Self-motivated or mobilised: political participation in the digital age

Darren G. Lilleker and Karolina Koc-Michalska

Introduction

At the heart of questions surrounding political participation is a conundrum, that despite the increase in the ways in which people can become engaged in politics, a key precursor for participation, yet the chief forms of participation remain the preserve of a minority. However when judging whether citizens of democracies engage in political participation a narrow suite of forms of participation are usually measured, mostly those which take place offline. Although interest is increasing in online forms of participation; why citizens participate, independent of the sphere in which these actions take place, remains under-researched. This paper explores the patterns of online and offline participation, in order firstly to assess to what extent there are clear connections between forms of activism.

More importantly, however, we explore the explanatory power of a range of motivational variables. Firstly, the extent to which internal variables, relating to the attitudes towards participation and the outcomes of taking part in a range of actions are considered; specifically the importance of feeling good, gaining esteem and benefiting others is measured. Secondly, external motivations are explored in terms of the extent that participation is related to self-efficacy and influencing either decision makers or other individuals. The paper also explores the extent to which participation is mediated through social media through communication from three sources: Political parties, campaign organizations and friends. In other words do the networks which people inhabit online contribute to feelings of social and political capital and are they able to bolster internal and external motivations.

The data we present is drawn from a survey among a representative sample of nearly 2000 residents of the United Kingdom conducted in the run-up to the general election held on May 7th 2015.The survey was designed to capture demographic variables, the forms of participatory behaviour participated in and what attitudes exist towards differing forms of participation. At the heart of the survey are questions about social media usage, the extent of usage for political participation alongside other spheres and whether communication online is a factor driving participation. Through correlations and factor analysis we determine whether we can identity suites of participation, whether they be online or offline, to ascertain if divisions between spheres remain or whether alternative patterns are emerging. The paper then develops a series of models through regression analysis to determine the explanatory power of internal and external motivations and the extent that these are mediated through encouragements disseminated through social media. Prior to presenting the data the debates around participation are discussed and pathways to mobilisation are conceptualized.

Conceptual Framework

1. Participation

The received wisdom is that political participation is in crisis across most advanced democracies (Norris, 2001). The decline in participation is predicated on reduced levels of civic obligation (Schudson, 1998), the sense of duty to be engaged which is argued to underpin democracy (Zukin, 2006). Participation in civic life appears less common among younger citizens (Martin, 2012), because they have lower interest in politics (Dalton, 2007) and lower trust in the actors and institutions that constitute the state (McAllister, 2011). What is less clear from the data on the general decline in participation is whether this results from citizens, and more likely younger citizens, having busy lives and lacking the desire to engage or whether those who do not pursue traditional

participatory opportunities are 'critical citizens' (Norris, 1999) who are dissatisfied with the participatory opportunities available and the lack of influence they have on public policy. Critical citizens thus become 'dissatisfied democrats' (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) searching for alternative ways to express themselves politically, ways to have a voice, be heard and have influence. Schudson (1998) argues that context is important, critical citizens may be dissatisfied democrats but they are also claimed to be 'monitorial citizens' who discuss politics and may be mobilized when political events and consequent policy stances conflict with their values; here we might explain those who engage only in campaigns against wars, austerity measures or, in the US, Obama's reforms to health care. Monitoring events and participating sporadically gives a sense that citizens now take a switch-on-switch-off approach to politics, passive engagement is interspersed with moments of 'hot cognition' (Lilleker, 2014) which underpins a participatory act.

The decline in political participation is mainly predicated on figures for voting, despite this being described as the most unusual form of participation (Marsh & Kaase, 1979). The other forms of participation which are usually surveyed (demonstrating, contacting elected representatives, joining political organizations and running for office (Verba et al, 1995)) have always been the preserve of the minority (Campbell et al, 1960) though a decline is still visible (Puttnam, 2000). The question is whether this represents a broader disengagement from public life, as Puttnam powerfully argues, or a re-orientation in the patterns of engagement. Inglehart (1997: 231), focusing on the role of a range of activities driven by labour unions and charities, argued that there was "dramatic evidence of rising mass political activism". Martin (2012: 95) capturing data from four nations, Australia, Canada, the UK and US, argues that while a decline in participation remains evident, younger citizens are "at the vanguard of what is a change in styles of political participation". For example, one that sees consumer activism and demonstrating prioritised over the ballot box. The data points to the importance of mobilization, younger citizens may well be critical, dissatisfied and monitorial but they are waiting to be activated. This seems to be particularly the case online (Gibson et al, 2004; Cantijoch et al, 2015) though this may not purely be a trend particular to younger citizens. Data suggests that those who are politically active online are more likely to be male, middle-aged and well-educated (Hindman, 2008), although this data focuses on actions that suggest higher levels of knowledge and cognitive involvement, such as authoring weblogs. More mundane actions tend to be dismissed as shallow engagement requiring little more than a mouse-click, hence clicktivism, and unworthy of consideration (Morozov, 2012).

