Media Consumption of Alberta Youth and Voting Participation

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Abstract

This study examines the media habits of 18-29 year olds as it relates to their propensity to be a voter. It examines the research question: How is communication technology used by young people (aged 18-29) to gather news and political information and how does that usage impact their participation in voting. Using a sequential mixed methods approach it looks at data from the 2011 Canadian Election Survey to create an index to measure propensity to vote and then uses that index to measure for correlations from the responses of 18-29 year olds (n=134) to other survey items that relate to media usage and social capital. Additionally, it includes one focus group interview (n=5) and three individual interviews (n=3) of youth to get a better understanding of their media habits related to news and information gathering. The study finds that voter participation is correlated to watching news on television, reading news in the newspaper and on the Internet, exchanging political news on the Internet and discussing news and politics with family. The qualitative interviews found that the 18-29 year old participants extensively use a wide variety of media; use mobile phones for quicker tasks often to kill time; consume various amounts of news media related to their propensity to be a voter; and that the more probable voters engaged in extensive news seeking, while the less probable voters focused media consumption around other areas of interest.

Keywords: Internet, media, news, social capital, social media,voter participation, voting, youth.

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Chapter One - Introduction

Background

Voter turnout in Alberta provincial elections reached a record low in the 2008 general election at 40.6 percent (Elections Alberta, 2013). While turnout improved in 2012 during a hotly contested election, this was an anomaly in a 20 year downward trend. Generally, in Alberta, in other provinces, nationally and globally, voter participation rates have been steadily declining for decades. (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003) This is a troubling trend for the state of modern democracies. As more people choose not to vote, the democratic authority of governments recede and the accountability of elected officials wane.

Statement of the Problem

The main source for declining turnout is the failure of young people to exercise their franchise (O'Neill, 2007; Delli Carpini, 2000; Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Barnes, 2010; Gidengil, Blais, Nevitte, & Nadeau, 2003; Malatest, 2011; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Milner, 2010). And while young people have traditionally voted at lower rates than older citizens, today's young people are turning out to vote at lower rates than previous generations of young people (O'Neill, 2007; Blais & Loewen, 2011; Putnam, 2000; Delli Carpini, 2000; Milner, 2010; Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Barnes, 2010; Gidengil et al., 2003; Menard, 2010; Stolle & Cruz, 2005). This is particularly troubling because previous generations have typically increased their political participation as they have aged (Barnes, 2010). If young people today are starting from an even

lower level of participation, then they will not sufficiently bridge the traditional age gap and our overall turnout will continue to decline. Noted social capital expert Robert Putnam (2000) calls voting "the most common act of democratic citizenship" (p. 31) and says that, "not to vote is to withdraw from the political community" (p. 35).

The literature varies in how young people are defined, but for the purposes of this study, the work of Barnes (2010) provides a good benchmark. Using turnout data from the Canadian Election Survey, it shows that voter decline is particularly remarkable amongst young adults aged 18-29. That data shows a significant downward turn amongst that cohort starting with the 1984 Canadian federal election (Barnes, 2010).

At the same time as voter turnout declines, new technologies are profoundly and constantly influencing the media habits of young people. Broddasson (2006) says, "A monumental shift is occurring in the media and communication habits of young people" (p. 105). Today's under 30s are digital natives (Prensky, 2001) and have been raised in a world where computing has been heavily present through most of their upbringing. The Internet will have been a large part of their adolescence, used for education, communications and research (both formal and informal). Similarly, mobile computing has also gained significant popularity; text messaging, Internet browsing, image capturing and mobile application usage have all exploded (Duggan & Rainie, 2012; AdMob, 2010). The general trend is that media usage is becoming increasingly individualized and in the individualized media landscape people are following public affairs less (Putnam, 2000). Young people pay less attention to news and know less about current affairs than

their elders do today or did in earlier years when they themselves were younger (Putnam, 2000; O'Neill, 2007; Milner, 2010). Interestingly, when looking at newspaper usage, its decline follows the same pattern as the decline in voting, where young people are reading newspapers less than young people did in previous generations, thereby creating an overall downward trend in readership (Delli Carpini, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010). This begs a significant question: how is readership in newspapers and paying attention to public affairs connected to voter participation? We know that media usage is connected with political knowledge and consequently electoral participation (Milner, 2010; Putnam, 2000; Norris, 2002), but what is the significance of news media in developing political knowledge and in turn enabling voter turnout? As the media usage of young people moves through the influence of the Internet and into the realm of mobile computing, the impacts on political involvement will also continue to change: "The generational shift in media use, from traditional to online media, needs to be better understood for its role in shaping the civic skills, orientations and activities of young citizens" (O'Neill, 2007, p. 25).

The whole question of the changing character of society is increasingly being discussed using the concept of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Social capital consists of the resources that are embedded in our social relations and social structure (Lin, 2001). Social capital has value and importance in sustaining our society. "Our schools and neighbourhoods don't work so well when community bonds slacken … our economy, our democracy and even our health and happiness depend on adequate stocks of social capital" (Putnam, 2000, p. 28). Declining civic participation is both a sign and a symptom of declining social capital.

Young adults are significantly less trusting, less interested in politics or public affairs, less knowledgeable about politics, less likely to read a newspaper or watch the news, less likely to vote, and less likely to participate in politics beyond voting (Delli Carpini, 2000). Therefore, this study aims to explore the connections between youth voter turnout, youth media usage and social capital.

Research Question and Objectives

The main research question guiding this study was: How is communication technology used by young people (aged 18-29) to gather news and political information and how does that usage impact their participation in voting?

To explore the research question, five broad objectives were included:

- to understand and document how the general population uses media and communication technologies to gather news and political information;
- to understand and document how young people use media and other communication technologies for news and information gathering;
- to document how young people are exposed to political information through ongoing or coincidental use of media and communication technologies;
- to identify what information young people use to guide their political participation and how they may obtain that through communication technology; and

- to explore the relationship between media and technology use and impacts on voting participation of young people.

Conclusion

This study proposes to gain an understanding of how communication technology is used by young people (aged 18-29) to gather news and political information and how that usage impacts their participation in voting. Arising from a pragmatist world view and grounded in the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication it will explore the personal, behavioural and environmental determinants that contribute to voting behaviour of young people (Bandura, 2001). The literature review and quantitative analysis of existing survey data will provide a broad description of the attitudes and behaviours of the larger heterogeneous group of young Canadians. That data will then inform the comparative analysis of data obtained in the qualitative interview phase which in turn helps introduce multiple perspectives on the question and a better abstraction of the knowledge.

The next chapter of this report reviews relevant published literature in the areas of voter turnout, media usage and social capital of young people. Chapter three provides an overview of the research design used in this study including the theoretical framework, data collection methodology, and a description of how the data will be analyzed. Chapter four presents the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in the study. Chapter five is a discussion of the findings placed within the context of the literature; it also explores

recommendations for future research and the limitations of this study. Chapter six includes some concluding thoughts.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

This chapter will provide an overview of relevant studies that have looked at issues related to participation in voting or media usage amongst young people. The first section of the review will look at studies related to declining voter turnout amongst youth. The next section will discuss the two main classifications of factors that impact low voter turnout amongst youth: lifestyle effects and generational effects. After that, the chapter will discuss the various demographic factors that impact voting participation of this sub population. The fourth section will discuss major factors affecting voter turnout amongst youth, while section five looks at the media habits of young people. The sixth and final section of this chapter looks at research on social capital and its relevance to the central research question.

Youth Voter Turnout is Declining

Turnout for democratic elections is declining in Canada and around the world (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010; Yang, 2009; Barnes, 2010). After 15 years of steady decline, voter turnout in the 2008 Canadian federal election hit a new historical low of 58.8 percent (Barnes, 2010; Pammett & LeDuc, 2003). Although Alberta's 2012 voter turnout rose to 54.4 percent that was amidst a hotly contested election, and the 2008 Alberta general election saw an historic low turnout of 40.6 percent (Elections Alberta, 2013). Some might suggest that this is a simplistic measure of civic engagement, but Milner (2010) says "voter turnout is still the best thermometer we have to measure the health of the body politic" (p. 78). Political participation and civic participation are dropping together, so the question of which is driving

which may be valid, but that doesn't eliminate value in pursuing an understanding of why the voter turnout issue has arisen (Milner, 2010; Yang, 2009).

The problem of declining turnout is driven mainly by decreasingly low voter turnout of young people (O'Neill, 2007; Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Barnes, 2010; Gidengil et al., 2003; Malatest, 2011; Stolle & Cruz, 2005) and this problem is definitely not unique to Canada (Blais & Loewen, 2011; Milner, 2010).

Lifecycle effects and generational effects

Low voter turnout amongst young people is certainly not a new phenomenon: "Young people are less likely to vote precisely because they are young" (Gidengil et al., 2003). There are many factors affecting a young person that contribute to young people being less likely to vote. For example, issues like health care may seem less relevant to a young person who is not concerned about deteriorating health as they age. K-12 education would seem less relevant to a young person who has not yet had kids and corporate taxation might not be on the mind of someone in college. The social and economic factors related to the life stages of youth that makes them less likely to vote are described as lifecycle effects (O'Neill, 2007; Barnes, 2010; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Milner, 2010; Putnam, 2000). Studies completed over time show that regardless of era, young people will typically have voter turnouts of 10 to 15 percent lower than older voters (Barnes, 2010; Gidengil et al., 2003; Yang, 2009).

Low voter turnout amongst young people driven by lifecycle effects are not terribly troubling, because historically many young non-voters become voters as they age: “Life cycle effects mean that individuals change, but society as a whole does not” (Putnam, 2000, p. 247). However, significant evidence shows that more recent generations are less likely to vote than previous generations at the same age (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Barnes, 2010; Gidengil et al., 2003; Menard, 2010; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Delli Carpini, 2000). Turnout was 10 points higher among young people born in the 1960s and 20 points higher among young baby boomers than young people today (Gidengil et al., 2003). The long term decline is caused by the gradual replacement of more participatory voters who came of age before or during the New Deal and World War II, by less participatory voters from generations that came later (Putnam, 2000). The propensity of recent generations of young people voting less than previous generations is described in the literature in terms of generational effects (O’Neill, 2007; Barnes, 2010; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Milner, 2010; Putnam, 2000). Unfortunately, anticipated upswings in turnout resulting from lifecycle effects fading as young people age are outweighed by generational downswings (Putnam, 2000, p. 247). These generational effects indicate that the disengagement of young people is more than just a problem of individuals, but rather is indicative of more troubling societal change.

Key Demographic Factors Impacting Voter Turnout of Youth

While the low levels and further cross-generational decline of youth voter turnout in general are concerning, several key demographic factors are actually associated with even lower turnout

amongst subsections of youth. Voter turnout is particularly affected by educational attainment, socio-economic status and ethno-cultural background.

Educational attainment is one of the biggest predictors of voter participation across all ages (O'Neill, 2007; Blais & Loewen, 2011; Malatest, 2011; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Gidengil et al., 2003) and low levels of education are particularly impactful on the participation of young people (Stolle & Cruz, 2005). Education level is also the best predictor for civic participation, with age identified as the second best predictor (Putnam, 2000; Gidengil et al., 2003). Stolle & Cruz (2005) describe education as, "a crucial factor in explaining the growing divide between youth who are engaged and those who are marginalized" (p. 91). Therefore, the most important action in preventing long-term voter decline is to keep more young people in school longer (Gidengil et al., 2003). Some research cites education and income as the top predictors (O'Neill, 2007), while others suggest education and country of origin as the most powerful predictors (Blais & Loewen, 2011), but education level is consistently cited by most authors as a major predictor of voter turnout.

Aside from educational attainment, income is also frequently cited as an explanation for variation in electoral engagement (O'Neill, 2007; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Malatest, 2011). Income plays an important role in providing access to resources and in facilitating other forms of civic engagement (Stolle & Cruz, 2005). The factors of education and income are more significant influencers on voting behaviour for young Canadians than they are for older Canadians (Stolle & Cruz, 2005).

Aboriginal youth are also less likely to vote in elections (Malatest, 2011) and the rapid growth in the aboriginal population suggests this is a need that should be addressed quickly. A 2011 survey (Malatest, 2011) specifically examined the attitudes of five key subgroups of youth known for low voter turnout: aboriginals, youth with disabilities, ethnocultural youth, rural youth and the unemployed. It showed that aboriginal youth don't vote because they are less interested in elections, less knowledgeable about how to vote and more likely to have transportation issues that impact their ability to get out to vote (Malatest, 2011). Aboriginal people are more youthful, more transient and have lower levels of education and income: all factors associated with low levels of voting and civic engagement (Stolle & Cruz, 2005).

