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# **Integrating Uses and Gratifications with the Theory of Planned Behavior to Explain Political Disaffection and Engagement**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) suggests that attitudes, norms, and efficacy predict behavior. Uses and gratifications (U&G) asserts that motives predict media use. When looking at the conceptualization of attitudes and norms in the TPB and motives in U&G, the two are conceptually similar and both appear to be a robust starting point for understanding political engagement. This paper reports the results of a study where motives and TPB variables were used to explain differences in political behaviors, like time spent using political news, following politics in diverse media outlets, voting, and engaging in other political activities. The results help explain the age-related differences in political engagement that have been observed in previous research.

**KEYWORDS:** voting, political news, uses and gratifications, theory of planned behavior, age

## I. Introduction

People who believe that their vote will not make a difference, that they are too busy to vote, that it is difficult to get to the polls, and that politics are unimportant are [unlikely to vote \(Pew, 2006\)](#). The people who hold these beliefs also tend to be younger, less wealthy, and less educated compared to people who regularly vote. These are also, demographically, the people who are [least likely to follow the news \(Pew, 2010a\)](#). Of those ranging in age from 18 and 29, 40% are not registered to vote and 25% are registered but rarely vote. News use has also steadily declined among this age group. So there is a disengaged, disaffected group of Americans who are not participating in the political process in the United States. By exploring the reasons for using and avoiding political news, researchers may be able to discover ways to help keep people informed. Further, by looking at predictors of political activity, researchers and practitioners may also find new ways to get people involved in politics.

Two theories may help explain disparities in political activity in general and political news use in particular: The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Uses and Gratifications (U&G). The TPB explains how attitudes, norms, and efficacy determine behaviors such as political activity. U&G focuses in particular on reasons for media use, and can build upon TPB conceptualizations of ‘attitudes’ that relate specifically to news use. These theories may help explain the age disparity in political engagement, because motives, norms, and efficacy may be related to one’s experience and, by extension, related to generation.

This paper includes a brief overview of each theory, addresses how the theories are conceptually similar, and finally describes how they may work together to explain political disaffection and engagement in the form of political news use. The results of a survey study are reported that support the contention that the TPB and U&G conceptually overlap and both predict political news use and political activity.

## II. Review of Literature

### **The TPB: From Reasoned Action to Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which is the theoretical precursor to the TPB, claims that behavior is the result of one’s intentions, which are, in turn, influenced by numerous variables ([Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980](#); [Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975](#)). The two main variables that influence behavior are the attitude one has towards enacting the behavior and subjective norms.

Attitudes are a combination of evaluations of a behavior and beliefs about the outcomes of the behaviors. Evaluations can be positive or negative. Performing a behavior may depend on which beliefs are activated and whether those beliefs are positive or negative ([Durnan & Trafimow, 2000](#)). Beliefs are organized by valence, such that positive beliefs tend to activate associated positive beliefs and negative beliefs activate associated negative beliefs in memory. If the bulk of beliefs that a person actively considers are positive, then they may be more likely to perform that behavior. Beliefs may also be either cognitive or affective ([Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998](#)). Cognitive beliefs are informational and affective beliefs are feelings or emotions associated with performing a behavior. Cognitive beliefs are likely to drive certain behaviors, while affective

beliefs are likely to drive other behaviors. Therefore, positive cognitive and positive affective beliefs are positive predictors of behavior, but the influence of cognitive versus affective beliefs will vary depending on the behavior being studied.

Beliefs alone do not consistently predict behavior. Rather, some behaviors are better predicted by norms. Subjective norms are peer expectations about behavior ([Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975](#); [Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980](#)) and can be inferred from the perceived prevalence of a behavior in a relevant peer group (i.e., descriptive norms), or they can be the perception of what one should do (i.e., injunctive norms) ([Rimal & Real, 2003](#)). These perceptions, which may not be fully accurate, are the outcome of face-to-face interactions and media influence, and are not consistently predictive of behavior ([Knight Lapinski & Rimal, 2005](#)). Attributes of the behavior can influence the extent to which norms predict that behavior. Specifically, when there is no ambiguity about what one should do or when the behavior is private, norms are less influential.

Regardless of attitudes and norms, people will not perform a behavior when they believe they do not have the necessary resources or skills. To account for the role of efficacy in deciding behaviors, the TRA was expanded to include behavioral control, and renamed the TPB ([Ajzen, 1985](#)). Perceived behavioral control includes efficacy, or having the skills and needed resources to perform a behavior. Behavioral control is both internal and external ([Notani, 1998](#)) and people have perceptions of efficacy that are both general and specific ([Ajzen & Madden, 1986](#)). So, people need to have the skills, knowledge, and means available to feel a general sense of efficacy about performing a behavior and the intention to perform a specific behavior.

