

# The Media's Role in Shaping Canadian Civic and Political Engagement

Brenda O'Neill (University of Calgary)\*

## Abstract

*This article represents a modest attempt at establishing the role that the media plays in shaping political and civic engagement in Canada. The findings suggest that more focused attention to the media's role would likely reap significant benefits in furthering our understanding of participation behaviour at the individual level. One of the questions framing this investigation is whether the media play a role in shaping the political and civic engagement of Canadians. The evidence suggests that they do. The media types employed by Canadians to follow politics and the frequency with which they follow such coverage each reveal an association to the number of activities in which respondents participate. Use of more traditional media – most notably television alone and in combination with newspapers – is associated with lower levels of engagement. Use of the Internet – most often employed in combination with more traditional media types – reveals an association with higher levels of engagement. Future research – more qualitative perhaps – ought to focus on addressing what it is about that these particular media type combinations that best addresses the needs and desires of those with more limited and more heightened engagement levels.*

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

General agreement exists within the social science disciplines that the media play an influential role in shaping political and civic engagement. The media are a transmitter of information, a source of information and a public space within which participation can take place (Delli Carpini 2004). Moving beyond this general statement, however, one finds much less agreement. Interest in civic engagement has exploded in part due to the attention directed at the arguments made in Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000). Many are concerned that democratic engagement, particularly among the youngest citizens, is at levels too low for the maintenance of healthy democracies. A number have directed their research lens on the media as a potential explanation for this low level of engagement. Some agree with Putnam and argue that television's dominance is to blame for declining stocks of social capital among younger generations while others are less willing to place the blame so squarely at the feet of this one

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\* Brenda O'Neill, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4 [bloneill@ucalgary.ca](mailto:bloneill@ucalgary.ca)

medium. Some have identified the Internet as holding the potential to re-invigorate democratic engagement, while others are more circumspect about the role that this most recent addition to the communications repertoire can play.

The path to moving this research forward was identified by Delli Carpini (2004),

As with other aspects of democratic engagement, noticeably absent are studies exploring the impact of different types of media (especially those other than television) and the impact of media on different segments of the population (411).

Although research in the area has grown since Delli Carpini's review, significant questions remain. In this article, the objective is to address the absences identified by Delli Carpini by asking key questions regarding the relationship between media use and democratic engagement in Canada. To what extent does the use of different media forms influence political and civic engagement? To what extent are media choices structured by economic and other forces? And, to what extent does the Internet offer promise for encouraging engagement, particularly among young Canadians?

Investigating the role of the media in influencing democratic engagement is a valuable exercise for several reasons. In addition to the absences in the research noted above, multiple media forms and, in particular, the ascendancy of the Internet as an alternative to more traditional forms of political information and entertainment, have added to the complexity of the relationship of interest. So too has the growth in cognitive mobilization, that is, the degree to which citizens in Western democracies possess skills and resources that provide them with greater political sophistication and the concomitant ability to determine political attitudes and behaviours independently (Dalton 2006).

University enrolments grew dramatically over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century leading to a citizenry with increased political knowledge, efficacy and interest, in short, with greater political sophistication. Coupled with an increasing number of media types through which one could access political information, one might have anticipated an overall increase in political participation levels. But the evidence suggests that this is far from the case. Although too often employed as the only measure of political engagement, election turnout rates are nevertheless one indicator of participation that has revealed a drop in recent years. Turnout rates for Canadian general elections between 1950s to 1980s were such that on average just over seven in ten Canadians could be expected to turn out to the polls; the turnout for the four elections held since 2000 reveals that the expectation is now closer to three in five. The link between greater access to information via the media and the decline in some forms of participation needs to be better understood. Finally, while the media has traditionally been identified as a *facilitator of engagement*, largely through its provision of political information but also through direct appeals for engagement, the ascendancy of the Internet as a media form has brought with it an additional *avenue for engagement* that has only recently become the focus of investigations. While the Internet provides an additional avenue for obtaining political information which can provide the spur for engagement, it is also an avenue for participation itself through social networking or volunteer organization sites, for example. According to a 2007 study, 40% of Canadian Internet users visit social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, and one in four do so on a weekly basis (Zamaria and Fletcher 2008). This new avenue, however, is not one that citizens of all ages employ equally; instead it is one that appeals more to younger Canadians, traditionally among the least politically engaged. According to the same study, the share visiting such sites jumps from one in four to one in two when examining Internet users under 30 years of age (Ibid.). Newer forms of media – including instant messaging, text messaging and social networking sites – directly affect political engagement by

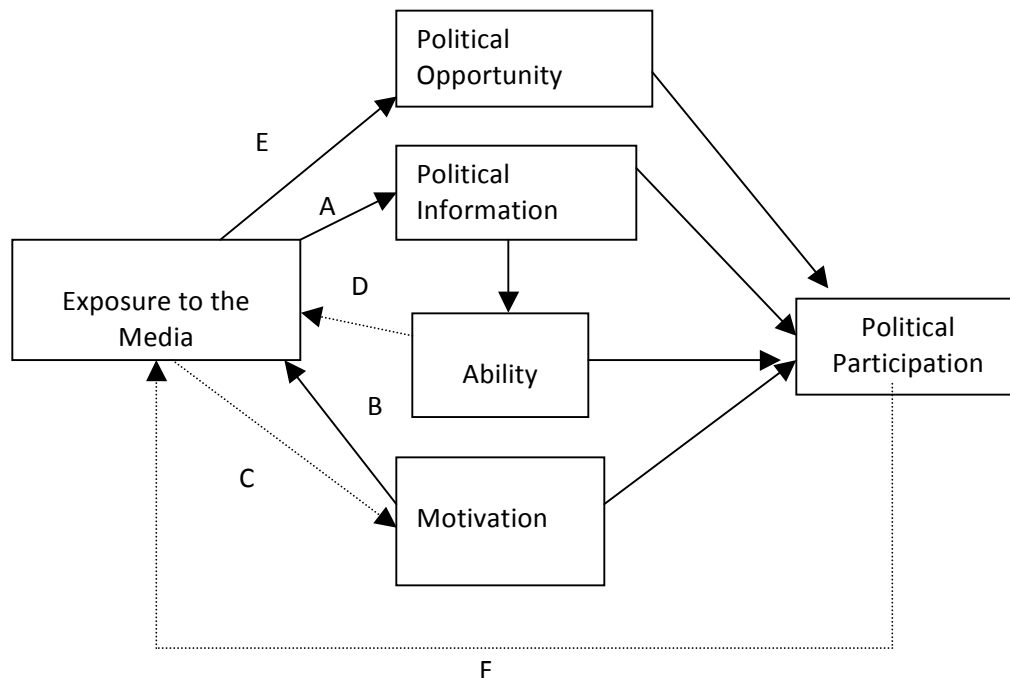
providing calls and instruments for action on certain issues. If the impact of media forms on engagement is changing we should see this change more clearly among younger Canadians as they are the most likely to take up these newer media forms.