Major Factors Influencing Youth Voter Turnout

Demographic factors like age, education level and income explain better who is less likely to vote, as opposed to why they are less likely to vote. The literature identifies a number of factors that contribute to low voter turnout amongst young people. Consistently, two major factors emerge as being most associated with voting behaviour: levels of knowledge or information and levels of interest (Putnam, 2000; Blais & Loewen, 2011; Malatest, 2011).

O'Neill (2007), Malatest (2011), Howe (2003), Milner (2010) and Stolle & Cruz (2005) all clearly identify that higher levels of political knowledge correlate with voter participation. For example, young people know very little about politicians and the political institutions that run the country (Menard, 2010). Milner (2007) actually established a cause and effect relationship

between the level of political knowledge and youth electoral participation (Menard, 2010). And the Malatest (2011) report says that the combination of low political knowledge and low political interest is a motivation barrier for the low participating youth subgroups it focused on. Low political knowledge is identified particularly as one of the generational effects contributing to further decline in turnout; the margin between political knowledge of young and older Canadians is worse than it was 10 years ago (Stolle & Cruz, 2005). Milner (2010) draws out this connection: "People with higher political knowledge can link their personal interests with appropriate public issues, and therefore can select the right person as their representative and can judge officials on the responsibilities they carry in the political system" (p. 98).

"Young Canadians are not so much 'turned off' as 'tuned out'," says Gidengil et al. (2003, p. 11), noting that low levels of interest in politics sit aside low political knowledge as a top factor. A large survey of voters after the May 2011 Canadian federal election found that 88 percent of youth who were very interested, politically voted, while only 28 percent of those who were not at all interested voted (Malatest, 2011). The connection between low levels of interest amongst youth and low voter participation is also noted by Pammett and LeDuc (2003), Stolle and Cruz (2005) and Malatest (2011). While other reasons for not voting exist, a broad analysis of the literature demonstrates that a lack of knowledge and lack of interest lead the way in factors that predict low voter participation.

The literature identifies a number of other factors that contribute to voting turnout of young people. Voting behaviour can be predicted by the possession of feelings of civic duty, which

develop with age, higher education and knowledge (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003). Lifecycle effects contribute to low turnout (Blais & Loewen, 2011). Low marriage rates, high mobility, less religious influence, lower income and lower likelihood of being born in Canada all correlate with low turnout (Blais & Loewen, 2011). Key factors related to access, including knowing where to vote, personal circumstances and administrative barriers also influence voting behaviours (Malatest, 2011). Voters are also more likely than non-voters to agree that government plays a major role in their lives. (Malatest, 2011). These other factors are important to consider, but do not come through in the literature with the prominence of a lack of knowledge and lack of interest.

Some claim that cynicism is a key driver for why young people are not voting, but the research does not seem to support this. O'Neill (2007) says that young people are often less cynical than other age groups and Pammett and LeDuc (2003) say that the youngest group in their study of non-voters (18-24 year-olds) were less likely to cite negative feelings towards political candidates, parties and leaders than were older age groups (p. 18). Gidengil et al. (2003) and Stolle and Cruz (2005) support the notion that young people are neither more dissatisfied nor more cynical than older generations when it comes to voting.

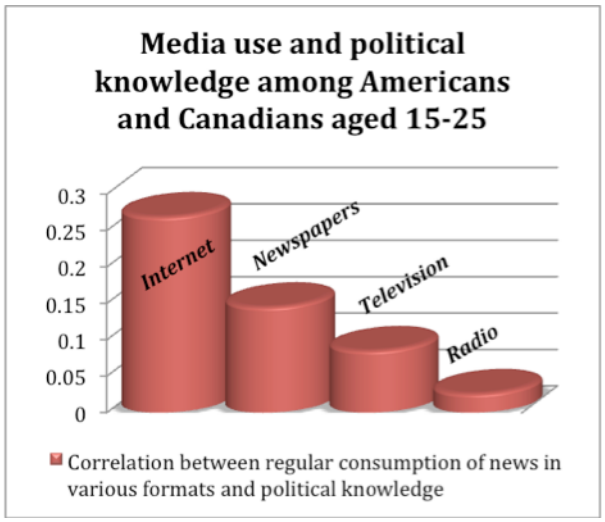
Media Habits of Young People

If political knowledge and interest are cited as the top factors affecting voter participation, then there is considerable value in investigating the media habits of young people related to

knowledge acquisition and expression of interests. This current study is particularly interested in looking at how the media habits of young people in particular are related to voter participation.

According to Milner (2010) there exists "near universal agreement" (p. 98) that politically informed people are more likely to vote and that voters are likely to be more informed than nonvoters. Voters are also more active media consumers: "they are more likely to read newspapers, listen to news or current events shows on the radio, watch the news on television, and surf the Internet for information than are non-voters" (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 43). Other researchers support the notion that following news and current affairs relates to political knowledge and engagement (Norris, 2002; Keown, 2007; Menard, 2010; Lee, 2005; Ostman, 2012; Milner, 2010; Delli Carpini, 2000).

Table 1



- Milner, 2010

It is important to note that much of the discourse on news consumption and information gathering relates to differentiating between the variety of media used; this review of the literature will explore three particular media forms later: newspapers, television and the Internet. However, on the topic of media sources, there is good evidence that active consumers consume news in multiple media environments, which includes those young people who are most engaged in voting (Malatest, 2011; Keown, 2007). A 2005 study of Australian youth showed that television,

newspapers and radio followed closely behind family as the main source for gathering information about elections (Milner, 2010). Speaking to the impact of media on voting behaviour, Delli Carpini (2000) believes that the decline in civic ability can be directly traced to the relative lack of attention paid by the media, candidates, and officeholders to the issues that matter to young adults. Media content frames how young people are socialized and their media choices are not just a response to technological change but are a means of self-expression (Milner, 2010). Consequently, "getting the Internet generation to participate politically entails, first and foremost, instilling in them the habit of paying attention to public affairs" (p. 97). Qayyum, Williamson, Liu, & Hider (2010) and Williamson, Qayyum, Hider, & Liu (2012) looked specifically at the news seeking behaviours of young adults in Australia. Williamson et al. (2012) said that the perceived relevance of news to young people's lives was very important in stimulating their interest. Qayyum et al. (2010) said that many of their participants viewed news gathering as a recreational activity, noting that most were passive users that wouldn't necessarily go online to seek out news stories but would discover them as part of their browsing routine. The use of various sources was also determined by its accessibility and because participants would listen to radio news while commuting in the car or on the bus (Qayyum et al., 2010).

If those highly engaged in voting use a variety of media sources to gain political knowledge, what is to be said about the effects and impacts of different individual sources? The first answer to this question seems to be about the depth of the information offered by each media source; a number of authors point to the value of in-depth media sources that encourage civic participation (Lee, 2005; Keown, 2007; Postman, 1985; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010). In particular, the value

of newspaper readership in increasing political knowledge and participation is frequently noted (Putnam, 2000; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001; Keown, 2007; Yang, 2009). Seventy percent of the highly engaged media consumers include newspapers as one of their sources (Keown, 2007). But a decline in newspaper readership is running parallel to the decline in civic engagement and participation (Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010). The decline of newspaper readership was so significant in the 1970s and 1980s that by the end of the 80s only 21 percent of Americans cited newspapers as the most credible news source versus 55 percent citing television (Milner, 2010). Interestingly, Putnam (2000) even traces the decline of newspaper readership to generational effects: "The falloff in newspaper readership in America from the 1970s to the 1990s was heavily concentrated in the youngest generations – the younger the cohort, the more rapid the decline over these two decades" (Putnam, 2000, p. 251). Postman (1985) wrote thoroughly about the impact of this significant decline of more literate and in-depth media sources nearly thirty years ago in his foundational text, 'Amusing Ourselves to Death'.

The second answer to the question of the impact of different formats speaks to how each media form is used for entertainment purposes as opposed to informative purposes. Civic engagement is negatively impacted by the use of media forms that are primarily used for entertainment rather than information (Yang, 2009; Postman, 1985; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010). The difference between high preference for entertainment and low preferences for entertainment in media equates to a 20-point drop in political knowledge (Milner, 2010). Media that blur the lines between information and entertainment, such as Fox News, are particularly concerning for some (Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010). More recent media forms make it easier for entertainment seekers

to avoid exposure to information (Milner, 2010). Interestingly, Dlodlo and Mahlangu (2013) investigated mobile device recreation of South African youth and found that the biggest reason for using mobile devices was entertainment, followed by impulsivity and addiction.

Post-baby boom generations are less knowledgeable of public affairs, despite the abundance of information sources (Putnam, 2000). The general decrease in political knowledge might be related to the increasing individualization and segmentation of media sources. Starting with television, progressing through the introduction of specialty cable television and moving into the Internet age, people are much more able to focus on niche areas of interest with less and less incidental exposure to other fields. While a highly engaged news consumer can find more and more sources for news and public affairs, those that are seeking entertainment can also become less and less engaged in informational content. As identified by Postman (1985), television seems to be a starting point for this substantial social decline. The importance of television is particularly profound for young people: 42 percent of youth cite television as their main source of information while 20 percent say it is a web source and 11 precent indicate newspapers or magazines (Malatest, 2011). Meanwhile, 91 percent of active news followers use television as one of their sources (Keown, 2007). This abundant use of television for information gathering is not necessarily positive for political engagement. A number of researchers speak to the lowering impact of television usage on political knowledge (Yang, 2009; Milner, 2010; Putnam, 2000; Kowalewski, 2009; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Keown, 2007). Stolle and Cruz (2005) say that, “the rise of television has been a ‘willing accomplice’ if not a ‘ringleader’ in American civic disengagement” (p. 94). Putnam (2000) extensively explores the impact of television viewership

on our society. He says that more television watching means less civic participation and social involvement and that nothing else in the twentieth century has so rapidly and profoundly affected our leisure like the introduction of television. To that end, this intrusion in how people spend their days and nights has "coincided exactly with the national decline in social connectedness, and the trends were most marked amongst the younger generations that are distinctively disengaged" (Putnam, 2000, p. 246). The dependence on television for entertainment is "the single most consistent predictor" affecting civic disengagement (p. 231).

The Internet has had a profound impact on media and news consumption, particularly amongst young people. Nearly 4-in-5 Canadians under the age of 34 used the Internet at home at least once a day (Menard, 2010) and young Canadians – in particular, highly educated young Canadians – are likely to go on-line to search for political information or news (Gidengil et al., 2003; Delli Carpini, 2000; O'Neill, 2007; Keown, 2007). Qayyum et al. (2010) report that immediacy, accessibility and free cost are relevant factors in the decision to access news online. By the end of the 2008 American election, the Internet had come to rival television as the leading source for news amongst young people (Milner, 2010). Towner (2013) investigated the effects of different media on engagement in the 2012 presidential election and discovered that the more attention young adults paid to presidential websites and Twitter the more likely they were to participate in the election offline. He says, "the use of online sources that provided a platform for communication and interaction among citizens, such as Google+, Twitter, and blogs, showed both significant and positive effects on political participation" (p. 538).

However, just because young people are high users of the Internet (McGrath, 2011) and use it as a preferred news source does not mean that they are prolific consumers of online news (Yang, 2009; Milner, 2010). Actually, only a fraction of the information accessed on the web is political information (Milner, 2010). According to a 2009 study, American youth accounted for 43 percent of all Web traffic, but only 32 percent of visits were to news sites and 22 percent of visits were to political sites (Milner, 2010).

The Internet has seemingly taken the individualization offered by commercial television and expanded it considerably. As with newspapers and television, those that use the Internet for news gathering are also likely to be using other sources (Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010; Ostman, 2012). Young people that follow online news get value from it and seem more knowledgeable or engaged (Yang, 2009; Milner, 2010). Informational uses of the Internet have a positive impact on democratic engagement, but the positive effects may be based on existing high levels of interest and engagement (Ostman, 2012). Unfortunately, those who rely primarily on the Internet for news are less likely to be civically involved (Putnam, 2000) and may be missing out on important information. A 2002 experiment in which subjects read either the print or online version of the New York Times for a week found that the online readers were less likely to follow the cues of news editors and producers, which meant that they read fewer public affairs stories (Milner, 2010).

There exist cautions that the Internet should not be seen as a panacea for increasing youth electoral engagement (Menard, 2010). The constant option of easily switching to less boring

internet content means that those who are less interested in political information will not gain much from vast stores of political content on the Internet (Milner, 2010). This reality might explain why the biggest drop in newspaper readership did not occur in the heyday of television but rather it occurred when the Internet emerged in the 1990s (Milner, 2010). Milner (2010) offers this point as an important conclusion on the impacts of the Internet: "Internet use facilitates participation by the already politically engaged, but exacerbates the digital divide due to geography, education level, income level and occupational classification" (p. 70).

