Politically Mobilizing vs. Demobilizing Media: A Mediation Model

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This study examined the role of time spent on media in predicting political participation (active and election participation). On the basis of type and content of media, media uses were categorized as either politically mobilizing (TV news, newspapers, magazines, and Internet for work) or demobilizing (TV non-news, radio, and Internet for pleasure). It was hypothesized that the positive relationship between mobilizing media and political participation would be mediated by political interest. On the other hand, the negative relationship between demobilizing media and political participation would be mediated by political cynicism. Findings provided general support for the proposed mediation models.

Keywords: Internet; Media Use; Political Participation

Political participation is regarded as one of the most important constructs in political communication research in that a democratic society functions on the basis of active citizen participation. The role that media play in mobilizing citizens has been a concern for political communication researchers (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; McLeod et al., 1996; Wilkins, 2000). However, the mediation process has drawn relatively little attention, and, therefore, will be the focus of this investigation in Taiwan. Specifically, mediation models were proposed to explain how the uses of various media can trigger different processes that may impact political participation.

Time spent using media accounts for a high proportion of an individual's waking hours. Specifically, five major media will be examined, including television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and Internet. In Taiwan, among the traditional media, television (81.8%) is most frequently used, followed by newspapers (37.0%), magazines (36.3%), and radio (25.2%) (InsightXplorer, 2004). The percentage of people who say they use the Internet is also estimated at 61.2% (TWNIC, 2004). In terms of time spent on these media, a typical Taiwanese adult spends three hours and 52 minutes a day watching TV, two hours and nine minutes a day listening to the

radio, and 33 minutes a day reading newspapers (Chang & Fu, 2004). Moreover, a typical Taiwanese spends three hours and 31 minutes a day on the Internet, 53 minutes of which are during his or her spare time (Chang, 2004). Given the large amount of time spent on media, what roles media use may play in mobilizing or discouraging political participation is an important question to explore.

Concerns regarding the influence of media use on political participation originate from two arguments: time displacement and the prevalence of misanthropic media portrayals of the world (Putnam, 1995a, 1995b). The latter argument suggests that content matters as much as time. For example, it is believed that newspapers inform citizens about political issues (e.g. Pan, Ostman, Moy, & Reynolds, 1994) and campaign issues (e.g. Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994) and provide them with 'mobilizing information' (Lemert, Mitzman, Seither, Cook, & Hackett, 1977), which can help citizens understand problems in their communities, gain political knowledge, and arouse their political interests, further motivating them to participate in political activities. Accordingly, in this study, media will be categorized into two types: those that provide issue information or mobilizing information and those mainly offering entertainment. The former will be referred to as mobilizing media, whereas the later will be referred to as demobilizing media. This distinction may render it possible to reveal the true nature of the relationship between media use and political participation.

Research has revealed several important predictors of political participation, including political interest and cynicism (e.g. Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Vedlitz & Veblen, 1980). Political interest represents a positive drive for political participation (e.g. Vedlitz & Veblen, 1980). In contrast, political cynicism is related to the decline of political participation (e.g. Austin & Pinkleton, 1995). This paper proposes a mediation model to argue that mobilizing media positively predicts political participation via a positive association with political interest, whereas demobilizing media negatively predicts political participation via a positive association with political cynicism (see Figure 1).

Politically Mobilizing vs. Demobilizing Media

When tying television use with the decline of social capital, Putnam (1995a) proposes two explanations to justify his indictment. The first explanation originates from the
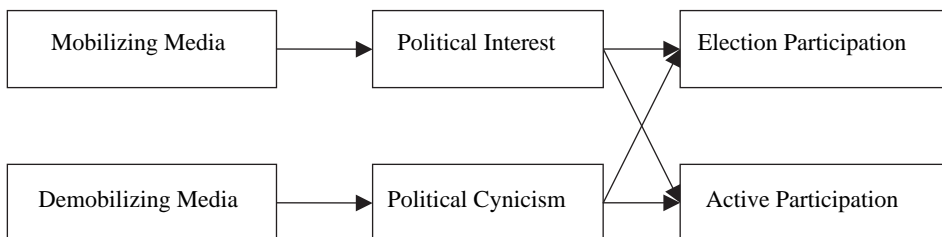

Figure 1 The Mediation Model.

time displacement hypothesis, suggesting that the more time individuals spend on media, the less time is available to engage in social activities or participate in social organizations, which are believed to be important foundations for democracy. The time displacement hypothesis also has been proposed to explain the negative relationship between television use and civic engagement (e.g. Moy, Scheufele, & Holbert, 1999).

