktivist.org, 2019; “clicktivism”). Clicktivism is also known as slacktivism and has the second definition of “the practice of supporting a political or social cause via the Internet by means such as social media or online petitions, typically characterized as involving little effort or commitment” (“clicktivism” – dictionary.com). This common definition is the main argument for the negatives of social media in civic engagement. While clicktivism can be very active and effective, it can also depersonalize and minimize an individual’s political participation. It then creates a false sense of efficacy that can affect the political sphere in a very negative way. This motivates my hypothesis by laying out the opposite of my expectations for this research. This negative form of clicktivism does not result in meaningful engagement in any way. The earliest pieces of literature on clicktivism were penned in the 2010s, so hopefully, this literary area will continue to grow.

Although a large amount of related and direct research, it is a considerably new field. Some of the limitations found in the research included uncertainty of accurate measurements for social media use and lack of availability when it comes to technology helpful in accurately measuring research in this field. Researches have been concerned that the survey data on social media use is inaccurate considering it is a survey and not physical monitoring of social media use. Development of technology that could more accurately and efficiently measure social media is what the researchers are suggesting to fix this problem. Some research gaps are questions that only continuous research will

bring answers: is this just information seeking or does this contribute politically to the bigger conversation? Should clicktivism be considered participation in a campaign? Is it meaningful and long-lasting? How does Web 2.0 change things? Is this new form of civic engagement reaching its full potential? (Skoric et al.2016). While these pieces of the literature suggest that social media use is positive for civic engagement, there is less of an emphasis on the connection the positive relationships to physical participation. These questions, occurring consistently in the literature, were the foundation of this hypothesis; specifically looking at the question of reaching the full potential and being meaningful. Like other studies, survey data and previous literature available will be examined; a slight variation in this research will be looking at the age group that has the most social media users and the most motivation to be involved politically.

### Hypothesis

As stated previously, it is argued that there is a positive relationship between social media use and political participation: the more frequent use of social media, whether posting or knowledge collection, the more active one will be in one's political community. The literature mentions the idea of putting in participation or effort and getting out a positive bonus; a sense of community, efficacy, even influence. Most of the literature, given some arguments stating otherwise, has supported my hypothesis. These aspects are very strong motivators for individuals, specifically those who can use the vast expanse social media in an efficient way. Because of this motivation, social media participation has a higher chance of turning into physical political participation and civic engagement.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

To test the hypothesis offline after conducting research online, survey tools and analysis were implemented to test the research question. The survey consisted of 16 questions that measured social media use, civic political engagement, and the opinion of the respondents on how they think social media affects civic engagement. While some questions were revised to better fit the needs of my research, what was mostly used were variations of questions found in existing literature (Valenzuela et al.2009) and typical demographic measurements. Some were “yes or no” questions while the others were presented along with Likert scale measurements (“strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, “very frequently” to “never”, etc.) The questions themselves fell into one of four categories: social media activity (Facebook use, checking for political updates), online political action (passive behavior such as liking sharing candidates post or active use like using accounts as platforms), connection between the online and offline worlds (attending a political rally publicized on social media, emailing local representatives), and attitudes about social media’s role in civic engagement.

The survey was created by Qualtrics and distributed electronically. To gauge the vast network of social media, even more, the survey was distributed through personal social media platforms Facebook and Twitter (which had an impact on my survey data as found in my Results), as well as the university’s mail out systems. Through these systems, students and faculty on campus would have had access to this survey. The social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter were chosen. These two social networking sites have the largest percentages of users and high traffic amounts. Sharing the survey on personal accounts guaranteed that the survey would be made available to

the public and specific age groups as soon as possible; whereas in the mailouts (Luckyday, Honors College, and the School of Social Sciences and Global Studies) would take extra correspondence to get published. As for gathering survey data, waiting for responses took shorter than expected; this is a testament to the connection found in social media itself. After the responses were collected, the statistical software system R was used to analyze basic regression models. These responses were then recorded in tables. The use of the survey system Qualtrics was required to not only monitor the survey but also create the demographic bar graphs which were later remodeled in the pie charts seen in Results. Before final models were run (See Appendices B-F), preliminary results were analyzed using R to eliminate insignificant variables of the research. These models proved that race and age did not have that much effect on social media's role in civic engagement.

