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## Participation, Online and Otherwise: What's the Difference for Policy Preferences?\*

### Abstract

**Objective:** One explanation for why voters' preferences are privileged by policymakers is that voters are likely to communicate their preferences through additional avenues as well. We examine this "communication hypothesis" by comparing the policy preferences of different types of political participators.

**Methods:** We analyze the National Annenberg Election Survey (2008), using latent class analysis to identify different types of political participators, and multinomial logistic regression to compare the policy preferences of these participator types.

**Results:** Voters who also engage in additional online and/or offline political acts have policy preferences that differ in a number of meaningful ways from those who "only" vote.

**Conclusion:** The findings indicate that prior research has overlooked important evidence on the connection between citizen participation and political outcomes due to a primary focus on the act of voting. This study suggests how future research can assess the impact of citizens' broader patterns of political participation.

Key words: political participation; online; latent class analysis; policy preferences

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As voting rates have remained stable or declined in advanced democracies, scholars of political participation have viewed the increased prevalence of political participation beyond the vote—both offline and online—as important potential avenues for alternative civic and political engagement. Focusing on the United States, Dalton concluded that even though electoral turnout declined somewhat in the U.S. over the past several decades, “the repertoire of political action has actually expanded, and people are now engaged in other ways . . . adding to the tools of political activism” (Dalton, 2008: 90-94). In addition to the increased prevalence of familiar “old” political activities like petitioning and protesting, various new forms of online participation have gained particular attention as ways in which democratic publics are increasingly engaged (Gainous and Wagner, 2011, 2014; Gibson and Cantijoch, 2013; Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal, 2008, Polat, 2005).

How these additional opportunities for political engagement have changed demographic or substantive representation are important questions. Despite the pervasiveness of the internet in contemporary life, research on different aspects of internet access and online political behavior continues to document a “digital divide” that favors the socio-economically advantaged (DiMaggio et al. 2004; Fuller, 2004; Gainous, Marlowe, and Wagner 2013; Norris, 2001; Prior, 2007; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, 2010; Weber, Loumakis and Bergman, 2003). But the consequences of these new types of political activities for the expression of policy preferences have not yet been examined. As Schlozman et al. suggest, one of the political contributions of internet-based participation may in fact be the expression of “new issues and new ideas,” even if it is not mobilizing new people or new kinds of people (Schlozman et al., 2005: 68-69).

Knowing more about the policy preferences of those participating in these different ways is important. If individuals engaged in these new, expanded opportunities for citizen

participation—like online political activity—are representative of the voting public, then the policy implications of these new types of participation would be minimal. If instead individuals who engage in these new modes of participation have distinctive policy preferences and convey these preferences through these new avenues, a different set of policy preferences would be expressed to decision-makers than those expressed through traditional electoral means such as voting. To the extent that these newly prevalent political acts convey political preferences that vary from those who “only” vote, elected officials may ultimately support or pursue policy outcomes that differ from the preferences of the voting public.

Assessing these alternative scenarios is critical for better understanding how and how well elected officials represent their constituents. The import of this empirical distinction is suggested by Griffin and Newman (2005) who argue that a possible explanation for elected officials’ disproportionate responsiveness to voters compared to non-voters is that “voters might be advantaged *because they are more likely to communicate their opinion to policy makers*” (2005: 1207). Griffin and Newman refer to this potential explanation as the communication hypothesis, and spell out its implications:

As Verba (2003, 663) put it, “political activity is the means by which citizens make their needs and preferences known to governing elites and induce them to be responsive,” so “equal activity is crucial for equal consideration” (see also Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995, 163-164). Although voting itself does not convey much information about citizens’ preferences, voters are more likely to engage in other activities that convey more content (e.g. Verba and Nie, 1972). Thus, officials may respond more to voters because they are more likely to communicate their preferences by other avenues (Griffin and Newman, 2005: 1207-1208).

If indeed a main causal mechanism through which voters’ preferences are advantaged is that voters also convey preferences in other ways (as the communication hypothesis suggests), then the common approach in scholarship on policy outcomes of comparing the views of voters

only with those of non-voters misses an important representational linkage: how individuals engage in a combination of participatory acts with the intention of influencing elected officials. We therefore propose that a first critical step toward testing the communication hypothesis is to compare the policy views of citizens who differ in their patterns of political engagement across a broad range of opportunities for political action.

To do so, we use latent class analysis to identify how individuals combine engagement across a broad range of political acts. We then assess whether there are discernible differences in the policy views of citizens with different kinds of “political tool kits” (i.e., combinations of types of political activities). Our analyses rely on data from the National Annenberg Election Survey (2008), which provides the necessary measures of new and old types of participation as well as policy preferences.