Putnam's (1995a) second explanation is that television cultivates a skeptical view of the world, which encourages pessimism and results in a decline in participation. Specifically, the cynical life portrayed in television dramas has been accused of cultivating a skeptical view of the world, which discourages individuals from wanting to be active citizens. It appears that time displacement alone may not necessarily result in a decline in political participation. The media content to which individuals are exposed may also be a determining factor.

Nevertheless, in contrast to media that cultivate cynicism, some media provide essential political information or even mobilizing information that serves as important, positive drives for political participation. For example, campaign news has been shown to help voters gain important issue information (e.g. Chaffee et al., 1994; Zhao & Chaffee, 1995). Moreover, it is believed that newspapers contain important mobilizing information that help people understand where, when, and how to express their opinions (Lemert & Ashman, 1983; Lemert et al., 1977). Eveland and Scheufele (2000) also argued that, in addition to helping citizens understand problems in their communities and gain political knowledge, mobilizing information in news media can encourage citizens to participate in political activities.

Genre and program differences within the same media also matter. Exposure to informational television content, such as news programs, is positively associated with political efficacy (Newhagen, 1994) and political participation (e.g. McLeod et al., 1996), whereas watching entertaining television programs is negatively associated with political efficacy (Newhagen, 1994). In a similar vein, Chang (2004) also demonstrated that only time spent on the Internet during one's spare time, not time spent for work purposes, is negatively associated with political participation. Therefore, it seems important to distinguish between time spent on different media as well as time spent on the same media but different genres or programs.

It is reasoned in this paper that time displacement may lead to a decline in political participation when media content provides only entertainment. Under situations where media provide issue knowledge or mobilizing information, time spent on these media may encourage political participation.

In this study, watching television news programs was distinguished from watching non-news programs, and using the Internet during work hours was distinguished from using it after work. In Taiwan, more people (71%) read magazines to gain information regarding politics, the society or the economy than to be entertained (26%) (Chang & Fu, 2004). TV news programs, newspapers, and magazines provide political information and may work to mobilize political participation. Time spent on the Internet during work hours, which is positively associated with information

searching, has been found to encourage political participation (Chang, 2004) and thus is believed to have a mobilizing function as well. Therefore, newspapers, television news, magazines, and Internet at work will be categorized as mobilizing media.

In contrast, non-news programs on TV are entertainment-oriented. The amount of time an individual spends on entertainment content is likely to displace time spent on mobilizing media. In addition, the entertainment programs with the highest ratings in Taiwan are ethnic soap operas, which often contain cynical portrayals of the world and have been criticized for cultivating social distrust and alienation (Guan, 2003). Taiwanese audiences tune into radio primarily for music (63%) rather than for news (23%) (Chang & Fu, 2004). Moreover, time spent on the Internet during one's spare time, which is positively associated with entertainment motives, has been shown to predict a significant decline in political participation (Chang, 2004). Thus, television non-news programs, radio, and Internet for pleasure will be categorized as demobilizing media. In general, use of demobilizing media is expected to discourage political participation. In the following sections, the positive associations between mobilizing media use and political interest and between demobilizing media use and political cynicism will be explored.

Media Use and Political Interest

Political interest is the degree to which individuals are interested in politics. Political interest has been demonstrated to be positively correlated with civic engagement (Shah, 1998) and an important predictor of political participation (Vedlitz & Veblen, 1980). In general, the more an individual is interested in politics, the greater his or her political participation. Political interest appears to function as a positive drive for political participation.

Findings regarding the relationship between media use and political interest are inconsistent. Some researchers have demonstrated that media uses are positive predictors of political interest. For example, McLeod et al. (1996) found that reading newspapers and watching television news are associated with greater political interest. Other studies showed that the relationship between media use and political interest is determined by both media type and content. For example, Newton (1999) showed that time spent watching television in general is associated with a decline in interest in politics, but time spent specifically watching television news kindles people's interest in politics. Therefore, distinguishing time spent on news programs and time spent on non-news programs will help clarify the complex relationship between television use and political interest.