The survey questions covered both social media and civic engagement individually, and how they two work together. Questions 6 through 16 measured the respondents' political activity over the past two years. Questions 12a through 12d measured the respondents' social media use. Questions 13a through 13d questioned the respondents' intent to physically participate in political culture. Questions 13 e and 13f connected online persuasion and offline participation. Questions 14a through 14j gauged the attitudes of the respondents towards social media.

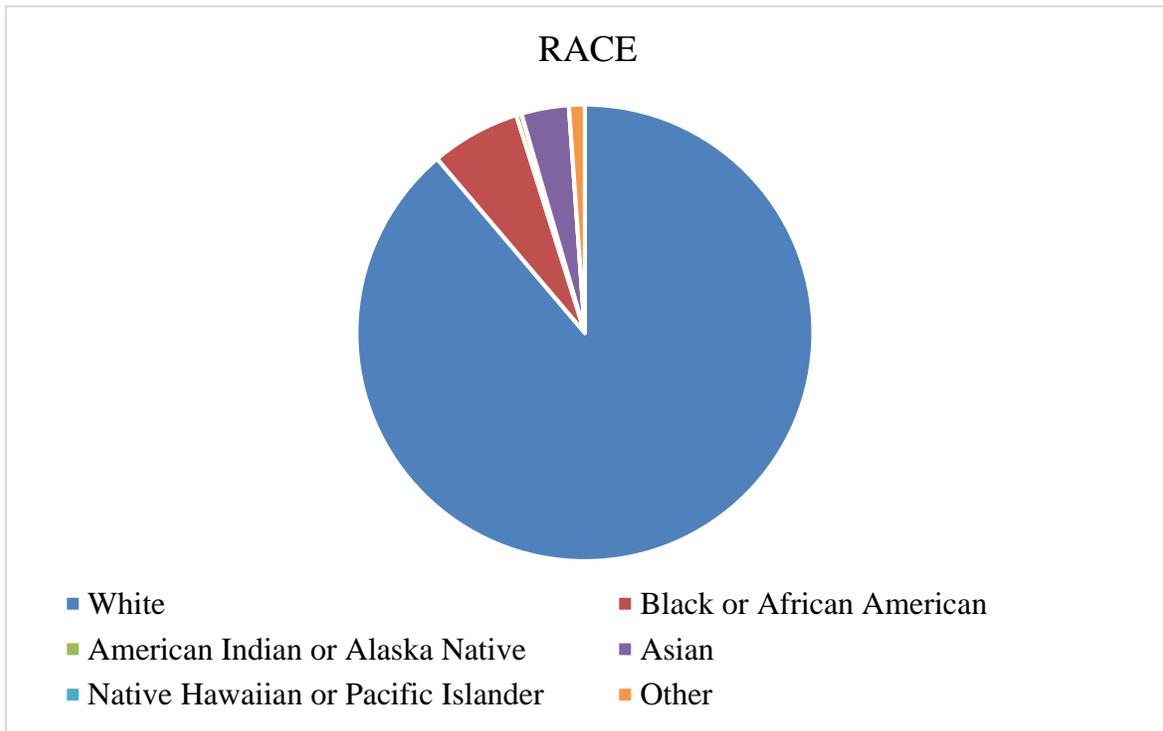
While most of the questions used in the survey were helpful, there were some that did not have any significance. The process of elimination between these types of questions and other data helped finalize the models used for this research. Questions 14a, 14c, 14f, and 14 h were kept, and questions 14b, 14d, 14e, 14g, and 14 j were dropped.