The TRA and TPB have been applied to political outcomes in past research. Attitudes and subjective norms are strong predictors of voting among young adults ([Ajzen, Timco & White, 1982](#)). Subsequent findings on the role of attitudes and norms in explaining voting behavior have been mixed. For example, Glasford ([2008](#)) applied the TRA to predict whether or not young adults would vote in the 2004 U.S. presidential elections and found that both attitudes and subjective norms were strong predictors of voting behavior. On the other hand, in a study of politics in Singapore, attitudes toward the political party and the candidate were stronger indicators of behavior than both mass media and interpersonal subjective norms ([Singh, Leong, Tan, & Wong, 1995](#)), which suggests that TPB predictors may vary based on individual differences like cultural background. In terms of applying the TPB to voting on issues, Gill, Crosby and Taylor ([1986](#)) found that behavioral control, norms, and attitudes influenced adult voting behavior on ecological issues. In an expansion of the TPB framework, Ahmed ([1993](#)) included knowledge, confidence, and involvement as determinants of one's tendency to vote on ecological and energy based initiatives. In all, attitudes and perceived behavioral control appear to be consistent predictors of voting behaviors, but norms are not consistently predictive of political behavior.

#### **Applying the TRA and TPB to Political News Use: U&G**

The TRA and TPB have been used to predict numerous behaviors, and likely would work well in terms of explaining individual differences in political news use. News use may be predicted by subjective norms and behavioral control. U&G research has already made it clear that beliefs about the outcomes of news predict news use behaviors.

U&G research focuses on people's social and psychological circumstances that create needs, which lead people to seek out media to fulfill those needs. Therefore, gratifications sought influence media selection, use, and effects ([Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974](#)). Research generally has supported the proposition that situations in a person's life lead to the gratifications he or she seeks from media ([Rubin & Rubin, 1981](#)) and the gratifications individuals seek influence exposure ([Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979](#)).

Palmgreen and Rayburn ([1979](#)) offered gratifications sought and obtained as an expectancy value explanation of how needs affect news use. Gratifications sought are what people want to get out of their media experience; gratifications obtained are what people actually get out of the experience. Gratifications sought and obtained were related to medium, program, and genre selection ([Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985](#)). Also in keeping with TPB predictions, Rayburn and Palmgreen ([1984](#)) added belief strength to the model, and further found that motives and evaluations of motives were related to news selection and exposure. These studies lend support to the application of the TPB to explain differences in political news use.

However, several studies challenged the expectancy value model of gratifications. For example, McLeod, Bybee, and Durall ([1982](#)) found that gratifications sought predicted gratifications obtained for debate viewing, but did not predict exposure. Further, Lin ([1993](#)) found that media users' activity during viewing influenced gratifications obtained and gratifications sought did not predict media use. Later, LaRose and Eastin ([2004](#)) argued that the typology of motives that Palmgreen et al. employed was incomplete, which may explain why subsequent studies' results challenged the expectancy value approach. Finally, Rubin and Perse ([1987](#)) found that more active viewing orientations and involvement increased the level of gratifications experienced as a result of viewing, suggesting that audience activity, like involvement in the program, rather than anticipated gratifications, accounted for gratifications obtained. To account for these discrepant findings, Swanson ([1987](#)) argued that individuals' motives may influence their *orientation* toward the media and, therefore, determine gratifications obtained through media use. This marked a shift away from the expectancy value approach in U&G, and away from conceptualizing motives as beliefs about the outcomes of media use.

Subsequent research has further refined the types of motives that may cause people to follow or avoid the news. Rubin ([1984](#)) identified instrumental (active, purposeful) versus ritualized (diversionary) motives. The news is also used to fulfill conversational ([Eveland, 2004](#)), information seeking, social utility, and civic duty motives ([Brubaker, 2010](#)).

These different types of motives lead to the use of different types of media and different types of use. Kaye and Johnson ([2004](#)) discovered that different Internet components actually fulfill different needs. The Web was primarily used for guidance, while bulletin boards and mailing lists fulfilled social utility and entertainment needs. Additionally, instant messaging and chat rooms were used for information seeking and to provide guidance. In a more recent study of Weblog usage, Kaye ([2005](#)) found that they were utilized for "information seeking and media check, convenience, personal fulfillment political surveillance, and expression and affiliation," (p. 73). So, different types of informational media fulfill different types of motives.

User competency with a particular form of media was also another factor that influenced media use. David (2009) indicated that both “psychological needs together with indicators of ability such as educational attainment play significant roles in the prediction of media use motivations” (p. 255). In keeping with this conclusion, Campbell and Kwak (2010) surveyed subjects with a median age of 35 immediately after midterm Congressional elections and found that those who were more competent in utilizing their mobile phones for the exchange of information also had higher levels of political and civic involvement. One final factor, one’s overall sense of self-efficacy, was found to not only be related to “media exposure, perception of media impact for intellectual stimulation” but also “political self-efficacy, and political participation” regardless of media type (Hofstetter, Zuniga, & Dozier, 2001, p. 74). These studies suggest that motives, in the conceptualization that moved beyond Palmgreen’s original research, are actually related to variables from the TRA and TPB, like behavioral control. Individual differences in education, competence, and self-efficacy get at the internal and external barriers that one may perceive in terms of using political news via different formats and engaging in different types of political activity.

Beyond U&G research, subsequent media research has explored the ‘structural aspects’ of media that make it useable by individuals, such as availability, access, and scheduling (e.g., Cooper & Tang, 2009). Results suggest support for the TPB explanation of media use offered here: a combination of motives and the structural aspects of television, such as having access to political news outlets and time to follow political news, predict media use. Arguably, the structural aspects of other forms of media, such as radio, the Internet, and newspapers would also vary in perceived access and availability, particularly between generations and different socioeconomic groups.

