Profiling Online Political Content Creators:
Advancing the Paths to Democracy

Ingrid Bachmann, School of Journalism Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile

Teresa Correa, School of Journalism, Diego Portales University, Santiago, Chile

Homero Gil de Zúñiga, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA

ABSTRACT

The Internet has allowed digital media users to be more than just consumers of political information, allowing the chance to create their own online political content. Thus, users can now create personal blogs, post comments on others' blogs, contribute with citizen news, and upload their videos about current events and public affairs. Drawing from sociological and psychological frameworks, this study explores the socio-demographic and psychological characteristics of online political content creators and the effects of this behavior for the political and civic spheres. A survey of U.S. adults reveals that income and age are negatively correlated with political content creation, as well as emotional stability and life satisfaction, while extraversion was positively related. Further, the creation of political content was a positive predictor of political participation and civic engagement, even after controlling for demographics, psychological factors, media use and trust, suggesting a positive linkage between the production of online political content and both political and civic participatory practices.

Keywords: Civic Participation, Demographics, Digital Media, Internet, Online Content Creation, Personality, Political Participation, Politics

INTRODUCTION

The Web increasingly offers greater opportunities and spaces for people to create, interact, and share material online, and content creation has grown at a fast pace: In 2008, 26.4 million people in the United States had started a blog (Technorati, 2008), and in 2010, 35 hours of video were uploaded every minute to YouTube (2011). In this increasingly interactive and user-generated Web, engaging in these creative activities may be important for the democratic agenda because new media users potentially become not merely consumers of content, but also participatory citizens (Livingstone, 2004). An active interaction in the online public sphere may help people to become engaged in political and civic arenas, which ultimately creates a better democratic environment. For example, Gil de Zúñiga (2009) found that the active usage of

blogs by posting comments and creating entries, rather than passive activities such as reading or browsing, is associated with people's political participation. Similarly, those who post political or social content are more likely to get engaged in civic activities, including joining a political or civic organization (Smith, Scholzman, Verba, & Brady, 2009). Likewise, expressive political participation via Web has been linked to mobilization in the offline realm (Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009), and past research suggest that new technologies have helped Internet users to be more engaged in public affairs (e.g., Williams & Tedesco, 2006).

Despite the increasing importance of creating online content, most of the studies have focused on the production of general online content (e.g., Correa, 2010; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Kalmus, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Runnel, & Siibak, 2009). Because of the ever-increasing prevalence of these creative activities, it is relevant to move the discussion forward and investigate more thoroughly specific forms of content creation, such as political content creation, which includes contributing political content to blogs, news websites, and video-sharing applications. For instance, the Pew Internet and American Life project found that 15% of adult Internet users have used the Web by posting comments, photos, or videos related to a political or social issue (Smith et al., 2009).

Just like it happens in offline settings, it is known that well-to-do and better-educated people are more likely to politically participate in online settings by signing an online petition or making a money contribution. However, there are signs that activities that involve user-generated content do not follow these well-established patterns and is done by people who traditionally come from more disadvantaged sectors of the population (Smith et al., 2009). For example, Pew found that political participation in blogs and social networking sites is not characterized by a strong link with socio-economic status (Smith et al., 2009). Similarly, it has been revealed that among online users, ethnic minorities are more likely to engage in content creation than whites (e.g., Correa, 2010).

Internet content creation has been defined in different ways. So far, many studies have investigated specific applications such as social networking sites and blogs (Gueorguieva, 2008; Vitak et al., 2011; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, & Bichard, 2010). Other studies have focused on a broad definition of content creation, one that includes general use of social networking sites; creation of a website or blog; and uploading photos, artwork, writing, or audio and video files to the Internet and to social networking sites (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Lenhart, Horrigan & Farrows, 2004; Leung, 2009). We argue that it is time to specify these general definitions and start to incorporate the purposes and contexts of the generation of online content. We answer that call by creating a construct of political content creation, defined as the generation of information about current events or public affairs that potentially favors the public discourse by engaging in civic and political participation. Thus, we measure online political content creation as creating blogs, posting comments on blogs, contributing with citizen news, and uploading videos to the Internet about current events or public affairs.

In addition, active participation in the Web has been explained by approaches that come from sociology or psychology. The former has focused on structural factors such as socio-economic status, while the latter has investigated constructs including personality traits. Research has found they are not randomly distributed among groups; there are differences by gender, race, socioeconomic status, and age (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Jones, Johnson-Yale, Millermaier, & Seoane Pérez, 2009; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). There are also psychological differences. For instance, people with greater levels of neuroticism and openness to new experiences tend to use blogs more often (Guadagno, Okdie, & Eno, 2008). Because research has investigated specific applications or has defined content creation in a very broad manner, it is pertinent to explore who are those that tend to take advantage of these participatory technologies by creating political content and whether that content generation translates into

to higher levels of active citizenship by participating in political and civic spheres. Drawing from the theoretical link among the civic voluntarism model (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), new media use, and participation (e.g., Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005), this study investigates political content creation in a more comprehensive way by taking into account the structural and psychological predictors as well as its political and civic outcomes. Using a national sample of U.S. adults, this study proceeds in two stages. First, we explore the socio-demographic and psychological factors (i.e., personality traits and life satisfaction) that predict political content creation. Second, we will empirically test the effects of such creative behavior on the political and civic spheres.

POLITICAL CONTENT CREATION AND PARTICIPATION

Digital media use and participation in political and civic arenas has been investigated from sociological and psychological standpoints. Scant research has comprehensively addressed the social and psychological predictors of more purposeful and participatory activities on the Web, such as political content creation and its possible political and civic outcomes.