Thus media use presents an important avenue of inquiry for developing a better understanding of civic and political engagement in contemporary democracies such as Canada, particularly given that existing research tends largely to focus on the US as a case study (Boulianne 2009). To do so, however, requires grounding in the literature examining engagement and the media.

## Modelling Engagement

The democratically engaged citizen is one who participates and who does so effectively (Delli Carpini 2004). As identified by Luskin (1990), political participation depends on motivation, opportunity, and ability, a framework that helps to model the multiple factors that can shape political engagement at the individual level (see Figure 1). The citizen who chooses to participate does so because of a willingness to do so, the availability of opportunities to do so, and the possession of skills and resources that allows one to take advantage of those opportunities. The opportunity to engage effectively – or according to Luskin, to be politically sophisticated, which he defines as having “accurate perception and efficient pursuit of one’s interests” (p.332) – is highly dependent on the availability of politically information. As he notes, “to become highly sophisticated, we must encounter a certain quantity of political information, be intellectually able enough to retain and organize large portions of the information we encounter, and have reason enough to make the effort” (p.335).

Figure 1 - Modeling the Media’s Role in Influencing Participation



The single most important source of political information is the communications media (causal arrow A in Figure 1). This information can lead directly to increased participation by providing a basis for political discussion or indirectly by creating increase political knowledge (ability). Exposure to the media will, however, vary with levels of individual motivation (causal arrow B); that is, the more political interested an individual is, the more likely they are to search out political information in the media. The causal arrow between motivation and media exposure can point in the opposite direction as well, in that greater exposure to the media has the potential to increase one's willingness to participate (causal arrow C). An additional causal arrow links ability to exposure to the media (causal arrow D). This relationship is identified to underscore the fact that political information is not equally accessed by all citizens. Possession of cognitive skills and resources that allows one to weed through this information to identify that which is most accurate and informative is likely to play a role in determining the degree to which individuals will direct their attention toward the media in order to search for political information. Finally, the media influence political participation directly by providing opportunities for participation, most notably via the Internet (causal arrow E).

## **The Media and Engagement**

The model provides a framework for summarizing existing research on the media's role in shaping political engagement. A recent assessment of the relationship between media and engagement concluded that it is "complicated and only partly understood" (Delli Carpini 2004: 418). The complication stems from the existence of multiple media forms, variation in content both across and within each media form, the indirect role played by attitudes such as political interest and political knowledge (ability and motivation in Figure 1), and the bi-directional nature of the relationship of interest: greater exposure to political information in the media can increase political engagement, but the more politically engaged are also more likely than others to seek out political information in the media (causal arrow F).

The complicated nature of the relationship is paralleled by disagreement in the literature on the direction of the media's impact on engagement. On the one side are those who argue that the media play a dampening role. Perhaps the most often cited among these authors is Putnam (2000) who argues that the rise in time spent watching television accounts in part for decreasing engagement levels. Putnam identifies two mechanisms through which television watching decreases the incentive to engage: the time that such behaviour occupies and its effect on levels of trust. First, every moment that an individual spends in front of the television is one that is no longer available for engaging in political and civic affairs – the time replacement effect. As such, Putnam argues that the viewing of television has "privatized our leisure time" (p.283) and decreased stocks of social capital that are an essential commodity in democracies. Second, he argues that television watching fuels social distrust, an additional component of social capital, in that it isolates citizens from their neighbours. The combination of a lack of trust and social isolation fuels an increasing unwillingness to participate and engage in the community. The time replacement argument made by Putnam has been extended by others to the Internet. Nie and Erbring (2000), for example, argue that time spent online reduces the time available for more social activities and thus diminishes stocks of social capital (see also Kraut et al. 1998).

Others authors have moved beyond looking simply at the time spent with a medium to an examination of the content of political news coverage – how such stories are framed and primed – in order to build an argument for the media's role in decreasing engagement. Much of this research is directed at television news coverage. Television has been argued to focus on the visual over information content,

providing less in the way of political learning than it might otherwise (Gronbeck 1996). Others counter that any limitations in coverage are necessary given human information-processing capacities (Graber 2004). An examination of the negative framing of political news by Cappella and Jamieson (1997) linked it directly to increased political cynicism that helps to explain the decreased levels of engagement that have accompanied the rise in television viewership. Where news coverage is particularly negative in tone, the effect is heightened. Negative campaign ads, for example, have been shown by some to have an effect on voter turnout levels, although generally the results on this score are mixed (Delli Carpini 2004). Yet others point to the fact that the dominance of non-political television coverage decreases the importance that the public assigns to political engagement, and thus helps to explain its drop (Lichter, Noyes and Kaid 1999, Postman 1985). The content of commercial television coverage in particular is identified for its role in this regard (Hooghe 2002).

Not all would agree, however, with such negative pronouncements. In particular, critics have been quick to point out that conclusions regarding media use and political engagement are often over-generalizations that neglect to take into account distinctions in media content, across media users and in the purposes that lie behind media use (Delli Carpini 2004, Livingstone and Markham 2008, Uslaner 1998). Television continues to be the main source for political news (Graber 2004), and many underscore its role in providing information that allows for political learning and increased political efficacy, both of which influence political participation (Norris 2000a, Milner 2002). Others highlight the media's role in shaping political interest, a motivator of political participation (Graber 2001, Livingstone and Markham 2008). Yet other studies point out that the relationship between television viewing and engagement is not a linear one; time replacement and trust concerns only appear among those who spend a significant amount of time watching television (Hooghe 2002, Romer et al. 2009).

Television viewing and newspaper readership have been argued to play a role in encouraging political participation but importantly in different ways. While television coverage has been found to be less effective than newspapers in providing in-depth coverage of political issues, it nevertheless appears to be more successful at attracting and involving the viewer (Neuman et al. 1992). Doris Graber (2001) argues that television can also be an effective mobilizing agent for social movements and political organizations by providing an avenue through which the public can learn of their existence and their political positions, and by generating support for or opposition to specific public policies (termed the "CNN effect"). And given that television's reach exceeds that of the newspaper, the impact of its effects is heightened.

Not all television content, however, has the same effect and it would be incorrect to assume that all stations and programs play a similar role in encouraging political participation. Informational programming has been contrasted with that geared towards providing entertainment, for example, as has public versus private broadcasting (Hooghe 2002). The economic imperative of commercial television is understandably to entertain rather than to inform (Graber 2004; Zaller 1999). In this vein, Pippa Norris has shown that it is not only how much time people spend in front of the television that matters for their level of engagement but also what they are watching (2000b).