### **Motives, Norms, PBC, and Demographics**

Apart from finding that different media and their various components met different needs, numerous researchers have found that a user’s background also had an impact on media usage and the fulfillment of particular needs. Kaye (2005) not only found that Weblogs fulfilled particular needs, but also that a particular type of user frequented them: young males who were well educated and financially successful. Weaver, Tinkham and Sweetser (2010) noted that young adults believed that “more solitary activities, such as searching for political information or reading blog content, do constitute political participation” (p. 760). Not surprisingly, older users did not hold this particular belief. Apart from age, a user’s gender was also a significant factor. Males experienced more enjoyment in “keeping up with the news” and overall political knowledge compared to women (Nash & Hoffman, 2009, p. 120).

A significant body of literature links age to general news use. Age and newspaper use are positively correlated (Brundidge, 2010). Boomers, who were born between 1946 and 1964 and were ages 47 to 65 at the time of the study, utilize newspapers primarily out of habit (Stempel, Guido & Hargrove, 2004) and for hard news (Scheufele et al., 2005). Often, such use leads to attachment and community involvement (Rothenbuhler & Mullen, 1996). Although Gen Nexters, who were born after 1977 and were age 34 and younger at the time of this study, perceive newspapers as highly credible sources of information (Jarvis, Stroud & Gilliland, 2009), they are less likely to use them (Coleman & McCombs, 2007) and if utilized, it is not for

the same reasons as the Boomer generation. When using newspapers, Nexters primarily use them for entertainment and leisure purposes ([Hoplamazian & Fester, 2009](#)).

Apart from newspapers, television's availability was also a strong influence on the Boomer generation. Not surprisingly, Magna Global's research on television use indicates that the Boomer generation watches "10 times more hours of television per week" than younger generations, and tend to frequent Fox News and CNN more so than other networks ([Consumer Behavior, 2007, p. 73](#)). In keeping with Boomers' overall consumption of TV, Coleman and McCombs (2007) found that 42% of Boomers get their news from TV (p. 503). Nexters, who also consider hard news important, rarely watch it compared to Boomers. Instead they opt for lighter, more entertaining news shows ([Meijer, 2005](#)).

Much like the impact that television had on the Boomers, the Internet has had a similar impact on the Nexters. Internet use is more prevalent among Nexters versus the Boomers. An indicator of the pervasiveness of technology in Nexters' lives is found in the startling statistic that most spend "an average of 21.3 hours online, including time spent doing email and IM" ([Leyden & Teixeira, 2007, p. 10](#)).

Unlike the relationship between age and newspaper use, there is an inverse relationship between age and online news use ([Brundidge, 2010](#)). Many actually believed that Boomers would be slow to adopt online news due to user anxiety, but this has not been the case. The Pew Research Center (2010b) found that 74% of Boomers versus 83% of Gen Nexters use the Internet for gathering such information.

In terms of linking the demographic disparities in news use to TPB variables, some of the disparities in the use of particular news sources likely stems from differences in attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control. Specifically, different generations may be more or less skeptical of different news sources, use the news for different reasons, and perceive the news to be more or less accessible, thus influencing the use of different news formats.

### **Hypotheses and Research Question**

In all, research suggests that attitudes, motives in particular; norms; and perceived behavioral control may be significant predictors of political news use and other types of political activity. TPB research has suggested that attitudes, norms, and behavioral control are multifaceted and vary depending on the types of behavior being explored. U&G research has similarly suggested that motives and behavioral control, in the form of resources and skills, predict media use.

The TPB may inform researchers' and practitioners' understanding of the motivations and obstacles relevant to regular news use and political activities. Since research continues to suggest that 1/3 of the population does not follow the news regularly ([Pew Research Center, 2007](#)), it is useful to apply a theory that provides practical insight as to why people are more or less motivated and able to use political news, and thereby offer suggestions for how to involve a larger segment of the population.

To begin to investigate the applications of TPB and U&G variables to political news research, these theories are used to explore the age discrepancy in political news use. Age may be one

demographic variable that affects attitudes, norms, and behaviors regarding news use. Therefore, differences between age groups in mean scores on TPB and U&G variables may shed some light on why younger groups do not follow politics closely, but older groups do.

H1: There will be mean differences between age groups (Boomers vs. Nexters) in (a) motives, (b) subjective norms, (c) perceived behavioral control, and (d) political news use.

One conclusion that Palmgreen's research program offered was that gratifications affect a variety of news use behaviors. In this study, we explore three political news use behaviors. We expect that variables from both the TPB and U&G will predict each type of news use, though we do not necessarily expect all of the variables from each theory to predict each news use outcome equally well, as different motives and different perceptions of behavioral control will likely be present for different news use behaviors. Therefore, we pose the following research question:

RQ1: Do motives, norms, and perceived behavioral control predict (a) the number of political news sources people use, (b) the types of news sources people use, and (c) the average amount of political news use after controlling for age?

