



Groupe de recherche
en communication politique

Social Media and Political Engagement

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Overview

- Theoretical and conceptual framework
- A very brief overview of the literature
- Reflections on comparative research
- Many questions and some answers from ongoing research
- Takeaway points and challenges

Theoretical and conceptual framework

Tidying up our conceptual toolkit

The emergence of the internet and social media as arenas for political discussion and engagement has led scholars to question not only the relationship between various uses of these platforms and political engagement, but **the very definition of what political engagement is and what it is not.**





“By political participation we refer simply to **activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action**—either **directly** by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or **indirectly** by influencing the selection of people who make those policies. [...]

We focus on **activity**: we are concerned with doing politics, rather than with being **attentive** to politics.[...]

We have also excluded **communication**—political discussions among friends, letters to the editor, calls to talk radio shows—in which the target audience is not a **public official**.”

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 38-40



“Talking in public with other citizens is a form of participation, one that arguably provides the opportunity for individuals 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. [...] **discursive participation** can include but is not limited to the formal institutions and processes of civic and political life. It can involve **private individuals in informal, unplanned exchanges**; [...] discursive participation can occur **through a variety of media**, including face-to-face exchanges, phone conversations, email exchanges, and internet forums.”

Delli Carpini, M., F. Cook and L. Jacobs (2004), *Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature*, in “Annual Review of Political Science”, 7, 1, pp. 315-344.

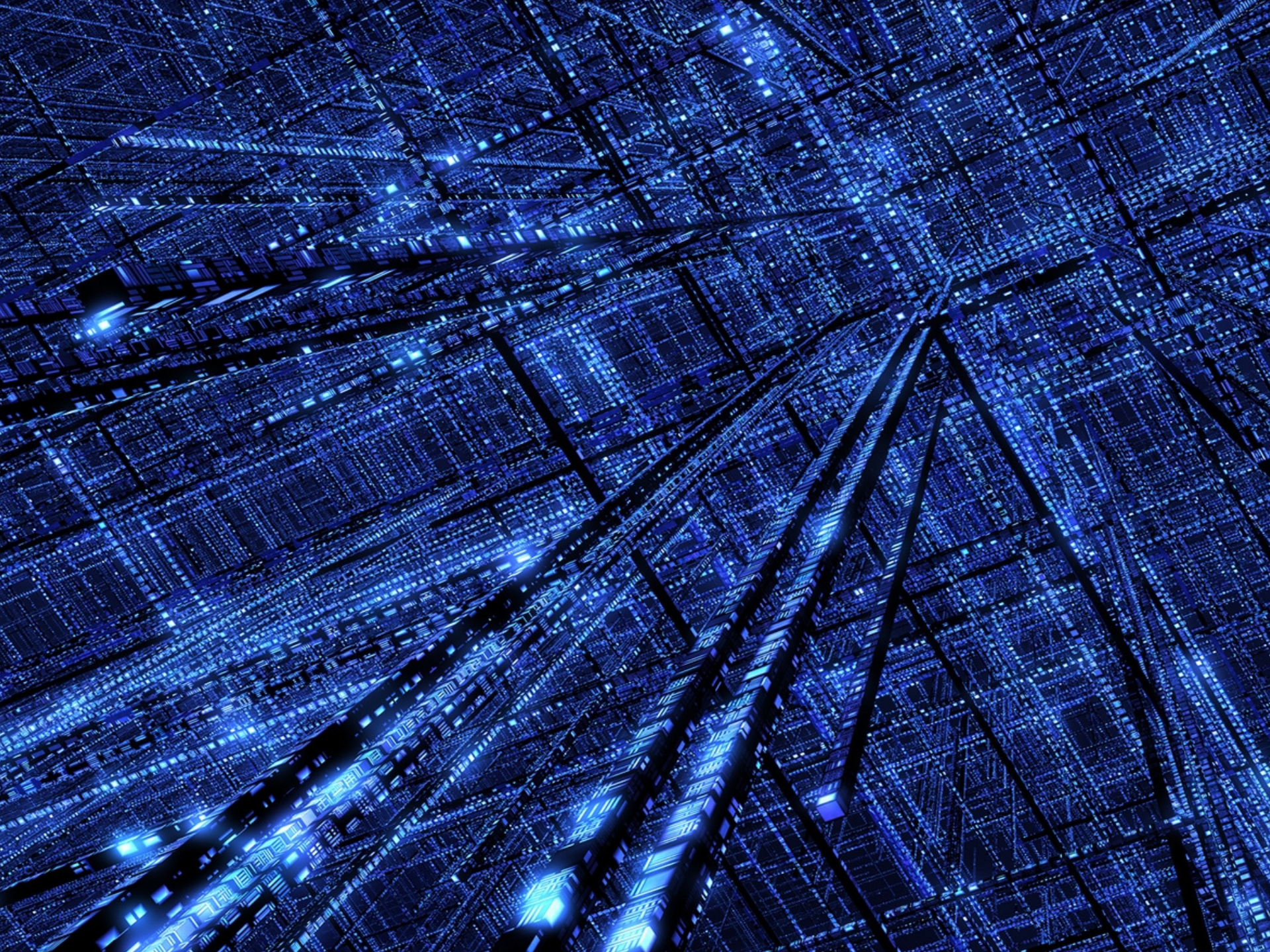


Table 2
Senses of engage

Sense of Engage	Involves Activity	Involves Attention?
Engage <i>in</i>	Yes	No
Engaged <i>by</i>	No	Yes
Engage <i>with</i>	Yes	Yes

“Political engagement refers to **attentive activity directly involving the polity** [...] Political engagement as a **particular episode** could involve only political attention, only political activity, or both of them together, but political engagement as a **generalized state** must represent attention to political affairs and processes as well as activity aimed at actualization.”

Berger, B. (2009). Political theory, political science and the end of civic engagement. *Perspectives on Politics*, 7(02), p. 341



“As ‘Web 2.0’, social computing, and other new technologies became an essential part of reconfigured everyday practices, **the technology grew unremarkable** inasmuch as these **new ways of organizing become routine** and are no longer compared to old ways of doing and organizing. At this stage, when explicit comparisons to old ways are no longer made, it is not helpful to think about people’s actions exclusively in terms of choices, intentions, costs, resources, and the related theoretical apparatus traditionally associated with collective action theory. Rather, **the ubiquity of the sociotechnical infrastructure changes normative expectations for what is and should be possible.**”

Bimber, B., Flanagin, A., & Stohl, C. (2012). *Collective action in organizations: Interaction and engagement in an era of technological change*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 51-2

NATURE | NEWS

Facebook experiment boosts US voter turnout

Mass social-network study shows that influence of close friends raises participation.

Zoe Corbyn

12 September 2012 | Clarified: 12 September 2012

Just how much can activity on Facebook influence the real world? About 340,000 extra people turned out to vote in the 2010 US congressional elections because of a single election-day Facebook message, estimate researchers who ran an experiment involving 61 million users of the social network.

The study, published today in *Nature*¹, is the first to demonstrate that the online world can affect a significant real-world behaviour on a large scale, say the researchers. But the closest Facebook friends exerted the most influence in getting users to the ballot box.

Today is Election Day [What's this?](#) [close](#)

Find your polling place on the U.S. Politics Page and click the "I Voted" button to tell your friends you voted.

VOTE

I Voted

01155376 People on Facebook Voted

Social message

Today is Election Day [What's this?](#) [close](#)

Find your polling place on the U.S. Politics Page and click the "I Voted" button to tell your friends you voted.