Our evidence suggests that there is little distinction in the policy preferences of non-voters compared to those who vote but do little else. The findings do indicate, however, that voters who have broader and more specialized political tool kits have policy preferences that differ in a number of meaningful ways from those who “only” vote. These findings therefore suggest that Griffin and Newman’s communication hypothesis falls short as a causal explanation for why the general voting public’s preferences are privileged in policy outcomes. More broadly, our evidence suggests that prior studies on the connection between citizen participation and political outcomes have overlooked important evidence due to their primary focus on the act of voting. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for studies of political participation and policy outcomes in American politics.

## **Citizen Participation and Citizen Influence**

A handful of studies have examined the connection between political participation and policy outcomes and have shown that policy decisions can indeed be influenced by who votes. For example, higher levels of voting among the poor are associated with higher welfare benefits (Hicks and Swank, 1992; Hill and Leighley, 1992; Hill, Leighley, and Hinton-Andersson, 1995; Mahler, 2008); areas with high turnout receive high allocation of federal grant awards (Martin, 2003); and when voters and non-voters differ in their policy preferences, the roll-call behavior of senators is more in line with voters' preferences (Griffin and Newman, 2005). Yet, the information cue on policy preferences conveyed by the act of voting is rather crude in comparison to the increasingly prevalent political acts beyond the vote (Verba 2003: 664). Assessing the responsiveness of elected leaders to these more targeted, precise expressions of political preference has been limited, although our understanding of the relationship between participation and policy outcomes would be improved by taking this activity into account.

Indeed, the increased prevalence of a variety of political acts beyond the act of voting is one of the most intriguing recent developments in political behavior in advanced democracies. Although much scholarship has focused on the stagnation or decline of turnout levels, Dalton (2008: 90-94) reports that other kinds of political engagement have been on the rise. Once-infrequent political acts have become more common, such as demonstrating and petitioning (DiGrazia, forthcoming; Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst, 2005) and new forms of political consumerism have emerged (Baek, 2010). Online acts of political engagement have proliferated so as to warrant serious attention as a distinctive form of political participation (Gibson and Cantijoch, 2013), and a wealth of research on this topic has focused on how internet usage may increase social capital (Kittilson and Dalton, 2011; Shah, Kwak and Holbert, 2001) or political

activity (e.g., Bakker and de Vreese, 2011; Bimber, 2003; Bimber and Copeland, 2013; Boulianne, 2009; Delli Carpini, 2000; Gibson, Lusoli and Ward, 2005; Krueger, 2002; Xenos and Moy, 2007).

Dalton proposes that the expansion in participation beyond voting enhances the representational linkage between citizens and political elites:

The new style of citizenship seeks to place more control over political activity in the hands of the citizenry. These changes in participation make greater demands on the participants. At the same time, these activities can increase public pressure on political elites. *Citizen participation is becoming more closely linked to citizen influence.* (Dalton, 2008, 94, italics added).

In their comprehensive research on the distinctions between online and offline participation, Gibson and Cantijoch (2013: 704) assert a similar claim, noting that “online expressive activity is arguably more influential than its offline counterpart”. These kinds of bold propositions about increased citizen influence through new kinds of participation are yet to be systematically examined. Indeed the dearth of research on the consequences of participation beyond the vote for political outcomes has been referred to as a “black box” about which little is known regarding “the way that participatory messages are received and interpreted and the circumstances under which they make a difference” (Schlozman, 2002: 460-461).

Recent studies have provided suggestive evidence that political acts beyond the vote do indeed have the potential to influence political outcomes. For example, using the NES Senate Election Study from 1988, 1990 and 1992, Bartels (2008) examines why affluent constituents are better represented and concludes that the act of contacting a public official is part of the explanation. Similarly, evidence in recent studies on protest has substantiated the supposition that protest impacts upon policy outcomes (Gillion, 2012; Htun and Weldon, 2012).

Studies about policy preferences have generally focused on the distinction between voters and non-voters, and have concluded that there are minimal differences between these two groups

(Bennett and Resnick, 1990; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995: 205; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980), though recent evidence by Leighley and Nagler (2013) reports instead that voters are more conservative than non-voters on redistributive issues. A broader array of participatory acts were taken into account by Verba et al. (1993) who also found overall similarity between the policy preferences of activists compared to non-activists, except for one distinction: that activists were less concerned with redistributive issues of basic economic needs in comparison to non-activists. Since Verba et al.'s (1993) study, based on data from over two decades ago, subsequent research has not examined the policy preferences of different kinds of participators.

In sum, the study of the relationship between citizen participation, policy preferences and policy outcomes has been limited by a narrow focus on the act of voting as representative of all political participation. As Leighley (1995: 198) observed, individuals must choose not only whether or not to act politically, but also how to act. Yet we know very little about how citizens' participatory engagement beyond the vote—as opportunities to engage in new ways have become more prevalent—relates to their policy preferences in recent years. By assessing the relationship between different types of political participators and their policy preferences, we can overcome the limitations of focusing on voting alone, and gain some insight as to whether the communication hypothesis is a legitimate linkage between citizens and their elected officials.