Yet others challenge the argument that television is to blame for declining stocks of social trust. Shah et al. (2001a) for example, found that media use for informational rather than recreational purposes is associated with higher rather than lower levels of social trust. As they note, "informational and communicative uses of the media may prove beneficial to the health of society, whereas recreational and entertainment uses may erode public involvement" (p. 144). Others argue that the media's negative impact, and specifically that associated with television, ought not to be exaggerated as empirical

evidence in this regard is neither consistent nor strong (Bennett et al. 1999; Uslaner 1998). A recent investigation of media consumption and political participation in the UK, for example, concludes that while media consumption can influence civic participation, its overall impact is relatively small compared with other democratic, social and political influences (Livingstone and Markham 2008). Still others argue that television is a response to, rather than a cause of “societal breakdown, individual isolation, and generalized discontent with politics” (Bennett 1998: 758).

Newspapers, and to some extent the radio, have been shown to be more positively connected to political participation than television and especially with levels of political interest and knowledge (Chaffee and Frank 1996, Livingstone and Markham 2008, Shah et al. 2001b). Newspapers have shown signs, however, of losing favour among younger people (Putnam 2000). Radio use has not been accorded much individual research attention given the dominance of television use (Chaffee and Frank 1996).

The relatively recent arrival of the Internet as an additional medium of communication accounts in part for the more limited attention that has been directed to assessing its importance for political participation. Although the medium continues to attract a younger set of users on average than more traditional media, users of the media are increasingly coming to resemble traditional media audiences and patterns of use more normalized (Xenos and Moy 2007). Consistent with research on more traditional media, opinions differ on whether the Internet is likely to encourage or discourage political participation (Tedesco 2004, Wellman et al. 2001). Some argue that the Internet holds the potential to engage the previously disengaged by reducing the costs associated with obtaining political information and by increasing the opportunities for online engagement (for a review see Boulianne 2009).

Others underscore that because Internet use is predicted by a set of determinants similar to those that explain engagement, its use is likely to encourage engagement among those who are already engaged. Jennings and Zeitner (2003), for example, find that it is those who are already politically engaged who adopt the Internet as an additional source of information, and as such, it is argued to have relatively little impact overall in participation at the individual level (see also Livingstone and Markham 2008). Some have argued that as a result the medium is likely to increase rather than bridge existing participation gaps (Brundidge and Rice 2009, Xenos and Moy 2007). The argument that the Web is a haven for the less trusting and those with limited social networks has been shown to hold little weight (Jennings and Zeitner 2003, Uslaner 2004). Others, however, argue that the negative effects associated with television viewing – limited face to face interaction and less time available for social interaction – apply equally to Internet use (Kraut et al. 1998, Nie and Erbring 2000).

The dominant perspective, however, is one that emphasizes the potential that the Internet holds for increasing engagement (Norris 1998, 2001, Shah et al. 2001a, Wellman et al. 2001). The Internet, like other media, provides an avenue for gathering political information but one unique for the speed with which the information is gathered and transmitted, the volume of information conveyed, the unmediated nature of the information it collects, its interactive capabilities, its ability to create and reinforce interest-based rather than geographic communities of interest and the mechanism that it provides for individuals to engage in ‘virtual’ political discussion and deliberation (Delli Carpini 2000, Norris 2001). Quite simply, the Internet reduces the costs associated with the collection of political information, communication and engagement. The Internet seems to “make it easier for citizens to obtain political information through mediating political organizations, direct government web sites, and information sharing, vis-à-vis email, Listservs and chat rooms” (Weber et al. 2003: 39). Another

researcher notes that the Internet provides citizens with the “ability to voice their political agenda to a worldwide audience” (Tedesco 2004: 510).

Given the multiplicity of activities that can be performed online – both asocial and social – some have underscored that “there are no single Internet effects” (Wellman et al. 2001:451). The Internet positively supplements existing forms of interpersonal contact and engagement but increased use also holds the potential to expose individuals to larger social networks that have only weak ties and to distasteful interaction (Ibid). Moreover, political discussion via email has been positively associated with political participation while similar discussions via chat rooms have not (Brundidge and Rice 2009).

The distinction between informational and entertainment uses of the television has also been extended to Internet use. Users who look to the web predominantly for political information possess heightened stocks of social capital; the opposite appears to be the case for those who employ the medium predominantly for social and entertainment purposes. And some have noted that its effects in this regard are stronger among young adults (Pasek et al. 2006, Shah et al. 2001b).

This focus on the importance of the Internet for young citizens’ engagement has increased given evidence of generationally-driven declines in voter turnout in many western democracies (for Canada see Blais et al. 2004). Importantly, the Internet is more likely to be employed by young citizens for political information purposes, increasingly important for overall engagement levels among this group especially as political parties and candidates increasingly employ the medium in their campaign strategies (Mesch and Coleman 2007). The newest medium also provides its users with an easy and accessible avenue for engaging in individually-based political activities, including blogs, wikis and social networking sites (Bennett 2008). As previously noted, however, evidence seems to point to the conclusion that it provides an additional repertoire for the already politically engaged, and for those who possess the skills and resources to master the medium (Livingstone et al. 2007, Mesch and Coleman 2007). Overall, a recent evaluation of this research suggests that “it is important that the value of the Internet for political socialisation should not be exaggerated and regarded as separated from offline influences (including traditional media) and socio-demographic characteristics which continue to be paramount” (Loader 2007:16).

## **Data and Measures**

The data employed in this analysis come from the 2003 General Social Survey (GSS), Cycle 17 on Social Engagement commissioned by Statistics Canada. The GSS is a cross-sectional telephone survey undertaken with a large sample of Canadians (N=24,951) from across the 10 Canadian provinces between February and December 2003. The total sample includes Canadians 15 years of age and over; for the purposes of this analysis, the sample was restricted to Canadians aged 18 and over (N=23,744), that is, Canadians of voting age. All analyses employ weighted data to reflect the population.<sup>2</sup>

As is true with the use of much secondary data, the GSS data provide a good but not perfect set of measures for examining the relationship between media use and civic engagement. The survey includes a comprehensive set of measures on engagement activities that extends beyond that often found in surveys. Civic engagement can be defined rather broadly to include attitudes and behaviours related to both the political and civil society (O’Neill 2007; Putnam 2000; Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995). Its use herein, however, is limited to its behavioural element: how people act politically rather than how they think about politics. This behavioural component includes activity directed at influencing electoral outcomes and public policy as well as activity directed at affecting change in the civic sphere. The

distinction between the behavioural and cognitive components of engagement is an important one in that the two have been shown to be causally connected, a mechanism that remains hidden if the distinct elements are combined into a single measure.