VOTE

I Voted

01155376 People on Facebook Voted

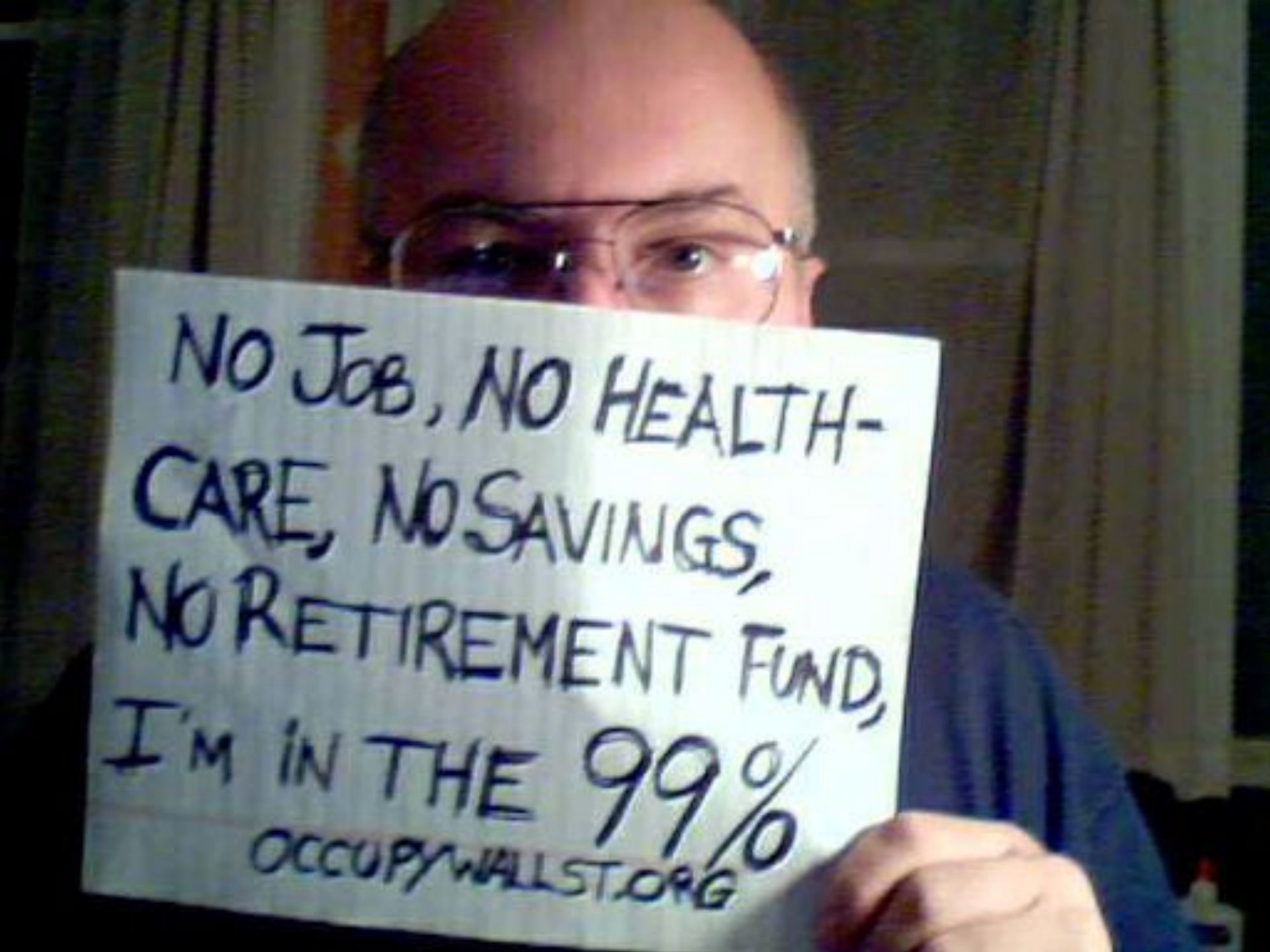
[Jaime Settle](#), [Jason Jones](#), and 18 other friends have voted.

Facebook sent out 'informational' (top) and 'social' messages to users during the 2010 US Congressional elections.

REF 1

“Many web 2.0 services rely upon large numbers of individuals behaving with regularity in **low threshold** ways. [...] much of the technological architecture of web 2.0 applications designs in **low *and* high threshold activities and many variants in between**. [...] The popularity of this approach is explained by the fact that it is not an all-or-nothing model. **Quantitatively and qualitatively different forms of contribution are facilitated** by the technological architecture.”

Chadwick, A. (2009). Web 2.0: New Challenges for the Study of E-Democracy in an Era of Informational Exuberance. *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*, 5(1), pp. 27-8.

A man with glasses is holding a white sign in front of his face. The sign has handwritten text in blue ink. The background is a dark, textured curtain.

NO JOB, NO HEALTH-
CARE, NO SAVINGS,
NO RETIREMENT FUND,
I'M IN THE 99%
OCCUPYWALLST.ORG

“The act of **activating one’s personal networks via digital media with the aim to mobilize others for social or political purposes** constitutes a *mode* of participation with different manifestations. [...]

An expressive act of participation has been broadly defined as a political act that “entails the **public expression of political orientations**” (Rojas & Puig-I-Abril, 2009, p. 906). In digital media, **such an act is inseparable from (a) the activation of one’s networks**—thus from the opening up of one’s views to the public, **and (b) the act of personalizing content** as part of one’s approach to convince others to act in a certain way in relation to a social or political cause.

Theocharis, Y. (2015). The conceptualization of digitally networked participation. *Social Media+ Society*, 1(2), 2056305115610140, pp. 5-6.



SOME DAYS IT ALL SOUNDS LIKE BLAH, BLAH, BLAH.
I GUESS IT MUST BE ME.

“When both scholars and laypeople attempt to explain communication, they most often do so using a reception-effects paradigm in which **all effects of communication are assumed to result from message reception**. Communication is thought of in terms of several related metaphors, such as information flow and information transmission, all of which imply that preexisting information travels in some form from one actor to another and then has its effects, if any, on arrival. This paradigm guides our thinking away from several possibilities, including **that the act of expression might change the message sender**, that expressed ideas often do not exist intact, if at all, in the sender’s mind prior to expression, and that **attention to—and thus effects of—received messages may result from the expectation of being able to respond**.”

Pingree, R. J. (2007). How messages affect their senders: A more general model of message effects and implications for deliberation. *Communication Theory*, 17(4), p. 439

A 3-minute literature review

PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED?

Pluralism, Participation and Party Websites

Pippa Norris

Does Internet Use Affect Engagement? A Meta-Analysis of Research

SHELLEY BOULIANNE

Direct and Differential Effects of the Internet on Political and Civic Engagement

Michael Xenos¹ & Patricia Moy²

Moving Slowly up the Ladder of Political Engagement: A 'Spill-over' Model of Internet Participation

Marta Cantijoch, David Cutts and Rachel Gibson

Social Media, Political Expression, and Political Participation: Panel Analysis of Lagged and Concurrent Relationships

Homero Gil de Zúñiga^{1,2}, Logan Molyneux³, & Pei Zheng³

The meta-analysis focuses on studies of the United States. I chose this geographic focus because of the volume of research on the American population. Almost all of the research in this meta-analysis is based on American respondents, but two studies combine Canadian and American respondents, so Canadians are included in some of the analysis (Quan-Haase, Wellman, Witte, & Hampton, 2002; Wellman, Quan-Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). The reason for this geographic focus is to control for exogenous variables, which may affect the observed relationship between Internet use and political engagement. For example, international studies would introduce differences in political culture, political institutions, and political processes related to key political behavior (e.g., voter registration process, predetermined election dates). These exogenous variables could affect the observed relationship between Internet use and engagement.

Boulianne, S. (2009). Does Internet use affect engagement? A meta-analysis of research. *Political communication*, 26(2), 193-211.

Most of the studies are based on established democratic systems, such as Sweden, United States, United Kingdom, Norway and Australia, but there are a significant number of studies conducted in newer democracies (Singapore and Chile), formal democracies (Columbia, Egypt and Tunisia) and other political systems (China). Only two studies offer a cross-national perspective (Chan & Guo, 2013; Xenos et al., 2014). Xenos et al. (2014) examine United States, United Kingdom and Australia. Chan and Guo (2013) compare American students and students in Hong Kong.

Boulianne, S. (2015). Social Media Use and Participation: a Meta-analysis of Current Research. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(5), 524-538.

**But political communication
and engagement, on and off
social media, do not happen
in a vacuum!**

Some reflections on comparative research

Comparative method: putting the cart before the horse?

“Among the several fields or subdisciplines into which the discipline of political science is usually divided, **comparative politics** is the only one that carries a **methodological** instead of a **substantive** label. The term ‘comparative politics’ **indicates the *how* but does not specify the *what* of the analysis.**”

Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative politics and the comparative method. *American political science review*, 65(03), p. 682

“Globalization means we must all become comparativists in our study of media”

Livingstone, S., and Hasebrink, U. (2010) Designing a European project on child internet safety: reflections on comparative research in practice. In Weibull, L. et al (Eds.), *Festschrift for Ulla Carlsson* (136). Gothenburg: Nordicom.