### **Conceptualization and Hypotheses: Participation, New and Old**

Moving beyond voting to a variety of potential political acts raises the issue as to how these acts relate to each other. Typical approaches to studying voting other than participation often results in using additive indices, suggesting that the amount of participation, rather than the types of participation, is the behavior of interest. We argue instead that the types of participation individuals

choose are important theoretically and empirically. Harris and Gillion (2010) use a “political tool box” metaphor to express the idea that individuals choose combinations of participatory activities as a rational strategy in seeking political influence. What we are interested in is how citizens combine offline and online political tools and the subsequent implications regarding the communication of policy preferences.

Theoretically, some individuals’ “political tool kits” may accumulate more tools because the same individuals who have traditionally toted those kits around are most likely to add new participatory opportunities to their kit. This possibility is consistent with the common empirical focus of participation scholarship on the distinction between non-activists and activists, as exemplified in Verba, Scholzman and Brady’s (1995) over-sampling of the activist population. As opportunities for political engagement have expanded in recent years, however, the possibility arises that some citizens may specialize in certain types of activities. Recent research has shown, for example, that some citizens specialize in online political tools while remaining relatively disengaged from offline opportunities, and vice versa (Oser, Hooghe, and Marien, 2013). But it has not yet been determined whether the policy views of different types of participators differ in meaningful ways.

By examining how offline and online political tools are bundled into citizens’ political tool kits, we can assess how citizens are responding to the availability of these new tools and advance toward a more direct test of the communication hypothesis. Rather than simply assume that those who vote are likely to communicate their policy preferences in other ways as well, we use latent class analysis to assess how citizens combine the act of voting with additional acts of offline and online political engagement. Once distinctive types of participators are identified, we then assess whether their policy preferences differ in meaningful ways in comparison to those who “only”

vote. Our analyses therefore first test a set of hypotheses regarding the different types of participators we expect to identify (H1), and then a hypothesis regarding the expected relationship between the identified participator types and their policy preferences (H2).

To assess how individuals combine the act of voting with additional participatory opportunities we test two hypotheses regarding potential patterns of political activity. Since the method used in this research enables the identification of a number of different types of political participators, these hypotheses are not mutually exclusive.

H1a. *All-around activists*: Some individuals are likely to add all participatory opportunities—including both online and offline political acts—to their political tool kits.

H1b. *Online/Offline Specialists*: Individuals who engage in online participation activities do not tend to engage in offline participation activities; and vice versa.

Our second research question subsequently asks whether the different types of participators identified in this study have distinctive policy preferences. Given the dearth of research on this topic, a central aim of examining the relationship between participator types and policy preferences is a descriptive aim of identifying whether meaningful differences exist in the policy preferences of citizens with different political tool kits. Drawing on earlier studies that documented the role of partisan strength as a predictor of voting, participation and cognitive engagement (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba, 1999; Plutzer, 2002), we believe that those with distinctive policy views in comparison to the general population may be more likely to engage in activities beyond voting. Our second hypothesis therefore relates to whether citizens' political tool kits are expected to be relatively small (e.g. voting only) or large (e.g. voting plus additional political acts) with no particular theory regarding what specific political tools we expect to find in citizens' tool kits.

H2. *Distinctiveness of Policy Preferences*: Those with distinctive preferences in comparison to the research population as a whole are more likely to have broader political tool kits than those with non-distinctive policy preferences.

### **Data and Methods**

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) 2008 post-election re-interview survey is a useful dataset for testing these hypotheses because it surveyed respondents' policy preferences on a variety of salient policy issues as well as a variety of participation measures.<sup>1</sup> The NAES 2008 survey was designed as a rolling cross-sectional study of political behavior, perceptions and attitudes during the 2008 U.S. primary and general election campaigns, and the post-election re-interview was conducted for a randomly selected sample from the survey respondents. Respondents were asked whether they engaged in campaigning, persuading, and donating through online and/or offline activity—as well as questions about the online-specific act of forwarding online campaign information, and the offline-specific acts of voting, showing a campaign sign and attending a political event.

The NAES 2008 post-election survey has an inflated self-report for voting (93 percent) which is much higher than recorded turnout rates (between 57 and 63 percent). This inflated self-report can be attributed primarily to the self-selection of those who agreed to complete the re-interview among the more politically interested and active in the sample.<sup>2</sup> Since the group of respondents who reported that they did not vote in the general election is so small (seven percent of the sample) and relatively inactive in additional political acts, this group is easily distinguished as a “non-voter” type. Among voters, however, engagement in a wide range of offline and online political acts is apparent, as noted in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

To examine citizens' political tool kits, we use latent class analysis (LCA), a technique that identifies groups of individuals who share similar characteristics in responses to a battery of indicators. We use LCA in this study to identify subgroups of the population that are relatively high on some indicators (e.g. online participation) but simultaneously low on others (e.g. offline participation) in relation to the sample as a whole. Like traditional cluster analysis, LCA identifies mutually exclusive subgroups of the research population, but LCA's probabilistic estimation method provides objective goodness of fit indicators which provide reliable guidance for model choice. Conditional probabilities in LCA indicate the likelihood of a positive response on each of the manifest indicators (i.e. participation acts) for members of each latent class (i.e. participator type). Each latent class corresponds to a subgroup of the research population that combines political activities in similar ways, i.e., uses the same set of political tools (see Online Appendix for supplemental information on LCA).