Political attitudes and norms have been linked to perceived behavioral control in past studies, and those same variables are also likely linked to political news use. Research has suggested that the type of political news people use is related to political engagement (e.g., Lee, 2005). Therefore, it is expected that political news use will be related to political activity, such as voting.

H2: The number of political news sources used, amount of political news used, and types of political news used will be related to political activity.

### III. Method

To explore the usefulness of the TPB and U&G for explaining generational differences in political news use, a survey was distributed using a snowball sample. Undergraduate students solicited participants to complete an electronic survey. Students received extra credit for soliciting participants via e-mail, texts, and social media. Of the 304 people who began the online survey, 256 completed it. In terms of demographics, 113 respondents were men and 143 were women. Their mean age was 27.8 years.

**Demographics.** Participants were asked to report their age, gender, and level of education. People 40 and over were coded 1 ( $N = 44$ ) and people 39 and younger were coded 2 ( $N = 212$ ) to test H1. Unfortunately, this split incorporated the late-Generation X respondents in the Boomer group and early-GenX into the Millennial group. The median age of GenX at the time of this study was around 39.5 years. Thus, the data was split between ages 39 and 40. See [CNN](#) for an interesting graphic depicting the different dates researchers use to delineate between generations. Age was used as a continuous variable in subsequent analyses. Education was measured on a 7-point Likert item: some high school (1), high school (2), some college (3), associate's degree (4), bachelor's degree (5), some graduate school (6), and graduate school (7) ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ).

**Motives and norms.** Rubin's (1983) 16-item measure of instrumental and ritualized media use motives was adapted to political news use and assessed on 5-point Likert items. Rimal and Real's (2003) measures of subjective and injunctive norms were also assessed on 5-point Likert items.

Motives and norms are conceptually similar: Both represent reasons for using media. Rubin's (1983) motives measure includes using media to talk to people and to be with other people. Those items are similar to measures of norms, such as people expecting one to use media, wanting to do what others want one to do, and the perception that others are using media.

In terms of whether motives are conceptually similar to beliefs about a behavior from the TPB, Trafimow and Sheeran (1998) pointed out that measures of attitudes should focus on attitudes toward the *behavior* rather than attitudes toward the *object*. Therefore, attitudes toward using the news, such as "the news is a good source of excitement," would be a less effective measure than "I use the news because it is exciting," which measures affective beliefs about the behavior. This may explain why gratifications sought measures did not work well in previous studies (Lin, 1993), but Rubin's (1984) measure of instrumental versus ritualized motives worked well in previous research.

Instrumental motive items, like using the news to learn and have topics to talk about, are conceptually similar to the cognitive items that Trafimow and Sheeran (1998) used for smoking behavior (e.g., they used semantic differential scales with items such as "it is useful/useless"). Also, the 'ritualized' items in Rubin's (1984) scale, such as using media because it is thrilling, exciting, etc., are similar to the affective items in Trafimow and Sheeran's (1998) TPB study, which included measures of enjoyment, gratification, and pleasantness. To explore the relationship between these indicators from U&G and the TPB, an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was used (see Table 1 for results). Factor analysis is often used to distinguish between cognitive and affective components of attitudes (Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998).



Table 1: Motives and Norms EFA

	<b>Pastime</b> Eigenvalue = 4.47 38.10% $\alpha=.91$	<b>Affective</b> Eigenvalue =4.46 19.95% $\alpha=.92$	<b>Cognitive</b> Eigenvalue =2.98 16.17% $\alpha=.78$	<b>Norms</b> Eigenvalue =1.44 7.57% $\alpha=.49$
Occupy my time	<b>.77</b>	.22	.20	.14
Just because it's there	<b>.82</b>	.03	.0	-.01
Nothing to do	<b>.91</b>	.02	-.01	.06
No one to be with	<b>.86</b>	.18	-.06	.08
It passes time away	<b>.85</b>	.20	-.03	.03
It's habit	.26	<b>.68</b>	.21	.06
It's exciting	.07	<b>.80</b>	.38	.14
It amuses me	.19	<b>.64</b>	.44	.11
It entertains me	.17	<b>.71</b>	.44	.06
It's thrilling	.14	<b>.81</b>	.23	.14
It's enjoyable	.06	<b>.84</b>	.35	.04
To talk to others	.11	.37	<b>.74</b>	.17
Peers use news (SN)	-.22	.18	<b>.67</b>	-.08
To learn what may happen	-.04	.18	<b>.79</b>	.08
To learn about self / others	.06	.32	<b>.65</b>	.14
People want me to (SN)	.04	.13	.16	<b>.79</b>
I do what others want (SN)	.14	.13	.03	<b>.77</b>
To be less lonely	.51	.59	-.25	.19
So I can get away	.64	.51	-.22	.17

Four factors emerged: using news for pastime, affective, cognitive, and normative reasons. Indeed there was some overlap between motives and norms. Peers using the news (an injunctive norm) loaded with other learning-related items on the cognitive motives factor. The pastime factor included using political news just because it is there, to pass time, and when there is nothing to do and no one to be with. The affective motive included using news for emotional reasons: thrills, entertainment, amusement, and enjoyment.