Structural Factors

From a sociological perspective, research has mainly focused on structural factors such as socio-demographics that predict online content creation in general. The literature has found that performing active behaviors on the Web, such as creating content, is not equally distributed among groups; there are differences by gender, race, socio-economic status, and age (Bachmann, Kaufhold, Lewis, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2010; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2010; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

Gender. Regarding gender, there is no clear pattern of online activities that require content creation. For example, research from the Pew Internet Project revealed that among adult Internet users, there are no gender differences in relation to creating content – roughly the same percentage of women and men have created content of one kind or another (Lenhart et al., 2004). Among younger cohorts, there are some gender differences. While teenage girls tend to be more avid bloggers, boys are more likely to upload videos (Lenhart, Madden, McGill, & Smith, 2007). In addition, Hargittai and Walejko (2008) found that female college students were less likely to share online content. Finally, Correa (2010) found that among college students, men were slightly more likely than women to participate in the Web by creating content.

Race. Contrary to the trend in which minority groups are in a disadvantaged position in technology use, early studies on content creation found that among online users there was no difference among racial groups (Lenhart et al., 2004). Recent studies have consistently found that whites are less likely than minority groups —i.e., African Americans, Hispanics and Asians— to actively participate by creating content (Correa & Jeong, 2011; Lenhart, 2009). For example, among college students, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians created significantly more content than whites (Correa, 2010). Another study found that black college students were more likely to keep a blog than whites (Jones et al., 2009).

Findings based on national samples of adult Internet users are similar. Based on a national survey of teens (12 to 17-years-old), Harp and her colleagues (2010) recently argued that African Americans were more likely than whites to civically and politically participate in online and offline settings.

Socioeconomic Status. Regarding the relationship between socioeconomic background and content creation, the findings are somewhat mixed. While some studies have found that college students from higher SES (measured as parental schooling) are more likely to engage in creative activities than those from lower classes (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008), others have found that SES does not make a difference (Correa, 2010). Among national samples

of adult Internet users, the results also do not show a clear pattern. Some scholars have indicated a positive relationship between income, education, and content creation (Lenhart et al., 2004) while others did not find a difference in SES (Chen, 2007).

Age. It has been consistently found that teens and young adults (18 to 32-years-old) are more likely than older generations to create content (Jones & Fox, 2009; Lenhart et al., 2004). Even within the young adult cohort, age makes a difference.

Because the literature has focused on socio-demographic and online content creation in general and does not always show a clear pattern to predict a more purposeful activity such as content creation related to political or public affairs, we pose the following research question:

RQ1: What are the socio-demographic characteristics of online political content creators?

Psychological Traits

From a psychological standpoint, most of the research on the psychological predictors of digital media use and content creation, in particular, has focused on factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, gratifications sought, locus of control, and creativity (e.g., Correa, 2010; Gil de Zúñiga, 2006; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2010; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2011; Kalmus et al., 2009; Leung, 2009). Scant research has investigated more stable psychological aspects such as personality characteristics, including their unique personalities and their levels of life satisfaction. Furthermore, personality traits have sparked recent interest in predicting political participation and political content creation is a form of participation in online settings.

Personality. As the Internet began diffusing to the population, scholars examined the relationship between personality and Internet usage utilizing the Big-Five Factor Model (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Widely used in psychology, this personality model contains five factors representing personality traits at a broad level:

extraversion, neuroticism, openness to new experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008; John & Srivastava, 1999). Each bipolar factor (e.g., extraversion vs. introversion) summarizes various specific aspects (e.g., being sociable, talkative, outgoing). This model suggests that the majority of individual differences in personality can be classified into these five broad domains (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003).

The line of research that has examined personality and Internet usage determined extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to new experiences are all related to blog usage (Correa, Bachmann, Willard Hinsley, & Gil de Zúñiga, in press; Guadagno et al., 2008). Extraverted people who are sociable and have greater levels of self-esteem tend to be drawn to online social activities that are not anonymous, such as social network sites and instant messages (Correa, Willard Hinsley, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2010; Ross et al., 2009; Zywica & Danowski, 2008). People with lower levels of emotional stability tend to use social network sites, instant messages, and blogs (Ehrenberg et al., 2008; Guadagno et al., 2008). Scholars suggest more neurotic people are drawn to these activities because they allow additional time to contemplate responses making it easier for them to communicate with others. Finally, people who are open to new experiences are heavier users of social media and blogs (Guadagno et al., 2008; Ross et al., 2009). This relationship is expected given the novelty of these new technological tools.

Life Satisfaction. Satisfaction with life refers to peoples' level of personal contentment or subjective happiness (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Because research has found that life satisfaction is generally correlated with positive effects in their interpersonal communication (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991) and their social ties (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006), one could expect that there is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and use of web tools that allow interaction and social connection (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). It is also possible that people who have lower levels of life satisfaction use these participatory

tools to compensate their real-world isolation and increase their personal contentment (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). Therefore, these studies are inconclusive.

Because research on personality and life satisfaction has only explored social media and blog usage in general and not more active and purposeful utilization of the technology by creating political content, and because some findings are inconclusive, the following research question is posed:

RQ2: What personality traits and life satisfaction do online political content creators have?

Content Creation and Participation

According to the Civic Voluntarism Model, three factors seem to be key determinants of people's participation in political and civic spheres: resources (e.g., information, money, and time), psychological resources (e.g., political or civic interest, knowledge, efficacy), and recruitment (i.e., being recruited to participate) (Verba et al., 1995). Existing research shows that people who obtain resources (especially information), become engaged, and are recruited for participation when they actively engage in discussions with others (Klofstad, 2007; Verba et al., 1995).