## **Findings**

### *1. Four Types of Voters Identified by Latent Class Analysis*

The first step in applying LCA is to determine the optimal number of classes for most accurately fitting the data, and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) is the most commonly used statistic for assessing goodness of fit with a low BIC indicating a good fit to the data. The model fit statistics indicate that the four-class model provides optimal fit to the data.<sup>3</sup>

The findings for the four-class model are presented graphically in Figure 1. The political acts included in the model are listed beneath the x-axis in descending order of prevalence in the sample population and the y-axis measures the conditional probabilities that members of each

latent class engage in these political acts. Thin lines connect the markers of two of the latent classes to aid in discerning the distinctiveness of each type of participator. Taken as a whole, this pattern of behavior describes the political tool kit of each latent class (i.e. participator type), and the distinctiveness of each latent class can be compared to the mean prevalence of these political acts among all voters (noted in parentheses beneath the participation indicators).

[Figure 1 about here]

The group described as “all-around activists” includes five percent of the voting population. This group is considerably more politically active in every political opportunity in comparison to mean levels of political activity among voters. For example, only one percent of the sample population engages in e-campaign activity, whereas the all-around activists have a 17 percent likelihood of engaging in this activity. Even for the political act for which this group does not have the highest probability of engagement (donating), the all-around activists’ likelihood of participation far exceeds the sample mean. In contrast, the group termed “low-engaged” is less engaged in every political activity in this study in comparison to the sample mean, and also in comparison to the other identified latent classes. In other words, the 76 percent of the voting population that belongs to the low-engaged type is fairly unlikely to engage in additional opportunities for political participation.

The two additional participator types identified by LCA have distinctive emphases in their political tool kit. The group we describe as “persuaders” (12 percent of voters) is particularly engaged in acts of persuasion, both online and offline, but is disconnected from campaign activity, and is generally on par with the sample mean for other activities. In contrast, the group we describe as “traditional campaigners” (8 percent of voters) is more than twice as likely as the average voter to report having worked or volunteered offline for a campaign during the general election and has

relatively high levels of other kinds of offline campaign activities, but has relatively low levels of online political activity.

To highlight the substantive import of these latent class analysis findings, let us consider a hypothetical and counterfactual set of findings: if all four of the participator types identified by LCA were found to be parallel lines above and below the mean, then an additive index would adequately describe the data. This is not the case. The activist group is considerably more active than the other participation types, and two of the participator types (persuaders and traditional campaigners) have opposite emphases—of high scores on some indicators and low on others—which would not have been readily captured through other analytical means.

To summarize the findings regarding our hypotheses, the All-around Activists Hypothesis (H1a) is confirmed through the identification of a small group that is highly likely to be active in all possible activities, including online and offline participatory acts. In addition, the Online/Offline Specialists Hypothesis (H1b) is partially supported in that the “persuaders” group generally has more of an online emphasis, whereas the “traditional campaigners” is generally more active in offline political opportunities. These emphases are by no means exclusive, however. In other words, there is no distinctive type of participators that is highly active in online political acts but completely disengaged from offline activities, and vice versa.

## *II. Policy Preferences of Different Types of Participators*

We turn now to our second research question: whether the distinctive types of participators differ in their policy views on salient political issues in comparison to those who “only” vote. Multinomial logistic regression is used to investigate whether the different types of participators identified in this analysis—including non-voters, as well as the four types of voters identified in

the previous section—are also distinctive in terms of their policy preferences, controlling for relevant background characteristics. The NAES asks questions about salient policy questions for the general election with the purpose of investigating dynamics of the presidential campaign. Selected issues are those that receive attention in the campaign discourse, including on the campaign trail, in debates, or in political advertising (Romer et al., 2006).

The four questions related to salient policy issues that were asked to the post-general election re-interview sample used in this study relate to tax policy, healthcare regulation, environmental protection, and abortion. Among these four policy issues it is noteworthy that tax policy was among the most salient and divisive policy issues in the 2008 campaign. As detailed by Hillygus and Henderson (2010: 241) the unanticipated financial crisis that took place in the middle of the fall campaign meant that “perhaps more than ever before in recent history, the economy was salient in the minds of voters in 2008”. If distinctive views on salient policy issues are a motivating factor for why citizens adopt broader and more specialized tool kits, then we would expect that among these four policy issues, citizens’ views on tax policy may vary across the participatory types.