Relatively less explored is the relationship between Internet use and political interest. One exception is Bucy, D'Angelo, and Newhagen's (1999) study indicating that Internet use is positively associated with interest in politics. Nevertheless, the relationship between Internet use and political interest also varies as a function of individuals' motivations for Internet use. Kaye and Johnson (2002) showed that only

those using the Internet for information seeking and social utility are more likely to express higher levels of political interest. Thus, it is important to distinguish between time spent on the Internet for pleasure and for work purposes.

Given that political interest is an important predictor of political participation, this study will first explore the relationship between time spent on various media and political interest. In line with earlier argument, it is proposed that time spent on mobilizing media content will arouse political interest.

> Hypothesis 1: Time spent on mobilizing media (TV news, newspapers, magazines, and Internet for work) is positively associated with political interest.

Media Use and Political Cynicism

Political cynicism can be generally defined as 'a lack of confidence in and a feeling of distrust toward the political system, including political officials and institutions' (Pinkleton, Austin, & Forman, 1998, p. 36). Declining trust in government has been attributed to the government's failure to fulfill the needs of its people (Miller, 1974), to people's dissatisfaction with the incumbent administration (Citrin, 1974), and, specifically, to media negativity (Patterson, 1993). For example, a media focus on campaign strategies has been shown to result in increased political cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Political cynicism has been demonstrated to be negatively correlated with political efficacy, which leads to lower level of political participation (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995). Therefore, political cynicism appears to be a negative predictor of political participation.

However, in general, findings regarding the positive relationship between media use and political cynicism are not unanimous. Some research has shown an absence of correlation. For example, Moy and Scheufele's (2000) findings indicated that reading newspapers and watching television news or entertainment programs are not significantly associated with political trust. Leshner and Thorson (1999) showed that the degree of an individual's media reliance is not significantly associated with his or her political cynicism. Other studies have suggested that media use is a positive predictor of political trust. For example, Pinkleton et al. (1998) demonstrated that active media use (actively seeking information and paying attention to news) is positively associated with political trust.

Media types have been shown to moderate the relationship between media use and political cynicism. For example, Leshner and McKean (1997) found that newspaper use is associated with less political cynicism, but radio and magazine use are not significantly related to cynicism. Newton (1999) showed a positive relationship between television use and cynicism toward the government but found no association between regular newspaper reading and cynicism. In addition, Pinkleton and Austin (2000) demonstrated that newspaper reading is a negative predictor of cynicism toward the government, whereas magazine reading is a positive predictor. A couple of other studies specifically explored the association between political trust and television and newspaper dependency. These studies suggested that dependency on

newspapers has a positive correlation with trust in the local and federal government, whereas dependency on television has a negative correlation with trust in the government (Becker & Whitney, 1980) and no significant correlation with trust in politicians (O'Keefe, 1980). In general, the findings in this area are not consistent.

The association between Internet use and political trust has been examined only recently. Kaye and Johnson (2002) demonstrated that the correlation between Internet use and political trust depends on the purpose of the Internet use. Internet used for entertainment was positively associated with political trust, whereas Internet used for guidance was negatively associated with political trust. Another study in Korea showed that use of the Internet is negatively associated with political cynicism (Lin & Lim, 2002).

Given the conflicting findings in the past literature, the relationship between time spent on mobilizing and demobilizing media and political trust also will be explored in this study. Consistent with earlier arguments, it is proposed that the use of demobilizing media, which is mainly for entertainment, may displace the time available for mobilizing political information. In addition, non-news programs portray the world in a negative light and cultivate a sense of cynicism. As a result, exposure to these programs may enhance cynicism toward the world. Therefore, time spent on demobilizing media will positively predict political cynicism.

> Hypothesis 2: Time spent on demobilizing media (TV non-news, radio, and Internet for pleasure) is positively associated with political cynicism.

Media Use and Political Participation

Political participation is defined as 'those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selections of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take' (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 2). Conway (1991) distinguished passive political participation from active political participation. Passive political participation involves 'following political campaigns through the mass media' (p. 4), whereas active political participation is more goal-oriented and involves activities such as working for candidates, writing public officials, or seeking political offices.

It is generally agreed that reading newspapers is positively correlated with political participation. For example, McLeod et al. (1999) found that newspaper use is positively related to institutionalized participation, such as voting and contacting political officials. Those who subscribe to local and regional newspapers have been shown to be more likely to vote and be involved in local politics (Viswanath, Finnegan, Rooney, & Potter, 1990). The importance of newspaper use also was documented in Eveland and Scheufele's (2000) study. They showed that newspaper use is associated with more voting behaviors and a higher degree of political participation, including displaying a campaign button, sign, or sticker; attending candidates' rallies; and donating money to candidates or political parties.