Recent studies suggest that online conversations are as effective in influencing participatory activities as face-to-face discussions (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Shah et al., 2005). There is evidence that Internet users are increasingly embracing online technology to engage in public life (e.g., Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Jennings & Zeitner, 2003; Wellman et al., 2003; Williams & Tedesco, 2006). Some active online behaviors are related to participation (Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009), and arguably online political content creation may lead people to be engaged in political and civic spheres, as new user-generated technologies of the Web, such as blogs, citizen journalism sites, and video-sharing sites, should facilitate engaging in horizontal discussions where anyone can

potentially participate in the public discourse. Therefore, we argue that these new participatory tools can be particularly effective in facilitating access to resources, psychological engagement and recruitment, which ultimately may lead to political and civic participation and a better democratic environment.

However, discussions do not occur in a vacuum of other information channels. Using the traditional news media and trusting the information provided by media organizations have been found to foster discussion and participation, so that a "virtuous circle" between media, discussion and civic and political behavior takes place in democratic societies (Norris, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). Nevertheless, this reciprocal relationship is not symmetrical. Recent studies, however, have found a clear causal direction in that relationship. That is, discussion and information-seeking behaviors predict participation to a greater extent than the opposite direction (Rojas, 2008; Shah et al., 2005).

Although the boundaries of political and civic engagement can be intertwined, we do not treat them as a unified concept of participation because someone can be politically disengaged (e.g., not voting) but very active in civic or community affairs (i.e., participating in PTA meetings and neighborhood associations) or vice-versa (for more distinct nuances between civic and political engagement, see Shah et al., 2005).

Political Participation. Political participation is a slippery concept. While political scientists originally defined it in terms of electoral activities (i.e., voting or working for political parties), recent conceptualizations have broadened the scope of activities related to participation to include different dimensions and acts such as writing letters to the editor (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli-Carpini, 2006) or following the news media closely (Zaller, 1992). To narrow down the definition and avoid confusion, we use Brady's (1999) definition: Political participation is an "action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes" (p. 737). Thus,

this concept includes voting, attending political rallies, contacting the media, and donating money to campaigns.

The literature also has consistently found that Internet use influences citizens' participatory levels in offline settings (e.g., Livingstone, Bober, & Helsper, 2005; Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001). Furthermore, it has also been found that active usage of blogs, such as posting comments, predicts offline political participation (Kerbel & Bloom 2005). Because we do not know whether this relationship is only linked to active blogging or to creative activities in general, we will test the following hypothesis:

H1: Online political content creation will be positively related to political participation.

Civic Engagement. Using Verba and colleagues' (1995) concept of civic engagement, we define civic engagement as a "voluntary civic activity," which is an activity that is not mandatory or financially compensated and aims at participating in community affairs that are not political per se, such as neighborhood or church associations. Although some scholars have blamed the media, especially television, for the decrease in the levels of American civic engagement (Putnam, 1996), the new consensus is that the relationship between media use and civic participation depends on the patterns of media usage. Uses related to information acquisition (e.g., news) and community construction (e.g., online discussions) are positively related to civic engagement while entertainment uses (e.g., reality shows) have a negative impact on engagement (Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001; Wellman et al., 2001). Recent investigations have found that active usage of the Web, such as messaging over the Internet, has positive effects on civic participation (Shah et al., 2005) The reason behind this finding is that online conversations often are text-based, purposive, and goal-oriented (Berger, 2009), thus they effectively mobilize people. If the purposive and goal-oriented attribute of the conversation is what helps people to engage in civic activities, we should expect a similar or stronger outcome of Web content creation. Thus,

H2: Online political content creation will be positively related to civic engagement.

METHODS

Data

This study uses data from a Web-based survey conducted among U.S. adults between December 15, 2008, and January 5, 2009, from an online panel provided by the Media Research Lab at the University of Texas at Austin. Given that past research has suggested that online surveys have generalizability limitations (e.g., Thompson, Surface, Martin, & Sanders, 2003), 10,000 randomly drawn subjects from a pre-existing pool of respondents were matched to two U.S. Census variables —namely, age and gender. In the end, compared to U.S. Census data, our sample had more females and was slightly better educated, but overall the demographic profile of respondents was similar to that of other comparable surveys (see the Appendix, Table 5).

Participants got an e-mail invitation, and up to three reminders, with the survey URL and details about a monetary incentive. Eventually, 1,482 valid cases were collected, for a 17.3% response rate. For this particular study, the final sub-sample includes 975 cases, corresponding to the participants who answered every question relevant to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses.

Measures

Socio-Demographic Variables. The study used five standard demographic control variables. For gender, females were the reference group (67% of respondents). Regarding race/ethnicity, 84.5% of respondents were White, 4.8% were

African American, 3.5% were Hispanic, 3.1% were Asian, and 3.2% chose the "other" option; eventually the variable was dummy-coded with Whites as the reference group. Education level was measured with a five-point scale: Less than high school, high school, some college, college degree (median group). Similarly, yearly household income used a 10-point scale and the median group was $50,000-$59,999. Age was measured with a six-group scale, with the 40-49 years old cohort as the median group. For a summary of the variables, means and standard deviations, see Table 1.

Personality Traits. The study also included three personality traits measures —extraversion, emotional stability and openness to new experiences— based on the 10-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling et al., 2003). Past research has identified these three measures as relevant to new media use.

Each one of these traits was measured with two items. Respondents had to rate their agreement with different pairs of traits that best described them on a 10-point scale, even if one attribute applied to a greater extent than the other. Extraversion was measured by summing reserved-quiet (reversed) and extraverted-enthusiastic ($r = .43$, $p < .001$). Emotional stability was created as the sum of the scores of anxious-easily upset (reversed) and calm-emotionally stable. This resulted in a skewed variable, so those who scored above 2 standard deviations from the mean (scores below 5, representing 3.7% of the sample.) were recorded as having a score of 5 ($r = .47$, $p < .001$). Openness to new experiences was computed as a summation of conventional-uncreative (reversed) and open to new experience-complex, after recoding the outliers (scores below 7, or 3.2% of the sample) due to skewness ($r = .29$, $p < .001$).