To present the key findings regarding the policy preference distinctions of different types of participators identified in the multinomial logistic regression, Figure 2 shows the predicted probabilities calculated for set characteristics of a respondent group. We control for main socio-demographic correlates of political participation of age, gender, race, education, income, and party identification, and the controls are consistent with findings from previous studies (see Appendix, Table A1 for descriptive statistics and Table A2 for multinomial logistic regression findings for participator types with socio-demographic controls). Figure 2 presents the percentage change in

the likelihood of participator type membership given the respondent's view on a given policy, with those who "only" vote (i.e. the "low-engaged-voters" group) as the reference category.<sup>4</sup>

[Figure 2 about here]

To contextualize these findings in relation to the communication hypothesis as articulated by Griffin and Newman, previous research has largely focused on the distinction between non-voters and voters, and generally presumed that voters tend to share similar policy preferences. To examine whether it is plausible that the mechanism by which voters' preferences are privileged by decision-makers is the fact that voters tend to also communicate their preferences through other means, Figure 2 presents evidence as to whether high-communicating voters hold different policy preferences on salient issues in comparison to the reference group of those who "only" vote.

Three main findings emerge from these figures. First, the activist group consistently has the greatest distinction in policy views in comparison to the reference group of those who vote but do little else. Second, for the policy issue that was among the most salient in the 2008 campaign, tax policy, we see the greatest distinction between the three politically engaged participatory types in comparison to the reference group of low-engaged voters. Those who think tax policy should change in either a liberal or conservative direction were more likely to have a broader or more specialized tool kit in comparison to those who are satisfied with current tax policy. Third, for some policy issues, those who specialize in traditional-offline acts versus persuader-online acts are indistinguishable in their policy views from those who "only" vote, but have distinctive preferences for others. For example, traditional-offline participators are more likely to be pro-environment in comparison to those who only vote; and online persuaders are less likely to think that abortion should be available to anyone in comparison to those who only vote. This evidence indicates that future comparative research designs could leverage the identification of "specialist"

participators to assess whether certain kinds of political acts (e.g. online or offline) have a differential capacity to influence decision-makers on specific policy issues.

In sum, we generally find support for the Distinctiveness of Policy Preferences hypothesis (H2), in that those with distinctive preferences on salient policy issues are more likely to have a broad political tool kit beyond the act of voting. It is also worthy of note, however, that there are not clear policy view differences for all types of participators on all policy issues. For health care policy, for example, all participator groups except for the activists group are essentially indistinguishable in their policy views in comparison to the low-engaged-voting reference group.

## **Discussion**

The findings in this study suggest that prior research on the influence of political participation on policy outcomes has been limited by research designs that designate the political act of voting as the only relevant influential act of citizen engagement. Indeed, one might describe the limited literature on participation and policy representation as reflecting an omitted variable bias of sorts: if those who vote can be identified as having distinctive political tool kits when additional opportunities for political action are taken into account, then ignoring these alternative means of influence will limit the rigor of inferences drawn from these analyses.

Two main findings in this study are of note. First, the nature of political participation is more complex than what simple additive scales typically used in empirical studies allow. We have demonstrated that individuals bundle different types of participation in systematic ways, and have identified these fundamental patterns. Specifically, among the voting population, the analysis in this study identified a group that voted but did little else; a group of persuaders that tended to be highly engaged in online opportunities; a traditional campaigner group that was particularly involved in offline campaign activities; and an all-around activist group that was most highly

engaged in all opportunities for political engagement. As the opportunities for political engagement continue to diversify, we will be increasingly interested to understand how citizens combine a broad array of participatory opportunities into their personal tool kit of political participation. Second, we have shown that there were meaningful differences in participators' views on policy issues that were salient in the 2008 campaign. The findings suggest that the highest-communicating group, the all-around activists, is the most distinctive in its policy preferences on all policy issues in this study. In addition, the highly salient issue of tax policy showed the greatest distinctions across participator types. These findings show that research on the impact of citizen participation on policy outcomes cannot rest on the "communication hypothesis" assumption that high-communicating voters—including those who specialize more in online, offline, or all political opportunities—are good representatives of the substantive policy concerns of all voters.

This study suggests how future research can go beyond the presumption that newly prevalent forms of participation (like online political participation) are exerting greater influence on decision-makers in order to test whether this is indeed the case. As highly salient issues in a campaign emerge, comparative data can be used to investigate whether the policy preferences of different types of participators (such as those who specialize in offline and/or online opportunities) have differential impact on specific policy issues. An additional topic for future research highlighted by the findings of the present study is the need to better understand other politically relevant features of these participatory groups. While time, money, and civic skills are likely suspects, other possibilities include elite mobilization, individual motivation (Han, 2009), and "taste for involvement" (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1995). Although the "resources model"

has proven a powerful theoretical model for explaining political activities, it seems plausible that additional theoretical explanations may be needed to explain holistic types of political behavior.