Along with the elimination of questions, some demographics were decidedly eliminated from the research. Education and gender were found to be the most influential in the data, leaving age and race to be removed from the final data models. Age was insignificant due to 66.04% of my survey respondents being in the same age group. Online participation would be a given with this younger age group and was not found to be significant to the research.

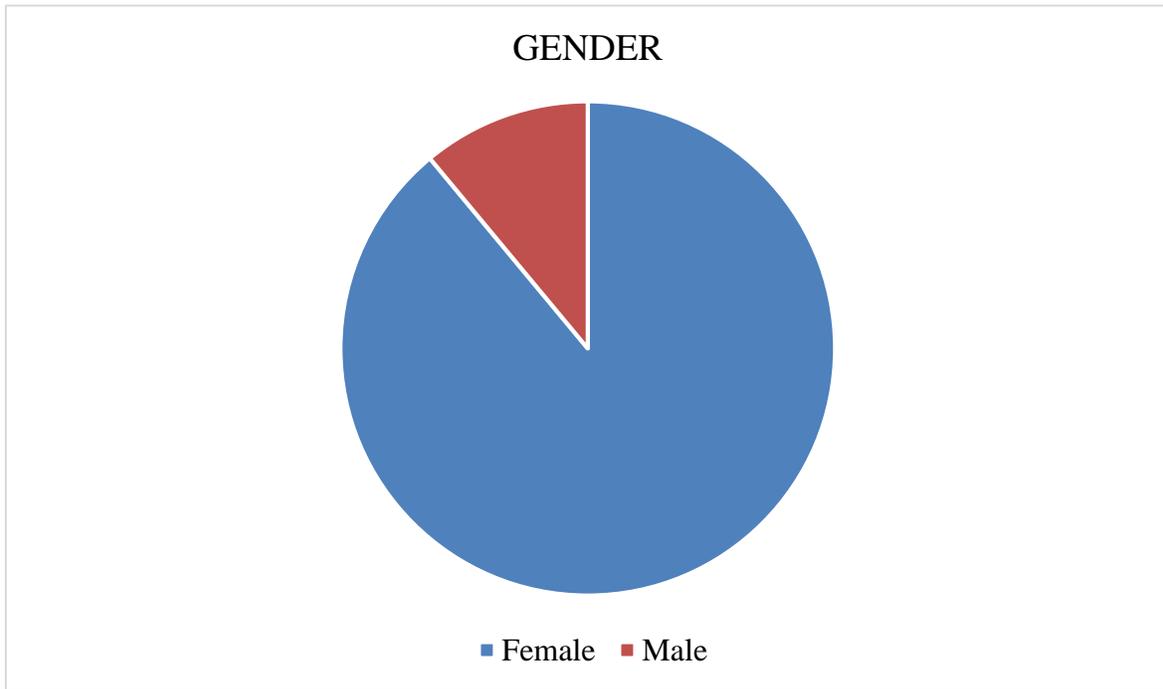
## Chapter 4: Results

The goal of the research was to observe social media use and see how increased or decreased use affected civic engagement and its effectiveness. The survey proved to be overall successful in measuring the desired effect. 284 survey responses were recorded overall, but only the first 263-268 were used for the survey data, per the format of Qualtrics (There is a variance of 5 between the results as some survey respondents skipped over questions). The results showed some interesting patterns among social media use and a sense of efficacy, and some counter-intuitive data on education in regards to political participation.

Most respondents (88.81%) that completed the survey identified themselves as “White”. The second largest group of respondents identified as “Black or African American” (6.34%), and then “Asian” (3.36%); the remaining 1.49% identified as “American Indian or Alaskan Native” and “Pacific Islander”.