Using terminology introduced by Norris (2003) to better reflect changes in the political repertoires employed by the politically engaged, two measures of political engagement were created by combining responses to several survey questions: the first for citizen-oriented political engagement, and the second for cause-oriented political engagement. The former addresses activity directly related to elections and political parties, while the latter addresses activity directed at specific issues or policy outcomes. Norris (2002) has argued that the repertoires of political activity have shifted to include more consumer-based activity and protest behaviour, blurring the line between the public and the private, and reflecting broader cultural changes in line with Inglehart's post-materialism thesis (1997). A third measure was created to address engagement in the civic arena, including volunteering, charitable giving and memberships in civic organizations.

The measure of citizen-oriented political engagement is a simple one that combines responses to questions asking about political party membership and party volunteering over the past 12 months, and voting in the most recent federal, provincial and municipal elections (a full description of the variables employed in this analysis is found in the Appendix). Respondents were awarded one point for each of the activities in which they had participated, resulting in a continuous scale that runs from 0 (no activity) to 5 (most engaged). The average score on this measure is 2.1, although almost half of the sample reported having engaged in three citizen-oriented activities reflecting the high rate of reported voter turnout in each of the three elections.

The measure for cause-oriented political engagement is also a simple additive one that awarded one point for participation over the past 12 months in each of the following activities: participating in a demonstration or march, signing a petition, boycotting/boycotting products, attending a public meeting, speaking out at a public meeting, and contacting a newspaper or politician to express a view on an issue. The range for this measure is 0 (no activity) to 6 (most engaged) and the average is 0.98. A little more than half of the sample indicated that they had not engaged in any one of these types of activities.<sup>3</sup>

The measure created for civic engagement taps forms of volunteering and membership in various organizations and associations. Respondents were asked if during the past 12 months they had engaged in unpaid volunteering for an organization, donated money or goods to an organization or charity, and if they were a member or participant in up to seven different organizations, networks and associations. The result is a measure of civic engagement that ranges from 0 (not engaged) to 9 (most engaged) with an average score of 2.2 across the sample.

The survey questions available for assessing the role of the media in shaping engagement are more limited. The GSS asked respondents how frequently they followed news and current affairs and to identify the media types employed for this purpose. Responses to the first question reveal that a relatively large number of respondents, a little over 70 percent, indicated that they followed the news on a daily basis; only six percent indicate that they rarely or never or never follow the news. Frequency of attention to the news can be considered a proxy for political interest, a component of motivation in Figure 1. People who follow the news on a regular basis are also highly likely to exhibit a strong interest in politics. Although a direct measure of political interest in addition to the measure of attention to the news would be preferred, the lack of a suitable measure in the GSS eliminates this option.



Respondents were also asked to identify up to five media types that they employed as a source for news and current events. Responses to the question reveal that television (89 percent), newspapers (67 percent) and radio (51 percent) dominate over magazines (21 percent) among traditional media forms. The Internet, a relatively recent addition, was identified by 29 percent of respondents as among their sources of political information. Importantly, however, respondents were allowed to identify more than a single media source, and how respondents *combine* different media types may well provide insight into their engagement patterns. As such a measure was created that combined all possible media type combinations identified by respondents (see the News Source variable in the Appendix). Given that respondents indicated over 30 different combinations of the five media types in their responses, these categories were collapsed into a more manageable set of six discrete categories. The first four categories include different combinations of traditional media. The first category includes those who indicated that television was their only source for news and current events, a category identified by 14.1 percent of respondents. Another 18.1% reported that they employed both television and newspapers to stay abreast of politics; and another 14.5% listed the combination of television, newspapers and radio as their news source. A fourth category combines all the remaining combinations of traditional media (newspapers, television, radio and magazines) reported by respondents accounting for another 24.4% of the sample. A fifth category includes all respondents who indicated that they use the Internet as a news source, either alone or in combination with up to three traditional media sources (another 19.0 % of respondents). It is interesting to note that very few respondents reported the Internet as their sole news source – a little more than 1 percent of respondents. This reinforces the findings of others that it has been added to existing news sources rather than replaced them outright. The final category includes all those remaining respondents (9.8 percent of the sample) who indicated that they employed all media types for their news needs. Respondents in this latter category would seem qualitatively different from the others in terms of their media habits and news demands.

The survey also asked respondents how many hours during a typical week they spent watching television which provides a test of Putnam's (2000) argument that time spent watching television reduces the time available for participation in more communally-based activities. One in four respondents reported spending more than 15 hours in a typical week watching television.

Also important for this investigation is the role that age/generation plays in mediating the relationship between media use and engagement. For this examination, the sample was divided into six groups: respondents aged between 18 and 24 years; between 25 and 34 years; between 35 and 44 years; between 45 and 54 years; between 55 and 64 years; and over 65 years of age. Rather than fix categories according to somewhat arbitrary criteria regarding distinct generational groupings (e.g. Baby Boomers and Generation X), the relatively small age range in each category provides greater ease in identifying any subtle differences in the relationship that might otherwise be overlooked, including non-linear effects across the categories.

A range of additional controls was created based on previous analyses of engagement. These include measures for general trust, education, household income, political socialization, time in community, immigrant status, time spent commuting to work/school, region, urban/rural status, sex, occupational status and the importance of religion (see Appendix).

## **Analysis**

The first step in the investigation is to assess the independence of the three measures of engagement. The low strength of the correlations across these three measures suggests that each is tapping a distinct

area of engagement but additionally reveals that a closer connection exists between cause-oriented political engagement and civic engagement ( $r=0.46$ ) than between citizen-oriented political engagement and cause-oriented political engagement ( $r=0.22$ ) or civic engagement ( $r=0.21$ ). This may reflect differences in the time required to engage in each; citizen-oriented engagement – voting and party involvement – might well require less of a time commitment than the two alternative forms of engagement, a point returned to later.

Attention to the news is likely linked to one’s overall level of interest in politics. One could also argue that the choice of news source for obtaining political information is related to one’s level of political interest. Multiple sources, for instance, could reflect a desire to obtain news coverage that is balanced, comprehensive, and in-depth. The results in Table 1 – a contingency table assessing news source by level of attention to the news – reveal a statistically significant relationship between where one obtains political information and how often one follows the news. The greatest difference is found between those who report paying the most and the least attention to the news. Those who rarely/never follow the news are much more likely to identify television as their only source for political information – 31.7 percent – compared with those who follow the news daily – 11.6 percent. Alternatively, those who follow the news daily are much more likely to report that they rely on all five news sources – 11.5 percent – compared to those who follow the news rarely/never – 2.6 percent. The media choices of those whose frequency of attention to the news falls between the two extremes more closely resemble that of respondents who follow the news daily, but suggest less reliance on the Internet and all five media types in combination. The relationship is not, however, a perfect one leaving open the possibility that factors other than interest are at play in citizens’ media type choices.