Discussion of importance of online participation and the forms

2. Mobilization

Martin's four nation study shows that, in reality, patterns of participation are complex. Participation still occurs and there may be a greater number of pathways to participation in the digital age than was previously the case. The important question is what factors lead for those critical, disillusioned but monitorial citizens to be activated. Although Olsen's (1982) thesis uses data on participation to argue controversially for greater pluralism in participatory democracy, he presents compelling evidence for the role of political organisations as being central to mobilising their members. In broadening out the definition of being politically active he shows that actually only 22% of US society were completely inactive, suggesting increased participation was possible with the right mobilization factors. Olsen found the most important predictors were association involvement, community attachment and media exposure each of which we can assume to play the role of activators. Olsen's research highlights how political organisations, including a range of non-governmental and campaign organisations, as well as political parties, can mobilize supporters. In the digital age we find the notions of community and

association can be more complex. Papacharissi (2013), for example, discusses the role of networks in building associative ties within which the users of the social media platforms which facilitate the formation of these networks perform demonstrations of their selves. Political organisations also colonize these platforms, attempting to capitalize on their affordances to embed themselves within and build their own networks. By linking to existing networks, political organisations can reach users through accidental exposure. Establishing their own networks allows them to communicate directly to their supporters and encourage them to mobilise their friends by sharing organisational communication to their networks (Norris & Curtice, 2008). Therefore, while organisations play a key role in mobilizing online civil society, tracking the influence of peers may also be crucial for understanding pathways into political participation.

3. Internet-mediated mobilization

The environment created by digital technologies is a highly complex tapestry of semi-autonomous, semi-connected networks containing individuals and organisations which communication to and at one another for a range of strategic and personal reasons. Digital technologies offer a range of affordances to political organisations to recruit citizens who share the concerns and ideological positions of their campaigns. Karpf (2012) charts the emergence of "a rich tapestry of non-membership advocacy organizations" (: 101) that have emerged in the US over the last decade (roughly 2002-12) using the Internet to connect supporters together and provide the tools to facilitate supportive activism. Karpf shows how the progressive movement that would support the campaigns for the presidency of Howard Dean in 2004 and Barack Obama in 2008 was formed of platforms that were Internet-mediated issue generalists. These platforms built a following of like-minded individuals, collected their email addresses and then requested their support for specific campaigns: requests were for financial help, lobbying senators, supporting progressive candidates in specific contests or taking part in local activities. Karpf describes much of the activism as 'passive democratic feedback' (2012: 23) to distinguish clicks, small dollar donating and online petition signing from clicktivism; while acknowledging the low effort Karpf suggests such acts do have meaning to the participant. Arguably the netroots he identifies as being mobilised are constituted out of the critical but disillusioned citizens who are monitoring and discussing politics and who may be seeking a way of having influence. Whether the netroots are constituted of the already active, so simply extending existing patterns of participation (Bimber, 2003) or bringing in new participants as Chadwick (2006) suggests is one of the fundamental questions.

Research on political participation has tended to bracket traditional forms of participation (protesting, contacting representatives, joining parties or organisations, or even consumer boycotts) from non-traditional and online activities (Meikle & Young, 2010). However, increasingly research seeks to identify the connections between activities such as information seeking and content creation online and more traditional forms of participation. Huckfeldt & Sprague (1995) argue that talking about politics leads to activism of some form, and this forms the basis for a number of hypotheses which have driven research. For example a number of studies have shown how the use of the Internet generally, and more recently social media, as a news source has led directly to offline political participation (de Zuniga et al, 2007; 2009; 2010; Vitak et al, 2011), whereas engaging in online political expression, what Cantijoch et al (2015) describe as e-expression, leads to engagement in a range of participatory acts online and offline (de Zuniga et al, 2013). A number of studies argue that forms of e-expression, which when linked to expressions of self-identity might including liking, sharing or creating content on a topic of personal interest, are important predictors of other forms of behaviour. E-exposure is argued to be the result of exposure, cognitive arousal and cognitive elaboration (Pingree, 2007; Lilleker, 2014), hence representing a first step towards participatory

behaviour. However, the potential for (Holton et al, 2015), or receipt of actual (de Zuniga et al, 2015), reciprocity is an additional motivational factor for e-expressive behaviour. Dual screening, the process of watching television and then commenting on the programme via Facebook or Twitter is argued to be driven by the desire to connect with others (de Zuniga et al, 2015), as are a number of other examples of e-expression. Reciprocal e-expression allows social media users to form connection within virtual communities that can lead to real-world community ties and participation in civic behaviour (Molyneux et al, 2015). The connections made online are argued to build social capital and feelings of self-efficacy that then underpin tendencies to become more involved in political activities. The studies of de Zuniga and colleagues form the argument that the division between the online and offline worlds is false and that those who participate in and one act will also be likely participate in a suite of other actions, online and offline. While earlier studies did suggest a pathway from the online sphere to offline, the pathway may not be multi-directional with individuals participating simultaneously in demonstrations, tweeting their experiences and mobilizing others, contributing to a weblog or Facebook campaign page after the event and then organising a petition. While this suggests hyperactivism, this type of scenario is a likely concomitant that can be derived from their data, we would also recognise that while the connections that form the social capital may drive hyperactivism they may also drive more passive suites of actions such as liking, sharing, signing petitions, contacting a representative and being a paying-only member of a political organisation.