**Perceived behavioral control (PBC).** PBC was measured on four 7-point Likert items ( $\alpha = .79$ ,  $M = 5.0$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ). Items included having the time, access, and knowledge necessary to access the news, and there was a global measure of there “not being anything preventing me from using the news.”

**News use: Types, amount, and number of sources.** There were three measures of political news use in this study. Lee (2005) argued that different types of news sources are related to different political effects. Therefore, we employed two measures of the specific types of political news people used. Use of news websites, cable news, TV network news, comedy news shows, news magazines, newspapers, news radio, blogs, and social networking were each rated on a series of 5-point Likert items ranging from ‘use never’ to ‘use daily.’

To explore if there are distinct patterns in political news use, these items were analyzed with an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation (see Table 2). Two factors emerged: a) *traditional political news use* included using websites, cable news, network news, news magazines, newspapers, and news radio. Those items were summed and averaged ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = .81$ ). b) *Nontraditional political news use* included using blogs, social networks, and comedy news shows. Those items were also summed and averaged ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = .68$ ).

Participants were asked to report the names of all of the political news sources they used the previous day. The number of sources was summed, and that was the measure of the number of news sources used ( $M = 1.84$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ).

Participants also reported how much time they spend watching political news in a typical day and the previous day. The responses were significantly correlated, suggesting they fit well together ( $r = .78$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Those self-reports were averaged to create a measure of typical amount of political news use ( $M = 24.4$  min.,  $SD = 31.01$  min).

Table 2: News Types EFA

	<b>Traditional</b> Eigenvalue = 3.16 35.13% $\alpha = .82$	<b>Nontraditional</b> Eigenvalue = 1.83 20.32% $\alpha = .56$
Websites	<b>.63</b>	.26
Cable	<b>.88</b>	-.01
Network	<b>.84</b>	-.04
Magazines	<b>.59</b>	.39
Paper	<b>.77</b>	.05
Radio	<b>.54</b>	.30
Blogs	.13	<b>.79</b>
Social Networks	-.03	<b>.69</b>
Comedy	.19	<b>.65</b>

**Political activity.** A range of political activities were assessed on 5-point Likert items ranging from ‘never’ to ‘very often’: attending rallies, talking to others about issues, voting in off-year elections, displaying yard signs, voting in primary elections, wearing t-shirts or buttons, voting in presidential elections, volunteering for a campaign, and donating to a campaign. In this study, political news use was conceptualized as a type of political behavior, so we did not include measures of political activity like following politicians on social networking sites because those types of activities were captured in the measure of news types and also in the

general, open measure of the number of political news sources people used. Arguably, in subsequent studies, measures of activity via new media could be included in either, or both, measures of political activity and political news use.

The items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis to determine the dimensions of political activity. Two dimensions emerged (see Table 3). The first dimension was political activism and it included going to rallies, displaying yard signs, wearing paraphernalia, volunteering and donating ( $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = .93$ ). The second factor included the three measures of voting ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = .54$ ). Talking about politics did not clearly load on either factor.

Table 3: Political Activities EFA

	<b>Activism</b> Eigenvalue = 3.22 35.79% $\alpha = .84$	<b>Voting</b> Eigenvalue = 1.68 18.65% $\alpha = .91$
Talk to friends about politics	.53	.43
Vote in an off-year election	.26	<b>.87</b>
Vote in a primary election	.15	<b>.93</b>
Vote in a presidential election	.11	<b>.88</b>
Volunteer for campaigns	<b>.86</b>	.10
Donate to campaigns	<b>.80</b>	.13
Attend political rallies	<b>.79</b>	.05
Display a political yard sign	<b>.57</b>	.41
Wear political paraphernalia	<b>.72</b>	.29

#### IV. Results

**H1.** The first hypothesis predicted that there would be mean differences between age groups on measures of U&G and TPB variables and the measures of news use. T-tests were used to assess the mean difference between those under 40 years of age and those over age 40. H1 was partially supported. Motives were not consistently different between the groups. There was a significant difference in pastime motives ( $t = 4.06$ ,  $p = .001$ ), but not affective motives ( $t = 1.26$ ,  $p = .21$ ), or cognitive motives ( $t = -1.60$ ,  $p = .08$ ), though differences in cognitive motives approached significance. There was a difference between group means on TPB variables. Both PBC ( $t = -3.00$ ,  $p = .02$ ) and subjective norms ( $t = 1.91$ ,  $p = .003$ ) were significantly different between the groups. The older group ( $M = 5.53$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ) felt more perceived behavioral control than the younger group ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ), and the younger group ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) felt more normative pressure than the older group ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ).

News use was different between the age groups. Differences were significant for use of traditional media ( $t = -3.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), nontraditional media ( $t = 2.23$ ,  $p = .02$ ), number of news sources used ( $t = -3.03$ ,  $p = .003$ ), and average news use ( $t = -2.32$ ,  $p = .02$ ). The older group reported more use of traditional media ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) than the younger group ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = .82$ ). The older group reported less use of non-traditional media ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = .64$ ) than the younger group ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = .69$ ). The older group, however, reported using more sources ( $M = 2.51$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ) than the younger respondents ( $M = 1.7$ ,  $SD = 1.5$ ). The older group also

spent more time on average consuming political news ( $M = 34.5$  min,  $SD = 30.5$  min) than the younger group ( $M = 22.4$  min,  $SD = 30.9$  min).

