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To Vote or Not to Vote:

Political Discussion, News Consumption, and Political Activism

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ABSTRACT

The past two decades have thrust us into a time where politics is at its most pervasive. Some dive head-first into it while others shy away from it. It is no easy decision to become politically active. This study examines some of the motivations behind being politically active. In it, I analyze the relationship between political discussion, news media consumption, and political activism. A wealth of prior research has explored the effects of news media and political discussion (among other motivators) on political activism and this study seeks to build upon it and further the research. Researchers like Dillipane (2011) and Edgarly et al. (2018) have shown the profound effects that outside influences can have on being politically active. Using correlational analyses, my study examines the effects of political discussion and news media consumption on an individual's likelihood of engaging in political activism. The study also examines the differences in activism likelihood based on the different types of news media an individual consumes, and the differences in mean frequencies of news media consumption based on the different types of news media consumed using analyses of variance. My findings show significant support for the role of news consumption in determining the likelihood of engaging in political activism but less support for political discussion. Similarly, I find support for the effects of types of news media consumed

on activism likelihood but less support for differences in news media consumption based on type of news media consumed. Results and implications are discussed.

Keywords: activism, consumption, discussion, motivation, news, media, politics

INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have cast all of us into a reality where politics is at its most pervasive. Nothing short of escaping into the backwoods of the Appalachians could keep us sheltered from it. Some take advantage of it, adding their voice to the chorus of thousands and fighting for what they believe in. With the power of the pen, the keyboard, or the physical voice they dive deep into the cage match of politics and fight it out with others who are just as passionate as them. Others turn away from it, wishing to avoid the corrosive touch of politics and keep themselves safe. For them, a life involved in politics is tantamount to eternal torture.

The decision to be politically active or not is influenced by numerous factors. The time we spend with our families discussing politics at the dinner table or what news we see are just some of the things that affect whether we take the leap of faith and become politically involved or not. The notion that the voices of the American people have no power is becoming outdated as the full force of our voices is becoming clearer by the day. More people are motivated to be politically active by the day and the effects are being seen. What motivates us to become politically active is more important now than before now that the tides are changing. It is becoming clearer that our voices matter and so the focus is now on getting us to use them. Perhaps it was the political talk at the dinner table that got us into politics or perhaps it was the news reporting something of interest that piqued our interest. This study explores the relationships between political discussion, news media consumption, and likelihood of engaging in political activism.

Literature Review

The pervasiveness of politics and the focus on activism motivation is apparent in the wealth of literature surrounding the topic. Many researchers have tackled the topic from many sides. Some target motivators such as political discussion or news consumption while others target the effects of laws on activism. Political issues in the United States have stagnated as of the past two decades. The same issues that affected the voters of 2000 affect the issues 2022. Thus, the library of literature on political motivation is nearly endless, providing a solid foundation for me to build my study on and offering varying viewpoints on what motivates us to be politically active. Parts of the vital and relevant literature are discussed.

Empirical Analyses

One researcher, Dillipane (2011), explored the effects of partisan news exposure on political participation. She used data gathered from the 2008 presidential election as well as interview-conducted surveys of random Americans to see whether exposure to partisan news that aligned with an individual's beliefs would increase his or her political participation. She also hypothesized that exposure to partisan news in opposition to one's beliefs would decrease political participation. Respondents reported their campaign activity, voter activity, party affiliation, and strength of affiliation among other things and then selected which news channels they most frequently watched. Dillipane found that the respondents tended to watch more like-minded channels and news, and greater exposure to like-minded channels increased political participation.

In a 2018 study conducted by Edgarly et al., the means by which surveillance knowledge (knowledge of political affairs) is attained were explored among younger citizens. They hypothesized that increased political discussions, mainstream news media consumption, and digital/social media use would result in higher surveillance knowledge attained. They

additionally hypothesized that political interest, education, and partisanship would affect surveillance knowledge. They conducted a rolling cross-sectional design over 23 days for this study and used an online survey to gather their data. Over 1,000 randomly-sampled young adults were surveyed, and the results partially supported their hypotheses. There was a noted correlation between digital/social media use and surveillance knowledge and between political interest and surveillance knowledge. There was also a noted correlation between political discussion with family and friends and higher surveillance knowledge. There was no relationship found between education, partisanship, and news media consumption with surveillance knowledge.

Building off some of the ideas presented in Edgarly et al.'s (2018) study, Levinsen and Yndigegn (2015) conducted a study that explored the experiences young people have with political discussion in their everyday lives, using data from Denmark for the analysis. They hypothesized that young people would exhibit a tendency to avoid political disagreements with their family and friends and the amount of political discussion with family and friends would affect their probability of being politically active. They surveyed over 900 Danes, of which 60 randomly-selected Danes participated in in-depth interviews. The results showed that the more political distance a person has from his or her family/friends, the less likely he or she will discuss politics with them, which supports their hypothesis. This behavior was especially apparent when considering the fathers compared to the mothers according to Levinsen and Yndigegn. Their results also supported the hypothesis that young people would tend to avoid political disagreements with family and friends. This aversion to political disagreements and political distance did also correlate with a lessened probability of being politically active.

Miller and Krosnick (2004) explored field applications of political motivations in a rather unique experiment. They explored the relationship between threats and the choice to engage in political activism or not. They tested two motivators, political threat and political opportunity, to see the level of response to each compared to a neutral motivator. They created three different versions of a letter soliciting contributions to the National Abortion and Reproduction Rights Action League of Ohio (NARAL Ohio). One outlined an undesirable policy change that threatened women's reproductive rights, one outlined a positive policy change that would bolster women's reproductive rights, and one that did neither and was completely neutral.

Their hypothesis was that people would be more likely to donate in response to threat motivator rather than the opportunity motivator or the neutral motivator. The yields of donations were low (<1%) across all three motivators but Miller and Krosnick footnoted that this is typical of cold mass-mailing. The results supported their hypothesis, with those who received the threat motivator having the statistically highest percentage of donations. These results can be tentatively generalized to fit other political areas and may represent some of the many motivations behind becoming politically active.

Two motivators that are becoming increasingly more important are the religiosity and secularism of a candidate. These characteristics were the focus of a study conducted by Castle et al. (2017). They posited that religious groups and identities are becoming less about what religion they are and more about how religious, which according to them translates to the political world when deciding who to vote for. They hypothesized that the religiosity and secularity of a candidate will affect the support gained from Republicans/conservatives and Democrats/liberals. They predicted that a candidate with high religiosity will appeal more to Republicans and "cultural conservatives" and thus result in greater outpour of their support,

while candidates who are more secular will appeal more to Democrats and "cultural liberals" (Castle et al., 2017). Respondents to the survey evaluated a hypothetical state legislative candidate with varying levels of religiosity and secularism.

Similar to the motivators of threat, political discussion, and news media consumption described in the literature above, the motivators of religiosity and secularity were found to be positively correlated with the choice to be politically active. Castle et al.'s (2017) study results supported the researchers' predictions that religiosity garners more support from Republicans/conservatives and secularism garners more support from Democrats/liberals.

Perhaps the most common form of political activism is voting. The past two years have seen a significant difference between older and younger voters with many younger voters staying at home despite making up the largest number in the electorate. The idea that our votes have no power is what primarily keeps them from going to the polls, and this idea originated from the dissonant state voting laws. Juelich and Coll (2020) explored the effects of these differing institutional laws on voting, noting how some states made voting as easy as breathing air while others made TSA security checks pale in comparison to the complexity and restrictiveness of their voting laws.

They hypothesized that more restrictive voting laws would negatively impact youth voter turnout and voter turnout in general. They conducted a survey using the Cost of Voting Index to determine that the more restrictive a state's voting laws are, the lower the voter turnout is, especially among youth when compared to older voters. Their age cutoff for youth was 29. Juelich and Coll (2020) noted a 4% difference in voter turnout between younger and older voters in states with more "permissible" voting laws and a significantly higher 13% difference in states

with more restrictive laws. These results supported their hypothesis and showed the effects of institutional laws on voter turnout.

Meta-Analysis on Political Ideology

Jost et al. (2009) conducted a massive review and meta-analysis of the then-recent advancements in the structure, functions, and affinities of the political ideology system. They reviewed several keystone articles and studies that shaped the definition of political ideology. One important distinction they included was the difference between symbolic and operational aspects of political ideology, where they asserted that many Americans were philosophical conservatives but operational liberals. Another aspect of political ideology they described that we definitely see today is the correlational relationship between liberalism and conservatism. They are almost always negatively correlated, as determined by multiple studies reviewed by Jost et al.