The motivations among users to form connections through e-expression are ones which may political organisations seek to exploit, perhaps in the hope of gaining hyperactivists but recognising all forms of activism are important. Globally political parties and campaign organisations have long recognised the affordances that digital environments offer them and developed platforms to facilitate the co-creation of campaigns with their diffuse support network. The US MoveOn, Avaaz, Australian GetUp, and in the UK the source of our data, 38 degrees, MySociety, Hope not Hate as well as specialist sites such as 'vote for politics, www.voteforpolitics.co.uk' and 'vote for yourself www.voteforyourself.co.uk' are all examples. Many of these platforms have engaged online civil society through stunts which challenge supporters to accumulate likes, shares or watches for their platforms or videos embedded on the platform and distributed via YouTube (Hill, 2010; Cantijoch et al, 2014). Such campaigns act in similar ways to the voluntary organisations Olsen argued as important for mobilization. However social media offers a dual route to reaching citizens, directly to those who support them and follow their campaigns as well as mediated by their supporters within their networks which, when they go viral, may then gain attention from the mass media. Therefore fulfilling the key elements of mobilisation defined as association involvement (attachments to a specific organisation), community attachment (attachments to the collective around an organization) and media exposure through a revised two-step flow model (Norris & Curtice, 2008).

The self-mobilizing collectives that lead to engagement in connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) may take one of three forms: organisationally brokered, due to attachments to the organization; organizationally enabled, due to attachments to issues; or crowd-enabled, due to attachments between members of networks. From the perspective of the organisation it does not really matter provided action takes place. However the extent to which citizens are influenced by peers, by Internet-mediated issue generalists and other campaign organisations or by parties provides important insights into routes into participation. Martin (2012: 107) uses data on forwarding of political messages in Australia and the US to suggest attachment to organisations is the most important mobilization factor. This suggests that organisations build social capital and feeling of self-efficacy, and so political participation is driven to some degree by the desire to have influence. Certainly data suggests the Internet can facilitate organisations attracting new supporters and sustaining new organizational

models (Ward & Gibson, 2009; Karpf, 2012) and this ties well to arguments surrounding social capital. However, if peer-to-peer influence is strong it may firstly suggest the importance of accidental exposure which is argued to be a powerful route to becoming engaged (Kim et al, 2013), more involved and so offer a route to participation within the social media age (Tang & Lee, 2013). However it could also raise a further set of questions around personal feelings towards political participation and the importance of interpersonal attachments. Kramer & Winter (2008) found, controlling for extraversion that self-efficacy was strongly related to the number of virtual friends and so influenced a range of factors relating to self-presentation such as levels of personal detail and number of photographs. Extending this argument, if peers are a key motivating factor then we hypothesise that participation is not simply driven by a desire to have influence but by seeking to contribute positively to the network which a person inhabits or seeks to be part of (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003). Therefore internal motivations, feeling good, and contributing to ones' self-esteem, may play an important part in influencing political participation where the individual seeks to enhance their status within a network through political e-expression (Park et al, 2009).

Therefore there are a complex series of potential motivating forces each of which may have direct and indirect explanatory power over political participation across online and offline spheres. Firstly it is unclear to what extent online and offline political participation are disconnected or connected, and whether they remain the product of organisational attachments, be they parties or campaign organisations. Secondly the motivations for participation may have a range of causal, inferential and intervening factors relating to self-esteem and/or social capital. Thirdly, it is the extent that people are more likely to participate if they receive encouragement via social media. In other words to what extent do peers, parties and campaigning organizations mobilize their latent supporters and facilitate participation and, importantly, to what extent do these forms of encouragement link to internal and external motivating factors.

Methodology

There is a general lack of data on political uses of the online environment (Owen, 2006). Surveys also miss engagement in the many forms of activity that are facilitated by digital technologies (Martin, 2012: 113) though it remains almost impossible to capture all the activities which have become intertwined with politics that previously could not be seen as political (Chadwick, 2006: 29). IN order to fill this gap we ran an online survey run by Opinium Research on a sample of 18+ years old representative for the United Kingdom N=2037 (the Norther Ireland respondents were excluded due to the missing variables within party identification questions leaving the sample of N = 1982). The survey was conducted before 2015 Parliamentary election WHEN???. It was performed using the CAWI method. It was fully financed by the Bournemouth University, UK. Presented data is not weighted.

Dependent variables

Offline and online political activities. Among the sample 753 (38%) respondents declared performing political activities basing on questions asking if in the last 12 months they have performed any of the following: *"boycotted a company or product"* N= 347 (17.5%), *"joined/rejoined a political party"* N=119 (6%), *"contacted an elective representative"* N=314 (15.8%), *"taken part in a demonstration"* N=130 (6.6%), *"commented about politics on social media"* N= 320 (16%), *"follow political non-governmental political organization or charity on SM"* N=278 (14%), *"shared political content on SM"* N= 243 (12%), *"follow political party/MP/candidate on SM"* N=199 (10%). Following the EFA and CFA analysis the variables were recoded into the indexes (please see the discussion on that in results). *Offline political participation* α = .782 (M=.47 SD=.89 for the whole

sample and M=1.2 SD=1.1 for only those performing any activity); *Online political participation* α = .714 (M=.51 SD=.89 for the whole sample and M=1.38 SD=1.3 for only those performing any activity). Further, for regression and path analysis purposes the variables are computed as latent variables from CFA analysis (weighted accordingly to their CFA coefficients).