The rise of mobile phone technology and usage is also having a profound impact on youth and their media habits. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA) was predicting in early 2012 that wireless device penetration would surpass 100 percent in the following few years (Trichur, 2012). While Canadian data broken down by age group is less available, a Pew Internet study in 2010 found that 90 percent of 18-29 year olds had a cell phone and 65 percent of them used it to access the Internet (Smith, 2010). Even more so today, mobile devices are serving as the Swiss Army knife of the 21st century (Stald, 2008) with many functions above and beyond the telephone. Smartphones work as phones, allow for text messaging and provide an access point to the Internet anywhere and anytime for a variety of different applications. A Quorus (2012) report for the CWTA found that 69 percent of 18-34 year old cell phone users in Canada have a smart phone - which was a staggering 21 point rise from 48 percent in 2011. Google found in 2013 that 56 percent of all Canadians over the age of 16 had a smart phone (Google, 2013). And while a significant 66 percent of users of internet enabled

mobile devices say they will use their device to stay informed (Google, 2013), the primary use for mobile devices is entertainment (Google, 2013; Dlodlo & Mahlangu, 2013).

The Role of Social Capital in Influencing Voter Participation

The concept of social capital is appropriately used to discuss the convergence of ideas related to civic engagement, generational change and socialization through media. Social capital "refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). The core idea is that social networks have value (Putnam, 2000). People who are highly networked and more involved in civic activity are seen to have greater stores of social capital. A number of researchers suggest that higher levels of social capital, as evidenced in greater participation in citizenship activities, are associated with voting (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Malatest, 2011; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001; Putnam, 2000): "Voters are more likely to be interested in politics, to give to charity, to volunteer, to serve on juries, to attend community school board meetings, to participate in public demonstrations, and to cooperate with their fellow citizens on community affairs" (Putnam, 2000, p. 35).

Some academics suggest that young people today are exhibiting greater habits of social capital (O'Neill, 2007; Gidengil et al., 2003), but others are suggesting that social capital is also waning for youth (Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Delli Carpini, 2000). O'Neill (2007) says that youth are more likely to volunteer and more likely to become members of interest groups than political parties: "The conclusion that youth engage in a different manner than other Canadians

seems more important than one of indifference or apathy" (p. 20). But voting is one of the lowest level activities for civic participation and those who do not vote are unlikely to participate in higher-level civic activity (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Milner, 2010). Youth continue to involve themselves with organizations and associations, but describe their societal engagement as sporadic (Stolle & Cruz, 2005). The decline in social engagement results from generational effects, where young people today are participating less than young people of previous generations (Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Gidengil et al., 2003): "America's youth appear to be disconnecting from public life, and doing so at a rate that is greater than for any other age group" (Delli Carpini, 2000, p. 341). Stolle and Cruz (2005) raise alarm bells over this trend: "Social capital and citizen engagement are important resources at the community and country levels; a permanent decline might potentially affect Canada's political and economic resources" (p. 98).

Social capital is not just important as an indicator of electoral and civic engagement, it is also valuable as a contributor towards such engagement. Greater sources of social capital can contribute to increased political socialization. Political socialization is the process through which new generations are inducted in political culture and learn the knowledge, values and attitudes at work in the system (Milner, 2010). For example, "education plays a role in creating social networks in which politics is likely to be a topic of conversation" (Stolle & Cruz, 2005, p. 90). Such conversations are an important predictor for voting behaviour as youth who discuss government or politics with family or friends are more likely to vote (Malatest, 2011; Stolle & Cruz, 2005). But, O'Neill (2007) and Malatest (2011) also point to the influential role of media

in impacting social capital and voting. Youth who vote report being influenced by politicians, the media and family, while non-voters are less likely to identify potential influencers; the media was cited as an influencer for 51 percent of voters and 35 percent of non-voters (Malatest, 2011). Milner (2010) is cautious about the value of social media in replacing community connections for political socialization: "Unlike the neighbourhood-based physical ones, virtual peer groups cannot, as a rule, be seen as agents of political socialization" (p. 50). But, Shabazz (2008) notes that social media allow youth to tell their own stories about their challenges and dreams. He also notes that "new media tools tied to building online and offline social networks are perfect to share information among young voters who otherwise might not tune in to traditional news" (Shabazz, 2008). Media habits continue to evolve rapidly given that 26 percent of Americans used their cell phones to learn about or participate in the 2010 elections (McGrath, 2011). According to O'Neill (2007), "the generational shift in media use needs to be better understood for its role in shaping the citizenship skills of young people" (p. 25).

Conclusion

After examining the literature on voter participation, media consumption and social capital, a number of important trends emerge. Declining voter participation, particularly amongst young people is a legitimate and significant concern. In particular, because of generational effects of voter decline, whereby voter turnout for more recent cohorts of young people is lower than young people in previous generations. The decline in youth voting behaviour is particularly remarkable amongst those with low education levels, low income and of aboriginal heritage. The two biggest reasons provided for not voting relate to a lack of knowledge about and lack of

interest in political issues and the political process. The consumption of news sources does relate well to voter and civic participation, but the use of more in-depth media, like newspapers, is also in decline. The personalized nature of today's media sources is encouraging for those highly engaged in public affairs, but damaging to the ability of media to provide incidental exposure to such issues. Television is a dominant source of news, but its value on influencing participation is less favourable. The Internet and other new media offer hope for more positive influence on voter participation but those seeking information from these media may be already interested and active. On the matter of social capital, there is some evidence that young people might be participating civically in other ways than voting but there is also evidence that the young people active in civic participation are voting anyway. Social networks have a lot of value in developing political socialization, but if there is a decline in social capital amongst youth as well, then the hope for a more immediate revival of voter turnout is diminished.

Chapter Three - Research Design

This chapter provides an overview of the design of the original research that was conducted as part of this study. The research design received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. The chapter begins by exploring the philosophical worldview and theoretical framework that underlie the study. The next section of the chapter includes an overview of the research methodology including a discussion of the logic behind the design used for the study. The third section of the chapter provides a more detailed overview of the research methods including a quantitative analysis of existing survey data, collection of new qualitative data and the qualitative analysis of that data using principles of grounded theory for analysis.

Philosophical Worldview and Theoretical Framework

This research takes a pragmatic worldview. Creswell (2008) states, “pragmatism as a worldview arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (p.10). He also says that, “instead of focusing on methods, researchers [from this worldview] emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem” (p. 10). This research therefore, examines the problem of declining voter turnout, driven by lagging participation amongst the youngest cohort groups and gains an understanding of how that problem is influenced by changing media usage behaviours.

Based in the social-psychological tradition of communication, this study extends from the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication (Bandura, 2001). Bandura (2001) says that social

cognitive theory of mass communication explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation between three – personal, behavioural and environmental – determinants. This theory fits well with a pragmatic worldview in looking at how the three *determinants* outline the *functioning* of the research subjects. This study therefore examines the personal, behavioural and environmental impacts of media consumption as key determinants in how young people function as participants in the democratic process, specifically as to whether they are likely to vote - an important aspect of the democratic process.

Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory of mass communication works well for research related to mass media issues. To Bandura (2001), research on the role of mass media in the social construction of reality carries important social implications and suggests that "the media both teach new forms of behaviour, create motivators for action by altering people's value preferences, efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and perception of opportunity structures" (p. 350). This offers a solid theoretical underpinning for prior research related to news usage and political activity (O'Neill, 2007; Norris, 2002) and it provides grounding for future research questions on media usage and participation. Bandura's (2001) work also supports the timeliness of such research that looks at sociological impacts of shifts in media usage, because, "extraordinary advances in technology of communications are transforming the nature, reach, speed and loci of human influence" (p. 351).

Logic of Study

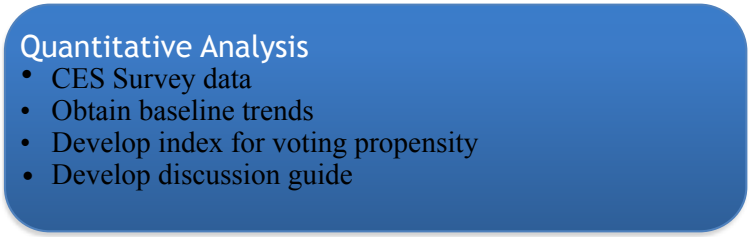
Corbin and Strauss (2008) say that in order to understand experience and explain situations, methodologies have to be complex, therefore it is important to capture as much complexity in the research as possible while understanding that capturing it all is impossible. This study used a sequential mixed methods approach that began with: a) an analysis of existing quantitative survey data taken from the Canadian Election Study, (Fournier, Cutler, Soroka, & Stolle, 2011) followed by b) qualitative analysis of data generated from a focus group and individual interviews using grounded theory for analysis. Creswell (2008) describes grounded theory as a strategy of inquiry where the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of action or interaction derived from the views of the participants. In this study, survey data was used to help identify and gather baseline information about the media consumption of young people related to their political participation. The survey data was also used to develop an index to determine an individual participant's propensity to be a voter. This index was then used to to create a group of study participants with a high propensity to vote into a distinct group that could be examined using a qualitative focus group interview. Another group of low propensity voters was assembled but was not able to meet for a focus group and so three individual interviews were held with such participants. The baseline information from the quantitative survey data also informed the development of the interview discussion guide and the

analysis of the qualitative data. Creswell (2008) says that grounded theory is "the constant comparison of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and differences of information" (p. 13). Therefore, the qualitative data from the group of high propensity voters can be compared to the data from the lower propensity voters to identify similarities and differences between the two. Corbin and Strauss (2008) also speak highly of comparative analysis. They say it helps researchers move more quickly from description to abstraction helping to examine their own basic assumptions, their biases, perspectives, and those of participants.

Methods

Use of Existing Survey Data (Quantitative Data)

The Canadian Election Study (Fournier et al., 2011) is an ongoing study that has been conducted around each federal election since 1965. In 2011, the study consisted of four sequential questionnaires offered to the same group of people. The questionnaires included a campaign period survey (CPS) conducted by telephone, a post-election survey (PES) conducted by telephone and a mail-back survey (MBS) which was a paper based survey; as well, there was a web-based survey (WBS). The CPS was completed by 4,308 individual subjects and 3,362 of those individuals also completed the PES creating a strong sample for analysis. The MBS and WBS were completed by



a considerably smaller group of participants (1,567 and 767 respectively) and so were not used for our study.

Preliminary inspection of the results of a subsample of respondents born after 1982 (aged 18-29 years during that election year) from the CPS and PES confirmed strong correlation between whether the respondent voted in the 2011 federal election and a number of other measures, including:

- Level of interest in politics, generally
- Perception on whether voting is a duty or a choice
- Level of guilt associated with not voting
- Political knowledge as indicated by correctly identifying the federal finance minister or provincial premier.
- Level of interest in the federal election during the campaign (significant correlation only)
- Amount of attention paid to the election
- Whether they voted in the last two federal elections
- Likelihood of voting in the next federal election
- Highest level of education completed, and
- The interviewer's perception of respondent's level of information about politics and public affairs (Fournier et al., 2011).

The correlation on these criteria are not surprising given the links between participation, political knowledge and interest that are described well in the literature (Further exploration of this data is found in Chapter Four - Findings).

The analysis of this data combined the ten criteria listed above (as indicated in 12 questions from the CES) with the response to whether the respondent voted to create an index that represents the propensity of a respondent to be a voter. This index will be further referenced as the VOTER index. The results of the 12 questions all contain criteria that the literature suggests are associated with voting and are all correlated with the response to the question of whether the participant voted in the 2011 election. The index consequently measures not just whether a participant had voted in a single election, but rather whether a participant is likely to be a voter, generally. That index was then measured for correlations with other responses provided by the young people that participated in the CES (Fournier et al., 2011) in order to determine which factors are associated with young people who are more probable voters. Specifically, the index was tested against questions related to when the respondent decided they would vote for their chosen candidate, which factors were most important in deciding who to vote for, participation over the past year in various political activities, level of news consumption and level of participation in political discussions. Singleton and Straits (2010) state that descriptive surveys, "seek to describe the distribution with a population of certain characteristics, attitudes, or experiences and make use of simpler forms of analysis" (p. 267). Once different factors related to voting behaviour were identified by the quantitative analysis, they were used to inform the development of the focus group discussion guide.