Jost et al. (2009) stated in their review that a common trend among the articles and studies they reviewed was that the political spectrum seems to be arbitrarily constructed in both a top-down process by political elites for the public's consumption and a bottom-up process by individuals to provide reason and structure to otherwise-disconnected ideals. Relatedly, they define a strong distinction in the understanding of the political spectrum between those who are highly informed of and engaged in politics and those who are not. Specifically, they stress the importance of high "ability" and motivation. Those who meet such criteria have similar and congruent ways of seeing the spectrum as a simple left-right scale (Jost et al., 2009). They stress that the more knowledgeable an individual is about politics, the more they can easily separate the concepts of liberalism and conservatism and understand it on a simple scale rather than a messy cloud.

This meta-analysis discusses how the effects of "outside" influences such as discussions with family or news consumption on political activism are related to the basic structure of political ideology. The distinction posited by Jost et al. (2009) of differing understandings of political ideology based on knowledge level of politics may have a profound effect on the results of my study. Behind every motivator is the individual's political ideology and how one interprets politics. There may be a mixture of people who are well-versed in politics and those who are all but oblivious to it in my participants pool, which may affect the results. Further implications are discussed in the "Discussion" section below.

Theoretical Foundations of Ideology and Activism

Self-affirmation theory states that people are motivated to protect and maintain their integrity, public perceptions of themselves, and a measurable control over their choices and fate. Research has shown that when we affirm an "aspect of [our] own individual identity" we reduce in-group biases (Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015). This theoretically could be applied to social identities as well, but Ehrlich and Gramzow (2015) stated that empirical support of this application is limited and it is equally, if not more, likely that the opposite effect occurs: group-affirmation can indeed increase certain in-group biases. Affirming the self often leads to reflection and understanding of one's own limits but group-affirmation produces far more mixed results.

If self-affirmation bolsters personal identities, group-affirmation bolsters social identities. Even in the face of rigid opposition, affirming the group's social identities has resulted in stronger favoritism of one's own group. For example, Ehrlich and Gramzow (2015) reference a study conducted by Glasford, Dovidio, and Pratto (2009) in which participants who affirmed their American identities experienced and reported less guilt after reading news of American

bombings in which many Iraqi civilians became collateral damage than those who did not affirm their identities. Ehrlich and Gramzow wished to see the effects of group affirmation on in-group biases with relation to politics and how we balance our own political identity with the identity of the political party (the group in this case) we most closely affiliate with. They conducted three experiments to test these effects. The first asked participants to state their political party affiliation who were then randomly assigned to one of two groups: self-affirmation and group-affirmation. Those in the self-affirmation condition were asked to rate a set of values based on how important they were to themselves, while those in the group-affirmation condition were asked to rate the same set of values based on how important they were to the political party they affiliated with. The results from Experiment 1 showed contradictory effects between affirming the self and affirming the group. Those in the group-affirmation condition were more likely to evaluate all items on all questionnaires with a group-favored bias and the outgroup was evaluated more negatively.

Experiment 2 followed the same formula but sampled undergraduate university students. The value set was also tailored for college students and asked about issues ranging from attitudes to students' best interests. It gleaned similar results to Experiment 1. Participants in Experiment 3 were also split into the two groups and were asked to select 5 stand-out words in a word-accessibility task from a set of 55 words that were randomly placed in 7 columns. Participants who affirmed their political party (the group) demonstrated "greater accessibility" of politically relevant words, while positive and negative words were accessed more by those who self-affirmed. Ehrlich and Gramzow's (2015) three experiments supported the notion that greater group-affirmation can lead to greater in-group biases, which is a concept that can be applied to all parts of politics, including views on activism.

The distinction between self-affirmation and group-affirmation comes into play with political activism with regards to the fluidity of the political climate. Individuals may feel more inclined to affirm with the group rather themselves during certain periods in a political year. This could happen when a party in power loses that position (e.g. Republicans following the 2020 election) and all within the party must work for the party (the group) as a whole to retake power rather than distinguish themselves from the others based on their own self-affirmed ideals. The collective requires more effort at that moment. This could impact the results of my study, and these implications are discussed in the "Discussion" section below.

Literature Analysis and Hypotheses

All eight articles and studies discussed in the section above examined the relationship between motivation, political ideology and its reasonings, and activism. The literature shows several trends. The first is the role of political discussion in political activism. Even if not directly related, political discussion with family, friends, and on social media seems to have an effect on likelihood of engaging in political activism (Edgarly et al., 2018; Jost et al., 2009; Levinsen & Yndigegn, 2015). The general trend appears to be that the greater the amount of time spent in political discussion with family, friends, and on social media, the greater the likelihood of engaging in political activism.

Another trend is the prevalence of a relationship between ideology, surveillance knowledge, and activism. Several studies (Edgarly et al., 2018; Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015; Jost et al., 2009) show that ideology is shaped by knowledge, and knowledge shapes ideology. Both knowledge and ideology play a role in political activism. While my study does not measure either knowledge or ideology, just behaviors, this interconnected relationship serves as an explanation for why my results are the way they are.

34

Most of the literature mentioned discusses political discussion and knowledge, which became a central point in my study. The wealth of data supporting news media consumption's relationship with political activism similarly led me to examine that relationship in my study. I used the concepts of ideology and applied it to my study as well, hoping to examine the relationships between different ideologies and political activism.

In my research, I examined the relationship between political discussion, news media consumption, and political activism in four parts. The first part examined the relationship between the time an individual spent in political discussion with friends, family, and on social media and the likelihood of that individual engaging in some forms of political activism. Part two examined the relationship between the frequency with which an individual consumed different types of news media sources and the likelihood of that individual engaging in some forms of political activism. Part three examined the differences in overall news consumption between the different types of news media consumed. Finally, part four examined the differences in likelihood of engaging in political activism between the different types of news media were also conducted. I hypothesized that:

- H_1: The frequency with which an individual consumes different types of news media sources will affect their likelihood of engaging in various forms of political activism.

- H_2: The frequency with which an individual participated in political discussion with friends, family, and on social media will affect their likelihood of engaging in various forms of political activism.

- H_3: There is a difference in the mean frequencies of consumption of different types of news media based on the type of news media primarily consumed.

- H$_4$: There will be a difference in participants' mean likelihood of engaging in political activism depending on the type of news media primarily consumed.

METHOD

Participants

The participants for this study were McNeese State University students enrolled in a psychology course. All 97 participants volunteered for this study via the SONA system and did so as a course requirement, as a bonus point opportunity provided by their instructors, or both; some professors require participation in a certain amount of studies and offer bonus points to those who participate in more. Most of the participants were of ages 18 or older, and those who participated but were under the age of 18 did so only after submitting a form giving them permission to do so to the Department of Psychology, which had to be signed by a parent or guardian. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 37 years old (M=20.43, SD=3.69).

A mixture of lower-level (freshman and sophomore), upper-level (junior and senior), and graduate students participated in this study, with 41 freshman, 11 sophomores, 17 juniors, 27 seniors, and 1 graduate student. 65 of the participants were female, 30 were male, 1 chose the "Other" option, and 1 chose the option of "Prefer Not to Say". The participant who chose the "Other" option for the gender demographic specified their gender as "nonbinary".

The participants' residential status (asked in the demographics questionnaire) varied, with 11 selecting "On-campus housing with others", 6 selecting "Off-campus housing alone", 21 selecting "Off-campus housing with others", 1 selecting "Off-campus apartment alone", 7 selecting "Off-campus apartment or shared space with others", 34 selecting "Living at home with a parent(s) or guardian(s)", and 17 selecting "Living at home with family (including siblings and/or extended family)". As for Ethnicity, I asked a free-response question in an effort to allow

for the inclusion of all ethnicities and combinations of ethnicities. The answers varied with some identifying with two or more ethnicities. 71 of the 97 participants identified as White or Caucasian, 10 as Black/African-American, 2 as Hispanic/Latino, 5 as Asian, and 9 as two or more ethnicities.

Of the 139 participants that signed up for the study on McNeese's online SONA website, I excluded the data of 42 participants because they failed to correctly answer at least one of the two validity questions in place to ensure that participants were giving their true answers and not selecting the same option for each question in an effort to "speed through" the study. Therefore, the total number of valid participants is 97. All 139 participants who completed the study, regardless of whether their data were excluded or not, were awarded 1 credit that would count toward either course credit or course bonus credit, depending on the participant's course.

Materials

I conducted this study online via the SONA system, so it required no physical materials other than an electronic device such as a laptop. In the study itself, I presented a SONA abstract, a demographic questionnaire, a modified version of the Activism Orientation Scale (AOS; Corning & Myers, 2013) that was used to measure a participant's likelihood of engaging in political activism, a questionnaire measuring frequency of political discussion, and a questionnaire on media exposure with an accompanying key that is not released to the participants and is for data collection purposes only. In addition, the study began with an Informed Consent page and ended with a Debriefing page.