Independent variables

Internal and external motivations: for each of the political activities respondents indicated the level ((4) strongly agree to (0) strongly disagree) to which motivations are driving their engagement in each activity. Stimuluses were clustered within internal motivation index **CAN WE SAY HERE THAT THIS IS BASED ON ANY PREVIOUS THEORETICAL RESEARCH??**: *"I personally feel good for taking part in this activity", "I feel that this activity is the sort of thing that my friends and family would respect me for", "Others benefits from people like me taking part in this activity"* and external motivation index: *"I feel I can influence others", "I feel I can influence policy makers"*. Indexes were calculated separately for offline and online participation: internal motivations for offline index (12 items, range 0-48, α =.943 M = 21.7, SD=11.7); internal motivations for online index (12 items, range 0-48, α =.964, M=18.7, SD=12.5); external motivations for offline index (8 items, range 0-32, α =.948, M=13.4, SD= 8.9); external motivations for online index (8 items, range 0-32, α =.967, M=11.4, SD=9.2).

Encouragement: frequency ((4) frequently to (0) never) of encountering the following encouragement: *"I see friends sharing and linking content on social media or I receive encouragement via social media from friends to like or join political campaigns"*(M=1.08, SD=1.3)*, "I receive encouragement via social media from political parties to like or join their campaigns"* (M=1.09, SD=1.3)*, "I receive encouragement via social media from campaign organization to like or join their campaigns"* (M=1.25, SD=1.4)*.

Control variables

Sociodemographic variables: *gender* with female (53%, reference group); *age* continuous variable (M=46.4 SD= 16.3); *education* measured as dummy variable for those with university education (46%) and with lower than university education (54%, reference group); *social grade* (ordered variable) is measured according to National Readership Survey (NRS) (A group 11%, B 26%, C1 30%, C2 12%, D 9%, E 12%); employment is a dummy variable with those being fully or partially employed (66%, otherwise is a reference group).

Political variables: *Party identification* is measure as a possibility to designate a party for which respondent would vote, a dummy variable 1= having party identity (73%, otherwise is a reference group); *Political discussion* measured as dummy for those discussing politics with friends or family (51%, otherwise is a reference group). In order to avoid multicollinearity problem those variables stands for proxy of political interest.

Results

Political participation patterns (Hypothesis 1)

In order to confirm our hypothesis different statistical analysis are run: exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, OLS regressions and path analysis.

Patterns of political participation

Simple correlations (Table 1) indicate a positive relation among diverse activities. The strongest participatory patterns are found separately within offline and online activities, with the most important correlation for the suites of participatory activities being for *joining the party* and *participating in demonstrations* ($\rho = .585$ p<.000) and *sharing political content* and *commenting about politics on social media* ($\rho = .614$ p<.000). The correlations cross- offline and online activities, thus positive correlations are clearly weaker, with the most important being for *boycotting* and *following campaigning organization* ($\rho = .353$ p<.000).

Table 1: Spearman's Rho correlations among different political online and offline activities

	Demonstration	Boycott	Contact	Joined party	Follow party	Follow NGO	Shared content
Boycotted a company or product	$\rho = .398^*$						
Contacted an elective representative	$.421^*$	$.346^*$					
Joined a political party	$.585^*$	$.359^*$	$.431^*$				
Follow political party/MP/candidate on SM	$.271^*$	$.261^*$	$.315^*$	$.290^*$			
Follow political NGO on SM	$.239^*$	$.353^*$	$.334^*$	$.204^*$	$.431^*$		
Shared political content on SM	$.268^*$	$.297^*$	$.276^*$	$.249^*$	$.433^*$	$.482^*$	
Commented about politics on SM	$.216^*$	$.303^*$	$.253^*$	$.183^*$	$.437^*$	$.447^*$	$.614^*$

NOTE Spearman's Rho correlations, statistical significance *p<.000 2-tailed

The exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (Table 2) indicates there are two clear suites of participation, those performed online and those performed offline; this counters De Zuniga's argument that participation takes place across a range of public and social spaces (SOURCE). Herman's single factor test confirms these results at the level of 60% of variance explained for offline participation and 57% for online participation), no cross factor loading was observed on a level higher than .400. The findings confirm Hypothesis 1, however contradictory to expectations (Hypothesis 1.1. and 1.2) and in simple correlation tests no additional splits within offline or online activities were found.

Partially confirming the previous literature on general political participation, age and education plays an important role for engaging in any form of activities (the logistic regressions not shown), however it is older respondents who are less likely to participate, contradictory to previous studies (Martin XX) but those with a university education participate almost twice the amount of any other group. Gender, social class nor working status has any statistically significant impact; this runs counter to findings from US-based research. Those identifying themselves as partisans and who discuss political with peers of family are respectively two and four times more likely to participate in any form of political activities.