Why compare?

- To test hypotheses on the role of systemic factors that differ across countries
 - Rokkan: “**macro hypotheses**”
 - Kohn: “**nation as unit of analysis**”
- To test hypotheses on the role of individual factors in more than one country to increase certainty of the estimates
 - Rokkan: “**micro replications**”
 - Kohn: “**nation as context of study**”
- The two goals are not mutually exclusive, but entail different emphases and may influence some key choices, especially when resources are scarce

Kohn, M. L. (1989) (Ed.). *Cross-National Research in Sociology*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Rokkan, S. (1966) Comparative Cross-National Research: The Context of Current Effects, cit. by Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative politics and the comparative method. *American political science review*, 65(03), p. 682-693.

How should/can we compare?

- **Theory** defines what is comparable and under what respects

“Comparability is a quality that is not inherent in any given set of objects; rather it is a quality important to them by the observer’s perspective” (Rustow 1968, cit. by Lijphart 1971)

- **Case paucity**: there are not enough countries (even if we could study them all)

“The principal problem facing the comparative method can be succinctly stated as: many variables, small number of cases” (Lijphart 1971, p. 685)

- **Theoretical parsimony** is an important solution to this problem

Comparative analysis must avoid the danger of being overwhelmed by large numbers of variables [...] and it must therefore judiciously restrict itself to the really key variables, omitting those of only marginal importance” (Lijphart 1971, p. 690)

- **Local theories** focusing on a specific set of political systems where variation is relatively smaller (Boudon, 1984)

Observational data and Endogeneity

“When we cannot control the assignment of the potential causes, we are at the mercy of history. [...] **The difficulty presented by endogeneity is to distinguish the effects of causes from the effects of conditions under which they operate.**”

Przeworski, A. (2009). Is the science of comparative politics possible? *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, p. 168.

Example: majoritarian institutions are more likely to survive in countries where political conflict is lower and/or is articulated in fewer dimensions, so disentangling the effects of majoritarian institutions and levels of political conflict is difficult, even if measures of the two variables are available

Many questions and some
answers from ongoing research

Starting points

- Need to **move beyond generic measures of internet/social media use** to assess the implications of specific political uses of social media
 - Accidental exposure
 - Informal political discussion
 - Interpersonal mobilization and influence
 - Dual screening and live commentary of politics
- Need to **study differential effects**: one size does not fit all
 - Individual level
 - System level
- Need to **go beyond U.S. findings**
 - To validate those findings beyond a rather exceptional political system
 - To understand the role of hitherto neglected systemic variables

Four Studies

1. Accidental exposure

A. Valeriani, C. Vaccari (2015). 'Accidental exposure to politics on social media as participation equalizer: Inadvertent encounters with political information, interest in politics and online participation in Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom'. *New Media & Society*, DOI: 10.1177/1461444815616223.

2. Party campaigners and citizen campaigners

C. Vaccari, A. Valeriani (2016). 'Party campaigners or citizen campaigners? How social media deepen and broaden party-related engagement'. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, DOI: DOI: 10.1177/1940161216642152.

3. Online mobilization

C. Vaccari (2016). 'Online Mobilization in Comparative Perspective: Digital Appeals and Political Engagement in Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom'. To be presented at the APSA annual meeting, Philadelphia, USA.

4. Dual screening

C. Vaccari, A. Chadwick, B. O'Loughlin (2015). 'Dual Screening the Political: Media Events, Social Media, and Citizen Engagement'. *Journal of Communication*, 65(6), pp. 1041-1061, DOI: 10.1111/jcom.12187.

Case selection (studies 1, 2, and 3)

- **Germany, Italy, United Kingdom**
- Established Western parliamentary democracies
- All voted (with similar PR laws) in 2014 European Parliament elections
- All have high levels of social media use (but different levels of internet diffusion)
- Theoretically fruitful differences
 - Party organizational strengths
 - Different levels of citizen engagement with the 2014 elections
 - ... and many others

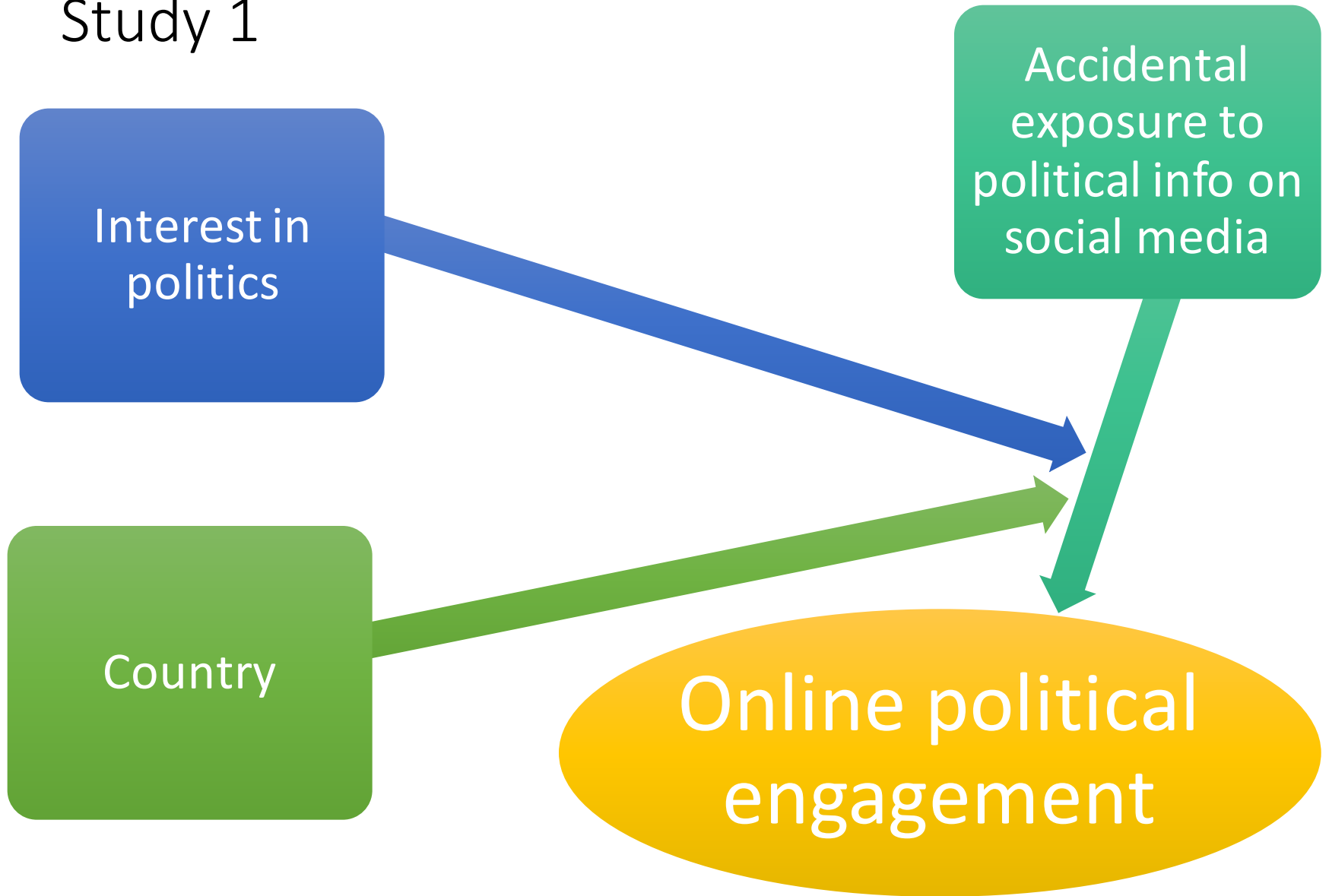
Data

- **Online surveys** conducted by IPSOS in the aftermath of the European Parliament election of May 2014
- **Response rates:** 17% (GER); 20.1% (UK); 21.4% (ITA)
- ***N*=1,750** for each country
- Samples representative of **Internet users aged 16-74** on age, gender, region, occupation, and education, obtained by quota sampling

Dependent Variables: “Over the past 12 months, have you...”