The demographic questionnaire asked five questions on the following demographics: age, classification in college, gender, residential status, and ethnicity. I also included a question asking for a specification of gender for any participants who may have chosen the "other option".

The Modified Activism Orientation Scale (MAOS) was used to measure the variable of "likelihood of engaging in political activism". It is a Likert-type scale that I modified from the original AOS. The original contained a few survey questions that were loaded, double-barreled, or posing greater-than-minimal risk, such as asking for an admission of minor criminal activity. My modifications removed these questions and reworded some others to keep the total 34 questions wholly impartial, simple, and free of greater-than-minimal risk.

Beyond this, the MAOS functions identically to the original AOS. It measures likelihood on a scale of 0 to 3, or "Extremely Unlikely" to "Extremely Likely", and the total score for each participant could be anywhere from 0 to 102. A score of 0 indicates the least possible likelihood of engaging in any sort of political activism, while a score of 102 indicates the greatest possible likelihood of engaging in political activism. For two partss of this study (see "Design" below), this scale measures the dependent variable. The scale has high content validity. It measures all aspects of the variable of political activism, which covers a wide range of activities including voting, protesting, campaigning, and displaying posters or T-shirts with political messages, giving it high content validity and covering all bases. It subsequently has high face validity, as the scale covers well-known aspects of political activism that can be easily recognized.

I also included a self-created measure for the frequency of political discussion variable. This simple measure asks participants to state the number of hours spent in political discussion each day in the past week. The measure had eight questions: seven asked for the number of hours for each day of the week and one asked for the total number of hours over the whole week. I chose to break it down for each day for only one week as that would make it easier for participants to recall and think critically about their daily discussions rather than give a guessed answer for larger periods of time.

The third and final measure used was a self-created Likert-type scale called the NMC (News Media Consumption) Scale that measured media exposure. The scale measured the frequency of consumption of news media and covered three different types of media: Liberal-Leaning, Unbiased/Neutral, and Conservative-Leaning. Participants indicated the frequency of consumption on a range of "Very Rarely" to "Very Frequently" with a corresponding score of 1 to 5. The 36 listed news media sources were split evenly into the three categories described above (12 in each category). The total score possible for each category (subscore) ranged from 12 to 60, and the total score range for the scale is 36 to 180. A score of 12 on any category indicates the lowest frequency of consumption of that type of news media and a score of 60 indicates the highest frequency. A score of 36 for the overall scale indicates the lowest frequency of consumption of all three types of news media, and a score of 180 indicates the highest frequency. For example, a participant who listens primarily to unbiased news sources would have a hypothetical subscore distribution of 12, 48, 18 (Liberal-Leaning, Unbiased/Neutral, and Conservative-Leaning, respectively), and the total score would be 78. Higher scores in each category indicate greater consumption of that category of media.

This measure was designed to easily categorize the three major types of media and assigns news sources to those categories based on widely accepted definitions for those sites. For example, CNN is widely accepted as a liberal-leaning source while Fox News is widely accepted as a conservative-leaning source. The measure has high construct validity, as it efficiently measures the abstract concepts of liberal, conservative, and unbiased. We may not be able to see these three categories objectively but we do have a well-established base of ideals and actions that concretely distinguish between the three categories. "Unbiased/Neutral" serves a double role of both unbiased, objective news and news that covers both liberal and conservative ideals. The

measure also has high face validity as the news sources are easily recognized and can be easily seen as part of one of the three categories.

Design and Statistics

The study consisted of four hypotheses and thus four parts: an ex-post facto Pearson correlational study part, a simple Pearson correlational study part, a one-way within-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) part, and a one-way between-subjects ANOVA part.

Design and Variables

The ex-post facto Pearson correlational part of the study measured the type of news media a participant consumed and the frequency of consumption and compared it to the participant's scores on the MAOS. Measuring news media consumption is an "after the fact" measurement, so an ex-post facto design was appropriate. To analyze this relationship between news media consumption and likelihood of engaging in political activism, I used a correlational analysis. I chose to do a correlational analysis because I wanted to analyze the degree to which these two sets of quantitative data are related.

The independent variable of this part was the frequency with which a participant consumed different types of news media sources. This frequency was measured on the Likert-type NMC Scale using the total scores which ranged from 36 to 180 rather than the individual section scores. A "news media source" is defined for this study as a nationwide (not local) news network that reports national and international news to the American public and is consumed on social media, television, radios, and other modes of communication. Sources included Al Jazeera, CNN, Fox News, The Wall Street Journal, and more that fit this definition. The dependent variable for this part was a participant's likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism. This was measured on the MAOS on a score of 0 to 102. "Likelihood of engaging in

forms of political activism" is defined for this study as the individually-reported likelihood that the participant would engage in each of the 34 acts of political activism listed in the MAOS sometime in the future. The "future" has no specific timeframe given the shifting nature of people's lives.

The second part of this study was an analysis of the relationship between the amount of time a participant spends in political discussion with family, friends, and on social media in the last full calendar week, and their corresponding scores on the MAOS. A "last full calendar week" is defined for this study as the seven days beginning with the most recent Sunday the participant experienced and ending on the Monday that preceded that Sunday. To analyze this relationship between political discussion and likelihood of engaging in political activism, I used a correlational analysis to see to what degree two sets of quantitative data are related.

For this part the independent variable was the time (in hours) spent in political discussion with friends, family, and on social media. "Political discussion with friends, family, and on social media" is defined for this study as any form of discussion (physical, text, online, etc.) in which the participant and the other person(s) discuss current or past political affairs such as political ideals, opinions on the state or federal governments' actions or future actions, elections, established or idealized laws, pending or future legislative bills, social issues related to law or politics (such as abortion or LGBTQ+ rights), moral issues related to law or politics, or any other item that is commonly referred to as a "political issue". My instructions in the study stated this exact definition for the participants to reduce confusion on their part. The dependent variable in this correlational part is the same as the dependent variable for the ex-post facto part, which is the likelihood of engaging in political activism as defined above.

Part three of this study was an analysis of the difference between the three types of news media consumed (Liberal-Leaning, Unbiased/Neutral, and Conservative-Leaning) in the NMC Scale and overall scores on the NMC Scale. Each of these categories are within the same subject, which is the frequency of political discussion with friends, family, and on social media as measured by the NMC Scale, and so to measure the difference between them I chose to use a one-way within-subjects ANOVA. Some participants had shown a preference for more than one type of news source (e.g. they had a subscore distribution of (18, 33, 33) or showed no preference at all across all three types (e.g. they had a subscore distribution of 12, 12, 12). As I could not use this data for the aims of this analysis, I excluded these score sets and they were noted as "No Clear Preference".

The three independent variables for this part were the types of news media consumed by participants. Each participant's subscore distribution was analyzed to see which of the three had the highest score among them, and that was noted as their primarily-consumed news media type. The dependent variable for this part was the overall frequency of news media consumption, represented by the total score on the NMC Scale.

The fourth and final part of this study was an analysis of the difference between the types of news media consumed in the NMC Scale and the likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism as measured by the MAOS. This time, the subscore sets noted as "No Clear Preference" were included because the analysis would examine the relationship between no clear news media preference and likelihood of engaging in political activism. This was conducted as a one-way between-subjects ANOVA as it measures the differences between two different subjects: NMC Scale subscores and MAOS scores, unlike part three which was under the NMC Scale blanket subject. The four independent variables for this part were all of the types of news media

42

consumed (No Clear Preference included). The dependent variable was the likelihood of engaging in political activism as measured by the MAOS. All four parts are nonexperimental designs as the independent variables in each were not manipulated, simply measured.

Statistical Tests and Assumptions

As mentioned above, I used Pearson correlational analyses and ANOVA to examine the statistics of my data. A Pearson correlational analysis will be used for parts one and two, corresponding to hypotheses one and two. I used ANOVA for parts three and four, corresponding to hypotheses three and four. Part three used within-subjects ANOVA while part four used between-subjects ANOVA. The subjects in part three (type of news media consumed and overall frequency of consumption of news media) are dependent on each other given their measurement on the same scale, which is why a within-subjects ANOVA was used. For part four the subjects of type of news media consumed and likelihood of engaging in political activism are wholly independent of each other, which justifies the use of a between-subjects ANOVA. Both analyses of variance are one-way given that each sample is defined in only one way.

Five statistical assumptions exist for the Pearson correlational analyses that I will discuss in this study. The first is the assumption that all variables are measured at the interval and/or ratio level, where variables have equal intervals between them. The second is that a linear relationship exists between the two variables. Third is that both variables are normally distributed. The fourth is that with each observation in the analysis there is a related pair of variables (an x and y component). The fifth assumption is that there are no outliers in the data.