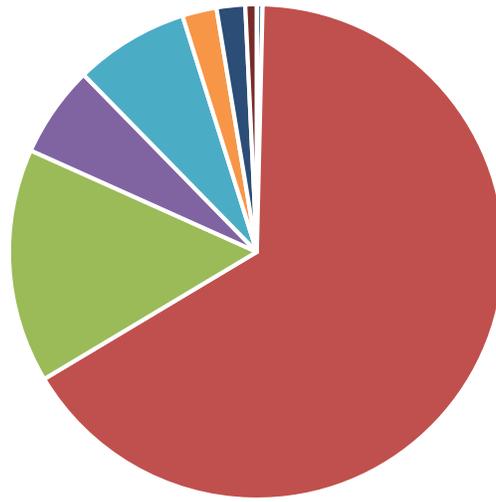


Gender was dominated by the “female” demographic; 88.97% of survey respondents identified as “female” and only 11.03% identified as “male”. This will be a factor to consider when discussing the relationships of independent and dependent variables.



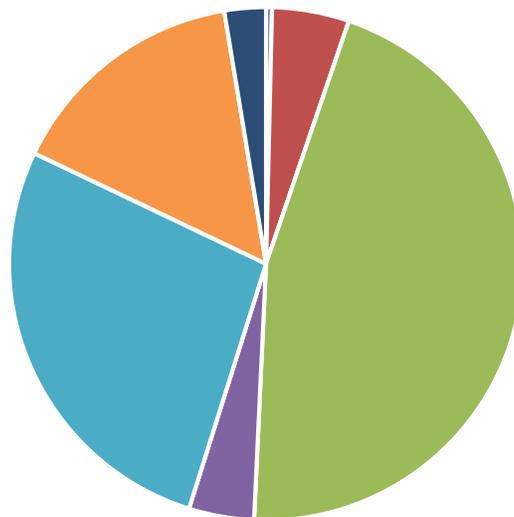
Age, while slightly more varied, was also dominated by one age group (this could more than likely be due to the form of dissemination of the survey; most of social media users are young adults in their early twenties). The largest group of respondents were between the ages of 18-24 years old, claiming 66.04%. The second, third, and fourth largest age groups were 25-34 years old (15.30%), 45-54 years old (7.46%) and 35-44 years old (5.97%), respectively.

### AGE



- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or older

### EDUCATION



- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2 year degree
- 4 year degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate

While there was not a significant amount of variation in race, gender, or age, there was more variation in an educational experience. The most common response to education involved some form of higher education attendance, up to and including professional degrees. Much like gender, education has a very interesting impact on results later in the research.

### Dependent Variables

The quantity and quality of civic engagement is the most important variable in the research. In this case, it is dependent upon social media use and attitudes towards social media. The dependent variables tested were much more specific to the research than extended literature; most research includes general public good, while this focuses on political participation. Civic engagement is understood as four different variables in the study: the intent to politically participate; the action of physically participating; the result of attendance at a political event due to the suggestion of social media, and the result of online and public support of a political cause or candidate by a suggestion of social media. Often the average individual will see their fair share of Facebook-circulated town halls and political rallies. This category measures the effect of political advertisements on social media and the likelihood that individuals that act and attend the event offline. The measurement of an individual liking, sharing, or commenting on a political candidate's or cause's post on social media can be a very important indicator of civic participation. It also measures their likelihood of using their own personal accounts as a political platform. The questions categorized by physical activity measures the physical participation that the individual has participated in sometime in the past two years.

## Independent Variables

The purpose of the independent variable is to measure attitudes towards social media use and social media's effect on civic engagement, as measured in responses to question 14 in the survey. The more positive the attitude, the more active civic engagement the individual is likely to participate in. Along with social media as the foundation of the independent variables, other factors were brought in as well. The attitude toward social media encouraging civic engagement was determined by question 14a in the survey (Appendix A). It gauges whether the participant believes that social media can encourage civic engagement positively. Social media's influence and role as a driving force in political civic engagement are similar as they both argue for the change social media can inspire in civic engagement and political participation; while grouped together, each has their own respective significance.