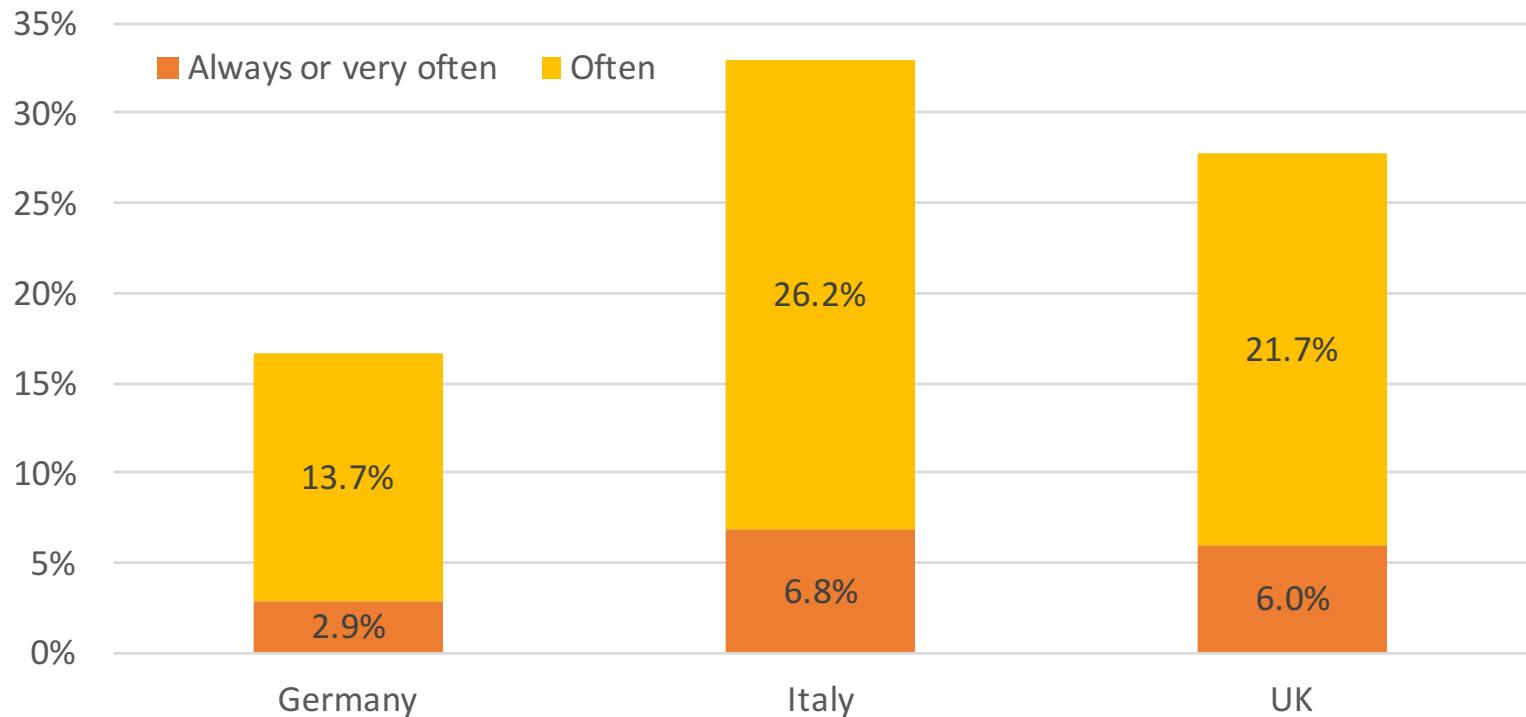
Accidental Exposure	Party Campaigning	Online mobilization
Sent an email to a party or a politician	Sent an email to a party or a politician	Tried to convince someone to vote for a party, leader, or candidate
Encouraged other people to vote for a party or candidate by sending an email	Encouraged other people to vote for a party or candidate by sending an email	Participated in the activities of a political party
Discussed national politics on a forum or blog	Encouraged other people to vote for a party or candidate on social media	Took part in public meetings and rallies on the elections
Signed an online petition	Commented on a post of, or sent a message to, a party or candidate on social media	Signed a petition or subscribed a referendum
Used the Internet to involve other people in online and offline political activities	Financed a political party, a candidate, or a campaign	Contacted a politician to support a cause
Participated in an offline political activity to which you were invited on the Internet	Participated in the activities of a political party	Discussed national politics on social media

Study 1



The Independent variable

“When you use social networks/social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.), how often do you come across news and information on current events, public issues, or politics when you may have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news?”

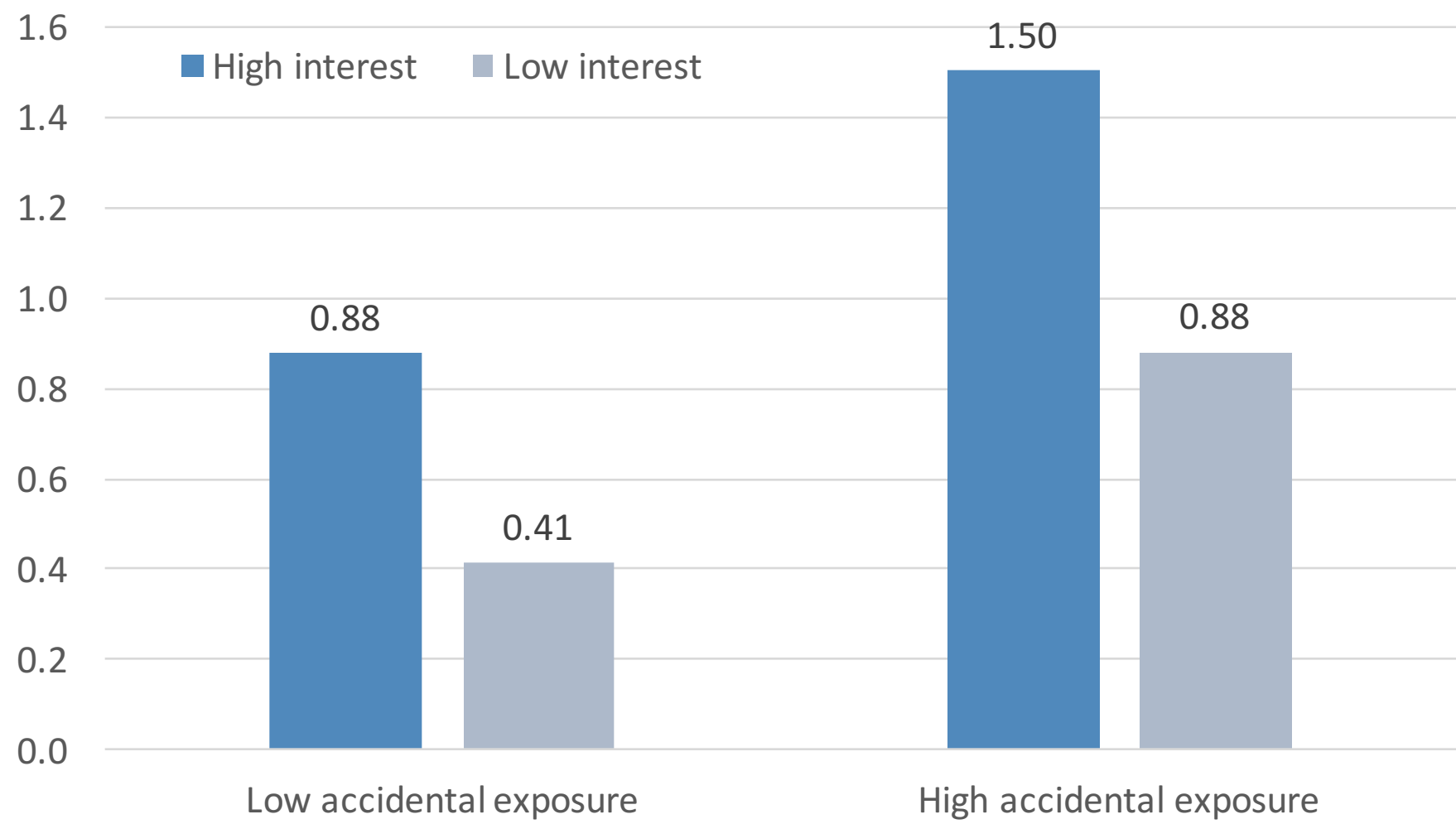


Accidental Exposure – Results

	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2
Accidental exposure	1.014***	1.143***	1.405***
Interest in politics	.972***	1.067***	1.059***
Interest*accidental exposure	—	-.642*	-.637*
Italy*accidental exposure	—	—	-.329*
UK*accidental exposure	—	—	-.355*
Italy	.299***	.294***	.338***
United Kingdom	.350***	.346***	.393***