Life Satisfaction. Research has shown that life satisfaction is related to personality (Chen, 2008; Schimmack et al., 2008), so we included this variable in the analysis. It was measured as an additive scale of three items taken from a scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larson, and Griffin (1985). Participants used a 10-point scale to determine to what extent they agreed

Table 1. Variable descriptives

	Cronbach's Alpha (When Applicable)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender (female)	--	.67	.47
Race (white)	--	.84	.36
Education	--	3.60	0.98
Income	--	5.54	3.12
Age	--	3.13	1.27
Extraversion	--	11.35	4.56
Emotional stability	--	13.74	4.16
Openness to new experiences	--	14.28	3.53
Life satisfaction	.83	16.88	7.01
News media use	.70	31.30	8.75
Traditional media trust	.68	8.37	4.89
Alternative media trust	--	3.67	2.34
Online political content creation	.76	6.81	5.81
Political participation	.78	2.37	2.01
Civic participation	.81	18.55	11.69

with the following statements: "In most ways my life is close to my ideal," "Things in my life are difficult" (reversed), and "I'm satisfied with my life."

Media Use. The regressions we ran to test our hypotheses included media use as a control variable, as past research has shown this is an important predictor of civic and political participation. It was computed as an additive scale of eight items asking respondents on a seven-point scale how frequently they had consumed different online and offline news media, such as print newspapers, online magazines, and cable TV.

Media Trust. The analysis included another two control variables for the regression models. Traditional media trust is a sum of the scores of two items that used a 10-point scale to measure how much respondents trusted mainstream media, whether online or offline. Participants also had to respond to what extent they trusted alternative media, which was measured with a single item.

Online Political Content Creation. This was computed as an index summing four items related to creating and posting to the Web one's own content. Three of these items (how often participants wrote or posted on their own blogs, posted comments on other's blogs, and created and posted their own videos online about current events or public affairs) used a 10-point scale; the fourth item—how often respondents contributed their own news to a user-generated website— used a seven-point scale.

Political and Civic Participation. The other two variables used in the analyses had to do with traditional modes of mobilization, such as political and civic participation, and were conceptualized in line with past research. An avid reader of this manuscript will realize that there are other modes of mobilization that were not included in this study (i.e., social movements). While social movements focus on specific political or social issues, we decided to exclude this kind of collective action as their goals and strategies favor a non-traditional,

more disruptive way of achieving social change (i.e., Tilly, 2004).

Thus, political participation was computed as an additive index of eight items measuring whether participants had taken part in traditional offline political activities during the last year. The items were the following: attended a political rally, called or sent a letter to an elected official, spoke to a public official in person, posted a political banner or sign, participated in any demonstration or protest, voted in the November 2008 election, were involved in local groups for political action, or participated in political action groups. The answers were yes (=1) or no (=0).

Civic participation is an additive scale that measures the respondents' involvement in community affairs and was computed from a series of question asking participants on a 10-point scale the extent to which they had been involved in the following civic activities during the last year: worked as a volunteer for a nonpolitical organization, raised money for charity, went to a meeting to discuss neighborhood problems, bought a product based on the values of the company that produces it ("buy-cotting"), or purposely avoided a product because of a company's values ("boycotting").

In order to answer the research question, we used zero-order correlations among the demographic and psychological variables and the online content creation scale. The latter was, in this case, the dependent variable. The hypotheses were tested with hierarchical multiple regressions, with the demographics in the first block, personality traits and life satisfaction in the second block, media use and media trust in the third block, and online content creation in the fourth and last block. Thus, in these particular cases, the demographic variables, psychological factors, and media use and trust were used as controls; the online content creation measure became the independent variable, and civic and political participation were the dependent variables.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 2, zero-order correlations of demographics and the online political content creation variable used to answer RQ1 show that the associations with gender are not significant, a finding consistent with studies using adult populations —rather than college students— that have found no gender difference among content creators. Similarly, the results

Table 2. Correlations among demographics and personality variables

	Online Content Creation	Gender (Female)	Race (White)	Education	Income	Age	Extraversion	Emotional Stability	Openness to New Experiences	Life Satisfaction
Content Creation	--									
Gender (female)	.04	--								
Race (white)	-.04	.02	--							
Education	-.05	-.12***	-.05	--						
Income	-.10*	-.13***	-.02	.42***	--					
Age	-.16***	-.12*	.18***	.06*	-.03	--				
Extraversion	.10*	.08*	.06#	.06#	.07*	-.06#	--			
Emotional stability	-.10**	-.10**	-.10*	.13***	.15***	.16***	.10**	--		
Openness to new experiences	.06#	.05	-.01	.06#	-.01	.02	.35***	.18**	--	
Life satisfaction	-.10*	-.04	-.02	.25**	.33***	.05	.14***	.40***	.10*	--

N = 975
# p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01 *** p < .001

are non-significant for race, although in the latter case the results suggest that non-Whites are more likely than their White counterparts to be content creators, reinforcing more recent studies that portray minority groups as more active content creators. While education also is not significant, there are two negative significant associations, both in line with past research: income ($r = -.10$, p < .05) and age ($r = -.16$, p < .001). Thus, online political content creators tend to moderately correlate to having lower income and also being younger citizens.

Further, answering RQ2, two of the three personality traits under study are associated with online content creation (Table 2). People blogging, posting comments, submitting their own news reports and creating and posting their own videos about current affairs tend to some extent to present higher levels of extraversion ($r =. 10$, p < .05) and less emotional stability ($r = -.10$, p < .01), which could explain being drawn to online social activities. The correlation with openness to new experiences was positive but only approached significance ($r =.06$, p < .10).