**Table 1 - News Source by Attention to News**

News Source	Attention to News			
	Daily	Several times a week	Several times a month	Rarely/Never
Television Alone	11.6%	17.0%	18.2%	31.7%
Television and Newspapers	18.1%	19.2%	19.6%	12.9%
Television, Newspapers and Radio	16.1%	12.1%	10.1%	6.1%
Other Traditional (alone or in combination)	23.5%	24.5%	28.5%	34.4%
Internet (alone or in combination)	19.1%	20.8%	18.7%	12.4%
All Five Media Types	11.5%	6.7%	5.0%	2.6%
N	16473	4383	1083	1365

Note: differences significant at  $p < .01$  ( $\chi^2=860.5$ ).

Before moving on to evaluate the independent effect that media use plays on various forms of engagement, an important step is to assess the characteristics of each group in the news source typology on some of the key determinants of participation identified in the literature (see Tables 2 & 3). The difficulty of determining the causal connections between media use and engagement stems in part from the fact that several factors play a role in shaping both news source and engagement simultaneously. For one, the selection of media type is likely to vary both with education and income, two factors linked to one’s ability to participate (see Figure 1). Education provides a set of cognitive skills

that allows for greater political sophistication while income can provide the necessary time, money and energy for participation and media access (Gidengil et al. 2004).

Tables 2 & 3 provide the results of several contingency tables assessing how news source varies across several socio-demographic measures. The findings reveal that news source is associated with both education and income. The data reveal that those with at least some college or university are much more likely than those without to make use of the Internet and to employ all five media for keeping abreast of politics. Those without some advanced education rely more heavily on traditional media, and in particular, are twice as likely to rely solely on the television. This reinforces the argument that the skills, learning and knowledge developed through higher education are central to the decisions that citizens make regarding where to access political information. Similarly, a digital divide (Norris 2000a) exists in the sense that those with higher incomes are far more likely to identify the Internet as one of their news sources. To the extent that the quality of information or opportunities for participation vary across media types, both findings are likely to translate into different engagement levels or 'democratic divides' (Gidengil et al. 2004). Rather than simply a matter of choice, where one obtains political information is constrained in part by structural factors that highlight the consequences of economic and educational inequalities.

Where citizens obtain their political information is also related to age and sex, both of which act as important determinants of political interest, a motivational factor identified in Figure 1. Three findings stand out when comparing media type choices across the age categories. First, younger Canadians, especially those under 35 years of age, are far more likely to include the Internet as a news source than older Canadians. This finding is not surprising if one remembers that the medium was only recently widely adopted by the public. Over time, however, one would expect these age differences to diminish as today's youngest citizens move through the life cycle. Second, the youngest respondents (under 25) are somewhat more likely to identify the television as their only news source. This may well reflect the dominance of the visual element of the medium but it nevertheless means that a slightly higher share of the youngest Canadians are limited to less than in-depth coverage of political issues and events. Third, almost 10 percent of respondent under 25 indicated that they employ all five media types to follow news and current events, a share similar to that found in the remaining age groups, and one that weakens over-generalizations regarding this group's political apathy.

Gender is an additional determinant of political participation that is likely to mediate the relationship between media use and political participation (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001). Despite educational and income gains over time, women continue to exhibit lower levels of political interest and efficacy which depress their motivation to participate (Gidengil et al. 2008). The findings in Tables 2 & 3 leave open the possibility that media choices might also shed light on women's lower engagement levels. Men are much more likely to employ the Internet to follow the news and reveal a somewhat higher tendency to employ all five of the media sources than women. To the extent that media choices play an independent role in shaping participation, these differences may well help to explain gender gaps in participation.

The degree to which the use of different media types is associated with greater or weaker levels of trust continues to be debated by researchers. A breakdown of the general trust measure by news source reveals a statistically significant relationship that sheds some light on the debate (results not shown). Respondents who employ television as their only news source reveal the lowest levels of trust: less than half – 42.5 percent – of them agree that 'most people can be trusted.' Those who include the Internet

**Table 2 - News Source by Determinants of Engagement (a)**

Media Types	Education		Household Income*		
	No college/ university	Some college/ university	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$79,999	\$80,000 and over
Television Alone	18.6%	9.4%	18.5%	12.1%	7.7%
Television and Newspapers	21.6%	14.3%	19.0%	18.2%	14.7%
Television, Newspapers and Radio	16.4%	12.4%	15.1%	15.3%	12.7%
Other Traditional (alone or in combination)	27.0%	21.9%	26.1%	24.3%	22.5%
Internet (alone or in combination)	11.0%	27.6%	15.6%	20.7%	25.3%
All Five Media Types	5.4%	14.4%	5.7%	9.4%	17.2%
N	12032	11292	5706	6995	5457
$\chi^2$ , p	1986.0, p<.001		818.7, p<.001		

Note: \* Household income categories collapsed for ease of comparison

**Table 3- News Source by Determinants of Engagement (b)**

Media Types	Age						Sex	
	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+	Female	Male
Television Alone	17.3%	13.7%	13.3%	13.7%	13.2%	14.7%	16.4%	11.8%
Television and Newspapers	17.3%	14.9%	16.9%	17.2%	20.3%	23.4%	18.7%	17.5%
Television, Newspapers and Radio	7.6%	9.9%	13.6%	16.6%	17.3%	21.6%	15.1%	13.8%
Other Traditional (alone or in combination)	20.2%	21.0%	23.8%	24.4%	26.8%	31.3%	26.9%	22.0%
Internet (alone or in combination)	27.9%	29.5%	21.2%	17.1%	12.4%	4.8%	15.1%	23.1%
All Five Media Types	9.8%	11.1%	11.2%	11.0%	10.0%	4.2%	7.8%	11.8%
N	2886	4212	5012	4525	3098	3591	11870	11456
$\chi^2$ , p	15333.0, p<.001						444.2, p<.001	

among their news sources and who employ all five news sources, on the other hand, are the most trusting, with 61.5 percent and 66.4 percent of them agreeing to the statement. All other respondents fall between these two extremes. This simple test leaves open the possibility that Putnam may be correct in arguing that television leads to lower levels of trust overall, and in turn, to lower engagement levels. It does not, however, support the argument of those who argue that the Internet plays a similar role.

