ALL THINGS MEDIA

March 2020

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Media Use and Political Engagement: Cross-Cultural Approaches  
Special Section in the International Journal of Communication (IJOC)  
Guest editors: Özen Odağ, Frank M. Schneider, Larisa Buhin, & Jinhee Kim

A cordial invitation to submit empirical research articles on media use and political engagement taking up a cross-culturally comparative design.

Democracies around the world are struggling with the global decline of civic and political engagement, especially among younger generations (Bessant, Farthing, & Watts, 2016; Smith & Thompson, 2015). Recent data from World Value Surveys and the Eurobarometer have yielded alarming results (Whiteley, 2012), showing that young people in most Western countries are increasingly dissatisfied with and disinterested in liberal democracy (Foa & Mounk, 2017; Sloam, 2016). At the same time, this overall decline is paralleled by an increase of new forms of engagement such as lifestyle politics, Internet activism, and political consumerism (Dalton, 2004; 2006; Theocharis & van Deth, 2018). These developments have contributed to a new understanding of citizenship, one in which citizens are increasingly engaging through informal, creative, participatory, and digitally networked activities, thus moving political engagement into the domain of entertainment and personalized communication (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). Activities that formerly took place offline (such as demonstrations, signing petitions, political discussions) have now largely moved into the online sphere and work in concert with offline civic engagement activity. They include a wide range of phenomena such as using social networks to access information, using digital platforms to exchange views, using mobile applications to access government services, and organizing protests on social networks (Bala, 2014). Many of these emergent behaviors are not yet fully understood. Their global rise across the world as expressed in countless examples of collective action in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the USA, however, render them a timely topic to study from a cross-cultural perspective.

Current scholarship focuses especially on the social and psychological factors that connect media use and political engagement (Hsiao, 2018; Hsiao & Yang, 2018; Valenzuela, Correa, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2018). Social identity, efficacy, injustice perceptions, emotions, values, and system justification beliefs have been identified as crucial psychosocial predictors of digitally enabled political engagement (Hsiao, 2018; Jost et al., 2018; Valenzuela, Correa, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2018; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). At the same time, our understanding of these effects has remained insufficient and largely confined to Western democratic contexts (such as Europe and the USA; see Hsiao, 2018, for an overview of this extensive research). Although a few authors have taken up a non-Western perspective and investigated such mechanisms of political engagement in the non-Western world (e.g. Hsiao, 2018; Valenzuela, Correa, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2018; Wibisono, Louis, & Jetten, 2019), current scholarship is impressively void of cross-culturally comparative approaches to the role of media in political engagement.
This Special Section aims to highlight the influence of cultural factors (societies, cultures, cultural identities, political regimes etc.) on the relationship between media use and political engagement. We are particularly looking for cross-culturally comparative empirical studies, both qualitative and quantitative, that deal with the role of media use in political engagement. A central aim of the studies should be to understand cultural variance in the theories that have been produced on the topic. Studies should thus focus on a minimum of two cultural contexts that are compared. The Special Section is open for a variety of topics. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Cross-cultural studies on the role of satirical new media formats, such as political talk-shows and political Internet memes, for political engagement;
- Cross-cultural studies on the role of specific social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and other non-Western variants, for political engagement;
- Cross-cultural studies on the role of entertainment media, such as political movies and video games, for political engagement;
- Cross-cultural studies on the role of political, religious, cultural identity in the relationship between media use and political engagement;
- Cross-cultural studies on the role of ‘cultured’ emotions and values in the relationship between media use and political engagement;
- Cross-cultural studies on social-psychological mechanisms in the context of echo chambers, fake news, and propaganda

The review process is two-tiered and comprises the submission of an extended abstract and a full paper. Full papers will be invited only if they are accepted in the prior review of extended abstracts. Extended abstracts are due April 20, 2020; full papers are due September 20, 2020 (see time line below).

The extended abstract (1,000 words max. excluding tables and references) should present previously unpublished work on a topic of clear interest to the Special Section. The extended abstract would typically include information about the cross-cultural purpose, novelty, significance, or knowledge gap being addressed, the cross-cultural methodological design of the study, and present cross-cultural results, conclusions and implications of the work conducted. The extended abstract must provide a title, a short 150-word abstract (not counted towards the 1,000 words), and up to five keywords that identify the thematic focus of the work. If accepted, the final full paper (8,900 words) must be turned in by September 20, 2020. For further details on formatting, author guidelines, and submission process, please visit AuthorGuidelines.
Time line:

- Submission Extended Abstracts: April 20, 2020
- Submission Full Papers: September 20, 2020
- Review Process: September 2020 - January 2021
- Revision Process: January - April 2021
- Resubmission: May 2021
- Final Proofs: June/July 2021
- Publication: September/October 2021

All papers in the IJOC are published as open access articles without publication fees for the authors. Submissions engaging in open science practices will be given particular consideration in the review process. We also especially welcome preregistered studies.

They very much look forward to your extended abstracts! For submission of extended abstracts, please contact oezen.odag@touroberlin.de. Please use this email also for further inquiry on the topic and procedure of our Special Section.
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