Table 2: Indexes of offline and online political participation

	EFA Online	EFA Offline	CFA Online	CFA Offline
Commented about politics on SM	.822		.682	
Shared political content on SM	.806		.648	
Follow political NGO on SM	.725		.737	
Follow political party/MP/candidate on SM	.656		.620	
Joined a political party		.831		.555
Taken part in a demonstration		.824		.575
Contacted an elective representative		.665		.737
Boycotted a company or product		.569		.688

Political participation: motivation and encouragement

In order to understand the role that internal and external motivations, as well as the mediating role of encouragement sent social media by political parties, campaigning organizations and friends, regressions and path analysis were run separately for different participatory patterns (Table 3, model A and B are regression analysis without/with control for the encouragement effects).

Slightly different results were found concerning demographic characteristics, contradicting the general regression results run for the binary variables (participating in any activities), are found if regressions are run separately for offline and online participatory patterns. Gender is a significantly diversifying characteristic only for online activities (males being marginally more active β_R[1]=.068 p<.05), this is mediated by social media encouragement, taking in to account receiving encouragement to participation, the gender gap diminishes. This finding suggests males are slightly more likely to engage in political participation, but encouragement via social media has a greater effect on females. As could be expected, age has a different impact depending on whether participation is offline or online, older respondents are definitely more likely to engage in traditional offline activities (β_R=.003 p<.05), surprisingly the effect is even stronger when receiving encouragement via social media (β_R=.006 p<.000). Age has no statistically significant impact on online participation suggesting that firstly, young people are more eager to engage online than offline, secondly that the gap in online engagement among older and younger visible in earlier studies, (SOURCES) most probably due to a generational digital divide (SOURCE) has diminished. The diminishing age gap may result from the greater ease of participating in online forms of political activism. Education remains a strong predictor, regardless of participatory patterns or mediation by encouragement. Social status plays an inverse role, those with the lower social grade tend to be less likely to engage in offline participation (β_R=-.027 p<.05), however encouragement via social media appears to offer the potential to mobilise lower class citizens into online participation (β_R=.021 p=.08). As with general political engagement, political variables (party identity and political discussion) play statistically significant and positive roles on participation rates regardless of the form of participation and independent of mediation by receiving encouragement.

Table 3: Regressions analysis for offline and online political participation

	Offline Model A		Offline Model B		Online Model A		Online Model B	
SES								
Gender	-.014		-.032		.068	**	.047	
Age	.003	**	.006	***	-.001		.001	
University grade	.170	***	.149	***	.167	***	.137	***
Social grade	-.031	**	-.027	**	.018		.021	*
Employed	.038		.014		-.009		-.034	
Political variables								
Party proximity	.190	***	.142	***	.158	***	.124	**
Discuss politics	.345	***	.322	***	.440	***	.384	***
Motivations								

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[1] β_R indicate coef from regression analysis (Table 3); β_{PA} indicate coef from path analysis (Figure 1 and 2)

|								
External	.010	**	-.001		.001		-.010	**
Internal	.025	***	.020	***	.027	***	.020	***
SM Encouragement								
from Political party			.056	**			.019	
from campaign organization			.114	***			.204	***
from friends			.040	*			.017	
Constant	-.631	***	-.701	***	-.505	***	-.545	***
Adj R2	.326		.380		.299		.369	

Note: OLS regression *p<.1 **p<.05, ***p<.001

Hypotheses 2 and 3 suggests there should be a strong positive effect on participation from individual motivations, regardless whether they are internal or external, and the influence of encouragement issued by any actor (political party, campaigning organization or friends). One may assume that self-efficacy, or the strong feeling that an individuals' actions may influence policy makers or other citizens (external motivations) or a personal satisfaction from undertaking actions (internal motivations) should have a positive and constant effect on engaging, regardless of any other variables, and should be reinforced through the effect of encouragement and incentives to participate sent by peers or organizations. Thus we claim that the complementary effect of mediation, with statistical significant direct and indirect effects of motivations without/with encouragement should exist (Zhao et al 2010). However, our data only partially confirms these hypotheses and complementary assumptions, indicating different forms of mediation may be at play in driving political participation.

We find a stable, statistically significant, positive and not mediated effect from internal motivations on any forms of political participation (β_R=.025 p <001 for offline and β_R=.027 p<.001 for online). The stronger one senses a 'feel-good' effect, considers their actions will earn respect from peers and bringing benefits to others the more likely that person is to participate. The result is strong regardless whether participation is within an offline or online sphere. On the contrary, external motivations have more complex effects, being positive for offline participation (β_R=.010 p <.001) but showing no effect on online participation, both are strongly influenced by mediators, turning the effect for offline participation to no longer be significant and the effect on online participation to negative. Thus we can confirm the H2.1 only partially indicating that internal motivations play a more important role than external motivators in influencing the propensity to participate politically.

Further regressions (Model B) and path analysis (Figure 1 and Figure 2) model external and internal motivations mediated by encouragements sent via social media by political parties, campaign organizations and friends, additionally we find indirect effects the statistical significance of which was calculated with the Sobel test and are presented in Table 4.