The next step is to assess if there exists a relationship between news sources and engagement prior to the introduction of controls. Given that the measure of media use employed herein addresses its use specifically for informational rather recreational purposes, its relationship to engagement ought to be heightened. The results of the analysis of variance tests in Table 4 reveal that where one accesses political information is indeed related to one's civic and political engagement levels. Three conclusions are evident from this preliminary investigation: citizens who rely on television alone for their political information are the least engaged; those who rely on all five sources of political information are the most engaged; and except for citizen-oriented political engagement (a point that will be returned to below), use of the Internet appears to be connected to higher levels of engagement overall. Use of the Internet, with the exception of those who employ it in combination with all other media types, is associated with *lower* levels of engagement in election and party related activities. This result no doubt reflects the younger age of Internet users, a group that has exhibited very low voter turnout levels in recent years (Blais et al. 2004, Gidengil et al. 2004). This preliminary finding reinforces the importance of distinguishing between forms of engagement, most notably between electoral and other forms. Simply put, not all engagement stems from the same set of influences.

**Table 4 - Engagement by News Source**

News Source	Citizen-oriented Political Engagement	Cause-Oriented Political Engagement	Civic Engagement
Television Alone	1.78	0.48	1.57
Television and Newspapers	2.09	0.74	2.04
Television, Newspapers and Radio	2.33	0.96	2.36
Other Traditional (alone or in combination)	2.12	0.94	2.24
Internet (alone or in combination)	1.84	1.30	2.56
All Five Media Types	2.24	1.66	3.07
N	22469	22967	23324
F, p	89.94, p<.001	313.82, p<.001	274.93, p<.001

Note: One-way Analysis of Variance. Entries indicate the mean number of activities for each category of the News Source variable.

In order to evaluate the independent effects of media on each of the three types of engagement tapped by the 2003 GSS, the media measures and a set of various other measures and indicators were regressed on the citizen-oriented, cause-oriented and civic engagement measures. The results are presented in Table 5. The relatively large set of explanatory measures included in the regressions nevertheless results in modest levels of explanatory power for political and civic behaviour, ranging from a low of 14% of the variance in cause-oriented engagement to approximately 24% for both citizen-

oriented and civic engagement. These results are, however, comparable to those achieved elsewhere (Livingstone and Markham 2008, Xenos and Moy 2007).

The media use measures appear to exert a significant effect on engagement. For citizen-oriented engagement, the difference in engagement between television only and all news source respondents is 0.29 points activities on the 0 to 5 scale; thinking differently, the variable exerts a shift in the mean number of activities (2.05) to a low of 1.91 and a high of 2.20 activities across the range of news source categories. The impact of attention to news is somewhat greater, shifting the mean number of activities – 2.05 – among those who rarely/never follow the news to a high of 2.47 activities among those who watch the news on a daily basis. The third media measure, time spent watching television has no effect on citizen-oriented engagement, perhaps indicative of the weaker time demands made by such activities.

The impact of the media variables on cause-oriented engagement is also significant. The overall impact of the news source measure on engagement is 0.75 activities on the 0 to 6 scale; almost one full activity separates those who rely only on the television and those who rely on all five news sources. The impact of attention to news on cause-oriented engagement is similar to that found for citizen-oriented engagement: those who follow the news daily engage in .45 more activities out of 6 than those who rarely/never follow the news. Although the final measure, time spent watching television, is also statistically significant, its overall impact is more muted: only .09 activities on the 0 to 6 scale separates those who watch less than 15 hours per week on television from those who watch 15 hours or more.

The media variables also play an important role in shaping civic engagement. The overall variation in engagement across the various categories of the news source measure is .66 activities on the 0 to 9 scale, holding all others measures constant. Those respondents who rely exclusively on the television reveal an average of 1.95 activities overall; those who rely on all five news sources, on the other hand, engage in 2.61 activities on average. Attention to the news exerts less of an effect, .36 activities on the engagement measure across the 4-point attention measure, than that found for the two other engagement forms but one that is not irrelevant. Finally, time spent watching television is negatively associated with civic engagement; those who spend 15 hours or more a week watching television engage in .15 fewer activities than those who watch it less. Perhaps not surprisingly, the time replacement argument made by Putnam and others appears to come into play for engagement activities that require a significant time commitment.

These results suggest that using television as one's only source of political information is associated with lower levels of engagement. One must be careful, however, to assign causality to television itself; it is possible that those who are not connected with their community may resort to watching television in order to fill their time. Unfortunately, cross-sectional data such as these make it difficult to establish the direction of causal arrows between variables.

Second, it is also the case that those who rely on all five media types for their political information reveal the highest engagement levels across the three measures. This finding remains after having controlled for the frequency with which one follows the news; as such, it is not the case that a higher level of political interest is being captured by the news source measure. Instead, the measure is likely capturing something about the quality and balance of coverage across different media.

**Table 5 - The Impact of Media Use and News Source on Political and Civic Engagement**

	<b>Citizen-oriented political engagement</b>	<b>Cause-oriented political engagement</b>	<b>Civic Engagement</b>
TV alone	-.14 (.04)***	-.33 (.04)***	-.29 (.05)***
TV & Newspapers	-.01 (.03)	-.21 (.04)***	-.10 (.04) *
TV, Newspapers & Radio	.08 (.04) *	-.01 (.04)	.02 (.05)
Internet (alone & comb)	.03 (.03)	.19 (.04)***	.09 (.04) *
All News Sources	.15 (.04) ***	.42 (.04) ***	.37 (.05) ***
Attention to news	.14 (.01) ***	.15 (.02) ***	.12 (.02) ***
Time Spent Watching Television	.00 (.03)	-.09 (.03) **	-.15 (.03) ***
18 to 24	-.74 (.04) ***	-.17 (.05)***	-.38 (.06) ***
25 to 34	-.39 (.03) ***	-.12 (.03) ***	-.29 (.04) ***
45 to 54	.22 (.03) ***	-.02 (.03)	.02 (.04)
55 to 64	.42 (.04) ***	.04 (.04)	.02 (.05)
Over 65	.62 (.08) ***	-.09 (.09)	-.04 (.11)
General trust	.22 (.02) ***	.18 (.03) ***	.32 (.03)***
Some college or university	.17 (.02) ***	.41 (.03) ***	.61 (.03) ***
Household income	.05 (.01) ***	.03 (.01) ***	.11 (.01) ***
Atlantic	.20 (.04) ***	.03 (.05)	.11 (.06)
Quebec	.51 (.03) ***	.13 (.03) ***	-.24 (.04) ***
Prairies	.05 (.03)	.11 (.03) **	.19 (.04) ***
BC	-.06 (.03)	.33 (.04) ***	.26 (.04) ***
Student	.13 (.32)	.32 (.36)	.78 (.41)
Retired	.07 (.07)	.14 (.09)	.47 (.10) ***
Homemaker/caregiver	.02 (.05)	.08 (.06)	.30 (.06) ***
Other main activity	-.08 (.06)	.16 (.07) *	.11 (.08)
Recent immigrant	-1.57 (.05)***	-.61 (.06)*	-.51 (.07) ***
More than 5 years in community	-.04 (.03)	.04 (.03)	-.02 (.03)
Parents volunteered	.16 (.02) ***	.32 (.02) ***	.53 (.03) ***
Importance of religion	.06 (.01) ***	.10 (.12) ***	.23 (.01)***
Lengthy commute to work/school	-.08 (.09)	-.02 (.10)	-.17 (.11)
Female	.07 (.02) ***	-.05 (.03)	.12 (.03) ***
Rural dweller	.09 (.03) ***	.24 (.03) ***	.29 (.04) ***
Constant	.56 (.08) ***	-.51 (.09) ***	-.48 (.11) ***
Adjusted R square	.236	.137	.230
N	12018	12254	12354