Focus Group and Individual Interviews (Qualitative data)

One challenge in this research has been the selection of study participants. The original research design called for two focus group discussions consisting of two groups of individuals that differed in their propensity to be a voter as indicated by the VOTER index. It was hoped that an optimal group size of five to seven participants (Berg, 2007) could be obtained for each focus group. While it was comparatively easy to recruit participants who scored low on the index (indicating a higher propensity to vote), it was more difficult to recruit participants that had a lower propensity to vote.

Qualitative Interviews
- Eight (n=8) 18-29 year-olds
- One focus group (n=5) of high propensity voters
- Three (n=3) individual interviews
- Discussion on media consumption
- Informed by literature and quantitative analysis

Contact with potential participants commenced with the completion of a 12-question telephone survey (See Appendix E) consisting of questions parallel to the twelve questions identified above from the 2011 Canadian Election Study. Consistent with the ethics approved research proposal, a number of potential participants that scored low i.e. indicating a high propensity to vote on the VOTER index, were invited to participate in a focus group interview related to their media habits. Five (n=5) participants between 18 and 29 years of age participated in a one time focus group interview. A smaller number of participants were identified, based on the telephone survey and VOTER index, as falling into the group that had a low propensity to vote but it was not possible to arrange a focus group interview where they were available at one time. Consequently, based on a revised ethics application and approval, individual, face to face interviews were held separately with three (n=3) other participants that ranged in the ages of

18-29 years but that focused on the same topics discussed at the focus group interview. The same interview guide was used for the focus group interview and the individual interviews.

Method of Analyzing Qualitative Data

The focus group interview and the individual interviews explored the media habits of study participants in order to find commonality amongst the participants and to identify differences that exist between young people who have a higher propensity to vote and those that have a lower propensity. Analysis can still take advantage of the separate grouping of high propensity voters by considering the data obtained from the three individual interviews as coming from participants that are alike in that they all had a lower propensity to vote according to the VOTER index. Berg (2007) says that researchers learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious and unconscious psychological and sociocultural characteristics of various groups.

Qualitative Analysis
- Analysis of interviews
- Comparing and contrasting high propensity voters with lower propensity voters

The interview guide was informed by the findings generated from the survey data from the Canadian Election Study (Fournier et al., 2011). The questions during the focus group and individual interviews explored the issues identified in the research objectives including how communication technologies are used for news and information gathering, how young people are exposed to political information and it probed different types of information young people use to guide their political participation. The focus group method, in particular, is valuable in that

participant exchanges during the interactions provided different points of view that were compared to examine motivation with a degree of complexity that is typically not available with other methods (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). The analysis, as recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008), focuses on transcribing the events of the interviews and then coding to ascribe particular labels to different sources of media, types of content consumed, experiences associated with the media or content and how the media enables users to gather news and political information. These conceptual codes can then be further categorized and analyzed to draw out observations about phenomena that are grounded in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Conclusion

This study takes a pragmatic worldview and is based in the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. It used a sequential mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis, starting with a quantitative analysis of the responses of 134, 18-29 year olds on the 2011 Canadian Election Survey (Fournier et al., 2011). Qualitative interviews were then conducted with eight (n=8) 18-29 year olds regarding their media habits and news and information gathering behaviours. The interview data was analysed using grounded theory techniques to identify phenomena present in the interviews.

Chapter Four - Findings

This chapter outlines the findings of the current research and is broken out into three sections. The first section examines the findings obtained from the survey data contained in The Canadian Election Study (CES) (Fournier et al., 2011). Principally, it outlines how our VOTER index (See Appendix C) was created and what was found when we tested it for correlations against other selected pieces of data in the study. The second section of this chapter describes the findings that resulted from the research participants completing a telephone survey (See Appendix E), which scored them against the VOTER index. The third section, highlights the findings from subsequent focus group and individual interviews which used grounded theory to analyze the data.

Findings from Canadian Election Study (2011) Survey Data

The Canadian Election Study (Fournier et al., 2011) is an ongoing study that has been conducted around each federal election since 1965. In 2011, the study consisted of four sequential questionnaires offered to the same group of people. The questionnaires included a campaign period survey (CPS), conducted by telephone, a post-election survey (PES), conducted by telephone, a mail-back survey (MBS) which was paper-based and a final web-based survey (WBS). Although there was attrition, the same research participants were invited to participate in all four surveys. In total, the CPS was completed by 4,308 individual participants and 3,362 of those individuals also completed the PES creating a strong sample for analysis. In total, the MBS

was completed by 1,567 participants and 767 completed the WBS. The smaller sample size for the two latter instruments made them difficult to use.

Our study focused on answering the question: how is communication technology used by young people (ages 18-29) to gather news and political information and how does that usage impact their participation in voting? Therefore, our analysis only focused on certain elements of the comprehensive range of raw data available through the Canadian Election Study (Fournier et al., 2011). Specifically, we only included data from participants who were between the ages of 18 and 29 at the time of the survey and we focused only on items that related to our research question. In total our analysis looked at a subset of 322 participants (125 male and 197 female) between the ages of 18-29 who participated in both the CPS and PES surveys. Because of the attrition of participants through the four phases of the CES, our analysis was limited to the CPS and the PES; in short, since too few participants responded to the MBS and WBS, there was not enough meaningful data for the subsection of 18-29 year old participants. Our study therefore focused on items from the CPS that related to: satisfaction with democracy, intention to vote, attitudes toward voting, knowledge, past voting behaviour, year of birth and educational level, and it focused on items from the PES that related to: attention paid to the election, past voting behaviour, interest in politics, political activities, media habits, aboriginal status and transiency. (See Appendix A for a full list of questions used in this analysis).

Our analysis of the CES data (Fournier et al., 2011) intended to identify and gather baseline information about the media consumption of young people related to their political participation.

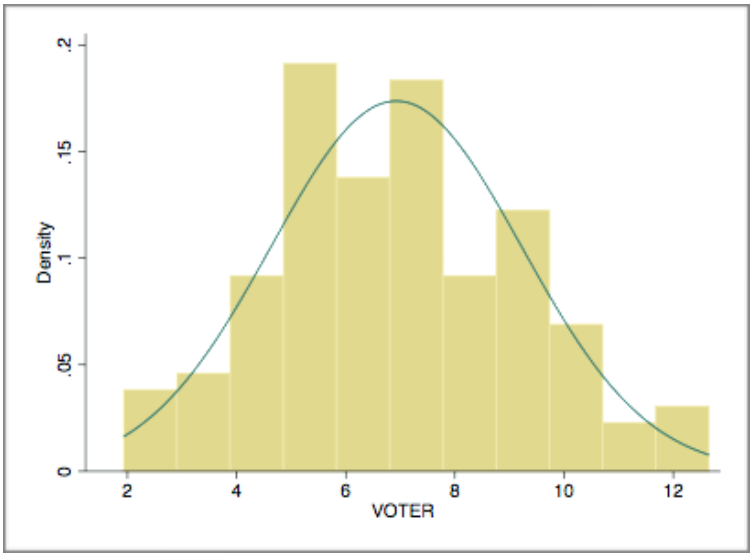
The literature identifies political knowledge and political interest as two of the biggest indicators as to whether someone is likely to vote or not (Putnam, 2000; Blais & Loewen, 2011; Malatest, 2011). Our initial analysis of the CES data began by looking at items that might measure conditions that the literature suggest should be associated with voting. We tested those items for correlations with the specific item that indicated whether the participant had voted in the 2011 federal election (See "Pairwise correlations on individual variables associated with voting" - Appendix B). Pairwise correlations were calculated and it was determined that the following CES variables were correlated with the 2011 PES item that measures whether the participant voted in the 2011 federal election:

- amount of attention paid to the election campaign;
- interest in politics generally;
- interest in the 2011 federal election campaign;
- likelihood of voting in future elections;
- perception of voting as a duty or choice;
- feelings of guilt associated with not voting;
- knowledge of the name of Provincial Premier;
- knowledge of the name of Federal Minister of Finance;
- knowledge of the name of the Governor-General who just finished her last term;
- whether they voted in last federal election in 2008;
- level of education; and
- the interviewer's perception of the respondent's general level of information about politics.

The correlations that we discovered are not surprising given the links between participation, political knowledge and interest, clearly discussed in the literature review (Putnam, 2000; Blais & Loewen, 2011; Malatest, 2011).

The next part of our analysis sought to create an index to indicate not just whether a participant voted in a single election but rather, that indicated whether they are likely to vote, in general. The index would bring together a number of items related to electoral behaviours, attitudes, interest and knowledge to create a single measure of propensity to vote. We have called this measure our VOTER index and the formula for generating it is included as Appendix C. This formula combines associated items from the CES into three general and equivalent variables measuring knowledge, interest and attitudes/behaviours about voting. Those three equivalent measures are then totalled to produce the VOTER index. The VOTER index subsequently provides a fair measure, out of 15, based on multiple variables of a participant's propensity to be a voter. Based on the scoring used in the CES, a low score on the VOTER index indicates a higher propensity to be a voter. In the CES (2011), 134 (n=134), 18-29 year old participants had complete data to produce a total value for the VOTER scale. Both the

Histogram of VOTER index scores for 18-29 year old CES participants



Shapiro-Wilk (p=0.16935) and Skewness/Kurtosis (p=0.2888) tests for normality suggest that the variable VOTER is normally distributed with a mean of 6.93 and a standard deviation of 2.30.

The next stage of our analysis intended to find out which of the other items of interest from the CES (Fournier et al., 2011) were associated with voting. The CES data was thus analyzed by performing pairwise correlation tests between the VOTER index and responses provided by 18-29 year olds to other questions in the survey that related to participation in various political activities, level of news consumption and participation in political discussions. Singleton and Straits (2010) state that descriptive surveys, "seek to describe the distribution with a population of certain characteristics, attitudes, or experiences and make use of simpler forms of analysis" (p. 267). By analyzing an index created from the raw data produced by a credible and sizeable survey with a large population we are able to describe behaviours amongst the general population of 18-29 year olds that will tend to be associated with voting. Our analysis showed that the following variables are correlated with the VOTER index (See Appendix D, "Pairwise correlations between VOTER index and other variables"):

- signed a petition [last 12 months],
- taken part in a march, rally or protest [last 12 months],
- used the Internet to be politically active [last 12 months],
- has been a member of a federal political party,
- watches the news on TV [Days in a week],
- reads the news in the newspaper [Days in a week],
- reads the news on the internet [Days in a week],

- exchanges political news and ideas on the Internet [Days in a week], and
- discusses politics and news with family [Days in a week].

Corbin and Strauss (1990) state that systematic and sequential procedures of data collection and analysis enable the research process to capture all potentially relevant aspects as they are perceived. The findings from this analysis were therefore used in two ways to inform the next stages of this study. First, the survey questions used to create the VOTER index were adapted for current contexts and used in a telephone survey given to participants prior to their involvement in either a focus group or individual interview. By calculating the score of a participant on the VOTER index, they could be compared to the 134 other 18-29 year olds that participated in the CES (Fournier et al., 2011) based on their propensity to vote. The mean and standard deviation of the scale from the CES (Fournier et al., 2011) was used to generate *z*-scores for potential participants. The *z*-scores were used to identify participants for analysis based on their propensity to vote. From there, we compared and contrasted the behaviours of the participants to identify phenomena that are common to all participants and others that are associated with either high propensity voters or low propensity voters. The quantitative analysis was also used to inform the design of the focus group and individual interviews.

Quantitative Analysis of Participants' Telephone Survey Data

The first stage of data collection with our study participants was the completion of an 11 question telephone survey with a 12th question that was answered by the interviewer based on the participant's apparent political knowledge (See "VOTER Telephone Survey" - Appendix E).

The questions were based on similar questions in the CES (Fournier et al., 2011) that were used to create the VOTER index for the quantitative analysis of existing survey data. A number of questions had to be modified slightly to fit the different context in which the current survey was completed in the spring of 2014. Instead of asking about participation in the 2011 federal election, participants were asked about their participation in the 2012 Alberta provincial election, the 2013 Edmonton municipal election and the next anticipated election - the 2015 federal election. Two questions asking participants to name the current Premier and current Federal Minister of Finance were slightly adapted to include the current or most recent person who held those positions as both individuals had been replaced in the days preceding the completion of the telephone survey. A number of potential participants were recruited and completed the telephone survey, but did not participate in the qualitative interviews and so, consistent with the approved research ethics application, their data was removed from the study. A total of eight participants (n=8) participated in both the VOTER telephone survey and the qualitative interviews. The results of the survey allowed the current participants to be scored on the VOTER index and compared to the 134, 18-29 year olds who completed the CES (Fournier et al., 2011). A lower score on the VOTER index indicates a higher propensity to vote. Because the scores of the 134 participants in the CES (Fournier et al., 2011) on the VOTER index are normally distributed, *z*-scores were used to determine what percentile each participant sits in relative to the general population of 18-29 year olds. The table, *VOTER score of study participants*, provides the scores of the individual participants on the VOTER index.