Figure 1: Path analysis of the motivations and encouragements on offline political participation
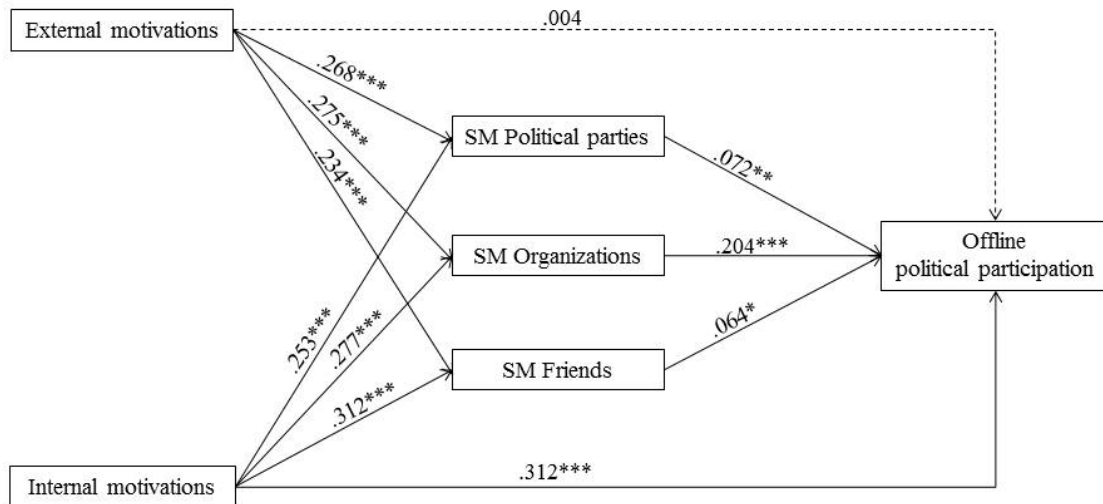
NOTE: Sample size N=1982. Path entries are standardized SEM coefficients (β) ***p<.001 **p<.05 based on two-tailed Sobel test, bootstrap at a level of 5000 iterations. The model controls for effects of sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, social class, employment, education) on exogenous and endogenous variables. Model goodness of fit: CMIN/DF = 3.187; CFI=.997; RMSEA=.033; PCLOSE=.974. $R^2_{\text{offline participation}}$ =.35

Figure 2: Path analysis of the motivations and encouragements on online political participation
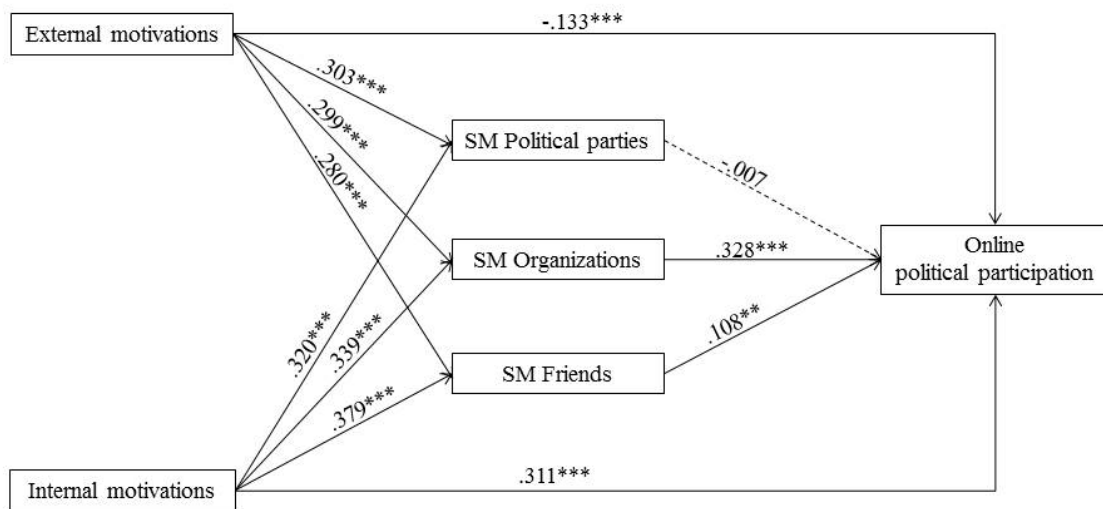
NOTE: Sample size N=1982. Path entries are standardized SEM coefficients (β) ***p<.001 **p<.05 based on two-tailed Sobel test, bootstrap at a level of 5000 iterations. The model controls for effects of sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, social class, employment, education) on exogenous and endogenous variables. Model goodness of fit: CMIN/DF = 3.693; CFI=.996; RMSEA=.037; PCLOSE=.976. $R^2_{\text{online participation}}$ =.33

Preliminary path analyses confirm the positive and direct effect of internal motivations on offline and online political participation (β_{PA}=.031 p<.001 and β_{PA}=.451 p>.001 respectively). These direct effects are stable (or reinforced for offline participation) if mediators are included into the model (β_{PA}=.312 p<.001 and β_{PA}=.311 p<.001) thus complementary mediation is found to be important (Zhao et al 2010).