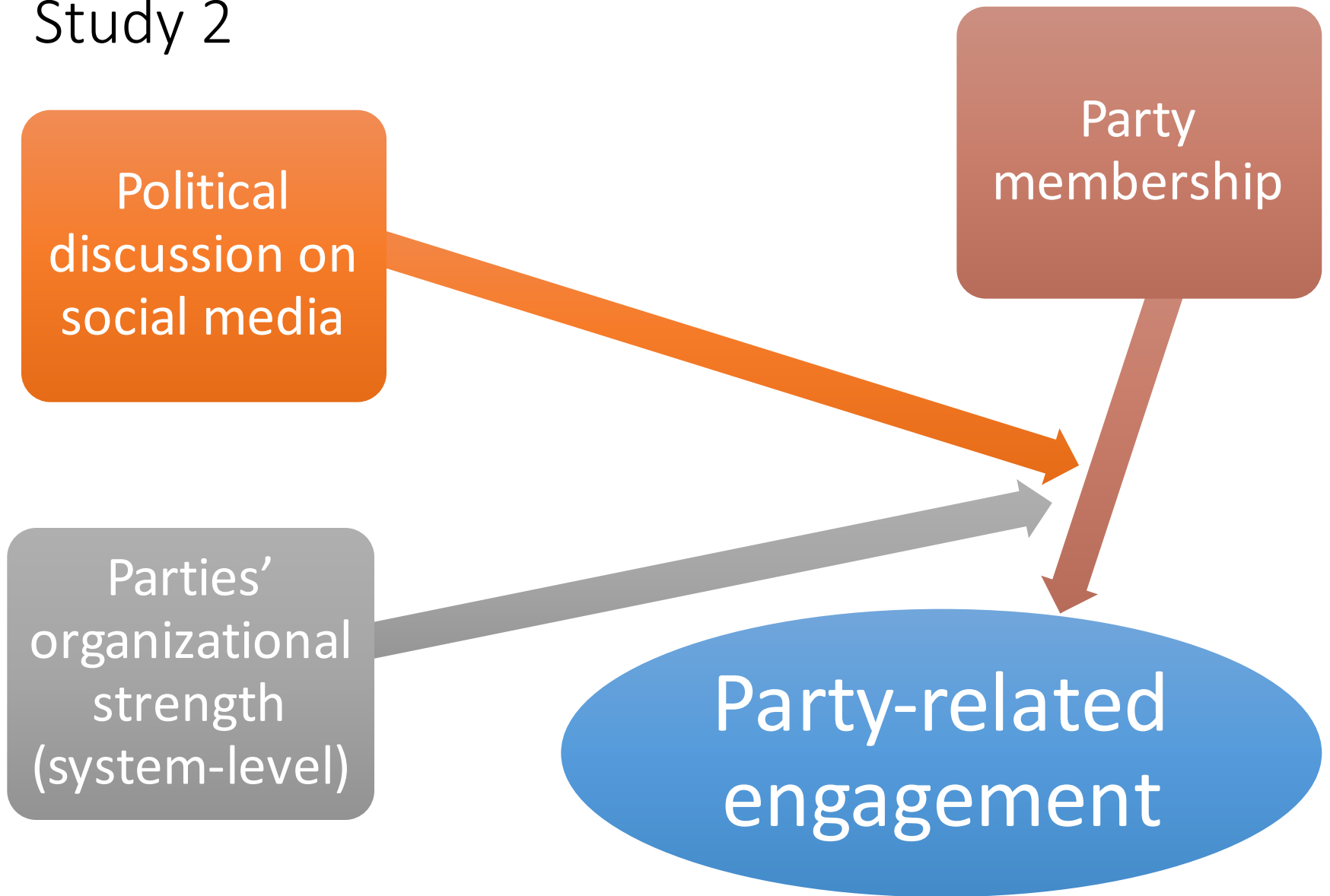
Poisson regression models controlling for ideology, trust in political parties, political efficacy, sources of political information, gender, age, education, and income. *N*=3683

Accidental Exposure – Effect Size Estimates



Estimates based on Model 1 for a British respondent, with all variables set to their mode or median, and ideology set as centrist. The values for accidental exposure and interest are one standard deviation below (low) and one above the mean (high).

Study 2



Different Countries, Different Parties?

Country	Party members	Trust in parties
Germany	1,300,000	30%
Italy	500,000	6%
UK	500,000	15%

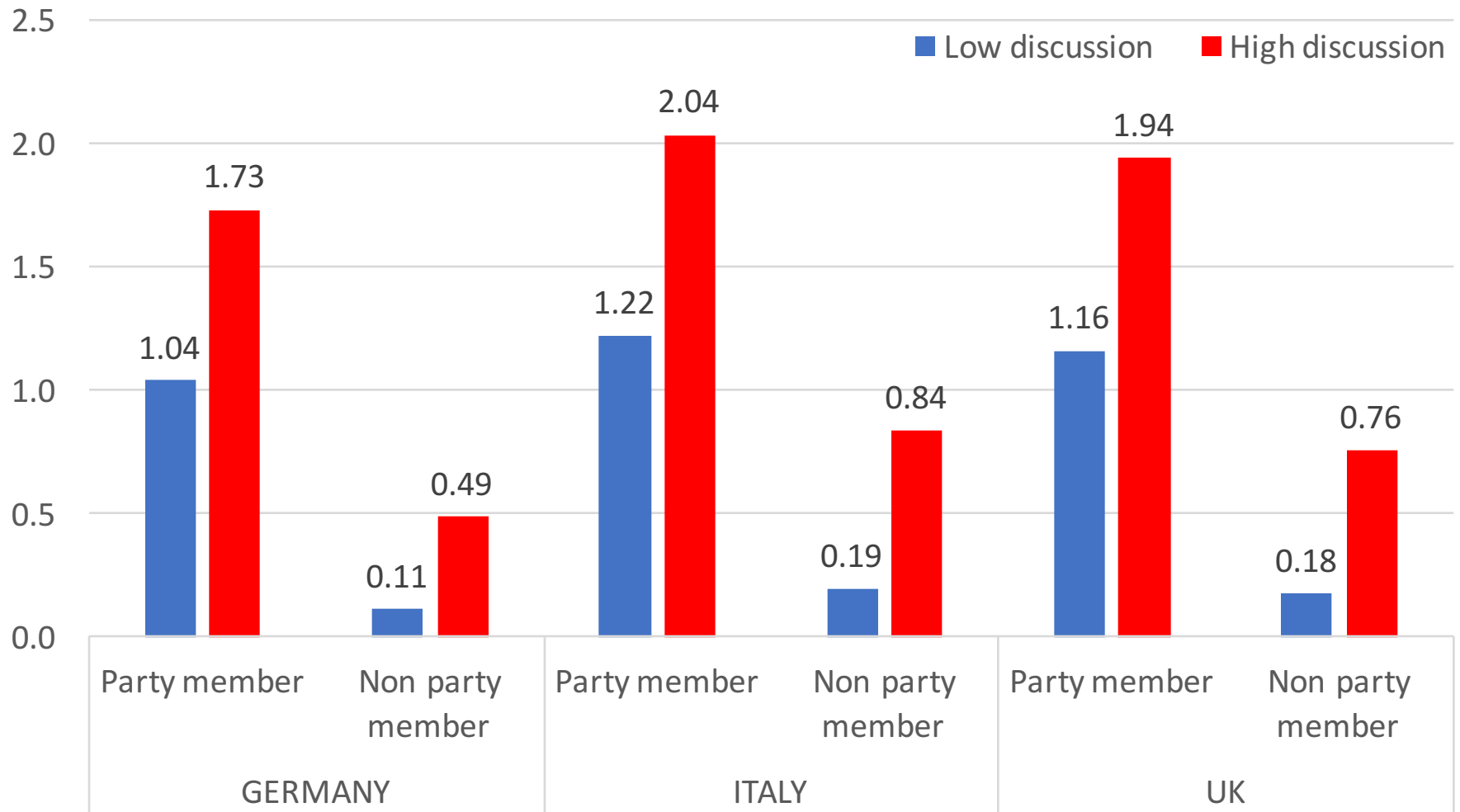
Supply (organizational efficiency) and **demand** (party-society linkage) mechanisms affect parties' viability as channels of participation