The previously mentioned dependent variables were tested against demographics age, gender, race, and education. These were chosen as they were consistently used across most surveys found in the literature. Other independent variables were pulled from the survey and combined to fit categories: social media use and social media's power to encourage, alter, and change civic engagement. Social media use measures how often individuals checked Facebook and Twitter, read articles on social media platforms, and make other social media actions.

## Model Analysis

To best display the data and highlight each variable, five tables were created to showcase the significance of the findings (Appendices B-F). Model 1 examines the

impact of my independent variables on whether or not a person intends to participate in politics. As can be seen in Table 1 (Appendix B), there is a direct effect of positive attitudes towards social media use and the influence on the individual's intent to participate in politics. The more an individual uses social media and the more an individual has a positive attitude towards social media's role in civic engagement, the more they intend to participate politically. Continuing with the positive attitudes, if the individual feels as if they or their social media use has an influence in politics, the more they intend to participate. In one surprising analysis, it is found in my survey that males have less intention than that of females to participate politically.

The second model examined the impact of the independent variables on the attendance of political events when suggested through social media. As can be seen in Table 2, surprising trends continue the farther along in their education, the less likely the individual is to attend a political event advertised on social media (Appendix C). This was the only negative relationship found under the dependent variable of political event (as advertised on social media) attendance. It would seem that the more one is educated, the more opportunities or resources they have available to contribute to political candidates or causes. The positive relationships are again found with three variables. Increased social media use leads the individual to be more respondent to events advertised on social media. An increased belief in the influence of social media also contributes to these positive relationships.

Model 3 (Appendix D) shows that the more positive the individual's opinion of social media use and the influence of social media with civic engagement, the more likely they are to openly support a candidate or political issue on their social media accounts.

When it comes to openly supporting a candidate or their social media platform, individuals with the increased use of social media have higher rates of sharing content created by a candidate or organization under their name.

Consistent with previous models, Model 4 explains the impact of an unexpected correlation between educated individuals and their past physical participation; the more educated someone is, the less they have physically participated in political civic engagement (campaigning, voting, and even displaying propaganda). This is also the only table where the variables show that when an individual believes social media has the power to influence change, that does not necessarily mean they participate more. Even when they think social media has changed civic engagement positively, that still does not increase their physical participation (Appendix E).

## Chapter 5: Discussion

Throughout the previous literature, this researcher's hypothesis, and conducted research, it is discovered that the relationship between social media and civic engagement is a positive one. In a sense, consistently positive relationships are based on individuals' positive attitudes. People who feel that social media encourages civic engagement tend to engage more because they do not view social media as a negative addition to civic engagement. In every model of the survey analysis ran, there was a consistent occurrence where the more likely an individual is to participate online, the more likely they are to participate offline as well. The literature and the survey results show that social media in civic engagement does lead to meaningful and active participation, and when physical participation is not an option, individuals still have the desire to participate and will participate effectively online. Another pattern involved the participation and attitude of male respondents; they were less inclined to participate physically, had low intent to participate, and had less social media use than the female respondents.

The most significant data was found in patterns of strong independent variables; how much a respondent used social media for political purposes, how influential they believe social media to be on political outcomes, and how strong they believe social media will affect civic engagement. Each of these dependent variables was consistently found to be significant data in each model we analyzed. Individuals, especially when it comes to political choices and participation, are motivated by emotions such as a sense of belonging, community, and importance (Valenzuela et al.2009). Those strong emotions, along with a sense of civic efficacy, are what created the patterns found in the survey. Increased social media use was expected to be common because not only was the survey

distributed on social media, but also the largest age group that respondents belonged to were 18-24. The unexpected results were the amount of such positive responses to influence, and the recognition of social media as a force of change.

A pattern as well, one significant variable found in the survey results was that of education. In typical political science research, the more education people have, the more likely they are to participate. In this sample, the most common level of education was some college, with the second, third, and fourth being a 4-year degree, a professional degree, and a high school degree respectively. With these higher levels of education found in most the respondents, a different outcome was sure to be expected.