An important caveat is in order regarding the generalizability of the cross-sectional U.S. survey data from 2008 analyzed in this study due to the rapid developments in online forms of communication and political behavior. For example, although social networking sites were not included in the NAES 2008 survey, recent research suggests that activity on sites like Facebook and Twitter, for example, is an important form of participatory behavior that has the potential to impact upon political outcomes (Bode 2012; Gainous and Wagner, 2014; Pasek et al. 2009; Valenzuela, Park and Kee, 2009). In addition, recent research suggests that governmental filtering of internet use in some nations may limit the generalizability of findings based on U.S. data (Wagner and Gainous, 2013). As online forms of political engagement increase and diversify cross-nationally in the coming years, the question of how individuals combine new modes of political activity will continue to be an important topic for research.

In sum, the findings in this study show that those who vote are not equally likely to communicate their policy preferences through other means. The policy preferences of the highest-communicating voters in the 2008 campaign differed greatly for every policy issue examined in this study from citizens who voted but were otherwise disengaged. In addition, for the policy issue that was arguably the most salient for the 2008 campaign (tax policy), the three most engaged participator types (all-around activists, persuaders, and traditional campaigners) include citizens who have distinctive tax preferences in comparison to those who “only” vote. While most studies to date on the relationship between political participation and policy outcomes have taken into account only the single political act of voting, this study suggests how future research can investigate the potential policy impact of citizens’ broader patterns of political engagement.



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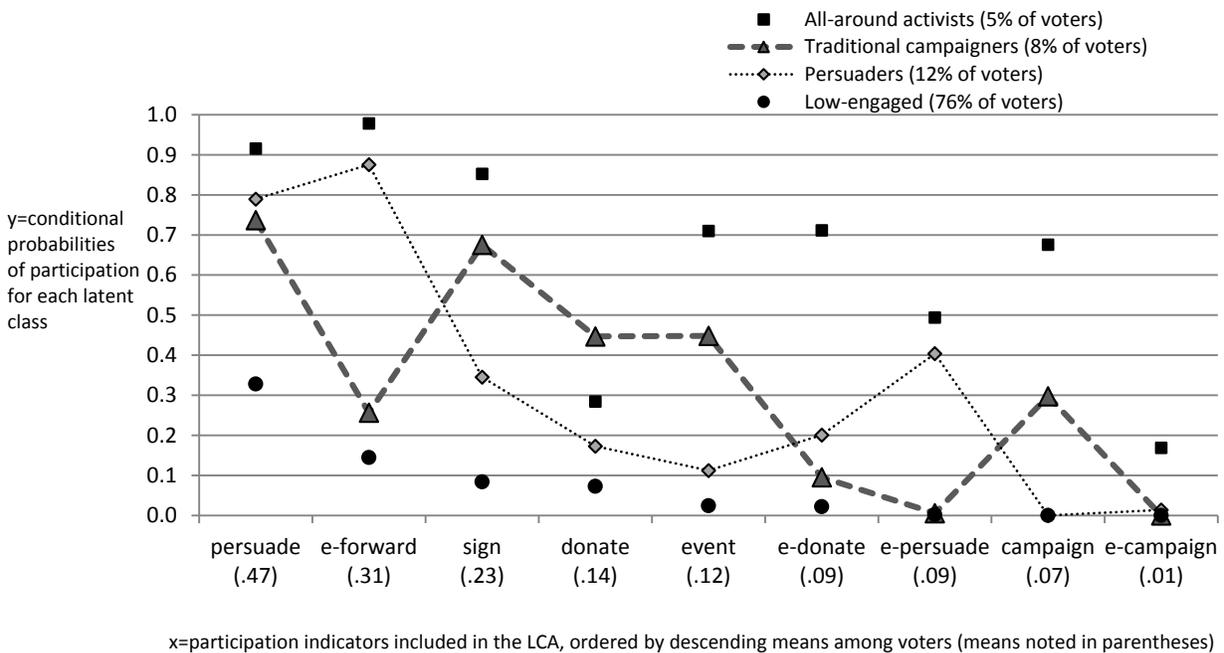
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**Table 1.** Participation Means among Voters

| <i>Participation Act</i>                                                | <i>Abbreviation</i> | <i>Participate (%)</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Tried to influence other's vote during the general election offline     | persuade            | 47.1                   |
| Forwarded online campaign information during the general election       | e-forward           | 30.6                   |
| Showed campaign sign during general election                            | sign                | 22.8                   |
| Contributed to the campaign during the general election offline         | donate              | 13.9                   |
| Attended political meeting during the general election                  | event               | 12.1                   |
| Contributed candidate during the general election online                | e-donate            | 9.2                    |
| Tried to influence other's vote during the general election online      | e-persuade          | 8.6                    |
| Worked or volunteered for candidate during the general election offline | campaign            | 6.9                    |
| Worked or volunteered for candidate during the general election online  | e-campaign          | 1.1                    |

Source: National Annenberg Election Survey (2008), means reported for self-reported voters (n=3,448). Offline political participation is denoted by a darker shade of grey; online by a lighter shade of grey.