Party campaigners – Main Results

	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2
Party membership	.880***	1.206***	1.752***
Social media discussion	2.121***	2.100***	2.740***
Italy*Party membership	—	-.444***	-.380***
UK*Party membership	—	-.382**	-.329**
Discussion*Party member	—	—	-1.782***
Italy	.410***	.586***	.542***
United Kingdom	.283***	.439***	.442**

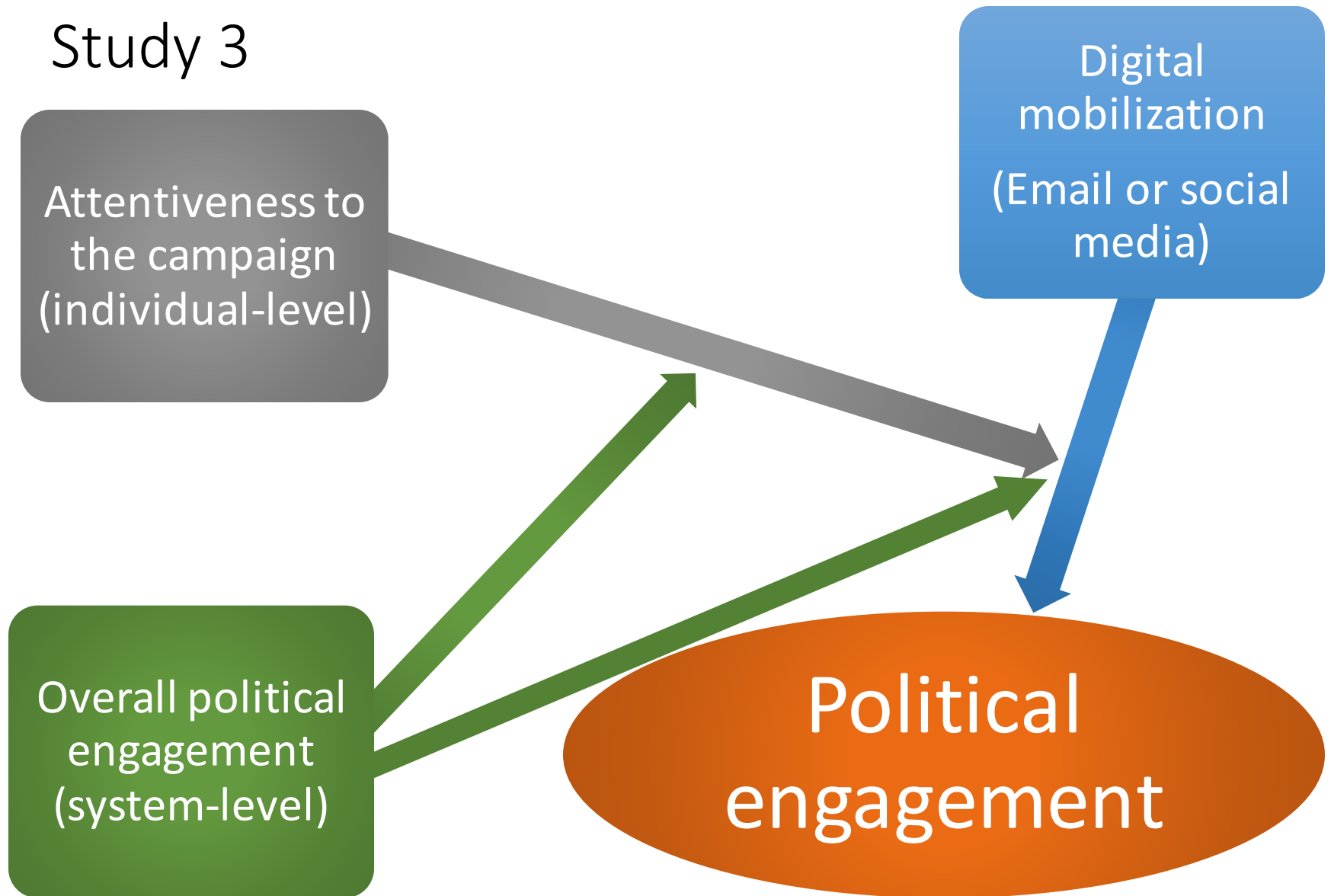
Poisson regression models controlling for trust in political parties, political efficacy, interest in politics, sources of political information, gender, age, education, and income. $N=3869$

Party Campaigners – Effect Size Estimates



Estimates based on Model 2, taking as reference values the mean (for ordinal- and interval-level variables) and mode (for dichotomous variables) across the pooled sample. The values for political discussion are one standard deviation below the mean (low), and one standard deviation above the mean (high).

Study 3



All European elections are second order elections. But in some countries, they are more second-order than in others.

Country	Turnout 2004-09-14	Turnout 2014	Political climate
Germany	44.8%	48.1%	Grosse Koalition harmony
Italy	64.7%	57.2%	Renzi's electoral baptising
UK	36.3%	35.6%	Keeping powders dry for 2015

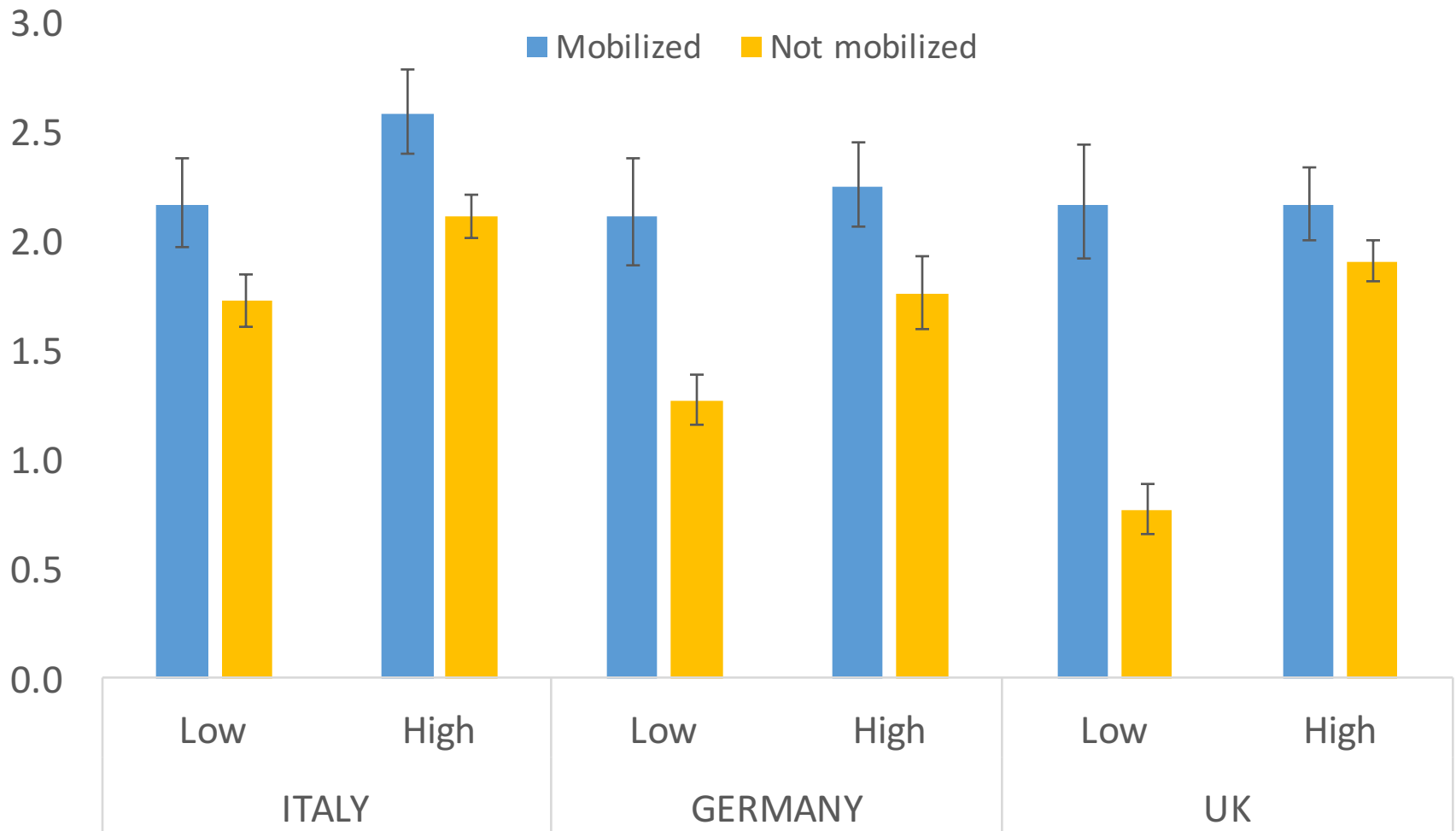
Mobilization has greater potential to be effective where overall levels of participation are lower, as the **ceiling** for its effects is higher (Aldrich et al., 2015: 3).