In contrast, findings regarding the influence of television use have been inconsistent. On the one hand, watching television news has been shown to be

positively associated with political participation, similar to reading newspapers. For example, Wilkins (2000) found that exposure to both television news and newspapers are positively associated with political participation, including voting and registering as a party member. Similarly, McLeod et al. (1996) showed that exposure to newspapers and television news significantly predicts political participation, such as taking part in institutional activities and attending forums.

On the other hand, television use may generate negative influences or have no effects on political participation. Norris (1996) demonstrated that time spent watching television is negatively associated with voting, participating in campaigns (e.g. working for or contributing to a campaign), and actively participating in politics (e.g. contacting officials or protesting), but time spent watching public affairs programs is positively associated with these participation variables. Viswanath et al. (1990) found that subscribing to cable television is not significantly associated with political participation. Failure to distinguish between program genres may account for this null result.

The influence of other traditional media, such as magazines and radio, on political participation is relatively less explored. Recently, however, the influence of Internet use has drawn researchers' attention. For example, categorizing respondents into voters and non-voters based on their past voting behavior, Bucy et al. (1999) showed that voters and non-voters differ in their use of the Internet for political purposes. Voters were more likely to access political websites than non-voters. Accessing political Internet sites may encourage political participation. Chang (2004) found that time spent on the Internet during one's spare time is negatively associated with political participation. The distinct uses of the Internet for work and for entertainment may be differentially related to participation in politics, and these possibly divergent patterns of association deserve research attention.

It is evident from the reviewed literature that political participation comes in various forms. Most researchers distinguish election participation from other forms of participation that require more information and motivation (Eveland & Scheufele, 2000). Therefore, two types of political participation will be explored in this study: election participation and active participation. The voting rate in Taiwan's most recent presidential election was high at 80.28%. Active participation, on the other hand, involves such activities as contacting officials or participating in political rallies or protests.

In line with earlier arguments, time spent on mobilizing and demobilizing media should have opposite relationships with political participation. Use of mobilizing media is expected to positively predict political participation, whereas use of demobilizing media is expected to negatively predict political participation.

> Hypothesis 3: Time spent on mobilizing media (TV news, newspapers, magazines, and Internet for work) is positively associated with active political participation (H3a) and election participation (H3b), whereas time spent on demobilizing media (TV non-news, radio, and Internet for pleasure) is negatively associated with active political participation (H3c) and election participation (H3d).

Political Interest as a Mediator between Mobilizing Media Use and Political Participation

One of the possible reasons why exposure to mobilizing media content is positively associated with political participation is that exposure enhances political interest, and political interest encourages participation. This hypothesized mediation process will be explored.

> Hypothesis 4: Political interest mediates the relationship between time spent on mobilizing media (TV news, newspapers, magazines, and Internet for work) and active political participation (H4a) and election participation (H4b).

Political Cynicism as a Mediator between Demobilizing Media Use and Political Participation

In a similar vein, one of the possible reasons why exposure to demobilizing media is negatively associated with political participation is that exposure to this kind of media may increase political cynicism, and cynicism discourages political participation. This proposed mediation process will also be examined.

> Hypothesis 5: Political cynicism mediates the relationship between time spent on demobilizing media (TV non-news, radio, and Internet for pleasure) and active political participation (H5a) and election participation (H5b).

Data

Analyses of the Taiwan's Social Change Survey data were performed to test the specified hypotheses. The data have been collected by Academia Sinica every four years since 1983. The data collection was done via face-to-face interviews. The data released in 2004 were collected from September 28 to October 24 in 2003. The population was all adults over 18 in Taiwan. Census was used as the sampling frame. A probability proportional to size sampling first determined the towns and districts to be included in the sample. Then a systematic sampling determined who would be contacted for the interviews within the sampled towns and districts. The proportions of sampled participants in terms of gender, age, and gender by age were not significantly different from the population (see Table 1). In total, 2,161 respondents completed the interview. Among them, 1,068 respondents had never used the Internet before. The response rate was 58.03%.