In this research, it is argued that the lack of physical participation found with more educated individuals is due to the busy schedule of their lives. When individuals are more educated, they are more likely to have consistent employment. Although polls, town halls, and other physical political events try to be at times where all can attend, most of the time citizens cannot due to prior commitments. Those with educational backgrounds also tend to have a better sense of the state of a community. If they could more easily recognize the negatives of political culture and social media than the positives, their negative attitude could also very well have an effect on their levels of participation. This could very well be one of the reasons, along with being aware of more resources and opportunities, that more educated people do not have high rates of physical participation or intention to participate.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

When this project started, the argument that the more frequent the use of social media, both informational and political, the more active one is in meaningfully participating in their surrounding political culture. Research expectations were to find increased social media use amongst younger, more educated age groups. While the more educated portion was shown to be incorrect, most of these expectations were fulfilled. Although the research and hypothesis were both consistent and positive, there were still a few limitations with both that should serve as a note of caution for future researchers to be aware of.

The first of the limitations were with survey structure and results. While it was anticipated that the majority of respondents would be in the college-aged groups, seeing more from older age groups would have served well to gain researchers interests, as well to get a broader sense of how age relates to social media. A more balanced result in terms of gender in survey responses was also to be desired. As mentioned in Results, most of the demographics, with the exception of gender, were not utilized due to this limitation. The solution to bring in all the demographics, and to remove limitations, is to go survey outside of the internet. Going door-to-door and potentially phone banking to get a more consistent amount of all ages and races would be very beneficial to expanding the scope of the research.

Social media, although with its own layers of conflict, has had a positive effect on the quantity and quality of civic engagement. It inspires citizens to act and improves attitudes about civic engagement. Social media adds positivity to civic engagement and it will continue to do so. With continued research and expansion of this field, social

media's presence in civic engagement will become an even larger tool of two-way communication with constituents expressing their beliefs to the powers that be. 10 years from now, social media will have continued to grow and alter civic engagement for the better by making more meaningful resources and opportunities available to those who may not have the highest responses of political participation.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions

Q6: In the past two years, have you attended a local government meeting?

- Yes
- No

Q7: Called, written, or emailed an elected public official?

- Yes
- No

Q8: Owned and displayed propaganda (yard sign, bumper sticker, car magnet, button, etc.) for a political candidate or cause?

- Yes
- No

Q9: Participated and/or volunteered in political demonstrations, rallies, marches or protests?

- Yes
- No

Q10: Voted in a national, state, or local election?

- Yes
- No

Q16: Attended a political event that you found out about on a social media site? (Rally, march, protest, candidate announcement, etc.)

- Yes
- No

Q12a: How often do you check Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, or any other social media site?

- Very Frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Q12b: Get added to social media groups or pages that support a political candidate or cause?

- Very Frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Q12c: Use social media to keep up with current political issues and public affairs (local, state, or national)?

- Very Frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Q12d: See advertisements supporting a political candidate or cause?

- Very Frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Q13a: How likely are you to comment on a political candidate's or cause's post (can be in favor of, against, or indifferent to)?

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Q13b: Share a post of a political candidate or cause?

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Q13c: Share your political opinions and beliefs on social media?

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Q13d: Contact a candidate or organization through social media?

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Q13e: Attend an event that is publicized on social media? (Facebook event page, email newsletter, a Tweet, etc.)

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Q13f: Support a political candidate or cause that you see frequently on social media? (Volunteer, donate resources, etc.)

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

*(The following statements appear in a table with the options: Strongly agree, Agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree)*

Q14a: Social media ENCOURAGES political civic engagement.

Q14b: Social media DISCOURAGES political civic engagement.

Q14c: Social media has altered civic engagement.

Q14d: Social media provides multiple views on different political issues.

Q14e: Social media can be one-sided on political issues and candidates.