Online Mobilization – Results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Mobilized online	0.299***	0.702***	0.216***	0.245*
Mobilized*UK	—	—	0.141***	1.512***
Mobilized*Germany	—	—	0.161***	0.474***
Attention to the campaign	0.489***	0.685***	0.479***	0.361***
Mobilized*Attention	—	-0.509***	—	-0.042
Mobilized*Attention*UK	—	—	—	-1.591***
Mobilized*Attention*Germany	—	—	—	-0.430*

Poisson regression models controlling for trust in political parties, political efficacy, interest in politics, visiting party websites, political messages exchanged on social media, frequency of social media use, attention*Germany, attention*UK, sources of political information, gender, age, education, and income. N=2679

Online Mobilization – Effect Size Estimates



Estimates based on Model 4, with all variables set to the means across the pooled sample for all variables apart from mobilization and attention. The values for attention to the campaign are one standard deviation below (low) and one above the mean (high).

Limitations

- **Observational data:** selection bias and reciprocal causation cannot be fully ruled out
- **Panel-based online surveys:** second-best to (increasingly difficult) random population samples
- **Self-reports:** subject to recall and social desirability bias
- **Too few cases, too many variables:** more research needed to establish causes of country differences
- **One point in time:** second-order elections differ from general elections (but offer interesting cross-country variation while keeping time—an important variable when studying digital media--constant)

Now for something a little
different...

What is Dual Screening?

“the bundle of practices that involve integrating, and switching across and between, live broadcast media and social media”

—Vaccari, Chadwick, and O’Loughlin (2015)

What are Media Events?

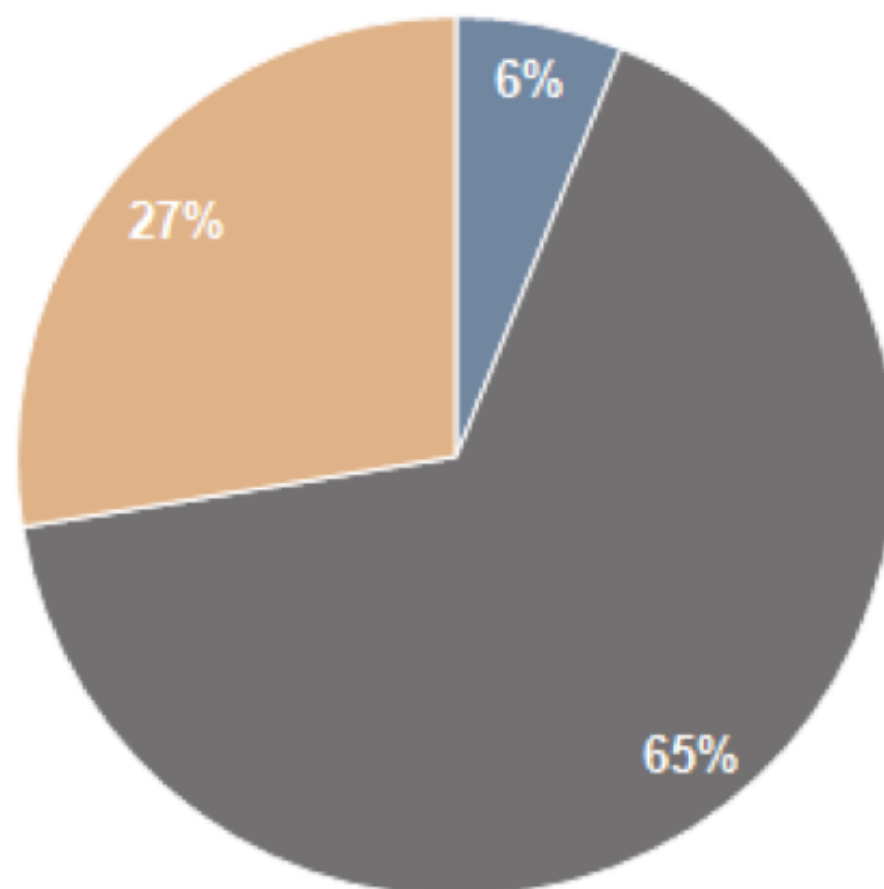
“live broadcasts of culturally-resonant, ritualistic, defining moments in the evolution of a national or transnational community”

—Vaccari, Chadwick, and O’Loughlin (2015)

How Users Watched Election Night

Percentage of Respondents...

■ Only Online ■ Only Television ■ Both



Source: Pew Research Center

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2013 STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA

The Challenge of Researching Dual Screening

- Mixes consumption and commentary.
- Very few previous studies, most of which relied on publicly available social media data.
- Such data tell us very little about the individual behaviors we are interested in.
- Content analysis alone cannot tell us about how people experience media events, however large (or small) the datasets.
- We need *surveys*.
- But we need *custom* surveys that tap authentic, high-profile media events.

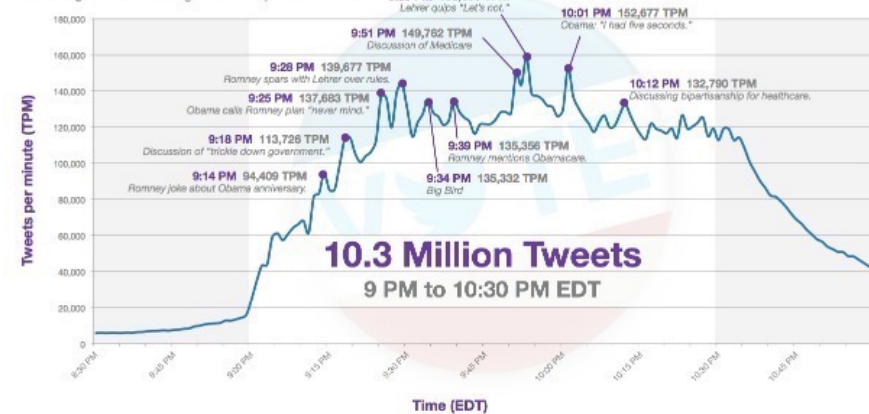
This is fine



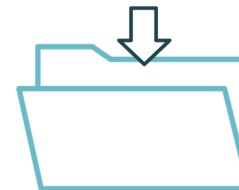
Tracking the #Debates: Denver

Tweets referencing the presidential debate, candidates and related terms — October 3, 2012

Follow @gov for more about government & politics on Twitter.