Measures

Time spent on various media was measured in terms of hours and minutes. In the analyses, all the responses were transformed into total minutes. For those who did not use the specified media, the time they spent on that media was zero minutes.

Table 1 Comparisons of the Sample and Population in Terms of Gender, Age, and Gender by Age

	No. of participants sampled	No. of expected cases	χ^2	p-value
Gender				
Male	1,845	1,899.5	3.194	0.074
Female	1,879	1,824.5		
Age				
<20	156	157.6	5.756	0.331
20–29	873	850.1		
30–39	784	831.3		
40–49	816	774.5		
50–59	462	468.4		
≥60	633	642.0		
Gender by age				
Male <20	85	81.2	12.464	0.330
Male 20–29	447	429.2		
Male 30–39	390	422.7		
Male 40–49	397	392.4		
Male 50–59	210	234.7		
Male ≥60	316	327.5		
Female <20	71	76.4		
Female 20–29	426	421.0		
Female 30–39	394	408.6		
Female 40–49	419	382.2		
Female 50–59	252	233.7		
Female ≥60	317	314.6		

Note: $N = 3,724$.

Time Spent on Mobilizing Media

Time spent on mobilizing media was calculated by summing time spent on the following four media or genres.

TV news

Respondents were asked on average how much time they spent watching television news programs every day.

Newspapers

Respondents were asked on average how much time they spent reading newspapers each day.

Magazines

Respondents were asked on average how many days per month they read magazines. Days were transferred to minutes by multiplying the number of days reported by 20 minutes.

Internet for work

Respondents were asked on average how much time they spent online each day. The time spent on the Internet during their spare time was deducted from the time they spent on the Internet in total to get the estimate for the time spent online at work.

Time Spent on Demobilizing Media

Time spent on demobilizing media was calculated by summing time spent on the following three media or genres.

TV Non-news

Respondents were asked on average how much time they spent watching television each day. Then, the time they spent watching news programs was deducted from the time they spent watching any television to get the estimate of the time spent on non-news programs.

Radio

Respondents were asked on average how much time they spent listening to the radio each month. Their responses were divided by 30 to represent the average time per day spent listening to the radio.

Internet for pleasure

Respondents were asked on average how much time they spent online each day during their spare time.

Political Interest

Using a 5-point Likert scale, participants responded to two statements measuring their political interest. They were: 'In general, I am interested in politics' and 'In general, I am interested in political affairs'. Higher scores indicate more political interest. The correlation of the two items was significant, Pearson's $r(2159) = 0.74$, $p < 0.01$.

Political Cynicism

Respondents used a 5-point Likert scale to answer four questions about political trust: 'Do you agree that the government does not have specific plans for the future?', 'Do you agree that you can trust the government to make the right decisions for us?', 'Do you agree that government officials often waste the taxes we pay?' and 'Do you agree that most officials are not corrupt?' High scores indicate more

cynicism. The second and fourth items were reversed. Cronbach's alpha was 0.65, indicating satisfactory scale reliability.

Political Participation

Nine items probed respondents' political participation. A factor analysis with varimax rotation generated two factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 4.56, accounting for 50.62% of the variance, and the second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.18, accounting for 13.07% of the variance.

The first factor measured active participation and included the following items: 'writing to newspapers or magazines to express my political opinions', 'contacting political officials', 'attending rallies', 'calling in to express opinions in television or radio programs' and 'voting via telephones to express my political opinions'. Cronbach's alpha for this subscale was 0.87, indicating good internal reliability.

The second factor measured election participation and included: 'persuading my friends to support my favorite candidates', 'attending campaign rallies', 'soliciting voter support for my favorite candidates' and 'casting my vote in most of the past elections'. Higher scores indicate more participation. Reliability of this subscale was satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha $= 0.66$).