**Figure 1.** Four Types of Voters Identified by Latent Class Analysis

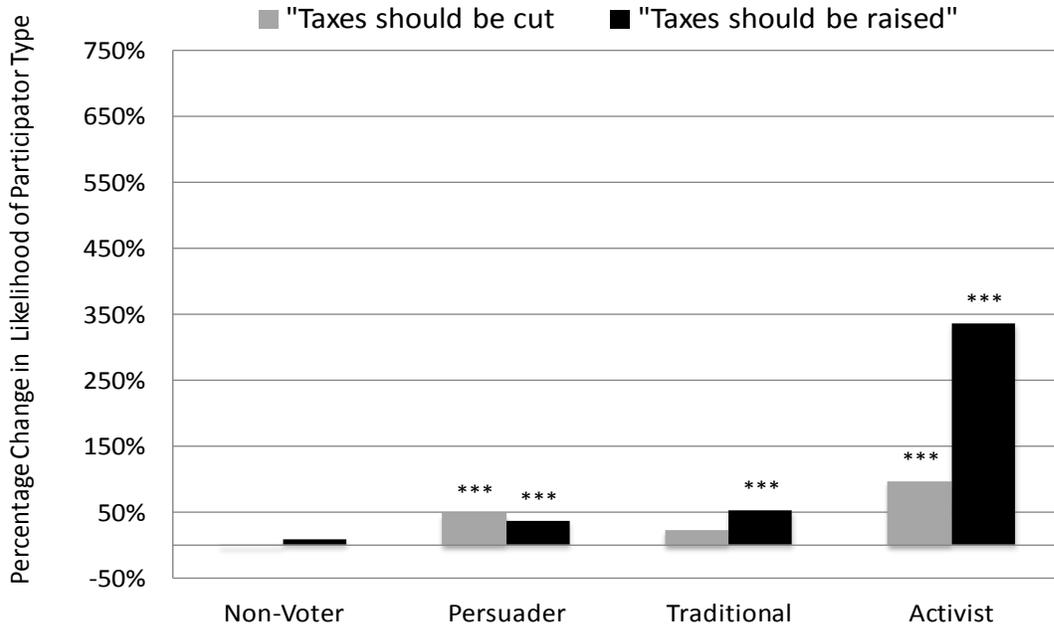


Source: National Annenberg Election Survey (2008) phone re-interview sample, self-reported voters (n=3,384; list-wise deletion for cases with missing data on participation indicators).

**Figure 2.** Likelihood of Participator Type Membership Given Policy Views

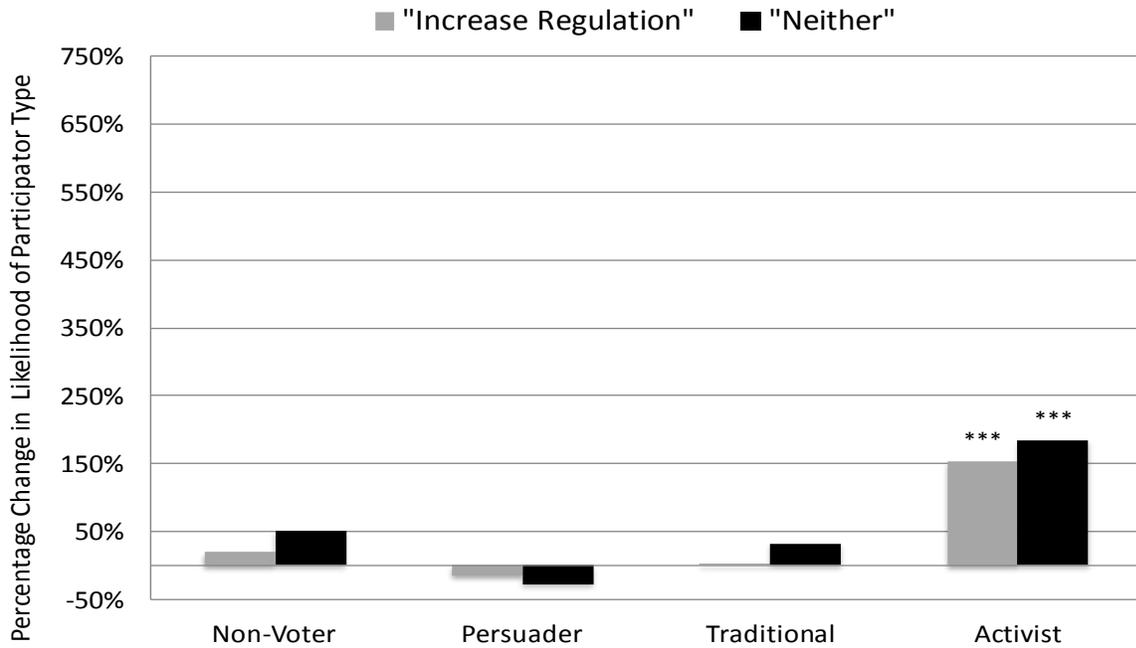
**2a. Taxes**

Reference category: "taxes should be kept the same"