Q14f: Civic engagement through social media has an influence on the outcome of politics.

Q14g: Civic engagement is a moving force of political action.

Q14h: Civic engagement is more than liking and sharing posts.

Q14i: Physical civic engagement has a larger effect on results than online civic engagement.

Q14j: Physical civic engagement and online civic engagement are equally important to political action.

## Appendix B: Variable Key and Table 1

Variable	Corresponding Survey Question
Intent	Q13a-d
Attendance per Media	Q13e
Support per Media	Q13f
Physical	Q6 – Q16
Social Use	Q12a-d

	Intent
(Intercept)	5.80** (2.12)
GENDER	−2.29* (1.09)
EDUCATION	−0.11 (0.26)
Social.Use	1.19*** (0.15)
Encouragement	0.76** (0.28)
Alteration	0.23 (0.41)
Influence	0.86** (0.32)
Force	0.51 (0.44)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.42
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.40
Num. obs.	229
RMSE	5.22

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

Table 1: Statistical Model - Intent

## Appendix C: Table 2

Attendance per Media	
(Intercept)	1.05 (0.65)
GENDER	0.36 (0.33)
EDUCATION	-0.22** (0.08)
Social.Use	0.19*** (0.05)
Encouragement	0.01 (0.09)
Alteration	0.11 (0.13)
Influence	0.20* (0.10)
Force	0.33* (0.13)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.28
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.26
Num. obs.	228
RMSE	1.59

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

Table 2: Statistical Model - Attendance per Media

### Appendix D: Table 3

	Support per Media
(Intercept)	0.76 (0.61)
GENDER	-0.29 (0.31)
EDUCATION	-0.07 (0.07)
Social.Use	0.27*** (0.04)
Encouragement	0.06 (0.08)
Alteration	-0.10 (0.12)
Influence	0.21* (0.09)
Force	0.39** (0.12)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.33
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.31
Num. obs.	228
RMSE	1.49

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Statistical Model - Support per Media

## Appendix E: Table 4

	Physical
(Intercept)	9.80*** (0.63)
GENDER	-0.51 (0.33)
EDUCATION	-0.45*** (0.08)
Social.Use	0.16*** (0.05)
Encouragement	0.00 (0.08)
Alteration	0.13 (0.12)
Influence	0.10 (0.10)
Force	0.05 (0.13)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.24
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.22
Num. obs.	229
RMSE	1.56

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Statistical Model - Physical

## Appendix F: Summary Table

	Intent	Attendance per Media	Support per Media	Physical
(Intercept)	5.80** (2.12)	1.05 (0.65)	0.76 (0.61)	9.80*** (0.63)
GENDER	-2.29* (1.09)	0.36 (0.33)	-0.29 (0.31)	-0.51 (0.33)
EDUCATION	-0.11 (0.26)	-0.22** (0.08)	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.45*** (0.08)
Social.Use	1.19*** (0.15)	0.19*** (0.05)	0.27*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.05)
Encouragment	0.76** (0.28)	0.01 (0.09)	0.06 (0.08)	0.00 (0.08)
Alteration	0.23 (0.41)	0.11 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.12)	0.13 (0.12)
Influence	0.86** (0.32)	0.20* (0.10)	0.21* (0.09)	0.10 (0.10)
Force	0.51 (0.44)	0.33* (0.13)	0.39** (0.12)	0.05 (0.13)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.42	0.28	0.33	0.24
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.40	0.26	0.31	0.22
Num. obs.	229	228	228	229
RMSE	5.22	1.59	1.49	1.56

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

Table 5: Statistical Models

# Appendix G: IRB Approval

Office of  
Research Integrity



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## NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-19-96

PROJECT TITLE: Social Media and Civic Engagement

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Users loaded with unmatched Organization affiliation., School of SSGS

RESEARCHER(S): Hannah Scott, Marek Steedman

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: March 14, 2019 to March 13, 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Sacco".

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board Chairperson