The external motivations show that a direct effect (without mediators) is significant for offline participation (β_{PA}=.009 p<.05) and not significant (but a negative direction) for online participation. When mediators are introduced, we find that the direct effect on offline participation is completely mediated (by all three mediators – full mediation (Baron and Kenny 1986) and the direct effect on online participation beomes significant and negative (β_{PA}=-.133 p<.001) thus the competitive mediation occurs (Zhao et al 2010).

Hypothesis H2.2 is confirmed for internal motivation however not confirmed for external motivation. To put this simply, internal motivations are important factors which influence both offline and online political participation; they can partially be mediated by encouragement from organizations or friends via social media. External motivations have a weaker influence on political participation, and are fully mediated by social media encouragement. One can imagine that if an individual expected to have some influence through offline or online political participation, those expectations might be reevaluated if social media was used.

We turn now to the analysis of the potential effects from encouragements coming from political parties, campaign organizations or friends, we hypothesised (H3) that any encouragement (sending positive messages) should have positive mediating effects regardless of the sender.

First, we find strong mediating power from communication from campaigning organizations via social media on both offline (β_{PA}=.204 p<.001) and online (β_{PA}=.328 p<.001) participation. Second, the effect of friends' encouragement via social media is weaker but still has a positive impact on participatory patterns (on offline β_{PA}=.064 p<.1, on online β_{PA}=.108 p<.05).

One might explain the differential influences by the different ties social media users have with political parties, campaign organizations and friends. We assume that to receive encouragement from any social media actors one needs to be connected into their network directly or via friends. It seems to be rare (with the exception for some specific cases e.g. journalists or potential trolls) that the average citizen would connect via social media (like, share, comment, follow) with organizations that she/he is not supporting (thus one may visit the contra-ideological groups without leaving any trace of such visits). The networks around organizations have a strong potential to be homogenous, formed of like-minded individuals, thus the encouragements from them is consistent with existing attitudes and reinforcing these attitudes to mobilize their supporters. Research on political participation finds largely that homogenous networks are most likely to encourage participation (Nir, 2011) unless heterogeneous networks are built around shared 'social trust' where those disagreeing publicly do not expect attacks (Pattie & Johnson, 2009; Matthes, 2013). Given the propensity for political networks to be based on ideological commitment, and to differ only on tactics, they are likely to be homogenous. As a consequence appeals from organizations at the center of these networks are likely to have a higher impact on their followers. The goals or campaign organizations may lead to encouraging participation in tactics which are offline, or they may see greater strategic value in building an engaged community and encouraging the widest number of people to participate in online deliberation (commenting) or viral marketing (following or sharing) . Such actions are agued to enable political parties and campaign organizations to extend reach, gain credibility and have impact on the media or public agenda (Norris & Curtice, 2008) by demonstrating the organizations' social importance and level of support . To build it they need to be visible through traditional offline engagement as well as broad and engaged online engaged audience. Our analysis confirms that the encouragement from campaign organizations is the most significant mediator, positively reinforcing both internal and external motivations of political participation.

Encouragement from friends appears slightly more important for online participation, and it mediates all motivations with a very similar magnitude (at $\beta_{PA}<.02$ p<.001 on offline and at $\beta_{PA}=.042$ p<.001 for online).The weaker mediating power of the messages received from social media friends may be explained by possibly inhabiting a more heterogeneous community of online friends (who can be ones' friends regardless of whether we agree or not with their political opinions. Therefore while one may see countervailing political messages, unless there is strong trust that disagreeing will not end the friendship or lead to hostility such encouragements will be more likely to be ignored (Matthes, 2013). Furthermore, if the network is highly heterogeneous friends may virtually simultaneously send conflicting political messages thus neutralizing one another; as a consequence friends' encouragements may have a lesser impact on political activity.

Surprisingly, the encouragement received through social media from political parties has a weak positive effect ($\beta_{PA}=.072$ p<.05) only offline participation, while the effect is statistically not significant for online participation. It raises a question if, in fact, political parties focus almost exclusively in their communication on enhancing only traditional forms of participation, for example getting out their vote, especially during election campaign, as well as encouraging their online supporters to join the party. Conversely, as we know parties do encourage sharing, if not debating (Lilleker, 2014), either their networks are small compared to campaign organizations so do not have the same persuasive power, the low trust in political parties mediates the effect of their communication or social media users do not post partisan material for fear of receiving negative responses from within their heterogeneous and largely non-partisan social networks. Given the complexity it is impossible to test for all these variables with the data available, however regardless of the causes, the weak or non-existent power of political parties encouraging political participation is counter to the assumption underpinning H3.