But in some cases this might be better



Ask Questions

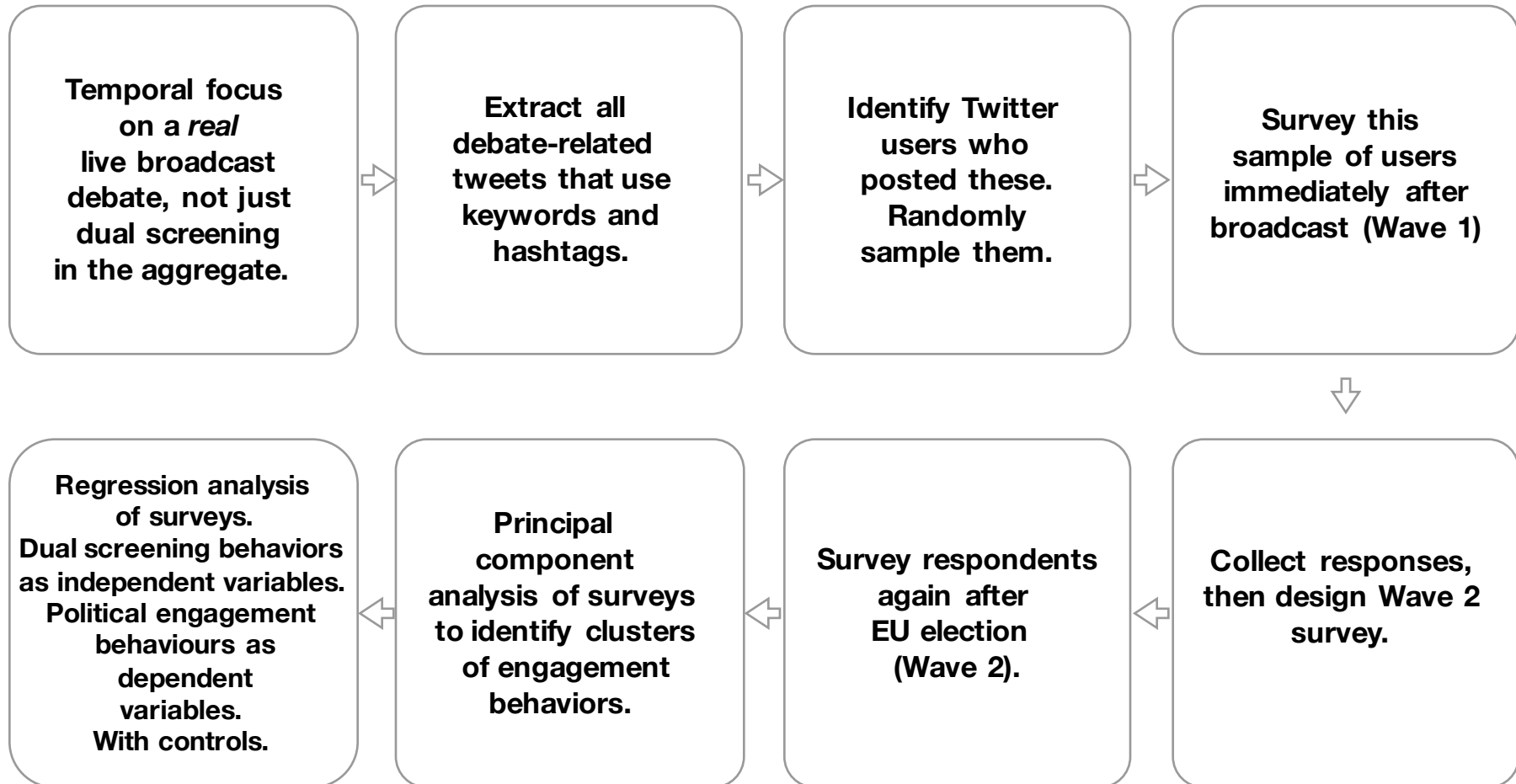


Get Answers

Research Questions

1. Do those who dual screen around a mediated political event become more or less politically engaged as a result of their experience, and how does this differ according to the type of political engagement?
2. Are those who are serendipitously exposed to information via social media about a broadcast media event more or less likely to become politically engaged?
3. In the hybrid mix of media affordances and practices involved in the dual screening context around a mediated political event, which have the strongest relationships with political engagement?

A Research Design to Get Inside Dual Screening a Hybrid Political Media Event





Radio debate on LBC, March 26, 2014. TV debate on BBC2, April 2, 2014: 1.7m viewers, 9% TV audience share for the evening.

Data Collection

- We collected tweets containing 21 keywords and relevant hashtags, such as #NickvNigel, #europedebate, #bbcdebate. Some of these emerged organically during the debates.
- This yielded 453,000 tweets posted by 103,000 unique users.
- Using an automated script, we used a series of Twitter accounts identifying the purposes of our research to send survey invitations to 22,000 unique Twitter users, randomly sampled from the original 103,000.

Data Collection

- We received 1,634 completed questionnaires in three days—7.5 percent of the 22,000 we invited.
- 1,187 provided their Twitter name or email address and agreed to be contacted by us in future. This enabled us to survey these respondents again immediately after election day, for wave 2.
- We ran our wave 2 survey seven weeks later, from May 23–26, the days immediately *after* the European Parliament elections.
- 762 responded to Wave 2 (a retention rate of 64 percent).

Our Sample

- Skewed towards politically active demographics:
 - 69% male
 - 65% left school aged 19 or older
- Not particularly young:
 - 17% aged 25-34, 23% aged 35-44, 21% aged 45-54
- Politically involved:
 - 69% very interested in politics, 26% moderately interested
 - 27% followed the campaign very closely, 42% moderately closely

Principal Component Analysis (Cross-Sectional Data)

	Discursive	Partisan	Civic
Debate political issues on social media	.857	.152	.172
Post political news on social media	.783	.180	.251
Comment on a post by a party/candidate on social media	.714	.312	.193
Discuss politics with family or friends	.600	.136	.128
Debate politics on a forum or blog	.621	.248	.249
Use the internet to encourage other people to take political action	.507	.306	.483
Encourage someone to vote for a party/candidate via social media	.408	.782	.146
Try to convince someone to vote for a party/candidate	.357	.771	.044
Encourage someone to vote for a party/candidate by sending an email	.150	.755	.278
Give money to a political party	.089	.714	.341
Work with a group of people to address a public issue	.238	.232	.766
Participate in a protest, rally or demonstration	.174	.103	.810
Attend an offline event after receiving an online invitation	.343	.342	.635

Varimax rotation. All cases with missing values for half the variables or more were excluded from the analysis.

Predicting Political Engagement (Cross-sectional Data)

	Discursive	Partisan	Civic
Watched/listened to the debates live	-1.058	-.355	-1.627**
Read about the debates on social media as the debates happened	-.189	-3.222***	-1.430*
Tuned in after reading about the debates on social media	-.665	-.216	-.641
Commented on the debates on social media as the debates happened	2.738***	2.014*	1.185*
Accidentally exposed to debate information on social media	2.306***	.396	1.411*
Engaged with the debates via posts on timeline	3.253***	2.382**	1.144
Engaged with the debates via mention (@)	1.320	2.395**	.380
Engaged with the debates via hashtag (#)	1.014	1.580*	1.251*
Engaged with the debates via searching tweets	.256	.833	.034

Unstandardized OLS regression coefficients. The models control for sources of political information, interest in politics, attention to the campaign, trust in politicians, gender, age, education, and income.

Predicting Political Engagement (Panel Data)

	Discursive	Partisan	Civic
Watched/listened to the debates live	-.254	-.843	-.705
Read about the debates on social media as the debates happened	-.281	.581	-.211
Tuned in after reading about the debates on social media	-1.018	-.539	-.718
Commented on the debates on social media as the debates happened	.659	-.076	1.203*
Accidentally exposed to debate information on social media	.850	-.061	.233
Engaged with the debates via posts on timeline	.643	-.829	.360
Engaged with the debates via mention (@)	-.149	-.244	.130
Engaged with the debates via hashtag (#)	1.355**	1.685*	.459
Engaged with the debates via searching tweets	-.557	-1.427	-.546
Dependent variable measured in wave 1	.571***	.712***	.717***

Unstandardized OLS regression coefficients. The models control for sources of political information, interest in politics, attention to the campaign, trust in politicians, gender, age, education, and income.

So what?

Some preliminary conclusions

- **Social media are an important piece of the puzzle of political engagement**
- Social media are **part of the solution more than the problem** of declining political engagement and political organizations across Western democracies
- Social media **may be closing engagement gaps** via different mechanisms and affordances **at both individual and aggregate levels**
 - Accidental exposure
 - Informal political discussions
 - Peer-to-peer mobilization
 - Active practices of dual-screening

The importance of thinking hybrid-ly

- **What happens online does not stay online:** political information, self-expression, and discussion taking place on social media have implications for individuals' offline political engagement
- **What happens offline also matters online:** campaigning on social media is being taken up by traditional party rank-and-file, with some help from newcomers, and is affected by overall levels of engagement with a campaign
- **Online and offline political engagement are closely intertwined,** to the point that it may become difficult to separate them out empirically with standardized questionnaires
- **Individuals' experience of mediated political events involve conversations about them on social media,** which can spill over into other forms of engagement, both online and offline

Complex models for complex phenomena

- **Practices and affordances** are crucial to understanding the implications of social media for political engagement
 - Platforms differ
 - Platforms change
 - Their uses and users differ and change
- **Differential effects** need to be accounted for if we are to fully understand these relationships
 - Individual level
 - Network level
 - Country level
- **Context matters** in different ways (and we need theories to define them)
 - Organizational legacies of political institutions (e.g. parties)
 - Ceiling effects due to different levels of overall engagement
 - ... and many others

THANK YOU!

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