In addition, and in conformity with past research, there is a negative correlation between online political content creation and life satisfaction ($r = -.10$, p < .05), suggesting that those who create and post their own content online tend to have a lower level of contentment with their lives, and thus may be trying to compensate for their unhappiness by trying to make themselves be heard, or by socialize with others out there in the virtual world.

Other than demographics and personality traits, political online content creation is also positively correlated with media use, media trust, and political and civic participation (Table 3). In this case, the highest correlation is observed between this Internet behavior and alternative media trust ($r =.35$, p <.001), followed by civic participation ($r =.32$, p <.001). The correlation with political participation was also positive ($r =.21$, p <.001).

Further, hierarchical multiple regressions show online political content creation as a significant predictor of participation —whether political or civic— even after controlling for demographics, personality traits, life satisfaction, and media use and trust, therefore supporting H1 and H2 (Table 4). In other words, people who create and post their content online

Table 3. Pearson correlations among participation variables

	Online Content Creation	News Media Use	Traditional Media Trust	Alternative Media Trust	Political Participation	Civic Participation
Online content creation	--					
News media use	.28***	--				
Traditional media trust	.17***	.26***				
Alternative media trust	.35***	.22***	.46***			
Political participation	.21***	.25***	.05	.19***		
Civic participation	.32***	.34***	.13***	.32***	.56***	--

N = 975

# p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 4. Hierarchical regressions predicting participation and engagement

	Political Participation	Civic Participation
Demographics		
Gender (female)	.04	.08**
Ethnicity (white)	-.01	.03
Education	.26***	.17***
Income	.08*	.06#
Age	.17***	-.01
R²	13.4%***	6.6%***
Personality Traits		
Extraversion	.08**	.07*
Emotional stability	-.01	.05
Openness to new experiences	.12***	.10**
Life satisfaction	.07*	.06#
R² change	4.5%***	4.8%***
News Media		
News media use	.11***	.22***
Traditional media trust	-.09**	-.09**
Alternative media trust	.14***	.23***
R² change	5.7%***	15.3% ***
Content Creation		
Online content creation	.20***	.20***
R² change	3.0%***	3.1%***
TOTAL R²	26.5%	29.9%

N = 945
Cell entries are standardized Beta coefficients.
# p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01 *** p < .001

participate politically more frequently. They also participate civically more frequently.

Thus, in the model of political participation (H1), the first block of demographic variables explains 13.4% of the variance, and the psychological variables explain an additional 4.5%. Media use and trust account for another 5.7%, and the block with online content creation remains significant ($\beta = .20$, p <.001) while explaining 3% of the variance. Among demographics, significant predictors are education

($\beta = .26$, p <.001), income ($\beta = .08$, p <.05), and age ($\beta = .17$, p <.001), while the significant psychological predictors are extraversion ($\beta = .08$, p <.01), openness to new experiences ($\beta = .12$, p <.001), and life satisfaction ($\beta = .07$, p <.05).

In the civic participation model (H2), the block of demographics accounts for 6.6% of variance; the psychological variables, for an additional 4.8%; the block of media use and trust, another 15.3%; and the fourth block, of

online political content creation, an additional 3.1%. Likewise, this variable is a significant predictor ($\beta = .20$, $p <.001$), as well as other variables like gender (female; $\beta = .08$, $p <.01$), education ($\beta = .17$, $p <.001$), extraversion ($\beta = .07$, $p <.05$), and openness to new experiences ($\beta = .10$, $p <.01$).

DISCUSSION

This manuscript expands extant academic literature on e-politics by dealing with some of the Internet's most active and skillful users, the online political content creators, and the potential implications for the democratic process. Based on the analysis of U.S. national data and by focusing specifically on the creation of political content, the study sheds light in this regard in a number of ways, with results that have important implications.

First, it explored the socio-demographic characteristics of these creative citizens, yielding instructive results. In line with historical trends on general Internet adoption and use, younger people tend to create online political content more than older adults. While this finding may pass as unimportant, it is, however, not trivial given the relationship between creating content and participating in civic and political activities. This result suggests that for this particular set of young people —who historically have been described as less politically engaged (Bennett, 1997; Smith, 1999)— the Web may grant them a space to contribute to civic society. Furthermore, by doing so, young adults will likely engage in participatory behaviors since political content creation and participation are positively associated. Additionally, our findings reveal another promising relationship among those with access to the Internet. Once individuals are provided have access to this medium, more marginalized segments of society —for instance those with low income— would also be more inclined to create online political content. Once more, this may be interpreted as good news and a new path for engagement in public affairs. These citizens may find these participatory tools relatively appealing for them to express their voice by contributing with their thoughts and their content, which in turn will explain that they also further involve in politics and in civic life. While our findings did not yield any significant differences regarding race, they are in line with recent research suggesting that among online users, minorities are more active, once again hinting at alternative ways of engaging groups historically marginalized from the political arena.

Second, through the lens of the media psychology work, this paper shows how certain personality traits also moderately relate to creating online political content. More extraverted people tend to create and generate online political content, suggesting that this set of adults may be more sociable. However, results also lend support to the idea that people who are less stable and less satisfied with their lives also tend to create more political content on the Internet. Arguably this behavior denotes their efforts to reach out and find a more balanced life in order to compensate for personal tribulations. Producing and sharing political content online may also mitigate their political frustrations and discomforts, which ultimately crystallize in a positive effect, for they end up actively engaging in the democratic process. Thus, these results help highlight the importance of addressing some of the structural factors influencing the creation of online content that focuses specifically on politics and public affairs. Given that these online behaviors correlate with offline outcomes in terms of participation, this is not a minor issue.

Building on this final point, this study found empirical support for a positive relationship between creating online political content and participating civically and politically. This effect prevails after controlling for the effect that other central variables previously identified in the literature had on participatory behaviors. Results indicate that the Internet may indeed be providing new paths to foster modern democracies, particularly so considering that each day that goes by, the number of citizens that decide to not only get informed online but also

participate on the content made available on the Web keeps on increasing. Perhaps this offers an optimistic view of a more equalitarian, inclusive society through which everyone may also have a voice and provide their thoughts to others. Along these lines, this study provides valuable insights about the relationship between online political content creators and participation, an area that requires more systematic research.