Table 4: Indirect effects of motivations on political participation

external motivations		no mediator	→	.009**
	→	SM Party	→	.019**
	→	SM Organization	→	.056***
	→	SM Friends	→ Offline political participation	.014***
internal motivations		no mediator	→	.031***
	→	SM Party	→	.018**
	→	SM Organization	→	.056***
	→	SM Friends	→	.040***
external motivations		no mediator	→	-.006
	→	SM Party	→	-.003
	→	SM Organization	→	.099***
	→	SM Friends	→ Online political participation	.042***
internal motivations		no mediator	→	.451***
	→	SM Party	→	-.003
	→	SM Organization	→	.112***
	→	SM Friends	→	.031***

NOTE: Standardized regression coefficient multiplied by the effect of independent variable on mediator and mediator on dependent variable, with the exception for 'no mediation' coefficient. Sobel test of significance for indirect effects2-tailed **p<.05, ***p>.001

Discussion and Conclusions

Overall we find that political participation (offline and online) is still the preserve of a minority; beyond the act of voting, which varies across elections and averages between 60 and 70 per cent, only 32% of UK citizens participate in political activities. While we find there are positive correlations among each of the political activities, those participating tend to be active either online or offline. Online participation, especially if encouraged by campaign organizations or to a lesser friends, equalize differences in participatory patterns explained by some demographics: there is no gender

difference, while younger people have a lower propensity to participate politically offline, there is no age effect for online activities. These findings suggest not only that young people tend to participate more online but also that the generational gap, caused by older people being less technically sophisticated, is no longer valid. The opportunities offered by the online environment also appear to facilitate respondents from lower social classes to participate in some forms of political behaviour, a group which tended to participate less offline. However, on the whole it would appear that the propensity to participate offered by digital technologies does not necessarily reach beyond the already politically interested. The most powerful explanatory variables are discussing politics, which we use as a proxy for political interest, and party identification. Overall, therefore, when looking at participation overall we therefore reinforce the finding, proven through factor analysis, that there are two fairly distinct suites of participation which could be argued to reinforce the divide between activism (traditional political participation) and click-tivism (online political participation (Morozov, 2011).

While some of those surveyed may well tend towards more passive forms of participation, we would not however see any form of participation as ill-considered independent of the difficulty involved in performing an action. While it involves greater effort to participate in a demonstration than share a post, the symbolic nature of making public one's political attitudes suggests social media users seek rewards and gratifications from their communicative activities. In particular we find a strong and consistent effect from internal motivations on both offline and online political engagement. They stay significant regardless if encouraged or not (indirect and direct effect). Therefore participation is driven by a desire to feel good as well being judged positively by peers, both of which suggest a degree of thought is put into deciding whether or not to act. External motivations, in particular perceived influence, are strongly influenced by encouragement. This finding suggests campaign organisations are able to build social capital among their supporters and give a sense of self-efficacy through providing routes into participation.

The fact that the strongest mediating power is awarded to campaigning organizations, independent of the motivational factors or form of participation, demonstrates their power. We suggest that this is due to organizations and fellow supporters providing reinforcement for positive attitudes towards participation within the homogenous networks around campaign organizations. With the more heterogeneous networks of friends many inhabit on social media, encouragement from friends has less persuasive power. Political parties reinforce only offline participation and have no effect on online participation. This finding suggests that either parties are not able to reach far into social networks or are unable to instil social capital within their online followers in order to encourage wider or more public forms of participation.

However, independent of the fact that the social media strategies pursued by campaign organizations and parties, or encouragement from politically motivated friends may have some positive effects on some peoples' propensity to participate, their power cannot override an individual's political attitudes. Internal motivations (if we want to feel good, be respected or benefit others) offer the greatest explanatory power for political participation independent of whether this is online or offline. Encouragement from campaign organisations or friends is only able to strengthen otherwise weak (not statistically significant) predispositions regarding the level of positive influence that can be had in taking part in a range of forms of political participation. In other words it would appear personal gratifications and a sense of having social capital is most important, but campaign organisations and friends appear to be able to increase a sense of social capital only.

Limitations

The data presented here is from a single survey, in a single country, and while there was a vibrant political culture in the lead up to the 2015 general election and significant debates surrounding the future of the union of nations, the relationship with the European Union and the best way to ameliorate the long-lasting effects of the global recession there are limits to the representativeness of the responses. A panel study would be required in order to control for the pure effects and over time consistency of motivations and encouragement on political participation. The political context may also have led to somewhat higher levels of engagement, as well as higher levels of encouragement from a range of organizations and actors which might not be witnessed during a non-election period, especially from electoral organizations. Therefore we might suggest that some findings are exaggerated or event that encouragement from friends via social media, in non-electoral period, may play more important role. In other words there are a number of communication and context variables that cannot be controlled for but which might impact on the data.

A more sophisticated question relates to the receipt of encouragement from other means beyond social media. It was impossible to conceive of all the means by which campaign organizations, political parties or friends are able to interact with citizens in an attempt to mobilize them. We thus focused entirely on social media in this project, but with the understanding that any participation not explained by these forms of encouragement could arrive from other sources. Equally, even when considering social media as a prime route for persuasive communication, especially via accidental exposure, it may be the case that the relative homogeneity of the networks individuals inhabit may be a mediating factor on whether communication, in particular from friends, has a significant effect. However, overall, we find some interesting suggested routes to participation and indications of the power of differing sets of motivations. In particular the significance of the direct motivational pathways to participation may indicate that internal and external motivations are very strong predictors of political participation. If these findings appear controversial it is necessary to conduct further research to focus on these and other mediating factors (Zhao et al. 2010) in order to provide even more holistic explanations for the variety of forms of political participation facilitated in the 21st Century.

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