Results

For each of the hypotheses, results of two regression models will be reported. In the first model, media uses were categorized as mobilizing or demobilizing, whereas in the second model, each type of media use was entered as a separate predictor. In all the models, demographic variables (gender, age, and education) were entered in the first stage. Men were dummy coded as '0' and women as '1'. For age, participants reported the year in which they were born. Coding of education ranged from no formal education (coded as '0') to a doctoral degree (coded as '19'), so higher numbers indicated more education.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that use of mobilizing media is positively associated with political interest. When political interest was regressed upon the demographic variables, mobilizing media, and demobilizing media, mobilizing media emerged as a significant predictor, $\beta = 0.15$, $t = 6.54$, $p < 0.01$ (see Table 2). When political interest was regressed upon the seven media use variables, findings indicated that time spent on TV news, newspapers, and magazines was positively associated with political interest, whereas time on the Internet for pleasure was negatively associated with political interest. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. In terms of demographic differences, findings showed that men, older respondents, and highly educated respondents generated higher ratings of political interest.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that use of demobilizing media is positively associated with political cynicism. When political cynicism was regressed upon demographics variables, mobilizing media, and demobilizing media, demobilizing media emerged

Table 2 Regression Results for Political Interest and Political Cynicism

| | Political interest | | | | Political cynicism | | | |
| | Model I | | Model II | | Model I | | Model II | |
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
Gender*	−0.15	0.01	−0.16	0.01	0.02	0.28	0.02	0.27
Age	−0.13	0.01	−0.12	0.01	0.19	0.01	0.20	0.01
Education**	0.16	0.01	0.13	0.01	0.11	0.01	0.11	0.01
Mobilizing media	0.15	0.01			0.01	0.55		
TV news			0.15	0.01			0.01	0.58
Newspapers			0.12	0.01			0.03	0.15
Magazines			0.08	0.01			−0.02	0.30
Internet work			−0.01	0.80			−0.01	0.76
Demobilizing media	−0.03	0.14			0.06	0.01		
TV non-news			−0.01	0.93			0.06	0.01
Radio			0.01	0.99			0.02	0.28
Internet pleasure			−0.12	0.01			0.01	0.63
	$R^2 = 0.08$, $p < 0.01$		$R^2 = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$		$R^2 = 0.08$, $p < 0.01$		$R^2 = 0.09$, $p < 0.01$	

Note: $N = 2{,}161$. *Men were dummy coded as '0' and women as '1'. **Coding of education ranged from no formal education (coded as '0') to a doctoral degree (coded as '19'), so higher numbers indicated more education.

as a significant predictor, $\beta = 0.06$, $t = 2.53$, $p = 0.01$ (see Table 2). When political cynicism was regressed upon the seven media use predictors, results demonstrated that more time spent watching TV non-news programs predicted greater political cynicism. Hypothesis 2 was thus supported. In terms of demographics, findings showed that younger and more highly educated respondents generated significantly higher ratings of political cynicism.

Hypotheses 3a and 3c predict that use of mobilizing media is positively associated with active participation, whereas use of demobilizing media is negatively associated with active participation. When active participation was regressed upon demographic variables, mobilizing media, and demobilizing media, mobilizing media emerged as a significant positive predictor, $\beta = 0.07$, $t = 2.88$, $p < 0.01$, whereas demobilizing media emerged as a significant negative predictor, $\beta = -0.05$, $t = -2.23$, $p = 0.03$ (see Table 3). When active participation was regressed upon the seven media use variables, time spent on TV news and newspapers was positively associated with active participation, whereas Internet for pleasure was negatively associated with active participation. Results supported Hypotheses 3a and 3c. Results for the demographics indicated that men were more likely to engage in active participation.

When election participation was regressed upon demographic variables, mobilizing media, and demobilizing media, mobilizing media emerged as a significant positive

Table 3 Regression Results for Active Participation and Election Participation

	Active participation				Election participation			
	Model I		Model II		Model I		Model II	
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
Gender	−0.07	0.01	−0.07	0.01	−0.09	0.01	−0.10	0.01
Age	0.05	0.11	0.05	0.09	−0.14	0.01	−0.13	0.01
Education	0.03	0.26	0.02	0.51	0.01	0.73	−0.03	0.36
Mobilizing media	0.07	0.01			0.09	0.01		
TV news			0.06	0.01			0.06	0.01
Newspapers			0.05	0.04			0.12	0.01
Magazines			0.04	0.12			0.08	0.01
Internet work			0.01	0.66			−0.01	0.69
Demobilizing media	−0.05	0.03			−0.01	0.86		
TV non-news			−0.02	0.40			0.02	0.47
Radio			−0.03	0.25			0.02	0.50
Internet pleasure			−0.07	0.01			−0.08	0.01
	$R^2 = 0.02$, $p < 0.01$		$R^2 = 0.02$, $p < 0.01$		$R^2 = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$		$R^2 = 0.07$, $p < 0.01$	

Note: $N = 2,161$. *Men were dummy coded as '0' and women as '1'. **Coding of education ranged from no formal education (coded as '0') to a doctoral degree (coded as '19'), so higher numbers indicated more education.

predictor, $\beta = 0.09$, $t = 3.89$, $p < 0.01$, but demobilizing media was not significant (see Table 3). Therefore, only Hypothesis 3b was supported. When election participation was regressed upon the seven kinds of media use, time spent on TV news, newspapers, and magazines was positively associated with election participation, whereas Internet for pleasure was negatively associated with election participation. In terms of demographic variables, results indicated that men and older respondents were more likely to engage in election participation.