Three assumptions exist for ANOVA that I will discuss in this study. The first is that all variables are normally distributed, similar to the Pearson correlation assumption. The second is that each subject is independent or independently sampled. Strict independence between subjects

is an assumption for between-subjects ANOVA while independent sampling is an assumption for within-subjects ANOVA. In a within-subjects ANOVA, subjects are intentionally dependent and thus only require that subjects be independently sampled and not wholly independent. The third assumption is that the variances of the measurements must be equal and the correlations among the measurements are equal as well (the assumption of sphericity).

Ethics

In the SONA description and Informed Consent was the assurance of the right to withdraw at any time with no penalty to the participants, and this assurance was made absolutely clear. Also included on these pages was the assurance that participation was entirely voluntary. Participants could not move on to the actual study before reading the SONA description and the Informed Consent page. As mentioned before, it was made clear that any underage participants (under the age of 18) had to have a signed paper by a parent or guardian giving permission to participate, and it had to be turned into the Department of Psychology prior to participation. An anticipated risk to the participants was the possibility of some insecurity as a result of discussing political behaviors. Participants may have felt some discomfort with revealing information that may reveal their personal beliefs or political stance. To manage this risk, participants were assured of their confidentiality in the SONA description, Informed Consent, and in the Debriefing at the end of the study, with assurances that their names will never be associated with any of the data. Another inclusion was the email addresses of both me and my instructor in the Debriefing at the end in case the participants had any questions or concerns about the study.

Another potential risk was the time commitment. Some participants may have been worried about the time it would take to complete this study and may not have wished to spend too much time on it. To manage this risk I included an assurance that the study will not take

longer than 30 minutes of their time. This assurance appeared both on the study's description on SONA as well as on the Informed Consent page.

Some participants may have felt stress or frustration as a result of attempting to remember previous events, which they were asked to do in one of the questionnaires. To ease this potential stress and frustration, I only asked them to recollect events from a week ago and no more than that. In addition, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that the participants would list the number of hours spent in political discussion for each day in the week, which should make recollection easier.

The primary benefit of participating in this research was either 1) receiving course credit or 2) receiving bonus points. Another benefit was that participants got to experience psychological research. They had read about such research in their PSYC 101 class (at least) as well as in other Psychology classes and will now have a better understanding of the experience itself, leading to a better understanding of psychology as a science.

Procedure

As the first step, participants signed into the SONA system and selected this study. As this was an online study, data collection occurred via the SONA system only. No participants completed this study in-person. Next, the participants read and acknowledged the Informed Consent form, which was the first form to appear once the participants signed up for the study. The form, among other things, contained assurances of confidentiality, privacy, and minimal time commitment. It also contained the assurance of the right to withdraw at any time. Participants were not able to move onto the actual study until they had first read this form. Clicking the button to proceed to the study acknowledged their assent in place of written consent.

The participants then completed a short demographic questionnaire that I constructed, in which I asked about their age, gender, classification, ethnicity, and residential status. The age and ethnicity questions were free-response questions designed as such to capture all possible answers. For the gender question I offered options of "Male", "Female", "Other", and "Prefer Not to Say". For those who chose "Other", I offered a free-response question for them to specify.

Following this, the participants listed the number of hours per day in the last full calendar week (Monday-Sunday) spent in political discussion with friends, family, on social media, etc. They listed the hours per day in seven separate free-response sections and were then instructed to state the total number of hours by adding up the hours listed prior.

The participants then completed a Likert-scale questionnaire (NMC Scale) in which they noted the type of news media they consume (the questionnaire consisted of 36 news sources such as CNN and CBS) and the frequency of consumption (ranging from "1-Very Rarely" to "5-Very frequently"). The news sources were divided into three types or categories: Liberal-Leaning, Unbiased/Neutral, and Conservative-Leaning. The types of news sources were provided in a repeating 1-2-3 fashion, with the first being a Liberal-Leaning source, the second an Unbiased/Neutral source, and the third a Conservative-Leaning source. Participants were not told which type each source was. In an effort to reduce the number of participants who simply mark one answer through the questionnaire instead of truthfully answering and to increase the validity of my data, I added a validity question to this questionnaire, which asked the participants to choose the option of "4-Frequently".

Participants then reported their likelihood of engaging in political activism using the MAOS. They completed this Likert-type scale similarly to the previous one, and they rated their likelihood of engaging in 34 separate acts of political activism on a scale of "0-Extremely

Unlikely" to "3-Extremely Likely". I also asked a validity question here, where I asked them to choose the option of "3-Extremely Likely". I provided a Debriefing page at the end of the study in which I explained the purpose of the study in detail and reiterated the assurance of confidentiality and privacy among other things. I also explained in the form that the participants' credit for completing the study would appear on SONA within the next 48 hours. In the form, I thanked them for their participation and included contact information if they had any questions or concerns.

RESULTS

Part One (H$_1$)

A Pearson Correlation test was conducted to measure H$_1$, which was the relationship between the frequency of consumption of different types of news media sources as measured by overall scores on the NMC Scale (M=53.34, SD=19.72) and the likelihood of engaging in political activism as measured by scores on the MAOS (M=25.91, SD=17.75). There was a statistically significant positive relationship between frequency of news media source consumption and likelihood of engaging in political activism r (95) = 0.40, $p < 0.05$ (p = 0.000048).

Table 1

Correlation Between Overall NMC Scale Scores and MAOS Scores

		MAOS Scores	NMC Scale Overall Scores
MAOS Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	0.401*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	97	97
NMC Scale Overall Scores	Pearson Correlation	0.401*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	97	97

p < 0.05

Figure 1

Relationship Between Overall NMC Scale Scores and MAOS Scores

Relationship Between NMC Scale Scores and MAOS Scores
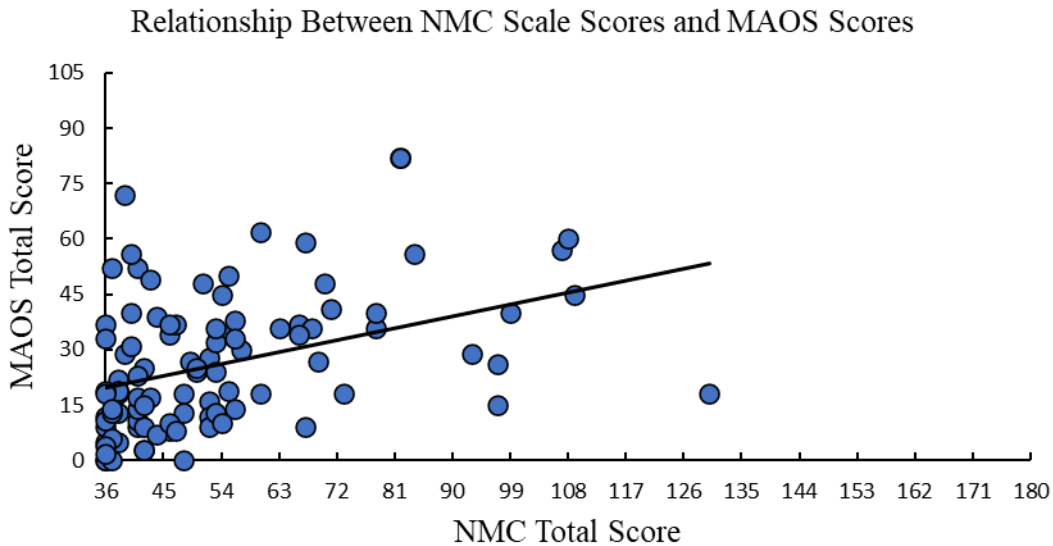
Part Two (H₂)

A Pearson Correlation test was also conducted to measure H_2, which was the relationship between the time (in hours) spent in political discussion with friends, family, and on social media (M=3.44, SD=6.11) and the likelihood of engaging in political activism as measured by scores on the MAOS (M=25.91, SD=17.75). There was no statistically significant relationship between time spent in political discussion and likelihood of engaging in political activism r (95) = 0.18, p > 0.05 (p = 0.079).