A total of eight (n=8) youth between the ages of 18-29, five males and three females participated in our study. Four of the males and one female scored very low on the VOTER index indicating they have a high propensity to be a voter. If the normally distributed data is taken to be representative of 18-29 year olds in general, these five participants would all be in the top 10 percent of 18-29 year olds related to their propensity to be a voter. These five individuals participated in one focus group interview as part of the qualitative part of the study. The remaining two females and one male scored higher on the VOTER index. Of these study participants, the male, Adam, was near to the median of 18-29 year old participants who completed the CES (Fournier et al., 2011), whereas the two females had a much lower propensity to vote and are actually amongst the lowest 5 percent of 18-29 year olds in the CES (Fournier et al., 2011). The three latter participants, that were determined to have a lower propensity to be voters, completed semi-structured, face to face individual interviews.

VOTER score of study participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	VOTER Score	Percentile
Calvin	23	M	1.93	98.5
Terry	22	M	2.29	97.8
Sharon	28	F	2.61	97.0
Jeff	27	M	2.90	96.0
Kurt	23	M	3.46	93.3
Adam	20	M	6.67	54.8
Kim	26	F	11.48	2.4
Julie	22	F	13.10	0.4

Findings of Qualitative Interviews

A focus group interview, using a semi-structure interview manner was held face to face with five participants (four males and one female) who, assessed using the VOTER index, had a high propensity to be a voter. Then, after the focus group interview was held with five youth, face to

face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three individuals (two females and one male), one at a time, who assessed using the VOTER index had a lower propensity to be a voter. The same discussion guide was used for the focus group interview and the three individual interviews. The discussion guide (See "Qualitative Interview Discussion Guide" - Appendix F) explored questions around the media usage of the participants. Given the correlations found between voting and news consumption on TV, by reading newspapers and through the internet, the discussion guide explored the use of those media and how participants engage with news content in each medium. Furthermore, the interviews explored how participants use the Internet to gather political information, read news and exchange political ideas and news. The three main areas of exploration were traditional mass media sources, Internet usage and mobile computing and other media.

Both interview types, the focus group and the individual interviews were digitally recorded, with participants permission, and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. Grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) was used to analyze all of the interviews. Interview data was labeled by concept to explore the phenomena of how communication technology is used by young people to gather news and political information and how that usage impacts their participation in voting. As the concepts were compared, those that belonged to similar phenomena were grouped. These categories provided the basis for presenting the findings and explaining the phenomena being examined in this study (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Using this process, five major themes emerged: the participants consumed a great deal of media in a variety of formats; smart phone usage primarily related to quick tasks and activities, often in an effort to kill time; the extent of participants' news consumption was associated with their propensity to vote as measured by the VOTER index; participants with a high propensity to be a voter exhibited extensive news seeking behaviours; and participants that had a lower propensity to vote used media, including news media, more specifically related to other areas of interest.

High consumers of a wide variety of media

A significant theme that emerged from the interviews was that the 18-29 year old study participants, overall, were high consumers of a wide variety of media. Calvin (pseudonym) said it succinctly: "The majority of my day I am consuming some sort of media." Perhaps most striking was an observation from Jeff in the focus group that he probably spends a total of 10-12 hours a day online. This statement was met with consensus amongst the other focus group participants, that is, that they all spent around 10-12 hours per day online. As Terry observed, "it sounds weird when I say it, but its definitely true." The participants from the individual interviews, who were indicated to have a lower propensity to be a voter, spoke of more conservative estimates but still spent a considerable two to three hours per day online.

As well as the use of online media, all participants indicated that they were users of a variety of other media types. Kim talked about "binge watching" of television and that she easily spends five hours a day on her mobile phone. Adam said that he would spend between seven and 14 hours a week reading books as well as up to five hours a week playing video games. Calvin said

he also spent at least an hour a day reading books while watching considerable amounts of news on television and extensive print newspaper reading.

All participants discussed their use of media while commuting: most said that they would listen to the radio, while others discussed considerable mobile phone usage. Calvin said that he had CBC Radio One (primarily news and talk radio) on all day, including during his commute and while he was at work consuming other online media at the same time. He was not the only participant who would engage in the use of multiple media all at one time. Kim said that she would commonly listen to music while texting and being online from her phone, while Julie said that she would almost always have streaming music playing while she studied. Jeff is a prolific multi-tasker indicating that he listens to podcasts or keeps an eye on a baseball game while playing video games. Similarly, he frequently uses his phone to check social media during commercial breaks when watching television. Taken altogether, it is clear that the use of media from print to music to videos and online content played a considerable daily role in the lives of these 18-29 year olds.

Smart phone usage for quick tasks and to "kill time"

The eight participants in this study tended to use their phones for quick tasks and activities, often in an effort to "kill time". When asked, all participants indicated that they had a smart phone and many of them identified it as their primary or only telephone. Outside of using it as a telephone, participants were quite specific about how and when they would use their phone. As Kim says, "usually when I am on my phone like that, just looking at crap on my phone, it is just to kill time

- it is just to do something mindless." But Sharon said that her mobile phone is never her first choice: "It's just when it's the only thing and that's when I will look at Twitter and things like that. It's when I'm waiting for something else; waiting for a bus or whatever." Terry also described how he would use the phone when he was waiting for transit or while commuting.

As a result of the more transitory nature of cell phone usage, these participants identified quick or low priority tasks as their main use for their phone. Julie said that her cell phone use is for tasks like Googling stuff quickly or for Facebook: "Smaller things that aren't necessarily - I don't want to say important - but yeah, they're not super important. The casual usage." Julie also discussed how she would use Facebook differently on her phone than she would on her laptop. For her, the Facebook 'app' would be used for checking notifications and posting status updates, then she uses the computer more to see what people are saying and to find articles. Adam said he would use his phone for email and for text messaging, saying that it was easier for him to bring together multiple email accounts on the phone than on the computer. Sharon said she will use her phone for Twitter but that she prefers to use the laptop so she can bookmark articles to read later. Both Kim and Julie identified 'apps' and websites that post collections and lists as a common use for their phone. Julie uses her phone to access the Chive and Kim uses hers to look at the Chive, the Berry and BuzzFeed. Kim says, "Most of the time I'm on apps like the Chive or the Berry because they are just entertaining and mindless and I can kill time." Terry said that he uses his smart phone primarily for text messaging and although he will use it for other stuff, like playing games and checking Twitter, he always thinks of it as a "backup" to his laptop. He says, "I keep

it, I have it and it's essential, but it's really not preferable. It's a nice backup for all the other things I could do in a better way."

Most of the participants identified at least one instance where their preference is not to use the phone for certain activities. For Terry, he'd rather not read on a screen, but will if he is somewhere that he can't carry a 1000-word book with him. Julie said she will avoid using her phone to look at videos for school because of the small screen and if she is reading an article, she will likely look at it on her computer. Jeff also said that he avoids long articles on the phone because of the screen size: "A lot of my reading on my phone is like two to three minutes, big skimming, [I] rarely try to read the details." Because of this, he acknowledges that he will try to rely on established sources because he knows they are good and he feels he can afford to skim it more. He says that on the phone, "I get a bit lax on my criticalness." While Kim's style of phone usage is similar to the others, it is important to note that she doesn't own another device, like a laptop, for accessing the internet. As a result, she acknowledges that her internet usage consists of "little spurts at a time." And she spends less time reading news online. Altogether, the use of cell phones for quicker tasks and in many instances, while waiting or "killing time", was a strong theme that emerged from the data collected in this study.

News consumption associated with those having a high propensity to vote

A third theme that emerged in this study was the association between the consumption of news media and the participant's score on the VOTER index. While everyone was exposed to and engaged with some degree of news media, users with a higher propensity to vote engaged in a

greater variety of news formats and consumed more of it than the other participants (those with a lower propensity to vote). Calvin, who scored in the 98th percentile on the VOTER index spends large chunks of his day engaging in news media, from a wide variety of sources and formats, frequently with more than one format at the same time: “wherever it comes from I will try to access it.”

The participants’ use of online news is the first area of note. Calvin spends most of his time online, including at work, reading and researching news and political sources. Even his self-described recreational internet use on the social media site Reddit features feeds that are mostly “news, politics, or cat videos.” Terry, Jeff and Sharon are also significant consumers of online news. Along with Calvin, they are regular users of Twitter where they primarily follow news and political sources. Terry says that he spends a lot of time online and at least half of it is consuming news media. Jeff says that he spends about three to four hours online with news media: “I am mostly opening up news links on Twitter.” Kurt, who is also indicated as one that has a high propensity to vote, does not use Twitter, but says that half of his media consumption is news related.

The participants with lower propensities to vote used media less for consuming news content. Adam acknowledged that he periodically discusses news or current events on Facebook and that he would look at news articles online, but that, “it’s not my primary focus when I’m on the Internet.” He said that he would be more likely to check out that sort of content around election time in order to make an informed vote. He said that he receives email updates from one of the

provincial political parties and that such an email would commonly spur further online news and political reading. Julie, who is indicated as having a low propensity to vote, says that she might get exposed to a story from the radio or from Facebook and that she would then look for articles, but she says she finds newspaper websites difficult to read and navigate. Consequently, she will more often just search for specific articles. She says, "I would rather look through a[n Edmonton] Journal physically than online because I do not know how to navigate them easily. I find them confusing." She also said that when she started coming up against her free-usage limit, she decided that she didn't want to pay and stopped using the site. Kim, another low likelihood voter, will similarly search for news stories online after she has heard about them on the radio or from colleagues at work, but she will just Google headlines and read whatever stories come up first.

Differences also appear in relation to radio news consumption. Calvin, Sharon, Jeff and Adam will listen regularly to news and talk radio stations; Jeff says he has CBC Radio One on all day. Julie, a less likely voter, listens to CBC's french language station Radio-Canada which is mostly talk and less music but acknowledges that she primarily listens to it because it's French. She notes that, "I don't usually pay attention … when they are talking about politics. That, I usually get lost in because I don't know much about it." Kim says that she listens to radio in the mornings but to stations that are primarily music stations. She says that there is more talk when she listens in the mornings and she likes that so she can hear about some of the top stories.

Watching television news was less popular than other media formats amongst the study participants, but those that liked watching television news had a higher propensity to be a voter, according to the VOTER index. Calvin reports watching multiple news casts on a daily basis. He says he also loves 24-hour news networks: “some days I consume way too much of it.” Jeff says that his TV news watching goes in cycles; on some days he will watch local Global news and sometimes he will watch BBC World news. Julie and Kim rarely, if ever, watch television news. Julie says, “Sometimes, maybe once a week, I will sit down to it and I’ll just zone out. I find it very depressing that’s why I don’t like it.” Kim says, “I actually couldn’t tell you the last time I watched like a TV news show.”

Interestingly, the use of print newspapers by all participants was largely related to the paper’s availability. Calvin reads multiple newspapers each day because they are delivered to his work place: “if they weren’t delivered to my office, I probably wouldn't read the paper copies… just access, expense. It’s easier to click through online.” Although Jeff, Sharon, Kurt and Terry are big news consumers and read plenty of newspapers online, they do not regularly read them in print. Adam regularly read Metro when he was in school, but not during the summer when he is working. He says that he reads Metro because it is free. Julie only started reading newspapers recently because she moved home and her mom has two of them delivered. Even though she skims the paper each day, she only reads one or two articles per week. Kim will only read paper copies brought in to her work by someone else.

High news seeking behaviour of high propensity voters

Participants in this study that had a high propensity to vote, as indicated by the VOTER index, tend to seek out news media and political information. As discussed earlier, the five participants in the focus group agreed that they would spend 10-12 hours a day online. Many of them also indicated that between 50-80 percent of that media usage is related to news. As active news seekers, these individuals tend to access a wide variety of sources for information gathering. Calvin reads multiple newspapers, listens extensively to talk and news radio, frequents news blogs, watches 24-hour news networks on television, watches television newscasts and checks out a number of political aggregator websites. Jeff reads the newspaper on his mobile phone, listens regularly to talk radio, watches television news periodically, listens to current event podcasts and spends at least three to four hours a day online using news media. Sharon uses the radio, internet and social media for news seeking; Terry reads blogs, visits news sites online and reads magazines; and Kurt watches television news, reads blogs occasionally and visits multiple online sources looking for news.