As these results show, focusing on the political content creation in the *online realm* is one way to improve our understanding of participatory habits in the *offline domain*. Thus, our study makes an important contribution to e-politics research and suggests that there still is much to understand about the factors predicting people's creative efforts and its relationship with political and civic life. Our findings also show that a focus on political content on the Web is a line of inquiry worth pursuing. First, results lend support for the idea of a spill-over effect. Engaging in certain behaviours online, such as creating content, will entail not only a clear path to a more participatory citizenry online but also in the offline, and more conventional or traditional domain. Additionally, these findings may also have implications for a more democratic and equalitarian distribution of today's public space. Increasingly more and more citizens feel comfortable generating and creating content online, which provides another mechanism for regular citizens to be heard and to discuss their views over public affair issues openly.

This study is one step in that direction, but unfortunately, it suffers from a number of problems; most of these can be dealt with in future research. The paper conceptualizes online political content creators being those who create content in blogs, post comments on blogs, contribute with citizen news, and upload videos about current events and public affairs. And this active engagement with the Web is theorized to generate useful information that potentially favors the public discourse by engaging in civic and political participation. This definition seems to be appropriate as our empirical analyses testify the positive relationship between political content creators

and participation. However, the definition and measurement, although conservative, is rather imperfect. It should be acknowledged as one of the shortcomings of this piece. Future research should strive to isolate the online content this type of user generates. In this current manuscript, everything is measured together: news, diaries, opinions, etc. It is to be expected that some of these contents will be more relevant than others when predicting people's engagement in civic and political activities.

On the bright side, even though all this content is included in our measurement, the effects are still positive and significant, lending support for the idea that Web political content creators will tend to participate civically and politically. In any case, it remains to be seen whether a richer measurement of today's hyper-interactive new digital environment with online political content creators in the lead will also have similar effects on all audiences. Of course, this should be interpreted as a suggestion for future research.

Another point for future research relates to possible effects of the user generated content in society at large. This paper analyzed the effect of citizens who create political content and their participatory habits. Nevertheless, it is left to empirical testing whether the exposure and consumption of all this sort of content would also come to contribute to reinvigorate civic and political life in a comparable manner to the way mainstream media consumption accomplishes it. Incipient research in this area indicates that consumption of blogs has positive mobilizing effects for the users (Gil de Zúñiga, Veenstra, Vraga, & Shah, 2010; Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009) so we argue that a similar effect may occur. We would like to propose it as a research question for future research.

The data used in this study represents one of its strengths, since it is national data and generalizable conclusions to the rest of the U.S. population may be drawn. Nonetheless, it also represents a shortcoming —the data reveals the state of the issue in a still point in time as it is cross-sectional data. Panel data should help to better discern the relationship of our

variables of interest and the causal direction of that relationship. Likewise, in our data the respondents seem to be slightly more educated than in the census and we obtained a greater response from females than males. Nevertheless we are confident of the representativeness of our data when compared to the Pew and American Life project national data and the U.S. Census.

Even with these limitations, there is much to be learned from the collected data. As the population of content creators online grows, so do the possibilities for these citizens and other users to engage civically and politically. This paper sought to offer a snapshot depiction of Internet content users/producers and how they may reflect on the democratic discourse. That is, we profiled online political content creators as we intended to further advance the path to today's democracy.

REFERENCES

Bachmann, I., Kaufhold, K., Lewis, S., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2010). News platform preference: Advancing the effects of age and media consumption on political participation. International Journal of Internet Science, 5(1), 34-47.

Bennett, S. E. (1997). Why young Americans hate politics, and what we should do about it. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *30*(1), 47–53. doi:10.2307/420669

Berger, C. R. (2009). Interpersonal communication. In Tacks, D. W., & Salwen, M. B. (Eds.), *An integrated approach to communication theory and research* (pp. 260–279). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Brady, H. E. (1999). Political participation. In Robinson, J. P., Shaver, P. R., & Wrightsman, L. S. (Eds.), *Measures of political attitudes* (pp. 737–801). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Chen, H.-T. (2007). *Sharing, connection, and creation in the Web 2.0 era: Profiling the adopters of video-sharing and social-networking sites.* Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.

Chen, L. S.-L. (2008). Subjective well-being: Evidence from the different personality traits of online game teenager players. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, *11*(5), 579–581. doi:10.1089/cpb.2007.0192

Correa, T. (2010). The participation divide among "online experts": Experience, skills, and psychological factors as predictors of college students' web content creation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *16*(1), 71–92. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2010.01532.x

Correa, T. & Jeong, S.H. (2011). Race and online content creation. Why minorities are actively participating in the Web. Information, Communication, and Society, 14(5), 638-659. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2010.514355

Correa, T., Bachmann, I., Willard Hensley, A. & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (forthcoming). Personality and social media use. In E.Y. Li y C. Evans (eds.), Organizations and social networking: Utilizing Social Media to Engage Consumers. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Correa, T., Willard Hinsley, A. & Gil de Zúñiga, G. (2010). Who interacts on the Web?: The intersection of users' personality and social media use, Computers in Human Behavior, 26(2), 247-253. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2009.09.003

Diener, E., Emmons, R., Larsen, R., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *49*(1), 71–75. doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13

Diener, E., Sandvik, E., & Pavot, W. G. (1991). Happiness in the frequency, not the intensity, of positive versus negative effect. In Strack, F., Argyle, M., & Schwarz, N. (Eds.), *Subjective well-being: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 119–139). Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press.