Table 2

Correlation Between Time Spent in Political Discussion and MAOS Scores

		MAOS Scores	Time Spent in Political Discussion
MAOS Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	0.179

	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.079
	N	97	97
Time	Pearson	0.179	1
Spent in	Correlation		
Political	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.079	
Discussion	N	97	97

Figure 2

Relationship Between Time Spent in Political Discussion and MAOS Scores

Relationship Between Political Discussion and MAOS Scores
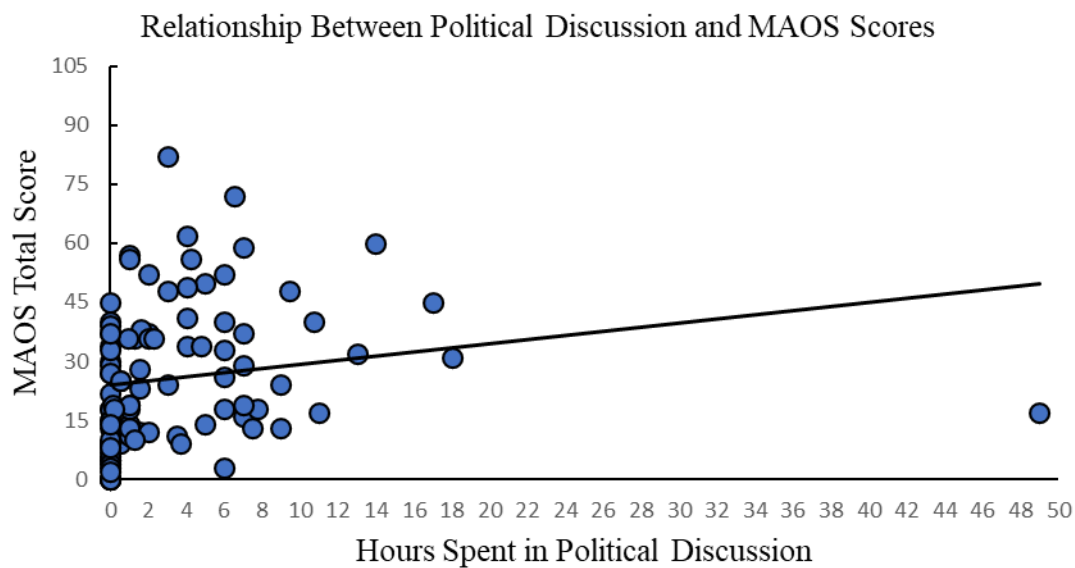
Part Three (H₃)

A one-way within-subjects ANOVA was conducted to measure the differences between mean frequencies of consumption of the different types news media sources as measured by NMC Scale subscores based on the type of news media consumed (Liberal-Leaning [LL], Unbiased/Neutral [UB], Conservative-Leaning [CL]). The overall news media consumption scores were significantly different across the different types of news media. $F_{(2, 192)} = 8.96$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.085$. Dependent samples t tests were conducted to assess which of the types of

consumed news media differed from one another, with each test conducted at an alpha level of 0.016. Results show that:

- The mean news media consumption scores for liberal-leaning news media consumption (M=18.60, SD=7.22) were significantly higher than the mean scores for unbiased news media consumption (M=17.40, SD=7.02), t (96) =3.45, $p < 0.001$.

- The mean news media consumption scores for liberal-leaning news media consumption (M=18.60, SD=7.22) were significantly higher than the mean scores for conservative-leaning news media consumption (M=17.34, SD=6.25), t (96) = 3.49, $p < 0.001$.

- There was no statistically significant difference between the mean news media consumption scores for unbiased news media consumption (M=17.40, SD=7.02) compared to conservative-leaning news media consumption (M=17.34, SD=6.25), t (96) = 0.21, $p = 0.83$.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for NMC Scale Subscores

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
LL Subscore	18.5979	7.21639	97
UB Subscore	17.4021	7.02326	97
CL Subscore	17.3402	6.25148	97

Multivariate Tests were analyzed to determine whether the within-subjects ANOVA was statistically significant. Table 4 shows the results of the multivariate tests, with all tests showing a statistically significant difference of $p < 0.001$ (alpha of 0.016in at least one of the pairs tested, though it does not specify which pairs were statistically significant. To determine this I conducted a paired samples t test (Table 7). The Wilk's Lambda is on the higher end, indicating

that the statistically significant difference may not just be due to the effects of the type of news sources consumed; chance or other confounding variables could play a role in it.

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was conducted to ensure that the variance between the variables was low enough to justify the use of a one-way within-subjects ANOVA (Table 5). At an alpha level of 0.05, sphericity was not violated and the ANOVA was justified at $p = 0.068$. Because sphericity was not violated, corrections such as the Greenhouse-Geisser were not used for estimates.

Table 4

Multivariate Tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Type of News Media Consumed	Pillai's Trace	0.132	7.197[b]	2.000	95.000	0.001	0.132
	Wilks' Lambda	0.868	7.197[b]	2.000	95.000	0.001	0.132
	Hotelling's Trace	0.152	7.197[b]	2.000	95.000	0.001	0.132
	Roy's Largest Root	0.152	7.197[b]	2.000	95.000	0.001	0.132

a. Design: Intercept
 Within Subjects Design: Type of News Media Consumed
b. Exact statistic

Table 5

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a]

Measure: News Media Consumption

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
						Epsilon[b]	

Type of News Media Consumed	0.945	5.381	2	0.068	0.948	0.966	0.500

a. Design: Intercept
 Within Subjects Design: Type of News Media Consumed
b. May be used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the averaged tests of significance. Corrected tests are displayed in the Tests of Within-Subjects Effects table (Table 6).

Though the results showed a statistically significant difference, the size of the difference (effect of the types of news sources primarily consumed on the frequency of consumption of the types) varies. Table 6 shows the results of a test of effect sizes for the within-subjects ANOVA. Results show $\eta^2 = 0.085$, which is fairly small.

Table 6

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: News Media Consumption

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta^2
Type of News Media Consumed	Sphericity Assumed	97.512	2	48.756	8.957	<.001	.085
	Greenhouse -Geisser	97.512	1.896	51.441	8.957	<.001	.085
	Huynh-Feldt	97.512	1.933	50.454	8.957	<.001	.085
	Lower-bound	97.512	1.000	97.512	8.957	.004	.085
Error (Type of News Media Consumed)	Sphericity Assumed	1045.155	192	5.444			
	Greenhouse -Geisser	1045.155	181.979	5.743			
	Huynh-Feldt	1045.155	185.539	5.633			

Lower-bound	1045.155	96.000	10.887

Because the multivariate tests (Table 4) did not show the individual *p* values for the ANOVA, I conducted a paired samples t test (Table 7) to determine them. Two of the three pairs showed a statistically significant difference in frequency of types of news media sources consumed based on the types primarily consumed. These two pairs were LL-UB ($p < 0.001$) and LL-CL ($p < 0.001$). The third pair (UB-CL) showed no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.834$). The individual pairs' effect sizes (Table 8) are represented by Cohen's d and show that while the differences in frequency of news media consumption types is statistically significant for LL-UB and LL-CL, the effect size is relatively small (0.350 and 0.354, respectively). The effect size for UB-CL is predictably small due to its lack of statistical significance (0.021). Figure 3 is a graph representation of the overall mean frequencies of consumption of different types of news media sources based on type of news media primarily consumed.

Table 7

Paired Samples Test on NMC Scale Subscore Pairs

			Paired Differences						
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	LL – UB	1.1959	3.4146	.3467	.5077	1.8841	3.449	96	<.001
Pair 2	LL – CL	1.2577	3.5511	.3606	.5420	1.9734	3.488	96	<.001

| Pair 3 | UB – CL | .0619 | 2.8969 | .2941 | -.5220 | .6457 | 0.210 | 96 | 0.834 |

Table 8

Paired Samples Effect Sizes

			Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	LL Subscores – UB Subscores	Cohen's d	3.41455	.350	.144	.554
		Hedges' correction	3.44152	.347	.143	.550
Pair 2	LL Subscores – CL Subscores	Cohen's d	3.55105	.354	.148	.559
		Hedges' correction	3.57910	.351	.147	.554
Pair 3	UB Subscores – CL Subscores	Cohen's d	2.89689	.021	-.178	.220
		Hedges' correction	2.91977	.021	-.176	.219

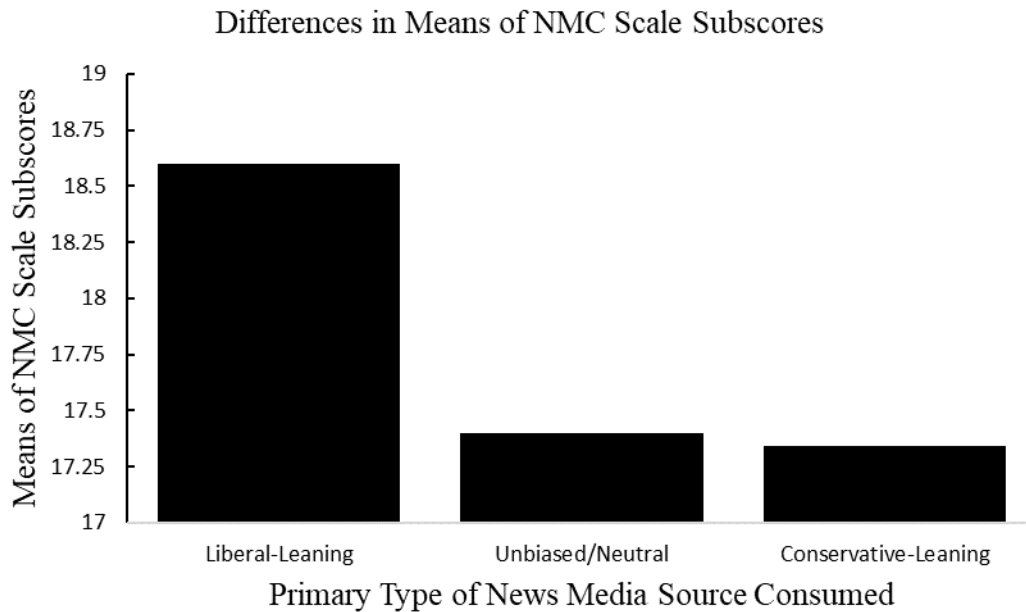a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.

Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.

Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

Figure 3

Difference in Means of NMC Scale Subscores Between Type of News Media Consumed

Differences in Means of NMC Scale Subscores

Part Four

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to measure the differences in mean likelihoods of engaging in forms of political activism as measured on the MAOS and the different types of news media primarily consumed (No Clear Preference [NCP], Liberal-Leaning [LL], Unbiased/Neutral [UB], Conservative-Leaning [CL]). The likelihood of engaging in political activism varied overall by the type of news media consumed, $F_{(3, 93)} = 2.93$, $p < 0.5$ ($p = 0.038$), $\eta^2 = 0.185$. The multiple comparisons of the groups indicate that:

- Those who consume primarily liberal-leaning news media (n=43, M=30.07, SD=18.92) were significantly more likely to engage in political activism than those who have no clear media consumption preference (n=24, M=17.21. SD=13.35, $p = 0.02$).

- There was no statistically significant difference in likelihood of engaging in political activism between those who have no clear media preference (n=24, M=17.21. SD=13.35)

and those who consume primarily conservative-leaning news media (n=13, M=25.92, SD=14.89, p = 0.23).

- There was no statistically significant difference in likelihood of engaging in political activism between those who have no clear media preference (n=24, M=17.21. SD=13.35) and those who consume primarily neutral/unbiased news media (n=17, M=27.65, SD=19.11, p = 0.46).

- There was no statistically significant difference in likelihood of engaging in political activism between those who consume primarily liberal-leaning news media (n=43, M=30.07, SD=18.92) and those who consume primarily neutral/unbiased news media (n=17, M=27.65, SD=19.11, p = 0.96).

- There was no statistically significant difference in likelihood of engaging in political activism between those who consume primarily liberal-leaning news media (n=43, M=30.07, SD=18.92) and those who consume primarily conservative-leaning news media consumption (n=13, M=25.92, SD=14.89, p = 0.87).

- There was no statistically significant difference in likelihood of engaging in political activism between those who consume primarily neutral/unbiased news media (n=17, M=27.65, SD=19.11) and those who consume primarily conservative-leaning news media consumption (n=13, M=25.92, SD=14.89, p = 0.99).

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for MAOS Scores Based on Type of News Media Primarily Consumed

MAOS Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.

					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
NCP	24	17.2083	13.33508	2.72201	11.5774	22.8392	0.00	41.00
LL	43	30.0698	18.92013	2.88529	24.2470	35.8925	0.00	82.00
UB	17	27.6471	19.10805	4.63438	17.8226	37.4715	8.00	72.00
CL	13	25.9231	14.89106	4.13004	16.9245	34.9217	3.00	48.00
Total	97	25.9072	17.74829	1.80207	22.3301	29.4843	0.00	82.00

Table 9 shows that the majority of participants (67 out of 97; 69.07%) either showed no clear preference or consumed primarily liberal-leaning sources. Standard deviations are high across all categories. The mean MAOS scores for each category seemed highly varied, which raised concerns for the variability between the independent variables and the justification for using a one-way between subjects ANOVA. A test of the homogeneity of variables was conducted (Table 10) which indicate that while a visual difference may exist among the mean MAOS scores, the variability is not statistically significant with an alpha level of 0.05 and they have relatively equal variance. Thus, the between-subjects ANOVA was justified.

Table 10

Test of Homogeneity of Variables

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
MAOS Scores	Based on Mean	1.575	3	93	.201
	Based on Median	1.266	3	93	.291
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.266	3	73.924	.292
	Based on trimmed mean	1.508	3	93	.218

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the differences in the mean likelihood of engaging in political activism (mean MAOS scores) were statistically different across the types of news media primarily consumed. Table 11 shows the results of the ANOVA, which shows an overall $p = 0.038$, is statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05 with F (3, 93) = 2.93.

Table 11

Overall Analysis of Variance

MAOS Scores

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2612.610	3	870.870	2.932	0.038
Within Groups	27627.554	93	297.070		
Total	30240.165	96			

Though the results showed a statistically significant difference in mean likelihood of engaging in political activism based on type of news media primarily consumed, the effect size of the type of news media consumed on the likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism is relatively small, with an upper limit η^2 of 0.185 and a point estimate of 0.086.

Table 12

ANOVA Effect Sizes[ab]

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
MAOS	Eta-squared	0.086	0.000	0.185
Scores	Epsilon-squared	0.057	-0.032	0.159
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	0.056	-0.032	0.158
	Omega-squared Random-effect	0.020	-0.010	0.059

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

The multiple comparisons test using Tukey's HSD showed the individual results of the ANOVA and showed which of the pairings were statistically significant. The test revealed that only one of the six pairs were statistically significant, which was between those with No Clear Preference and those who primarily consumed liberal-leaning news media sources. The mean difference of -12.86 is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ with a p of 0.022. The other five pairings did not have a statistically significant difference (NCP-UB, NPC-CL, LL-UB, LL-CL, CL-UB). Thus while the overall ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.038$) between mean MAOS scores and type of news media primarily consumed, it is only due to the difference between No Clear Preference and Liberal-Leaning ($p = 0.022$). The least significant difference is between Unbiased/Neutral and Conservative-Leaning ($p = 0.993$).

Table 13

*Multiple Comparisons of Pairs of MAOS Means (Tukey's HSD)*

Dependent Variable: MAOS Scores

(I) Type of News Media	(J) Type of News Media	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
No Clear Preference	Liberal – Leaning	-12.86143*	4.39165	0.022	-24.3504	-1.3725
	Unbiased/ Neutral	-10.43873	5.46376	0.231	-24.7324	3.8550
	Conservative – Leaning	-8.71474	5.93545	0.461	-24.2424	6.8130
Liberal – Leaning	No Clear Preference	12.86143*	4.39165	0.022	1.3725	24.3504
	Unbiased/ Neutral	2.42271	4.93795	0.961	-10.4954	15.3409
	Conservative – Leaning	4.14669	5.45529	0.872	-10.1249	18.4183
Unbiased/ Neutral	No Clear Preference	10.43873	5.46376	0.231	-3.8550	24.7324
	Liberal – Leaning	-2.42271	4.93795	0.961	-15.3409	10.4954
	Conservative – Leaning	1.72398	6.35030	0.993	-14.8890	18.3370
Conservative – Leaning	No Clear Preference	8.71474	5.93545	0.461	-6.8130	24.2424
	Liberal – Leaning	-4.14669	5.45529	0.872	-18.4183	10.1249
	Unbiased/ Neutral	-1.72398	6.35030	0.993	-18.3370	14.8890

*$p < 0.05$

Figure 4 shows the graph representation of the differences in mean likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism (as represented by MAOS scores) between the different types of news media sources primarily consumed.