According to Hypothesis 4a, political interest mediates the relationship between time spent on mobilizing media and active political participation. Adopting Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach to testing for mediation, a series of regression analyses were conducted, with demographic variables included in all the models. Regression results showed that: (1) mobilizing media significantly predicted political interest ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$); (2) political interest contributed significantly to active participation ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$); (3) mobilizing media accounted for significant variance in active participation ($\beta = 0.07$, $p < 0.01$); and (4) when both mobilizing media and political interest were included in the same model predicting active participation, mobilizing media was no longer significant ($\beta = 0.01$, $p = 0.54$), but political interest remained significant ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$). These results provided confirmatory evidence for Hypothesis 4a.

Hypothesis 4b states that political interest also mediates the relationship between time spent on mobilizing media and election participation. Regression results showed that: (1) mobilizing media predicted political interest ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$); (2) political interest contributed significantly to election participation ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$); (3) mobilizing media accounted for significant variance in election participation ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < 0.01$); and (4) when both mobilizing media and political interest were in the same equation predicting election participation, mobilizing media was no longer significant ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.80$), but political interest remained significant ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$). These results support Hypothesis 4b.

As stated in Hypothesis 5a, political cynicism mediates the relationship between time spent on demobilizing media and active political participation. Regression results showed that: (1) demobilizing media significantly predicted political cynicism ($\beta = 0.06$, $p = 0.01$); (2) political cynicism contributed significantly to active participation ($\beta = -0.12$, $p < 0.01$); (3) demobilizing media accounted for significant variance in active participation ($\beta = -0.05$, $p = 0.03$); and (4) when both demobilizing media and political cynicism were included in the equation predicting active participation, the significance of demobilizing media was reduced ($\beta = -0.05$, $p = 0.05$), and political cynicism remained significant ($\beta = -0.11$, $p < 0.01$). The results suggested that time spent on demobilizing media was both directly related to active participation and indirectly related via its association with political cynicism. Therefore, political cynicism was only a partial mediator of this relationship, lending partial support for Hypothesis 5a.

Finally, Hypothesis 5b states that political cynicism mediates the relationship between time spent on demobilizing media and election participation. Regression results showed that demobilizing media significantly predicted political cynicism ($\beta = 0.06$, $p = 0.01$). However, neither political cynicism ($\beta = -0.03$, $p = 0.23$) nor demobilizing media ($\beta = -0.01$, $p = 0.86$) was a significant predictor of election participation. Therefore, the mediation relationship among these three variables was not established, and Hypothesis 5b was not supported.

Discussion

By categorizing media as either politically mobilizing or demobilizing, the nature of the relationship between media use and political participation can be better understood. As demonstrated in this paper, mobilizing media use is positively associated with political interest, active political participation, and election participation, whereas demobilizing media use is positively associated with political cynicism and negatively associated with active political participation.

More importantly, mediation models were tested to understand the different processes triggered by the use of mobilizing and demobilizing media. Findings for mobilizing media use are consistent with expectations. Use of mobilizing media was linked to greater political interest, which in turn predicted more active political and election participation. It is important to note that exposure to mobilizing media may

also motivate political participation by informing individuals about important political issues. Therefore, in addition to political interest, political knowledge may function as an important mediator in the process. Future research can explore this possibility.