Note: The column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors shown in parentheses. Estimation is by ordinary least squares. See Appendix for information on the variables employed in the analysis. \*\*\* indicates significant at  $p < .001$ , \*\* at  $p < .01$ , and \*  $p < .05$ .

A third finding is that Canadians who obtain their political information from the Internet are not distinguishable from Canadians who combine more traditional types of media in their overall levels of citizen-oriented political engagement. Voting and engagement with political parties appear to have little connection to the use of the Internet for information purposes. Internet use is, however, significantly associated with greater participation levels in cause-oriented and civic engagement. For cause-oriented

political engagement, in-depth coverage and the wide array of information available on-line would seem to make it a valuable addition to one's information sources. Its usefulness for volunteering and membership activity is less immediately clear. It may be the case that the civically engaged are part of networks that make greater use of the Internet which might lead to greater familiarity with the medium and a greater willingness to include it among one's information sources.

The frequency with which one pays attention to political news is positively associated with all three forms of engagement. As previously noted, this measure is likely closely connected to political interest, and in the absence of such a measure in the survey, is likely capturing some of its effects on engagement. As such the finding is not surprising. Here too, however, the causal direction ought not to be assumed too quickly. While paying attention to the news may well instil a desire to engage, engagement itself may well spur the desire for greater political information.

The argument that time spent watching television leaves less time for engagement is partly supported by the results in Table 5. Both cause-oriented and civic engagement levels are lower for those respondents who indicated that they spend more than 15 per week watching the television. This effect is not evident, however, for citizen-oriented political activity. This latter form of engagement may well require less of a time commitment than the two alternative forms of engagement – registering one's vote requires a minimal time commitment and political parties limit much of their activity to election campaigns – which may well explain the lack of a significant effect. This explanation is possibly hinted at by the higher correlation between cause-oriented and civic engagement mentioned above. But in the absence of longitudinal data, the possibility exists that those who engage in time-consuming activities simply have less-time available to watch television.

The dummy variables for the various age groups reveal that younger Canadians, particularly those under 25 years of age, are significantly less engaged than other Canadians. This finding holds for all three forms of engagement, and after having controlled for factors that likely mediate the relationship. This finding likely reflects life-cycle effects: as young people enter their thirties they are more likely to marry, have children, begin careers, obtain a home and a mortgage, all of which are likely to increase the importance that they place on politics and political issues as well as increase their opportunities for volunteering and charitable giving as their children become involved in organizations and income patterns become more firmly established. The importance of generational effects should not be dismissed, however, particularly for citizen-oriented political engagement as evidence accumulates to suggest that young people are voting at levels well below those of young people in previous generations (Blais et al. 2004).

Significant findings in the remaining variables generally reflect expectations. General trust, a concept that has been identified as a motivation link to engagement, reveals a strong and consistent association with all three forms: the more generally trusting that respondents are of people overall, the more engaged they are in electoral, cause-oriented and civic processes and organizations. Here too, however, we are left to speculate as to whether it is the higher level of engagement itself that generates greater trust or greater trust that leads citizens to get involved. Education and income are both positively associated with engagement, no doubt connected to the skills and resources that accompany higher levels of both. Women are more likely to engage in citizen-oriented political engagement and in civic engagement. Retirees and homemaker/caregivers are more civically engaged, likely stemming from greater flexibility in their schedules. Having recently immigrated tends to depress engagement, a finding that has been argued elsewhere to stem from the limited time and income that often accompanies this status (Gidengil et al. 2004). Having parents that were volunteers when one was younger underscores the importance of childhood socialization on political participation later in life. Religion is positively



associated with engagement levels, reflecting both the belief system associated with religious practice as well as the avenues that such organizations provide for volunteering (O'Neill 2006, Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Living in a smaller community is associated with increased engagement, perhaps due to the lack of anonymity and/or increased stocks of social capital found in smaller communities. Neither time spent in the community nor a lengthy commute to school or work appear to matter for engagement, findings that run counter to expectations. Lastly, the variation in engagement patterns across the provinces is not an unexpected finding but certainly one deserving of greater research attention.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This article represents a modest attempt at establishing the role that the media plays in shaping political and civic engagement in Canada. The findings suggest that more focused attention to the media's role would likely reap significant benefits in furthering our understanding of participation behaviour at the individual level. One of the questions framing this investigation was whether the media play a role in shaping the political and civic engagement of Canadians. The evidence suggests that they do. The media types employed by Canadians to follow politics and the frequency with which they follow such coverage each reveal an association to the number of activities in which respondents participate. Use of more traditional media – most notably television alone and in combination with newspapers – is associated with lower levels of engagement. Use of the Internet – most often employed in combination with more traditional media types – reveals an association with higher levels of engagement. Future research – more qualitative perhaps – ought to focus on addressing what it is about these particular combinations of media that best addresses the needs and desires of those with more limited and more heightened engagement levels.

Distinguishing between different types of engagement is also central to better understanding the role that the media play. The findings in this investigation suggest that citizen-oriented political engagement – that directed towards electoral and party politics – is qualitatively different from more cause-oriented and civically oriented engagement. Some have argued that the distinction has been amplified by generational value shifts and increased cognitive mobilization (Norris 2003) but whether and how the media shapes these uniquely motivated activities has received too little attention to date.

The evidence also indicates that media use is not simply a matter of individual agency but rather is partly shaped by economic and educational factors. Thus democratic divides can be mitigated by providing cheap and easy access to political information but also by encouraging investment in education given the strong indirect role that ability plays in mediating the media's role in shaping engagement. Political sophistication requires access to information but also the intellectual capacity to process and act on that information. Minimizing gender differences in engagement that might stem from media choices is less easily achieved given the important role that gender socialization likely plays in shaping those choices.