Ehrenberg, A., Juckes, S., White, K. M., & Walsh, S. P. (2008). Personality and self-esteem as predictors of young people's technology use. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, *11*(6), 739–741. doi:10.1089/cpb.2008.0030

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *12*(4), 1143–1168. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x

Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2006). Reshaping the digital inequality in the European Union: How psychological variables affect Internet adoption rates. *Webology, 3*(4), Article 32. Retrieved from http://www.webology.org/2006/v3n4/a32.html

Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2009). Blogs, journalism and political participation. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *Journalism and citizenship: New agendas in communication* (pp. 108-123). New York: Routledge.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Lewis, S., Willard Hinsley, A., Valenzuela, S., Lee, JK., & Baresch, B. (2011). Blogging as a journalistic practice: A model linking perception, motivation, and behavior. *Journalism: Theory Practice & Criticism, 12*(5), 586-606. doi: 10.1177/1464884910388230

Gil de Zúñiga, H., & Valenzuela, S. (2010). Who uses Facebook and why. In D. Wittkower (Ed.) *Facebook and Philosophy: What's on your Mind?* (pp. xxi-xxxi). Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., & Valenzuela, S. (2011). The mediating path to a stronger citizenship: Online and offline networks, weak ties and civic engagement. *Communication Research*, *38*(3), 397–421. doi:10.1177/0093650210384984

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Veenstra, A., Vraga, E., & Shah, D. (2010). Digital democracy: Re-imagining pathways to political participation. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *7*(1), 36–51. doi:10.1080/19331680903316742

Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann, W. B. J. (2003). A very brief measure of the big five personality domains. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *37*(6), 504–528. doi:10.1016/S0092-6566(03)00046-1

Guadagno, R. E., Okdie, B. M., & Eno, C. A. (2008). Who blogs? Personality predictors of blogging. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *24*(5), 1993–2004. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2007.09.001

Gueorguieva, V. (2008). Voters, MySpace, and YouTube: The impact of alternative communication channels on the 2006 election cycle and beyond. *Social Science Computer Review*, *26*(3), 288–300. doi:10.1177/0894439307305636

Hargittai, E., & Walejko, G. (2008). The participation divide: Content creation and sharing in the digital age. *Information Communication and Society*, *11*(2), 239–256. doi:10.1080/13691180801946150

Harp, D., Bachmann, I., Rosas-Moreno, T. C., & Loke, J. (2010). Wave of hope: African American youth use media and engage more civically, politically than whites. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, *22*(3), 224–246. doi:10.1080/10646175.2010.496662

Jennings, M. K., & Zeitner, V. (2003). Internet use and civic engagement: A longitudinal analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *67*(3), 311–334. doi:10.1086/376947

John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big-Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. In Pervin, L. A., & John, O. P. (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 102–138). New York, NY: Guilford.

Jones, S., & Fox, S. (2009). *Generations online in 2009*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Generations-Online-in-2009.aspx

Jones, S., Johnson-Yale, C., Millermaier, S., & Seoane Pérez, F. (2009). U.S. college students' Internet use: Race, gender and digital divides. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(2), 244–264. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01439.x

Kahneman, D., & Krueger, A. B. (2006). Developments in the measurement of subjective well-being. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *20*(1), 3–24. doi:10.1257/089533006776526030

Kalmus, V., Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., Runnel, P., & Siibak, A. (2009). Mapping the terrain of "Generation C": Places and practices of online content creation among Estonian teenagers. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(4), 1257–1282. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01489.x

Kerbel, M. R., & Bloom, J. D. (2005). Blog for America and civic involvement. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, *10*(4), 3–27. doi:10.1177/1081180X05281395

Klofstad, C. A. (2007). Talk leads to recruitment: How discussions about politics and current events increase civic participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, *60*(2), 180–191. doi:10.1177/1065912907301708

Lenhart, A. (2009). *Adults and social network websites*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Adults-and-Social-Network-Websites.aspx

Lenhart, A., Horrigan, J., & Farrows, D. (2004). *Content creation online*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2004/Content-Creation-Online.aspx

Lenhart, A., Madden, M., McGill, A. R., & Smith, A. (2007). *Teens and social media: The use of social media gains a greater foothold in teen life as they embrace the conversational nature of interactive online media*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2007/PIP_Teens_Social_Media_Final.pdf.pdf

Leung, L. (2009). User-generated content on the Internet: And examination of gratifications, civic engagement and psychological empowerment. *New Media & Society*, *11*(8), 1327–1347. doi:10.1177/1461444809341264

Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *Communication Review*, *7*, 3–14. doi:10.1080/10714420490280152

Livingstone, S., Bober, M., & Helsper, E. J. (2005). Active participation or just more information? Young people's take-up of opportunities to act and interact on the internet. *Information Communication and Society*, *8*(3), 287–314. doi:10.1080/13691180500259103

Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. (2007). Gradations in digital inclusion: Children, young people and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, *9*(4), 671–696. doi:10.1177/1461444807080335

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. J. (1997). Personality trait structure as a human universal. *The American Psychologist*, *52*(5), 509–516. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.52.5.509

Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: Political communications in post-industrial democracies*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511609343

Putnam, R. (1996). The strange disappearance of civic America. *The American Prospect*, *24*, 34–48.

Rojas, H. (2008). Strategy versus understanding: How orientations toward political conversation influence political engagement. *Communication Research*, *35*(4), 452–480. doi:10.1177/0093650208315977

Rojas, H., & Puig-i-Abril, E. (2009). Mobilizers mobilized: Information, expression, mobilization and participation in the digital age. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(4), 902–927. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01475.x

Ross, C., Orr, E. S., Sisic, M., Arseneault, J. M., Simmering, M. G., & Orr, R. R. (2009). Personality and motivations associated with Facebook use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *25*(2), 578–586. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2008.12.024

Schimmack, U., Shigehiro, O., Furr, R. M., & Funder, D. C. (2008). Personality and life satisfaction: A facet-level analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *30*(8), 1065–1075.