**2b. Healthcare**

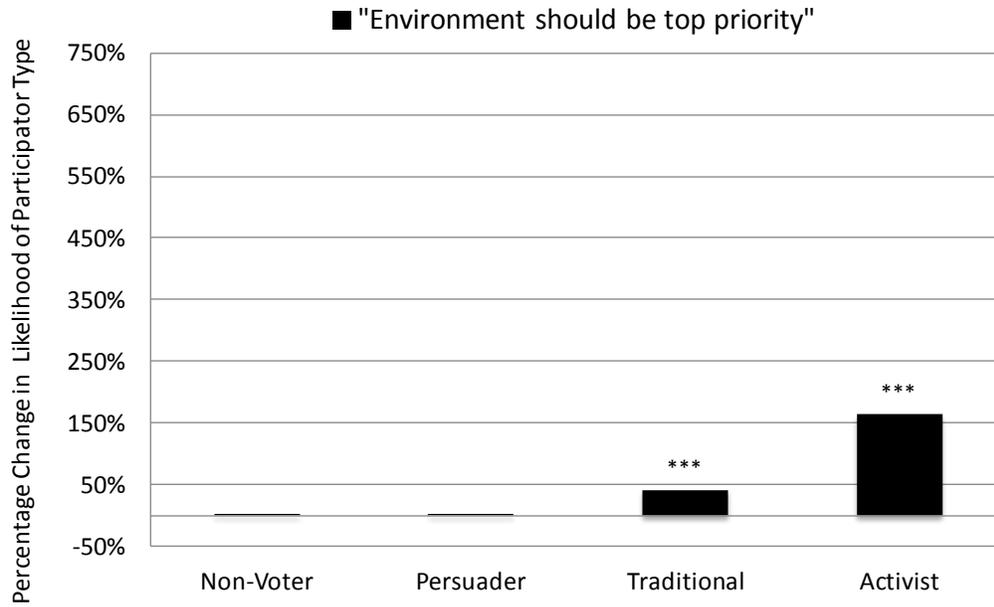
Reference category: "increase competition."



**Figure 2.** Likelihood of Participator Type Membership Given Policy Views (continued)

**2c. Environment**

*Ref category: "More important to keep economy growing."*



**2d. Abortion**

*Reference category: "Not Permitted"*



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The National Annenberg Election Survey of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania was conducted under the direction of APPC by Abts SRBI of New York. The post-election re-interview was conducted for 6,990 people randomly selected from the total 21,698 respondents interviewed in the Rolling Cross-Section (RCS) survey, and conducted November 5-10, 2008. The overall response rate of the post-election re-interview is 41% (n=3,737): a product of the percentage of the RCS respondents who consented to be re-contacted (78%) and the re-contact rate (53%). Although this is the most comprehensive survey available for our analytical purposes, it is noteworthy that a number of increasingly prevalent participation acts were not included in this survey (such as demonstrating, petitioning, political consumerism or activism on social networking sites such as Facebook), so these data cannot be used to investigate political tool kits in their broadest possible sense. For additional information on the survey, including precise question wording see:

<https://services.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes08/phone/about/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Following Ansolabehere and Hersh's (2012) recent research on vote validation, we investigated whether respondents' misreporting of an act like voting (widely seen as a fundamental civic duty that would trigger social desirability effects among non-voting respondents) could be identified as an additional reason for this inflated self-report. We obtained verified voting data for respondents in the NAES 2008 survey, available through Catalist, a political data vendor that uses rigorous matching technologies to successfully link survey respondents to their validated voting record (Ansolabehere and Hersh 2012). The findings using the matched data were largely consistent with the findings reported in this paper. We present findings using the unmatched data since only three self-reported voters proved to be verified non-voters (i.e. "misreporters"), while 1,547 respondents were unmatched for administrative reasons, and therefore become missing cases in the matched data. This means that although the validated voting rate of the matched dataset is somewhat lower than the self-reported rate (87 percent instead of 93 percent), this lower rate is gained almost entirely due to unsuccessful administrative matches—and not due to verified misreporting.

<sup>3</sup> Bayesian Information Criterion for the nested models: 1-class = 23957; 2-class = 21618; 3-class=21392; 4-class= 21229; 5-class=21253; 6-class=21291. LCA findings using Latent Gold 4.5.

<sup>4</sup> Characteristics set for predicted probabilities are modal age and income, female, white, college education, and strong party identification. Full regression output upon which the predicted probabilities are based are available from the authors.