Social media plays a big role in the news seeking habits of these participants who, using the VOTER index, have a high propensity to vote. Jeff will read many articles from links in his Twitter feed and identifies that as his top internet activity. Sharon says, “I follow a lot of politicians and news media through Twitter as well” and she also picks up news articles from Facebook. Terry says that he uses Twitter a lot: “I mostly only use it for journalism, politics and stuff like that, so I tend to get linked to articles a lot.” And he says that, “if I don’t find anything interesting on there then I will go out and look for articles.” Terry also notes that he tends to send

news to other people on social media: “I guess I’m that guy.” Calvin checks Twitter regularly between his other extensive media usage and also uses Facebook and Reddit for news seeking. These participants have also developed systems to collect and organize news articles. Terry uses Twitter to, “cue up” multiple stories that he will want to read. Jeff uses RSS aggregators and his browser tabs to collect news stories for reading and Sharon uses bookmarks to save headlines for later.

These same participants have also developed a keen sense of what news sources they value and prefer. Calvin says about his news seeking, “there is a lot of self selecting. I continue to go to the same sources and the same things all the time because I know thats what I will like to read.” Jeff says he uses “established news sources like BBC, CBC because I know they will be a good source.” Kurt prefers independent sources like Observer and Tyee and avoids others like Fox News and the Daily Mail. Terry says, “I click on articles for the specific source.” Terry and Jeff are not fans of how BuzzFeed presents their news, as Jeff says, “intentionally, it’s like junk food media, right?” Interestingly, Terry said that the reason he doesn’t watch much television news is because he doesn’t like waiting for stories that he’s not interested in: “I don’t have to wait until the segment is done. What will they decide I need to know?” This news seeking behaviour is a result of news and politics being their particular interest.

Many of these study participants choose to engage in news recreationally. Sharon and Terry discussed how they use their laptops on breaks from work to look at news. Terry said his internet use is mostly news and politics: “it’s what I find most interesting.” On reading political science

books, Calvin says, “its my passion, I love politics so those are the types of non fiction books I read.”

News scanning behaviour by low propensity voters

As opposed to the high propensity voters, who are very much news seekers, the lower propensity voters are more news scanners and searchers. The focus group participants, were much more interested in news in and of itself, whereas the three participants who we conducted individual interviews with spoke more about other interests. Adam has a general interest in politics, but devotes more media activity to science fiction and fantasy content. Julie is interested in education, science and french language and culture. Kim is interested in crime and mystery content as well as celebrity culture.

Interestingly, like the group of high propensity voters, the lower propensity voters devoted a variety of media to their interests. The big difference between the two was that the high propensity voters had news and politics as a primary interest. Adam (a lower propensity voter) consumes media around his science fiction interest by watching movies, reading books (7-14 hours per week), discussing on Facebook, watching YouTube videos and playing video games (four to five hours per week). Although Julie is not a Francophone, she reads the Le Franco newspaper, listens to Radio-Canada (french radio), and actively engages with other French content online. She says that she has a big mix of English and French friends on Facebook but that, “it’s rare that I won’t read a post in French.” Kim reads mystery books, watches true crime and mystery television shows and similar documentaries. Accordingly, Kim acknowledges that

she consumes a variety of media on the topic and that it is also the type of news stories that will grab her attention. She says:

> That's what I appreciate about documentaries. The news will only tell certain parts of a story, but afterwards the documentary will tell you more of what happened behind it and books will go even further into that. It's absolutely fascinating how people's brains even work to solve crimes like that. It is what fascinates me - my entertainment. So when it comes down to it, I want to know how cops got there and what kind of stuff brought them.

And so, although Kim, Julie and Adam are not news seekers but news scanners, searching for specific stories that tend to match their interests; they scan newspapers, Facebook and radio broadcasts and then search on the internet for stories that interest them. Julie says that, "A lot of the news I'm realizing, is French." She will scan the Edmonton Journal each day, but only reads one or two stories a week and is usually drawn to ones related to her interests in education and science. Adam is drawn to entertainment related news, like stories about what is coming out in terms of science fiction or fantasy movies or video games.

These low propensity voters will get exposed to news when engaging in other media - in particular, radio, Facebook, the Chive and BuzzFeed. All three said that they hear news stories on the radio that would compel them to conduct news searches online. Both Kim and Julie said Google was one of their top websites and made strikingly similar statements about it. Julie said, "That's the main thing I use the Internet for - I Google, like, literally everything" and Kim said, "obviously I Google everything in my life." Adam said that a few of his friends follow politics regularly and he will pick up on the "occasional Facebook post" that will draw his attention and

spur him to conduct a further Google search. Kim doesn't use Facebook but Julie also discussed how she would hear about stories on Facebook, conduct her own searches, and then might post further about a topic. Interestingly, both Kim and Julie talked about hearing about news and current events from entertainment website the Chive. Julie said, "there are like some interesting things that I've learned on there too. A lot more international stories. A lot to do with like kids and families and certain extreme situations for people." Kim said similar things about BuzzFeed: "I will go on there looking for nothing sometimes. Because you can go on and it will pop up - the most current affairs. Sometimes it will be like eight of the celebrity tweets you missed this week, just dumb stuff, but next to it, it will have links to serious stuff that is happening in the world. Holy crap, I had no idea this was going on." She goes on to say that she likes BuzzFeed as a source of news: "it's kind of like what you need to know immediately there and that's what I appreciate about that. It's not full of a bunch of opinion. It's like here's what's happening and here's what you need to know about the situation."

The media habits of the individuals who scored low on the VOTER index demonstrated their lower interest in politics and higher interest in other areas. While Adam showed more interest in politics than the other two, he acknowledges that news is not his primary reason for going online and that he will not usually discuss politics online. Julie and Kim had stronger reactions. On her radio usage Julie says, "things that I don't usually pay attention to is when they are talking about politics. That I usually get lost in because I don't know much about it." She says that she will zone out watching television newscasts, that she's not interested in paying for online newspaper content and that she finds news websites hard to read and navigate. Kim is more blunt: "political

stories or dry topics like that don't really catch me too much; I don't really care to be honest… I really don't give a shit about politics."

Conclusion

Chapter four has provided an overview of the findings of the research, broken down into three main research steps. A quantitative analysis of the Canadian Election Study (Fournier et al., 2011) identified that the propensity to vote amongst 18-29 year olds is associated with political activities like signing a petition, joining membership in a political party, participating in a rally and using the internet to be politically active. The propensity to vote was also associated with watching news on television, reading news in the newspaper and on the internet, exchanging political news on the Internet and discussing news and politics with family. A telephone survey was conducted with eight (n=8) young adults to determine their propensity to vote using the VOTER index. Finally, a face-to-face focus group interview was conducted with five participants that, using the VOTER index, were indicated to have a high propensity to vote. Three individual face to face interviews were conducted with those that, based on the VOTER index, have a low propensity to vote. Overall, the qualitative interviews identified five key themes: first, the 18-29 year old study participants extensively consume a wide variety of media; they use mobile phones for quicker tasks that are often done to "kill time"; they all consume some news media but the extent of that consumption was related to their propensity to be a voter; the more probable voters engaged in a great deal of news seeking; and the less probable voters focused their media consumption around other areas of interest.

Chapter Five - Discussion

This chapter is a discussion of the findings, future research directions and limitations related to this study. The discussion explores how the research findings fit together and relate to the findings of other research from the literature review. The future directions section discusses the types of questions for future research that became apparent as a result of this study and the limitations relate mainly to recruiting and the demographics of the research participants as well as limitations of the methods used.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings of this study are quite consistent with the existing literature (See Chapter 2) in relation to media habits and the voting behaviour of young people. This study helps to provide more qualitative information about some of the trends from the literature that were discussed earlier. We have found that youth use a variety of media sources, and in particular the Internet, extensively. Their media usage is driven in large part by their interests. They use a number of formats to consume content related to those interests, including for those with an interest in news and political affairs. With interest fuelling media usage and media usage helping to increase political knowledge, a trinity of voter participation is evident in our findings and the literature. Today's highly accessible and customizable media environment allows for greater participation amongst those already engaged but it also allows those who are less interested to avoid new information, thus inhibiting the acquisition of new knowledge.

The young adults in our study verified the findings in the literature that indicated that youth are prolific users of the Internet (McGrath, 2011; Menard, 2010). Their Internet usage was at least two to three hours per day and as many as 12 hours per day. Our participants combined extensive Internet use with other media use including reading books, watching television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, playing video games, listening to music and using their mobile phones. Media usage that is directed towards political information and acquiring political knowledge has a positive impact on voting and civic participation (Norris, 2002; Keown, 2007; Menard, 2010; Lee, 2005; Ostman, 2012; Milner, 2010; Delli Carpini, 2000), but the literature suggests that the media consumption of young people is not necessarily directed to news (Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2012; Yang, 2009). Our participants were split in their consumption of news content, with some participants consuming a great deal of news and others consuming much less.

The participants in our study demonstrated an affinity for media content that related to particular areas of interest. Whether the interest was science fiction, true crime, french language and culture or news and politics, the participants used media, and the Internet in particular, to find content related to those interests. As supported by the literature, we determined from our study participants that young people who were high users of the Internet and used it as a news source were not necessarily prolific consumers of online news (McGrath, 2011; Yang, 2009; Milner, 2010). The current media landscape is highly customizable allowing youth to immerse themselves much more in areas of interest and this was evident with our participants. They used

multiple media formats to consume a variety of content related to their interests. Adam, for example, would explore his interest in science fiction by playing video games, reading novels, chatting on Facebook, watching YouTube videos, seeking out news stories, and watching movies and television shows that related to science fiction. This pattern of multiple media format usage to explore content of personal interest was also evident for Kim and her interest in true crime and also for Calvin and his interest in politics and current affairs. The literature supports the notion that active news consumers consume it in multiple media environments and formats (Malatest, 2011; Keown, 2007; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010; Ostman, 2012). But the customizability of media currently means that those who are less interested in news or politics can easily switch off of content they find boring to pursue content related to other interests (Milner, 2010), an observation that was supported by both Kim and Julie in our interviews. As Gidengil et al. (2003) suggest, young people are not so much “turned off” as they are “tuned out”.

The prolific news seeking behaviours of some of our participants is not surprising and is also consistent with the literature; young people that follow online news get value from it and seem more knowledgeable or engaged as a result (Yang, 2009; Milner, 2010). The participants in our study who were active seekers of news content were very engaged: they consumed news in multiple formats, they used numerous sources mindfully and they had specific approaches and strategies to help them discover, find and organize news stories. For them, their primary interest was news and politics and their media usage reflected that; these were the same people that, according to our VOTER index, were also likely to vote. They are representative of Ostman's (2012) observation that information use of the Internet promotes democratic engagement but that

those positive effects may be based on existing high levels of interest and engagement. New media, such as the Internet thus, has the ability to exacerbate a digital divide, whereby it facilitates participation by the already engaged and leaves others behind (Milner, 2010).

All of this elicits the notion of a voter participation trinity, that includes interest, knowledge and media usage contributing to each other in a way that supports engagement for some and exacerbates disengagement for others. Media usage is driven by interest and so those with interests in politics and current affairs consume content accordingly; the consumption of that content promotes political knowledge which supports participation; the resulting knowledge increase promotes participation and drives up interest. The counter cycle was also evident in our research. Those without a great interest in news or politics consumed less of it; they were less knowledgeable about political affairs and were less likely to vote; and they expressed little interest in politics because they did not know enough about it. The importance of political knowledge and interest on participation in elections was clearly evident in the literature (Putnam, 2000; Blais & Loewen, 2011; Malatest, 2011) but less directly connected in the readings to media usage. When the VOTER index, which includes measures of interest and knowledge, is compared to other responses from the Canadian Election Study, we see another illustration of that important connection to media usage. Those with a high propensity to vote watched television news more, read newspapers more, read news online more, exchanged political news and ideas online more and discussed politics and news with family more. The only media factor measured that did not correlate with the VOTER index was listening to news on the radio; our participants all identified instances of listening to radio news, often as part of their morning

commute - but that radio news consumption was still different between the two types of participants, with the lower propensity voters using less in-depth radio news sources.