There were also non-hypothesized differences in voting ( $t = -3.61, p < .001$ ) and political activism ( $t = -3.48, p < .001$ ). People in the older group ( $M = 3.54, SD = 0.29$ ) reported more voting ( $M = 3.22, SD = .57$ ) and more political activism ( $M = 2.37, SD = 1.07$ ) than the younger group ( $M = 1.84, SD = 0.87$ ).

**RQ1 and H2.** The research question asked whether U&G and TPB variables would predict types, number, and amount of political news people consume. The final hypothesis predicted that news use would be related to political activity. The research question and final hypothesis were assessed using a series of multiple regressions. See Figure 1 for a depiction of results, and Tables 4, 5, and 6 for the statistical results. Not surprisingly based on the results of H1, age was negatively related to pastime motives and norms, and positively related to PBC. In terms of the inter-relationships among predictor variables, PBC was predicted by all other independent variables in the model, though pastime motives were a negative predictor. Norms were significantly related to all other predictors except cognitive motives. Affective motives were positively related to all other predictors.

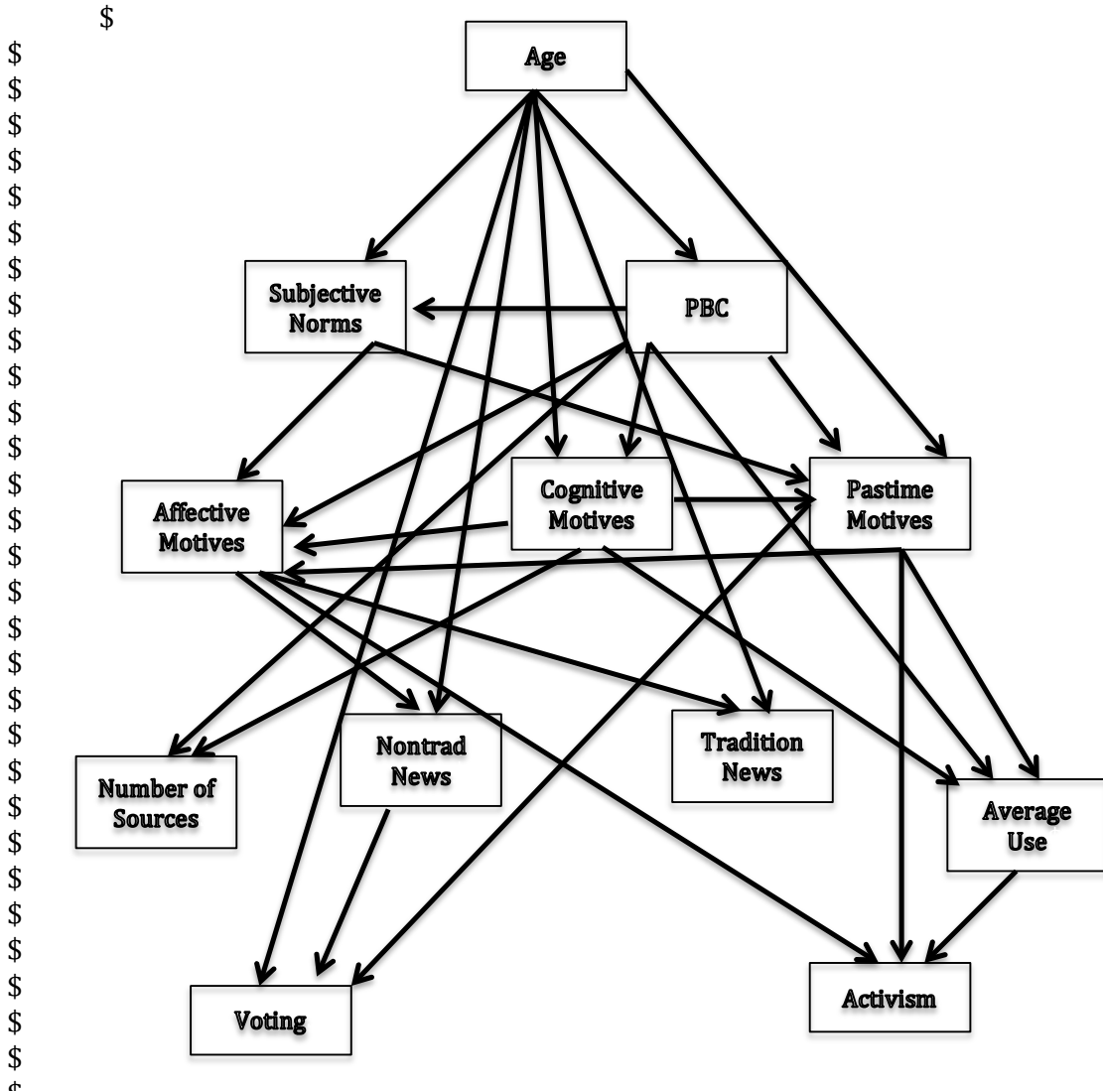


Figure 1: Results of RQ1 and H2

Table 4: Regression Results for Relationship Between Age, TPB Variables, and U&amp;G Variables