Shah, D., Cho, J., Eveland, W. P. J., & Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling internet effects on civic participation. *Communication Research*, *32*(5), 531–565. doi:10.1177/0093650205279209

Shah, D., Kwak, N., & Holbert, R. L. (2001). "Connecting" and "disconnecting" with civic life: Patterns of Internet use and the production of social capital. *Political Communication*, *18*(2), 141–162. doi:10.1080/105846001750322952

Shah, D., McLeod, J. M., & Yoon, S. (2001). Communication, context, and community: An exploration of print, broadcast, and Internet influences. *Communication Research*, *28*(4), 464–506. doi:10.1177/009365001028004005

Smith, A., Scholzman, K. L., Verba, S., & Brady, H. (2009). *The Internet and civic engagement*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media/Files/Reports/2009/The Internet and Civic Engagement.pdf

Smith, E. S. (1999). The effects of investments in the social capital of youth on political and civic behavior in young adulthood: A longitudinal analysis. *Political Psychology*, *20*(3), 553–580. doi:10.1111/0162-895X.00156

Technorati. (2008). *State of the blogosphere: Introduction*. Retrieved from http://technorati.com/blogging/feature/state-of-the-blogosphere-2008/

Thompson, L. F., Surface, E. A., Martin, D. L., & Sanders, M. G. (2003). From paper to pixels: Moving personnel surveys to the Web. *Personnel Psychology*, *56*(1), 197–227. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.2003.tb00149.x

Tilly, C. (2004). *Social movements, 1768–2004*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site? Facebook use, and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(4), 875–901. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01474.x

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vitak, J., Zube, P., Smock, A., Carr, C. T., Ellison, N. B., & Lampe, C. (2011). It's complicated: Facebook users' political participation in the 2008 election. *CyberPsychology*. *Behavior & Social Networking*, *14*(3), 107–114. doi:10.1089/cyber.2009.0226

Wellman, B., Quan-Haase, A., Boase, J., Chen, W., Hampton, K., & Isla de Diaz, I. (2003). The social affordances of the Internet for networked individualism. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *8*(3). Retrieved from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol8/issue3/wellman.html

Wellman, B., Quan-Haase, A., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet increase, decrease, or supplement social capital? Social networks, participation, and community commitment. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, *45*(3), 436–455. doi:10.1177/00027640121957286

Williams, A. P., & Tedesco, J. C. (2006). *The Internet election: Perspectives on the Web in Campaign 2004*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

YouTube. (2011). *YouTube Press statistics*. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics

Zaller, R. (1992). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511818691

Zhang, W., Johnson, T., Seltzer, T., & Bichard, S. L. (2010). The revolution will be networked: The influence of social networking sites on political attitudes and behaviors. *Social Science Computer Review*, *28*(1), 75–92. doi:10.1177/0894439309335162

Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., & Delli-Carpini, M. X. (2006). *A new engagement? Political participation, civic life, and changing American citizen*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Zywica, J., & Danowski, J. (2008). The faces of Facebookers: Investigating social enhancement and social compensation hypothesis. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(1), 1–34. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2008.01429.x

Ingrid Bachmann is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. A former reporter, her research interests include gender, political communication and language, with emphasis in cross-national comparisons. She primarily focuses on the role of the news media in the definition of identities and meanings within the public sphere. Her recent research has been published in Howard Journal of Communication, Journalism Studies, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and others, and includes works examining how minority youth use media for political purposes, media coverage of female politicians, and the range of dissenting voices on the Iraq War in news dialogue.*

Teresa Correa is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism at Diego Portales University (Santiago, Chile). Her research focuses on digital media access and media sociology and has been published or is forthcoming in Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Information, Communication & Society, Computers in Human Behavior, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and* International Communication Gazette*, among others.*

Homero Gil de Zúñiga is an assistant professor at University of Texas at Austin, where he heads the CJCR: Community, Journalism and Communication Research, within the School of Journalism. He's been a participant of the NCA's Doctoral Honors Seminar (2005) and the Summer Doctoral Program in the OII at the University of Oxford (2006). In 2010 he was appointed Nieman Journalism Lab Research Fellow at Harvard University. His research focuses on new technologies and digital media, and their effects on society. In particular, he investigates the influence of Internet use in people's daily lives as well as the effect of such use on the overall democratic process. He has published over 20 articles in several peer-reviewed journals, including Journal of Information Technology & Politics, Communication Research, New Media & Society, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Mass Communication & Society, Human Communication Research and Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, among others.*

APPENDIX

Table 5. Demographic profile of study survey and other comparable surveys

	Study Survey Dec. 2008 – Jan. 2009 (%)	Pew Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey Nov. - Dec. 2008 (%)	U.S. Census American Community Survey (Adults Only) 2005 – 2007 (%)
Age:			
18-24	3.5	6.0	13.1
25-34	18.9	9.9	17.8
35-44	21.6	13.5	19.4
45-64	50.5	40.5	33.2
65 or more	5.5	30.2	16.6
Gender:			
Male	33.0	47.2	50.0
Female	67.0	52.8	50.0
Race / Ethnicity:			
White	84.4	79.8	65.8
Hispanic	4.5	6.1	15.0
African American	5.0	9.2	12.1
Asian	3.0	1.3	4.0
Education:			
High school or less	15.4	38.4	46.7
Some college	28.1	27.7	22.3
College degree	37.2	19.8	22.4
Graduate degree	19.2	14.1	8.6
Household Income:			
Less than $49,999	41.1	51.2	50.1
$50,000 to $99,999	37.9	31.8	30.9
$100,000 or more	21.0	17.1	19.0
Turnout:			
Voted in 2008	80.3	85.2	----