The evidence also suggests or at least does not eliminate the possibility that use of the Internet encourages political participation, a finding with significant consequences for young Canadians given their adoption of the medium. Such a conclusion must be tempered, however, by the fact that the measure employed to assess its use was fairly narrow, limited to its use to stay abreast of current affairs. A more comprehensive measure of Internet media usage would provide a more sophisticated understanding of when, why and to what end it is employed, especially as an instrument of engagement rather than one employed only for informational purposes. And this finding is less true of civic-oriented

political engagement, given the limited independent impact that the Internet appears to play in such activities and the remarkably low levels at which young Canadians engage in them.

A final note is offered on the benefits and limitations of the data employed in this investigation. The GSS collects information on a sample much larger than that normally encountered in social science investigations, providing an opportunity for establishing more nuanced indicators of concepts and contextual analysis. Yet the cross-sectional rather than longitudinal nature of the data significantly limits the degree to which causal connections can be established. Moreover, the analysis suffered from the often inevitable limitations that accompany the use of secondary data. For one, a limited set of questions addressing media use limited the conclusions that could be reached. Extant research has identified the importance of the reasons why people employ various media – informational versus entertainment purposes – as well as their station and program choices on participatory behaviour (Hooghe 2002). Moreover, findings suggest that attention to media, not just that focussed exclusively on staying abreast of current affairs, plays a role in shaping behaviour (Ibid.). The failure to collect this information eliminated the possibility of assessing such distinctions. Finally, several important elements of the model for evaluating participation decisions were omitted given the lack of valid questions in the GSS: political knowledge, political efficacy and political cynicism. As key links between media use and the participatory behaviour of respondents, their omission restricted the degree to which the model could be fully examined.

## Appendix

### Variables Employed in the Analysis

Variable	Type	Distribution	GSS variables
Citizen-Oriented Political Engagement	Interval	Minimum=0 Maximum=5 Mean=2.05, Std. Dev.=1.34	CE_Q111, PE_Q110, PE_Q120, PE_Q130, PE_Q230
Cause-Oriented Political Engagement	Interval	Minimum=0 Maximum=6 Mean=0.98, Std. Dev.=1.32	PE_Q250, PE_Q260, PE_Q270, PE_Q280, PE_Q290, PE_Q300
Civic Engagement	Interval	Minimum=0 Maximum=9 Mean=2.24, Std. Dev.=1.70	VCG_Q300, VCG_Q340, CE_Q110, CE_Q112, CE_Q113, CE_Q114, CE_Q115, CE_Q116, CE_Q240
News Source	Nominal	Television Alone=14.1% Television and Newspapers=18.1% Television, Newspapers and Radio=14.5% Other Traditional (alone or in combination)=24.5% Internet (alone or in combination)=19.0% All Five Media Types=9.8% Entered as dummy variables in regression; omitted category: 'Other	Q320A, Q320B, Q320C, Q320D, Q320E

Attention to News	Ordinal	traditional' 1 'Rarely/never'=6.4% 2 'Several times each month'=4.6% 3 'Several times each week'=18.7% 4 'Daily'=70.3%	PE_Q310
Time Spent Watching Television During a Typical Week	Nominal	0 'Less than 15 hours'=74.7% 1 '15 hours or more'=25.3%	PE_Q330
Age	Ordinal	18 to 24=12.3% 25 to 34=18.0% 35 to 44=21.4% 45 to 54=19.3% 55to 64=13.3% 65 and over=15.6% Entered as dummy variables in regression; omitted category: 35 to 44	AGEGR5
General Trust	Nominal	"Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?" 0 'Cannot be too careful'=44.5% 1 'People can be trusted'=52.9%	TRT_Q110
Education	Nominal	0 'Less than college/university'=52.2% 1 'Some college/university or more'=47.8%	EDU10
Household Income – last 12 months	Ordinal	Minimum=1 'No income or loss' Maximum=12 '\$100,000 or more' Mean=8.8, Std. Dev.=2.51	INCMHSD
Region	Nominal	Atlantic=7.6% Quebec=24.1% Ontario=38.5% Prairies=16.4% British Columbia=13.4% Entered as dummy variables in regression; omitted category: Ontario	REGION
Work Status	Nominal	Working=58.2% Student=8.1% Retired=17.1% Home/caregiver=10.1% Other status=5.6% Entered as dummy variables in regression; omitted category: Working	ACMYR
Recent Immigrant	Nominal	0 'Non-immigrant or arrived before 1995'=95.0% 1 'Arrived in 1995 or later'=5.0%	YRARRI
Time in Community	Nominal	0 'In city/local community less than 5 years'=82.9% 1 'In city/local community 5 years or	DOR_Q231

Parents volunteered	Nominal	more'=17.1% 0 'Parents did not volunteer when respondent was in grade/high school'=50.8% 1 'Parents did volunteer when respondent was in grade/high school'=49.2%	YER_Q190
Religiosity	Ordinal	"How important are your religious or spiritual beliefs to the way that you live your life?" 1 'Not at all important'=12.2% 2 'Not very important'=15.9% 3 'Somewhat important'=34.0% 4 'Very important'=37.8%	RL_Q105
Long commute	Nominal	"Last week, how many hours did you spend commuting to and from work/school?" 0 'Less than 20 hours'=98.5% 1 '20 hours or more'=1.5%	MAR_Q530, MAR_Q540
Sex	Nominal	0 'Male'=49.9% 1 'Female'=51.0%	SEX
Rural Dweller	Nominal	0 'Resides in large urban centre (CMA/CA)'=80.4% 1 'Resides in non-CMA/CA'=19.6%	LUC_RST

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the International Seminar on "Democracy, Communication & Media: Recent Experiences from Mexico and Canada," Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, February 16-17, 2009. I wish to thank the participants of that seminar as well as an anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments. All errors remain my own.

<sup>2</sup> The working weight in the analysis is the GSS population weight divided by its mean. The GSS population weight included with the data inflates the sample to produce results that reflect the actual size of the Canadian population; dividing the weight by its mean provides the necessary correction for sampling while removing the sample to population inflation.

<sup>3</sup> Both the cause-and citizen-oriented political engagement variables deviate somewhat from a normal distribution. The lack of normally distributed dependent variables is not a concern for the OLS regression technique employed in this analysis although it does increase the likelihood of violating the normality assumption in the distribution of the error terms. The violation of this assumption is, however, of no consequence for the unbiasedness of the regression estimators and is only of minimal consequence for the accuracy of the inferential tests in large samples given the central limit theorem (Allison 1999, Berry and Feldman 1985).

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