		<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>β</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Age</b>		.40	.16			.001
	Cognitive Motives			.12	1.36	.176
	Affective Motives			-.13	-1.58	.115
	Pastime Motives			-.22	-3.37	.001
	Norms			-.14	-2.17	.031
<b>PBC</b>	PBC	.68	.46	.21	2.63	.009
	Cognitive Motives			.53	8.62	.000
	Affective Motives			.17	2.58	.010
	Pastime Motives			-.17	-3.21	.001
	Norms			.11	2.15	.033
<b>Norms</b>	Norms	.37	.14			.001
	Cognitive Motives			-.01	-.09	.926
	Affective Motives			.19	2.29	.023
	Pastime Motives			.17	2.55	.011
	PBC			.17	2.15	.033
<b>Pastime Motives</b>	PBC	.47	.22			.001
	Cognitive Motives			-.17	-2.04	.042
	Affective Motives			.51	6.92	.000
	Norms			.15	2.55	.011
	PBC			-.24	-3.21	.001
<b>Cognitive Motives</b>	PBC	.75	.56			.001
	Affective Motives			.45	8.31	.000
	Pastime Motives			-.10	-2.04	.042
	Norms			-.00	-.09	.926
	PBC			.44	8.62	.000
<b>Affective Motives</b>	PBC	.72	.51			.001
	Cognitive Motives			.49	8.31	.000
	Pastime Motives			.32	6.92	.000
	Norms			.11	2.29	.023
	PBC			.15	2.58	.010

Table 5: Regression Results for relationship Between New Use, Age, TPB Variables, and U&amp;G Variables

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Number of sources</b>	.54	.29			.001
Age			.09	1.50	.134
Affective Motives			.03	.32	.746
Cognitive Motives			.35	4.29	.000
Pastime Motives			-.09	-1.44	.150
Norms			-.02	-.41	.680
PBC			.19	2.51	.013
<b>Average News use</b>	.50	.25			.001
Age			.07	1.18	.239
Affective Motives			.06	.75	.452
Cognitive Motives			.16	1.94	.053
Pastime Motives			-.13	-1.97	.050
Norms			.02	.34	.738
PBC			.29	3.84	.000
<b>Traditional News</b>	.53	.28			.001
Age			.18	3.11	.002
Affective Motives			.28	3.58	.000
Cognitive Motives			.16	1.91	.057
Pastime Motives			-.02	-.34	.734
Norms			.07	1.26	.208
PBC			.10	1.36	.175
<b>Nontraditional News</b>	.36	.13			.001
Age			-.14	-2.14	.033
Affective Motives			.25	2.97	.004
Cognitive Motives			-.03	-.30	.762
Pastime Motives			.01	.12	.902
Norms			.08	1.27	.204
PBC			.08	1.02	.309

Table 6: Regression Results for relationship Between Voting, Activism, Age, TPB Variables, and U&G Variables

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Voting</b>	.49	.24			.001
Age			.27	4.07	.000
Affective Motives			.13	1.59	.112
Cognitive Motives			.16	1.76	.080
Pastime Motives			-.27	-4.14	.000
Norms			.02	.39	.695
PBC			.03	.31	.757
Number of Sources			-.10	-1.47	.144
Average Use			-.00	-.04	.968
Traditional News			-.01	-.19	.852
Nontraditional news			.17	2.60	.010
<b>Activism</b>					.001
	.55	.31			
Age			.11	1.68	.094
Affective Motives			.22	2.67	.008
Cognitive Motives			.09	1.05	.296
Pastime Motives			-.21	-3.27	.001
Norms			.06	1.04	.297
PBC			-.02	-.20	.842
Number of Sources			-.02	-.29	.771
Average Use			.30	4.64	.000
Traditional News			.01	.18	.855
Nontraditional news			.08	1.30	.196

In terms of RQ1, the number of news sources used was predicted by cognitive motives and PBC. Average news use, on the other hand, was positively predicted by cognitive motives and PBC, but negatively predicted by pastime motives. Traditional news use was significantly predicted by age and affective motives. Lastly, nontraditional news was negatively predicted by age, but affective motives were a positive predictor of nontraditional news use.



The results offer mixed support for H2. Age and nontraditional news use were positive predictors for voting, and pastime motives were a negative predictor. Activism was positively predicted by affective motives and average news use, and was negatively related to pastime motives.

## V. Discussion

There are several notable results reported here. First, there were mean differences for age evident in this study. Most notable, younger groups felt more normative pressure but less efficacy to follow political news. Respondents who were 40 years old and older used political news more to pass time, possibly as a result of increased perceived behavioral control. The older respondents reported using traditional news more, reported spending more time following political news, and reported using more types of news media to follow politics, though they used newer forms of political news media less often than the younger demographic.

Each of these exposure measures was exploring a different type of political news use behavior. Previous research has borne out that some behaviors are more affectively, or emotionally-driven, while other behaviors are more cognitively, or information-driven ([Lavine et al., 1998](#)). This research begins to parse out which types of beliefs, or motives in U&G terminology, are related to which types of political news use.