Figure 4

Differences in Mean MAOS Scores Between Types of News Media Consumed
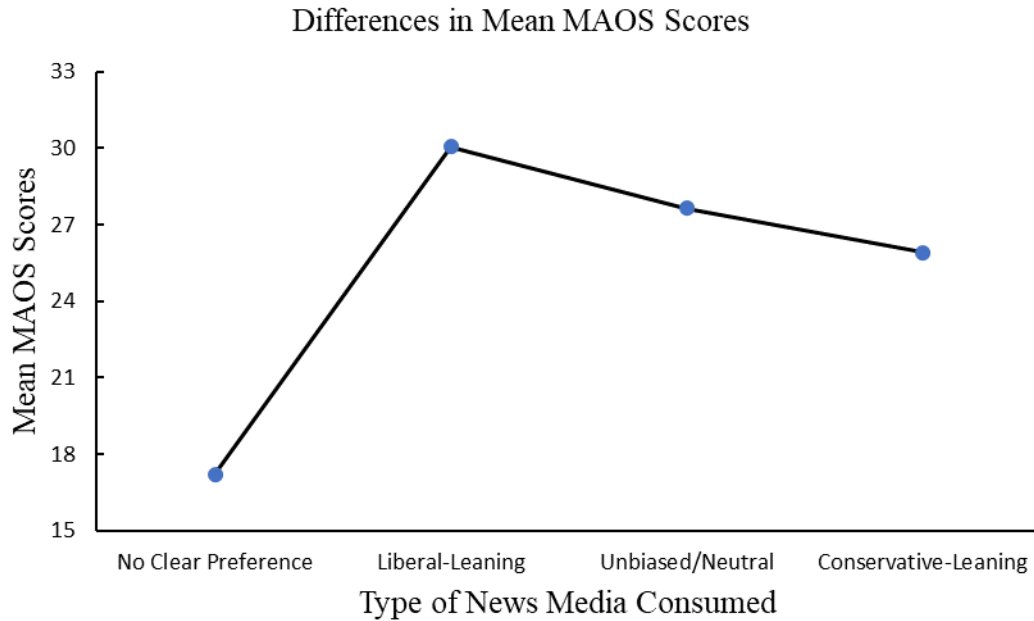
DISCUSSSION

Support for Hypotheses

The results partially supported my hypotheses. The null hypotheses for my study are as follows, respective to the order of my hypotheses:

- $H_{0(1)}$: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency with which an individual consumes different types of news media sources and their likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism.

- $H_{0(2)}$: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency with which an individual participates in political discussion with friends, family, or on social media and their likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism.

- $H_{0(3)}$: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean frequencies of consumption of different types of news media based on the type of news media primarily consumed.

- $H_{0(4)}$: There is no statistically significant difference i participants' mean likelihood of engaging in political activism depending on the type of news media primarily consumed.

For Part One's Pearson correlation, I hypothesized that the frequency with which an individual consumes different types of news sources would affect their likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism. The results did show a positive relationship between the two, with greater frequency of news media source consumption resulting in greater likelihood of engaging in forms of political activism ($r = 0.40$, $p = 0.000048$). Scores on the NMC Scale were positively correlated with scores on the MAOS. Though the correlation is only weak to moderate, it was enough to create a significant difference. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept H_1.

Part Two's Pearson correlation results failed to support my hypotheses. I hypothesized that the frequency with which an individual participates in political discussion with friends, family, or on social media will affect their likelihood of engaging in political activism. The results did not show a statistically significant relationship between the two ($r = 0.18$, $p = 0.079$). The r value does show a very weak positive relationship between the two but it is not enough to be considered significant at $p < 0.05$. Therefore we accept the null hypothesis and reject H_2.

Part Three was analyzed with a one-way within-subjects ANOVA. I hypothesized that there would be a difference in the mean frequencies of consumption of different types of news media based on the type of news media primarily consumed. The results of the ANOVA and subsequent paired samples t test mostly supported my hypothesis, with two of the three pairs showing statistically significant results. The difference in mean frequencies of consumption

between those who primarily consumed liberal-leaning sources and those who consumed primarily unbiased/neutral sources was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), and the difference in in mean frequencies of consumption between those who primarily consumed liberal-leaning sources and those who consumed primarily conservative-leaning sources was also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The only pair to not show a statistically significant difference was between those who consumed primarily unbiased/neutral news sources and those who consumed primarily conservative-leaning news sources ($p = 0.834$). The overall p value for the ANOVA was less than 0.001, which is the result of two of the three being statistically significant. Therefore we partially reject the null hypothesis and mostly accept H_3.

Part Four showed the least support for my hypotheses. My hypothesis was that there would be differences in participants' mean likelihood of engaging in political activism depending on the type of news media primarily consumed. The results of the one-way between-subjects ANOVA showed an overall p of 0.038, which is statistically significant. But the multiple comparisons showed that of the six pairings possible between the four categories (No Clear Preference, Liberal-Leaning, Unbiased/Neutral, Conservative-Leaning) the only statistically significant difference between the mean likelihood of engaging in political activism was between those with No Clear Preference and those who primarily consumed Liberal-Leaning news sources. The other five were not statistically significant. Therefore, we mostly accept the null hypothesis and partially accept H_4.

Consistency with the Literature

In some ways my results were consistent with the literature. My analysis of the relationship between political discussion and political activism built off the work of Edgarly et al. (2018), whose study only focused on how political discussion and other factors affected

surveillance knowledge. In theory, my results would have shown an extension of his work and how the surveillance knowledge gained from political discussion would translate to actual political activism. My results did not end up achieving this. The results were similarly inconsistent with the work of many others I had discussed (Levinsen & Yndigegn, 2015; Jost et al., 2009). Contrary to what a large portion of the literature indicated, my results showed no such relationship between political discussion and political activism.

One way my results were consistent with the literature was with the relationship of news media consumption and political activism. The work of Dillipane (2011), Edgarly et al. (2018), Levinsen and Yndigegn (2015), and more in the discussed literature explored the relationship between news consumption, whether via television or other sources, and their relationship with either expected political activism or past politically active behaviors. My results did show a statistically significant relationship between news media consumption and political activism, adding another brick to the solid wall of literature supporting this relationship.

Though researchers such as Dillipane (2011) explored how the type of news media affects political activism, theirs was more of an analysis on past political activism. My study is among the first to actively explore the relationship between the type of news media most favored by participants and how likely they are to be politically active in the future. My results may not have been ideal with five of six pairs showing no significant differences in mean MAOS scores, but where it did show a relationship was fairly solid.

Figure 4 does show an interesting trait in regard to this, however. When comparing the means of those with NCP to the other three categories, the gap between "significant" and "not significant" seem to visually be fairly small. The means of LL, UB, and CL are fairly close to each other with the notable exception being NCP, yet only LL had a statistically-significant

difference with NCP. The statistically significant difference could exist between NCP and the other two but were not shown with the data gathered in this study.

One aspect virtually untouched by the established literature was the difference in mean frequency of consumption of each of the different types of news media sources based on the type of news media primarily consumed. For this part those with No Clear Preference were excluded, as the focus was on those with preferences. Those who primarily consumed LL news media had a significantly higher mean on their NMC Scale subscore than those who primarily consumed UB or CL news media.

Each NMC Scale subscore ranged from 12 to 60 for each of the three categories and the three subscores were compared for each participant, who was then grouped into one of the three categories depending on which of the three types of news media they consumed the most. Their scores for whichever group they were put in were then calculated and resulted in the means. For example a participant who had a score distribution of 26, 12, 12 was grouped into the Liberal-Leaning category for primary consumption. Their score of 26, corresponding to the NMC LL Subscore, was then added to the NMC LL Subscores of other participants who primarily consumed LL sources and thus the mean was calculated.

The idea of this part of the study was to see with how much fervor participants consumed their favored sources compared to participants in the other groups. This is not done commonly in the established literature; we are among the first to do it. My results were fairly promising as well, with two of the three pairs showing significant results (LL/UB and LL/CL). Those who primarily consumed LL sources did so to a significantly higher degree than those who consumed the other two. These results, combined with the existence of a difference in mean MAOS scores between LL and NCP news source consumers, shows support for Dillipane's (2011) notion about

how viewing like-minded news channels could increase political participation. The fact that the three "biased" categories all had higher mean MAOS scores than NCP also helps support this, though the difference in means is not significant enough to provide concrete support in the case of CL and UB source consumption.

Jost et al.'s (2009) notion on the understanding of political ideology definitely could have affected the results of this study. Though I did not measure it, the degree of knowledge of politics could have affected the results. Perhaps the data would be different if I sampled only students who are Criminal Justice and Political Science majors rather than those in Psychology classes. Even the university as a whole could show this discrepancy in understanding of politics better than the relatively small sample of 97.

General Notes and Observations

For the two analyses of variances, the effect sizes were fairly small despite there being a statistical significance. It does raise the possibility of some results being more up to chance than being affected by the independent variables but the strength of the significance (low p value) indicates that there is at least some interaction between independent variables and the dependent variables.

Something of interest is the prevalence of participants who consumed primarily liberal-leaning sources compared to the other sources, particularly conservative-leaning. In a solidly-conservative state such as Louisiana, it is surprising to see that the largest percentage of participants among the four categories consumed Liberal-Leaning sources (44.3%) compared to Unbiased/Neutral (17.5%), No Clear Preference (24.7%), and Conservative-Leaning (13.4%). Even more surprising is the fact that the lowest percentage of participants primarily consumed conservative-leaning sources compared to the others.