The problem then of declining voter turnout is exacerbated by a media environment where users can use more and more media related to increasingly narrow sets of interests. The literature suggests that civic engagement is negatively impacted by the use of media forms that are primarily used for entertainment rather than information (Yang, 2009; Postman, 1985; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010). Our participants who were less likely to vote were more apt to identify entertainment based interests and to engage in media that was entertainment based, including television, Internet, radio and mobile technology. All of our study participants were engaged with media usage on their mobile phone and they used it for less in-depth content and more entertainment type activity. This is detrimental to civic participation since the use of in-depth media formats have such a positive impact on civic engagement (Lee, 2005; Keown, 2007; Postman, 1985; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2010). Most of our participants expressed dislike for using their phones for certain activities, particularly if the activity was more in-depth or information based. Yet, as Terry exclaimed, the use of his cell phone was essential and a significant part of his media usage. Mobile phone usage amongst youth is primarily entertainment driven (Google, 2013; Dlodlo & Mahlangu, 2013) and so as the popularity and prominence of mobile devices takes up more of the media space for youth, the issue of civic disengagement may very well worsen. Postman (1985), Putnam (2000) and Stolle and Cruz (2005) all use strong language to decry the impact of television on civic disengagement, but in

today's world the Internet and mobile personal devices are likely accelerating that disengagement for younger generations.

It is necessary to revisit the foundational text "Amusing Ourselves to Death" by Neil Postman (1985). In it he argues that the value of public discourse in a number of areas is waning with rising importance being placed on the pursuit of entertainment. He suggests that television, the emerging dominant media format of that time, in particular, is training people to be less interested in reasoned discussion of public policy and more interested in sensational, graphic or frivolous content. His findings, as it relates to television are not unlike more recent findings related to mobile phones (Google, 2013; Dlodlo & Mahlangu, 2013). He goes on to discuss how in the televised world of politics, the message and the discussion of public policy becomes less important than the image of the politician and their ability to present themselves as a reflection of the viewer. He says, "what we watch is a medium which presents information in a form that renders it simplistic, nonsubstantive, nonhistorical and noncontextual" (Postman, 1985, p. 141). This could very well be true for how the young people in our study engage with content on their mobile phone - scanning social media for status updates, reviewing photo aggregators like Chive and identifying list style news sites like BuzzFeed as a main source. Postman (1985) said television offers the masses amusement as a means to pacify their discontent and if he is right, then the Internet and mobile phone are surely prominent successors in that regard. Today, it is the "selfie" that is emerging as a symbol of the more instantaneous and self-gratifying media that is starting to dominate the usage of many young people. Postman writes of dire consequences: "if

that universe of discourse is discarded, then the application of empirical tests, logical analysis or any of the other instruments of reason are impotent" (p. 127).

Future Directions

Much is still to be learned about the media usage of youth and the relationship to participation in voting. While our quantitative analysis of the CES (Fournier et al., 2011) data provides a good baseline for these questions, a broader sampling with questions specifically designed to explore, in more detail, the media usage of young people as it relates to news and political information would be valuable. Specific research into how youth use two particular types of emergent media for news and information gathering would also contribute significantly to the literature that is already available, namely mobile devices and social media. Our study identified a phenomena of news seeking behaviours that relate to young people who are highly engaged in news and politics and specific habits related to those behaviours would be fertile ground for future study. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, further study is required into the news, media and information gathering habits of those subgroups of young people that are less likely to vote. This study was able to gain important insights from a couple of individuals who were not probable voters, but it was limited by its ability to attract more participants from that group. In particular, aboriginals, immigrants, less educated and lower income youth are less likely to vote and more needs to be understood about their approach to media, news and political information use.

Limitations

The limitations of this study primarily relate to complications around the process for recruiting participants. The recruitment of participants requires the distribution of recruitment materials

using a variety of media. We used electronic messages via email, a website, online classifieds and social media. Posters were also displayed in a variety of places where young people might be likely to frequent. The likelihood of a potential participant to use certain types of media will obviously impact whether they were exposed to the recruitment materials. Similarly, the voluntary nature of participation typically meant that respondents were more likely to have an existing interest in the content of the study. Given that interest is a central issue related to propensity to vote, the study was much more likely to attract participants that were likely to be voters and we ended up with many more individuals who, according to the VOTER index, had a high propensity to vote. Only a handful of low propensity voters expressed interest in participating in the study. Similarly, our participants did not cover a full range of demographic diversity. All of the participants were university graduates or students and only one participant was a visible minority. Females who were high propensity voters and males who were less likely to vote were underrepresented amongst the participants.

A change of method was also required because of complications related to recruiting. Given the small number of interested participants who had a low propensity to vote according to the VOTER index, it was impossible to schedule one time when enough participants would be available for a focus group interview. As a result, a series of individual interviews was conducted with those participants. Focus groups allow for participant exchanges which can help add to the complexity of the data being gathered (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Unfortunately, the data coming from those participants with a lower propensity to vote was not enhanced by such

participant interactions. The use of individual interviews for some of the participants and not others is a limitation of this study.

Conclusion

The discussion chapter of the paper reviewed a synthesis of the findings, potential directions for future study, and a statement on the limitations of the study. The synthesis of the findings explored how the study findings were reflected in the existing literature but also provided more context related to the vast media usage of young people. That media usage is very much interest driven and so the young people in our study would use a variety of media and content related to their interests - including the young people who had news and politics as an area of interest. Given the connections between political interest, knowledge and voter participation, this study identified a trinity of voter engagement that included interest, knowledge and media usage that fuel each other towards higher levels of voter engagement. But the study also identified risks associated with low level of interest in a media environment that is so highly customizable. The future directions section of the chapter identified further research around mobile phones and the Internet, around news seeking behaviours and around disengaged populations of young people as good areas for future study. Finally, the limitations section discussed how this study was limited by the need for a greater demographic variety of participants and by the use of individual interviews for some participants and focus group interviews for others.

Chapter Six - Conclusions

On August 6, 2014, while the finishing touches were being made to this paper, former Alberta premier Alison Redford resigned her seat as member of the legislative assembly amid revelations about misuse of government airplanes. Her resignation letter appeared as an Op-Ed in the print editions of the Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald that morning (Redford, 2014). Despite having a digital-first philosophy towards breaking news, editors at those sister papers decided to break the story on print on the front page the next morning (Kleiss, 2014), rather than release the letter and story online as soon as possible. While there was a time that breaking news would be read from the front page of a morning newspaper, that time is mostly behind us. Readers on this morning were treated to a uniquely twentieth century phenomena in 2014.

Our communications tools are rapidly changing and so are our habits for acquiring news and political information. As Marshall McLuhan so insightfully said, “We shape our tools and then our tools shape us.” Today’s young people are growing up as digital natives in a uniquely different media environment then previous generations. These new media habits are having profound generational effects on them and on other aspects of society.

This study sought to examine the media habits of young people today through the lens of participation in voting in a hopes of better understanding why turnout is declining in an age of nearly infinite information. The literature shows that the declining turnout is led by decreasing involvement amongst our newest generations. This study demonstrates that participation is

impacted by a trinity of interrelated factors: political knowledge, interest levels and media usage. Today's highly individualized and customizable media environment encourages media usage and information gathering around increasingly narrow areas of interest. As a result those young people with a clear interest in news and politics become hyper engaged while those with other higher interests are more apt to tune out.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Selected questions of interest from the Canadian Elections Study

Campaign Period Survey

CPS11_0: On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all with the way democracy works in Canada?

1 very satisfied
3 fairly satisfied
5 not very satisfied
7 not satisfied at all
8 Don't know
9 Refused

CPS11_9: How interested are you in this FEDERAL election? Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no interest at all and 10 means a great deal of interest.

0-10 enter number
98 Don't know
99 Refused

CPS11_10: On election day, are you certain to vote, likely, unlikely, or certain not to vote?

1 certain
3 likely
5 unlikely
7 certain not to vote
98 Don't know
99 Refused

CPS11_62: People have different views about voting. For some, voting is a DUTY. They feel that they should vote in every election. For others, voting is a CHOICE. They only vote when they feel strongly about that election. For you personally, is voting FIRST AND FOREMOST a Duty or a Choice?

1 duty
5 choice
8 Don't know
9 Refused

CPS11_63: If you didn't vote in a federal election would YOU PERSONALLY feel very guilty, somewhat guilty or not guilty at all?

1 very guilty
3 somewhat guilty
5 not guilty at all
8 Don't know
9 Refused

CPS11_68: And the name of Provincial Premier?

10-59 correct
97 any other name
98 Don't know 99 Refused

CPS11_69: And the name of the federal Minister of Finance?

1 correct (Jim Flaherty; Flaherty)
3 interviewer thinks respondent means Jim Flaherty
5 any other name, no text entry required
8 Don't know

CPS11_70: And the name of the Governor General of Canada who just finished her term last December?

1 correct (Jean; Michaëlle Jean; Michaëlle)
3 interviewer thinks respondent means Michaëlle Jean
5 any other name, no text entry required
8 Don't know
9 Refused

CPS11_73: Did you happen to vote in the last Federal election in 2008?

1 yes
5 no
7 not eligible (too young/not a Canadian Citizen)
8 Don't know

CPS11_78: First, in what year were you born?

1900-1993 Enter year of birth please
9998 Don't know
9999 Refused

CPS11_79: What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

1 no schooling
2 some elementary school
3 completed elementary school
4 some secondary / high school
5 completed secondary / high school
6 some technical, community college, CEGEP, College Classique
7 completed technical, community college, CEGEP,College Classique
8 some university
9 bachelor's degree
10 master's degree
11 professional degree or doctorate
98 Don't know
99 Refused

CPS_int_assess1: Interviewer: respondent's general level of information about politics and public affairs seemed...

1 very high
2 fairly high
3 average
4 fairly low
5 very low
8 Don't know

Post Election Survey

PES11_1: How much attention did you pay to the election campaign: a lot, some, or not much at all?

1 A lot of attention
3 Some attention
5 Not much attention at all
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_3: Did you vote in the election?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_4: Did you vote MAINLY because you felt it is your duty, because your vote could make a difference, or because you liked a particular party, leader or candidate?

1 duty
3 could make a difference
5 liked a particular party, leader or candidate
s other, specify
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_6: What is the main reason you did not vote?

1 vote will not make a difference, nothing will change, etc.
2 no time, too busy, etc.
3 no interest, did not follow election or issues, etc.
4 physical limitations, mobility issues, sick/ill, aged, etc.
s other (specify)
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_8: When did you decide that you were going to vote for the [fill]? Before the campaign began, during the campaign, or on election day?

1 before the campaign began (includes always vote that way)
2 during the campaign
3 on election day
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_8b: Which of the following was most important in your decision to vote for this party: you liked the leader, you liked your local candidate, you liked their policies, you didn't like the other parties, or was it because the party was doing well in polls?

1 you liked the leader
2 you liked your local candidate
3 you liked their policies
4 you didn’t like the other parties
5 because the party was doing well in polls
s R volunteers: other, specify
98 Don't know
99 Refused

PES11_60: How interested are you in politics GENERALLY? Use a scale from 0 to 10, where zero means no interest at all, and ten means a great deal of interest.

0-10 enter number
98 Don't know
99 Refused

Have you done any of the following things in the last 12 months?

PES11_61: Have you signed a petition in the last 12 months?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_62: Have you volunteered for a party or a candidate in the last 12 months?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_63: Have you bought products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons in the last 12 months?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_64: Still thinking about the last twelve months, have you taken part in a march, rally, or protest in the last 12 months?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_65: Have you used the Internet to be politically active in the last 12 months?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_66: Have you volunteered for a community group or a nonprofit organization in the last 12 months?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_67: Have you ever been a member of a federal political party?

1 yes
5 no
8 Don't know
9 Refused

Generally speaking, how many days in a week do you do the following things?

PES11_74: First, watching the news on TV? [How many days a week]

1 one
2 two
3 three
4 four
5 five
6 six
7 seven/everyday
0 none/never
98 Don't know 99 Refused

PES11_75: Read the news in the newspaper? [How many days a week]

1 one
2 two
3 three
4 four
5 five
6 six
7 seven/everyday
0 none/never
98 Don't know 99 Refused

PES11_76: Listen to news on the radio? [How many days a week]

1 one
2 two
3 three
4 four
5 five
6 six
7 seven/everyday
0 none/never
98 Don't know 99 Refused

PES11_77: Read the news on the internet? [How many days a week]

1 one
2 two
3 three
4 four
5 five
6 six
7 seven/everyday
0 none/never
98 Don't know 99 Refused

PES11_78: Exchange political news and ideas on the Internet? [How many days a week]

1 one
2 two
3 three
4 four
5 five
6 six
7 seven/everyday
0 none/never
98 Don't know 99 Refused

PES11_79: Discuss politics and news with family? [How many days a week]

1 one
2 two
3 three
4 four
5 five
6 six
7 seven/everyday
0 none/never
98 Don't know 99 Refused

PES11_80: Discuss politics and news with friends? [How many days a week]

1 one
2 two
3 three
4 four
5 five
6 six
7 seven/everyday
0 none/never
98 Don't know 99 Refused

PES11_81@day: On average, how many minutes or hours a day do you usually spend watching, reading, and listening to news?