**Motives.** Cognitive motives were predictive of average political news use and the number of sources people reported having used. Clearly, cognitive motives lead to diverse political news use behaviors. This makes sense, as those seeking information are likely to go to a variety of sources and spend more time with news sources. Interestingly, though, the diversity of sources used did not predict voting or political activism. Cognitive motives, which one might expect to predict more politically engaged behavior, were only related to activism indirectly by inciting increased average news use.

Affective motives, on the other hand, were related to the types of news people use *and* political activism. So, affective motives appear to be more closely related to political engagement. Research has suggested that affective beliefs often supplant cognitive beliefs when they are more accessible in memory (e.g., [Duran & Trafimow, 2000](#)). Future research may benefit from exploring whether affect is a stronger predictor of political behavior compared to cognition. This could have numerous implications for political research in terms of explaining the effectiveness of negative and fear-inducing campaign tactics, the implications of game versus strategy frames in political news, and the consistently abysmal scores found on political knowledge tests. If political behavior is largely affectively driven, then affective arguments are possibly more effective, game frames more appealing, and knowledge an incidental product of, rather than objective for, using political news. In fact, recent research has suggested that emotions can incite political participation ([Namkoong, Fung, & Scheufele, 2012](#)) and increase involvement and learning ([Hullett, Loudon, & Mitra, 2003](#)).

These findings may also explain why low-information voters do vote, but do so with relatively little knowledge about issues and candidates. Cognitive motives are related to diverse political news use; but affective motives predict other political behaviors. Therefore, extreme partisans

may be more likely to engage in political activities, but less likely to seek out multiple sources of political information as indicated by the absence of a relationship between affective motives and number of news sources used. Affectively motivated voters used more nontraditional and traditional news, but went to fewer sources, suggesting a clear focus on comparatively few news sources among those people who were more politically active. Future research could explore whether the sources that emotionally involved voters focus on are more likely to be partisan news sources.

In all, it appears that some political behaviors may not be directly related to cognitive or informational motives. Therefore, the emphasis on informed, rational political decision-making may be missing the strongest predictor of actual political behavior: emotions. Significant subsequent research is warranted to explore these possibilities. In this study, it appears that affect was an important determinant of political engagement.

Pastime motives were negatively related to the average amount of time spent using political news and negatively predictive of voting. If a person is 'killing time,' it makes sense that he or she would not be *actively* seeking out sources. Interestingly, norms were related to pastime motives, as were PBC and affective motives. One may feel pressure to be aware of politics and efficacy regarding political engagement, but not care about the outcome. Research on the link between pastime motives and political cynicism and apathy may be in order to explain why people only use political news incidentally, and what, if anything, might be done to inspire them to engage more in the political debate in this country.

**Norms.** Consistent with U&G, motives predicted news use but the TPB variables, particularly norms, were less clearly related to political engagement. Subjective norms were not directly predictive of news use or political activity. There are several tentative explanations for why this may be the case. First, the measure of norms used in this study could and should be developed further. There are elements of norms in the U&G measure of motives used here, in the measure of political activities employed here (though it failed to load on either of the factors for political activity), and in the three items specifically designed to measure norms.

It is important to note, however, that norms were related to cognitive and pastime motives and PBC, and those variables were predictive of different types of news use. So, political news use may not be a norm-driven behavior. Using the news is done in the privacy of one's own home, and private behaviors are less influenced by normative pressure ([Knight-Lapinski & Rimal, 2005](#)). But, norms may indirectly influence political activity by affecting people's attitudes toward that behavior or perception of their efficacy in terms of performing a behavior.

There is a significant body of literature in political communication that looks at the role of conversational expectations in influencing political engagement (see for example [Eveland, 2004](#)). Arguably, conversational expectations are a form of normative pressure, but are a very explicit form. It may be valuable for political communication research to diversify the conceptualization of norms beyond the injunctive and descriptive norm dichotomy in TPB research to look at a range of normative influences that vary in explicitness.

**PBC.** PBC was related to average news use directly, and it was indirectly related to news use through its relationship with cognitive, affective, and pastime motives. PBC was negatively related to pastime motives, which suggests that one explanation for pastime motives, which are negatively related to news use, is a diminished sense of efficacy. It makes intuitive sense that people are more likely to enjoy (affective motives) and learn from (cognitive motives) news content when they feel efficacious about using it.

In terms of promoting political engagement, behavioral control may be an important area for future research and political campaigners to consider. Given its direct and indirect relationship with overall news use and the number of sources used, behavioral control may work in concert with structural aspects of the media to explain the division between those who are politically engaged and those who are politically estranged. As age increases, PBC also increases, which may explain why research has consistently found that younger people tend to be less engaged in politics and less likely to use the news (e.g., Pew, [2006](#), [2010](#)).

## **VI. Conclusion**

In all, this study links TPB variables to U&G variables, and the results suggest that these theories overlap and both explain different aspects of political engagement and estrangement. The TPB may be a useful framework for exploring political engagement. Though a couple of the measures warrant further development, particularly the measure of norms, the results here point to several fruitful areas for future research. In particular, the TPB offers a framework for integrating motives and other motivation variables, cognitive and affective processes, structural aspects of media, and interpersonal and conversational expectations in one relatively parsimonious model.

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