This could be related to one of two things. College/University settings tend to lean more to the left than the right regardless of the states they are in. This discrepancy could explain the bizarre results. The second is that the participants were in Psychology classes, a field that is squarely on the left side of the spectrum. The liberal ideologies more closely match those of psychology and thus psychology attracts mostly liberals. If that is the case then one possibility for why there isn't a higher percentage of liberals in the participant pool is that many of the participants signed up for course credit in PSYC 101, an introductory psychology class that is on the curricula of many colleges and degree programs. Students from those programs are not necessarily liberal, which accounts for the discrepancy.

There is something else to consider, which is the time period. The study was conducted in the month or so prior to the 2022 Midterm elections, where Democrats/Liberals were in danger of losing control of Congress. As we did end up seeing in the Midterms, young Democrats poured out in unforeseen numbers to vote in the Midterms and secure the Democratic hold on the Senate and weaken the Republican majority in the House. Without the surge, Democrats would have lost both. Perhaps that surge and that increased desire to save the Democratic party is what contributed to the larger consumption of liberal-leaning news sources. This would support the idea of group affirmation taking precedence over self-affirmation that Ehrlich and Gramzow (2015) discussed. Some who are politically unmotivated may have opted to instead affirm the group (in this case the Democratic party) and therefore go out of their way to cast their vote, which is a form of political activism. It could just have been the "perfect storm" of these factors that gave me these results.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in the study is the prevalence of low-end data. On the NMC Scale, the MAOS, and in the time participants spent in political discussion, the data are

clustered towards the low ends. Figures 1 and 2 show this very well, especially Figure 2. Specifically regarding time spent in political discussion, a large percentage of participants noted that they spent an average of 0 hours over the week discussing politics. The one exception here is the participant who noted his hours spent in discussion as 49, which is around 29% of the entire week and around 43.8% of the entire time the average person spends awake in a week (assuming 8 hours of sleep per night). Despite this, the participant's MAOS score is under 20 out of 102. There are three possibilities for why this data point is where it is, ranked from least likely to most likely. The first is that the participant is a very political person and loves to discuss politics, spending close to half his or her waking moments discussing politics, but either does not feel the need to be politically active or does not have time to do so.

The second (and most interesting) reason is that most of the political discussion is involuntary. Perhaps the participant's family is highly political and spends most of their time talking politics whether the others like it or not, resulting in an extremely high number of hours spent discussing politics but a near-total apathy for politics as a result, hence the low MAOS score. This possibility is interesting because it raises the question of whether there is such a thing as too much politics. Too much politics in someone's life could cause them to burn out and become apolitical. Anecdotal evidence for this phenomenon does exist, though it is highly understudied. Perhaps this participant is a victim of such a burn out.

The third and most likely reason is that the participant simply lied. It is highly unrealistic to spend nearly half your waking time on politics, even if it is in a politically-charged household. More than likely the participant lied on the form, though I cannot speculate as to motive. This point was kept in the data as opposed to being removed due to the possible implications of its position. It could open the door into political fatigue and its effects on youth voters and more.

This example aside, the rest of the data is primarily low. Even when considering the mean frequency of consumption of news media sources (Part Three), the means are all under 20 on a range of 12 to 60. That is extremely low. Scores on the overall NMC ranged from 36 to 180, and many got a final score of 36. The highest score was in the 120s though the majority of scores clustered between 36 and 72 (Figure 1). The MAOS has a range of 0 to 102 and surprisingly it was fairly well-spread compared to the other two. Even people with 0 hours of political discussion under their belt for the week had some high likelihood of engaging in political activism. It isn't the best spread, but it is better.

The most obvious reasoning for this low-end data is the probable apolitical nature of the participants. Just as the past three years have ignited a political flame in some, it may have doused the fires in others. The participant pool may simply be less politically-inclined than expected. As mentioned in the study by Juelich and Coll (2020), young people vote less than older people. Institutional laws aside, perhaps this is also due to the lack of interest from younger people. McNeese State University is in a fairly small city in Louisiana that rarely sees any large political events. Most people simply inherit their parents' political beliefs. It may be a situation where circumstance hinders political activism and any political inclinations.

For Part Four the test of homogeneity of variables gave me p values that were clearly not significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ($p > 0.2$. Despite the visual disparity, the variances were more or less equal for the sake of justifying the between-subjects ANOVA. For the within-subjects ANOVA it was also justified but the sphericity test to test variability resulted in a p value that was just slightly above the alpha level of 0.05 ($p = 0.068$). Sphericity was not violated, thus not needing the corrective measures, but it was close. Perhaps with a larger sample size and more diverse participant pool the difference will be greater. Had the variances for either been

significant ($p > 0.05$), the ANOVA would not have been justified as is and a correction in the form of altering the degrees of freedom (most likely using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction) would have been needed to continue.

Limitations

This study was not without its limitations. The first is that some participants did not give exact answers. When asked about time spent in political discussion, some participants responded with answers that included the words "approximately" or "about". This leads me to believe their answers were not entirely accurate. As mentioned previously, this could also have occurred with the outlier with 49 hours spent in political discussion. Despite the two validity questions in place to exclude the data for people who were randomly answering, some may have caught them and cleverly passed them while continuing to choose random answers. Rather than actively participate in the study they simply wanted their course credit or bonus points. The study being online does increase the risk of lying on it, although the data received was still more than enough to get statistical results.

A second limitation is my exclusion of social media sites in the NMC Scale. Given that most news outlets have a social media presence (Twitter, TikTok, etc.) I chose to exclude social media sites for the sake of ease and simplicity in formatting the scale. The issue with this is that many social media sites have users who relay news and are unaffiliated with the 36 news sources mentioned. This is particularly prevalent on TikTok, where hundreds of TikTokers relay international, national, and local news without being affiliated with any news organizations. I believe their inclusion would not only have increased the validity of the measure but also resulted in higher scores given how frequently we use social media for our news. I personally get more news from TikTok than I do from established news outlets. Future studies could alter the

NMC Scale to include these sites and reformat the distinction between LL, UB, and CL sources to better accommodate these invaluable sources of news.

Given the relatively low effect sizes of the independent variables, there may have been several confounding variables that affect political behaviors. Perhaps some people like to talk about politics but don't actively participate in it. Others may not talk at all about politics or consume news sources but still are active due to their experiences or family traditions. Consuming news also doesn't translate to being politically active. Some are just "spectators" who don't dive in but watch from the sidelines. Another possible confounding variable is the apolitical nature of the youth as mentioned previously. The prevalence of younger people in the pool, who are still the least likely to vote, may have affected the results.

A larger and more diverse sample size would be ideal for future research, hopefully offering new insights into the complexities of political activism and strengthening some trends found in this study. Repeating the experiment with a larger sample size would also help to generalize my research findings.

Conclusion

The results of this study have both strengthened the literary base that guided it and offered new insights into the field. I do believe that the results can tentatively be generalized to the entire University population, though I believe there will be differences if I had sampled the University as a whole. Overall, the results supported key parts of my hypotheses and reinforced notable parts of the literature, particularly when it comes to news media consumption. It has also explored topics almost untouched by previous literature, serving as a stepping stone for future research.

Politics have become pervasive and have become an expected part of most civil service or governmental affairs. Rights and freedoms are being challenged every day from all sides of the political spectrum, and the main focus of many political scientists is to motivate the younger generations to take action and take the country into our own hands. After all, we will be the ones shouldered with the fruits and labors of the previous generations. More people now are becoming politically active, especially given the tumultuous events of the past three years. Outdated norms are collapsing under the weight of the shifting zeitgeist, laws are changing to adapt to the new times, and the country is entering a new age. The first Generation Z candidate has been elected to Congress as of the 2022 Midterms. The political power is falling to the younger generation, and the best way to move forward is to understand how we are motivated. Studies such as this one shoulder a heavy responsibility of serving as blueprints for the future, helping to understand what motivates us and why.

By no means is this study a one-and-done deal. It is part of a growing pyramid of knowledge that will help shape the future of this country. Research should never stop building for better, and this study serves as a step forward in that mission. Whether we like it or not, politics are an ingrained part of our daily lives. For many, it is life or death. What motivates us now is vital to understanding what will motivate us in the future. How we choose to act on our beliefs today is vital to understanding how we will rise to the challenges of tomorrow. Nothing short of escaping into the Appalachian woods can hide us from the pervasiveness of politics. So, we must work with it. What drives us, what inspires us, what motivates us to act in the ways we choose is more important now in this time of transition than ever before. Regardless of how we feel, our involvement as the young generation in the shaping of this country must persist and

grow, and the best way to ensure its growth is to understand what motivates us and how our

motivations can help us serve the country.

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