@
0 none
9998 Don't know
9999 Refused

PES11_103: Are you a member of a First Nation, Metis, or Inuit?

5 no
1 First Nation
2 Metis
3 Inuit
s Other
8 Don't know
9 Refused

PES11_104: How many times have you moved during the last 2 years?

0 none
1-9 enter number
10 ten or more times
98 Don't know
99 Refused

Appendix B - Pairwise correlations on individual variables associated with voting

	PES11_3	PES11_1	PES11_60	CPS11_9	CPS11_10	CPS11_62	CPS11_63	CPS11_68	CPS11_69	CPS11_70	CPS11_73	CPS11_79	CPS_int_assess1
PES11_3	1.0000												
PES11_1	0.4590* 0.0000	1.0000											
PES11_60	-0.4789* 0.0000	-0.5855* 0.0000	1.0000										
CPS11_9	-0.3645* 0.0000	-0.4903* 0.0000	0.5702* 0.0000	1.0000									
CPS11_10	0.4222* 0.0000	0.3154* 0.0000	-0.4113* 0.0000	-0.3863* 0.0000	1.0000								
CPS11_62	0.3135* 0.0000	0.2364* 0.0005	-0.2934* 0.0000	-0.2764* 0.0000	0.5010* 0.0000	1.0000							
CPS11_63	0.2277* 0.0008	0.2993* 0.0000	-0.3133* 0.0000	-0.3350* 0.0000	0.3727* 0.0000	0.4402* 0.0000	1.0000						
CPS11_68	0.2244* 0.0009	0.3988* 0.0000	-0.2790* 0.0000	-0.1540* 0.0057	0.2676* 0.0000	0.2946* 0.0000	0.1807* 0.0012	1.0000					
CPS11_69	0.1590* 0.0194	0.1698* 0.0126	-0.1902* 0.0049	-0.1783* 0.0013	0.1384* 0.0132	0.1527* 0.0062	0.1300* 0.0202	0.2354* 0.0000	1.0000				
CPS11_70	0.2169* 0.0013	0.3034* 0.0000	-0.2275* 0.0007	-0.1923* 0.0005	0.2727* 0.0000	0.2653* 0.0000	0.1800* 0.0012	0.4670* 0.0000	0.2710* 0.0000	1.0000			
CPS11_73	0.4378* 0.0000	0.1285 0.1345	-0.2339* 0.0056	-0.1103 0.1228	0.4195* 0.0000	0.3420* 0.0000	0.1352 0.0589	0.1658* 0.0199	0.0809 0.2583	0.1465* 0.0400	1.0000		
CPS11_79	-0.3141* 0.0000	-0.3182* 0.0000	0.2904* 0.0000	0.1665* 0.0028	-0.2565* 0.0000	-0.2046* 0.0002	-0.2916* 0.0000	-0.3452* 0.0000	-0.2314* 0.0000	-0.3368* 0.0000	-0.3575* 0.0000	1.0000	
CPS_int_assess1	0.3874* 0.0000	0.4895* 0.0000	-0.4941* 0.0000	-0.3676* 0.0000	0.3791* 0.0000	0.3783* 0.0000	0.2927* 0.0000	0.5703* 0.0000	0.3444* 0.0000	0.4485* 0.0000	0.1904* 0.0075	-0.4021* 0.0000	1.0000

Appendix C - Formula for Determining VOTER index

```
generate CPS11_9x = 10- CPS11_9
generate CPS11_79x = 11- CPS11_79
generate PES11_60x = 10- PES11_60
generate ATTITUDE = (PES11_3 + CPS11_10 + CPS11_62 + CPS11_63 +
CPS11_73)*5/27
generate KNOWLEDGE = (CPS11_68 + CPS11_69 + CPS11_79x+
CPS_int_assess1)*5/31
generate INTEREST = (PES11_1 + PES11_60x + CPS11_9x)*5/25
generate VOTER = ATTITUDE + KNOWLEDGE + INTEREST
```

Appendix D - Pairwise correlations between VOTER index and other variables

	VOTER	PES11_61	PES11_62	PES11_63	PES11_64	PES11_65	PES11_66	PES11_67
VOTER	1.0000							
PES11_61	0.3549* 0.0000	1.0000						
PES11_62	0.1635 0.0591	0.0561 0.4131	1.0000					
PES11_63	0.0165 0.8496	0.1818* 0.0074	0.1295 0.0574	1.0000				
PES11_64	0.2323* 0.0071	0.2236* 0.0010	0.1532* 0.0247	0.2249* 0.0009	1.0000			
PES11_65	0.4396* 0.0000	0.3402* 0.0000	0.0809 0.2364	0.1749* 0.0100	0.2020* 0.0029	1.0000		
PES11_66	0.0436 0.6167	0.1280 0.0604	0.1167 0.0870	0.2363* 0.0004	0.1224 0.0733	0.2771* 0.0000	1.0000	
PES11_67	0.2617* 0.0023	0.1090 0.1111	0.4233* 0.0000	0.0238 0.7284	0.1890* 0.0054	0.2131* 0.0017	0.0205 0.7646	1.0000

	VOTER	PES11_74	PES11_75	PES11_76	PES11_77	PES11_78	PES11_79	PES11_80
VOTER	1.0000							
PES11_74	-0.2259* 0.0087	1.0000						
PES11_75	-0.1889* 0.0289	0.2338* 0.0005	1.0000					
PES11_76	-0.0854 0.3284	0.2753* 0.0000	0.1014 0.1372	1.0000				
PES11_77	-0.3875* 0.0000	0.0304 0.6565	0.2334* 0.0005	-0.0086 0.8994	1.0000			
PES11_78	-0.3530* 0.0000	0.0373 0.5889	0.2139* 0.0017	-0.0509 0.4622	0.3702* 0.0000	1.0000		
PES11_79	-0.2053* 0.0177	0.1431* 0.0356	0.0948 0.1651	0.1664* 0.0143	0.1141 0.0943	0.2516* 0.0002	1.0000	

	VOTER	PES11_74	PES11_75	PES11_76	PES11_77	PES11_78	PES11_79	PES11_80
PES11_80	-0.1463 0.0928	0.0098 0.8860	0.1363* 0.0453	0.0688 0.3138	0.2346* 0.0005	0.3714* 0.0000	0.6208* 0.0000	1.0000

Appendix E - Voter Telephone Survey

VOTER Telephone Survey

The results of the survey will be used to calculate the rating of each potential participant on the VOTER scale. The scale uses questions from the 2011 Canadian Election Survey related to voting knowledge, interests and attitudes to provide a measure of the participants likelihood to vote. The purpose of this index is to compare potential survey respondents to other 18-29 year olds who completed the 2011 Canadian Elections Study and to the other potential participants in this study.

Preamble:

> *Hi, This is Jonathan calling. I'm the graduate student from the University of Alberta who is conducting the focus group sessions on youth voting behaviours and media habits. I hope that you are still interested in participating in the upcoming focus group discussions. I still have a couple of things to do before I schedule the discussions but I hope to have them sometime during the week of _____.*
>
> *I need to complete a quick telephone survey with you in order to help me place you in the correct focus group. Do you have about 5 minutes to complete it now?*
>
> *Great. Before we start I want to confirm your willingness to participate in the focus groups and obtain your consent to collect the data. Are you still interested in participating in this study, including the upcoming focus groups? Have you read the information sheet and consent form that I sent to you by email? Do you have any questions about the study or the consent form? I will still need you to sign the consent form when you come for the focus groups, but in order to complete the phone survey now, I would like to obtain your verbal consent based on that form. Do I have your informed consent to include you as a subject in this study?*
>
> *Thanks for that. Now, I have 11 questions related to politics and voting. This should only take a few minutes. Remember that your participation is voluntary and we can stop at any time. Shall we get started?*

1. How interested are you in politics GENERALLY? Use a scale from 0 to 10, where zero means no interest at all, and ten means a great deal of interest. (PES 11_60)

0-10 enter number
. Don't know
. Refused
Calculate: Q1x = 10-Q1

2. People have different views about voting. For some, voting is a DUTY. They feel that they should vote in every election. For others, voting is a CHOICE. They only vote when they feel strongly about that election. For you personally, is voting FIRST AND FOREMOST a Duty or a Choice? (CPS11_62)

1 duty
5 choice
. Don't know
. Refused

3. If you didn't vote in a federal election would YOU PERSONALLY feel very guilty, somewhat guilty or not guilty at all? (CPS11_63)

1 very guilty
3 somewhat guilty
5 not guilty at all
. Don't know
. Refused

4. I would like to see how widely known some political figures are. Do you happen to recall the name of the Premier of Alberta? (CPS11_68)

1 correct (Alison Redford; Redford)
3 interviewer thinks respondent means Alison Redford
5 any other name, no text entry required
8 Don't know

5. And how about the name of the Federal Minister of Finance? (CPS11_69)

1 correct (Jim Flaherty; Flaherty)
3 interviewer thinks respondent means Jim Flaherty
5 any other name, no text entry required
8 Don't know

6. How interested were you in the recent municipal election in Edmonton? Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no interest at all and 10 means a great deal of interest. (CPS 11_9)

0-10 enter number
. Don't know
. Refused
Calculate: Q6x = 10-Q6

7. How much attention did you pay to the recent municipal election campaign: a lot, some, or not much at all? (PES 11_1)

1 A lot of attention
3 Some attention
5 Not much attention at all
. Don't know
. Refused

8. Did you vote in the municipal election? (PES 11_3)
1 yes
5 no
. Don't know
. Refused

9. Did you happen to vote in the last Provincial election in 2012? (CPS11_73)
1 yes
5 no
. not eligible (too young/not a Canadian Citizen)
. Don't know

10. The next expected election is a federal election in 2015, are you certain to vote, likely, unlikely, or certain not to vote? (CPS 11_10)
1 certain
3 likely
5 unlikely
7 certain not to vote
. Don't know
. Refused

The final question is just a question about your background.

11. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (CPS 11_79)
1 no schooling
2 some elementary school
3 completed elementary school
4 some secondary / high school
5 completed secondary / high school
6 some technical, community college, CEGEP, College Classique
7 completed technical, community college, CEGEP, College Classique
8 some university
9 bachelor's degree
10 master's degree
11 professional degree or doctorate
. Don't know
. Refused

Calculate: Q11x = 11-Q11

Well, that is all the questions that I have for you for now. Thanks greatly for your time today. I have to call the rest of the participants, but once I have done that I will get back to you and let you know the specific date and time of our meeting.

Before I go, do you have any questions about the study?

Thanks again for participating.

12. Interviewer: respondent's general level of information about politics and public affairs seemed... (CPS_int_assess1)

1 very high
2 fairly high
3 average
4 fairly low
5 very low
. Don't know

Calculate ATTITUDE = (Q8 + Q10 + Q2 + Q3+ Q9)*5/27
Calculate KNOWLEDGE = (Q4 + Q5+ Q11x+ Q12)*5/31
Calculate INTEREST = (Q7 + Q1x + Q6x)*5/25

Calculate VOTER = ATTITUDE + KNOWLEDGE + INTEREST (total /15)

Based on the results of 134 youth (born before 1982: 18-29 year olds) responding to the 2011 Canadian Election Survey, the metric VOTER is normally distributed (Skewness=0.236, Kurtosis=2.60) with a mean of 6.95 and a standard deviation of 2.32.

Calculate $Z_{[VOTER]}$ = (VOTER-6.95)/2.32

Appendix F - Qualitative Interview Discussion Guide

Thanks for participating, overview of discussion, statement about respecting confidentiality and notification that confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed.

Discussion Number 1: Mass Media

- Do you read any print publications regularly? If so, which?
    - How often do you read news and current events in the newspaper?
    - How often do you read other sections?
- What radio stations do you listen to? How often do you hear (pay attention) to newscasts?
- What television shows do you watch regularly? How do you watch TV (PVR, Netflix, downloading)? Do you watch news or current affairs programming?

Discussion Number 2: Internet Usage

- How much time are you on the internet? What devices do you use most often to access the internet?
- What websites do you most frequently visit?
- What other activities do you use the internet for?
- Do you visit news or current affairs websites?
- Do you use the internet to learn about political issues or candidates for office?
- Do you discuss current affairs or political issues using the Internet? Which websites?

Discussion Number 3: Mobile Computing and Other Media

- How much time do you spend on mobile devices? What activities do you use your mobile devices (phone/tablet) for?
- What mobile applications do you use? Do you use any applications for current affairs, news, and information on politics?
- What other media content do you frequently consume? How do you consume it? gaming systems, satellite radio, music devices, streaming video, movies, etc?

Thanks for participating, statement about respecting confidentiality and disbursement of incentives.