The mediation model for use of demobilizing media only received partial support. On the one hand, use of demobilizing media was both directly and indirectly related to election participation, indirectly via its association with political cynicism. On the other hand, use of demobilizing media was not significantly associated with election participation, which is counter to expectations. One possible explanation for this result is that voting in Taiwan is regarded as an important civil responsibility for a citizen. For example, the voting rate in the 2004 presidential elections was much higher in Taiwan (80%) than in the United States (55%) (Wattenberg, 2005). Therefore, time spent on demobilizing media may discourage individuals from contacting political officials or participating in rallies, but may not discourage them from casting their votes. Another possible explanation is that the relationship between political cynicism and election participation may vary as a function of an individual's education or political involvement. For example, Valentino, Bechmann, and Buhr (2001) demonstrated that media use results in detrimental consequences only among those who are less educated and less involved in politics. It is likely that use of demobilizing media discourages only those who are less educated, not those who are highly educated, attenuating the expected negative relationship between use of demobilizing media and election participation.

As expected, time spent on TV news versus non-news programs exerted divergent patterns of influence. Time spent on news programs was positively associated with political interest, active participation, and election participation. On the contrary, time spent watching non-news programs was positively associated with political cynicism. It appears that television news may provide important issue information that arouses individuals' political interest and encourages their political participation. In other words, the content delivered by the media seems to matter as much as the length of time spent on the media. In Taiwan, there are nine cable news channels that broadcast news 24 hours a day, which may function as important sources for political information.

In this study, time spent on the Internet for work was not associated with political interest or participation. One of the explanations is that Internet for work is only a proxy derived from 'Internet for pleasure' and may not truly represent work-related Internet use. Yet, time spent on the Internet for pleasure was negatively associated with political interest, active participation, and election participation. From the perspective of the time displacement hypothesis, time spent on the Internet after work is more likely to displace time for political participation. As a result, individuals who spend more time online after work may be less likely to vote or to be involved in other political activities.

This study utilized secondary data and could not further categorize time spent on newspapers, magazines and radio for specific content (e.g. entertainment or political

information). Therefore, findings regarding time spent on these media are less consistent. Reading newspapers, which were categorized as mobilizing media, positively predicted political interest, active participation, and election participation. Reading magazines, which were also categorized as mobilizing media, only positively predicted political interest and election participation. Both of these media forms may encourage political participation because they provide readers with political information. Listening to the radio, which was categorized as demobilizing media, was not linked to less political interest or participation. Even though the radio is used primarily for entertainment, it is likely that listening to the radio usually accompanies the performance of other tasks. Therefore, radio use may be less likely to generate time displacement effects than watching television entertainment programs.

Demographic characteristics also accounted for significant variance in the regression analyses. Men, in comparison with women, expressed more political interest and participated more in politics. Also, older people showed greater political interest and participated more in election-related activities, and younger people were more likely to express cynicism. Those with more education tended to have higher levels of political interest but also higher levels of political cynicism. The positive influence of political interest and the negative influence of political cynicism for highly educated individuals may cancel each other out, which could explain why there exists no significant association between education and political participation.

It is important to note that the data reported in this study were not collected during election campaign periods. Past research has indicated that during election campaigns news media are replete with negative coverage, which has been accused of generating political cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Exposure to media coverage of election campaigns that abound with negative stories can also lead to a decline in political efficacy (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentio, 1994). Chang's (2002) investigation of the 2000 presidential election in Taiwan also suggested that exposure to newspapers or attention to television news negatively predicted voters' internal political efficacy. In contrast, in non-election contexts news media is believed to be an important information source that enables citizens to gain understanding about the political world (e.g. Pan et al., 1994). It appears that if the data had been collected in campaign periods as opposed to non-campaign periods, findings may have been different.

When interpreting the results reported here, the study's limitations should be taken into consideration. First, it is difficult to establish the cause–effect relationship using cross-sectional data. For example, it is possible that political interest is the antecedent, not the consequence, of using mobilizing media. Similarly, the data cannot rule out the possibility that political cynicism leads individuals to shun news media delivering political information. Second, this study employed secondary data that did not measure time spent on mass media for specific types of content. This made it impossible to further categorize media use specifically on content. Third, in this study, time spent on media was the indicator of media use. Past research has shown that attention to media rather than time spent on media can better explain the effects

of media use (e.g. Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986). Future research can explore the differences between time spent on media and attention to media. Finally, time spent on television news, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet for work were summed to indicate time spent on mobilizing media, whereas time spent on television non-news, radio, and the Internet for pleasure were summed to indicate time spent on demobilizing media. However, some of the media can be used simultaneously, such as Internet and radio, reducing the possible time displacement effects. Therefore, how to measure the total time spent on various media, taking into account the possibility of concurrent usage, is deemed an important question for future research.

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