

정치 참여자의 세대적 · 사회경제학적 · 인구배경학적 대표성에 대한 인터넷의 영향

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요약 이 연구는 인터넷을 통한 미국 시민들의 정치 참여가 참여자의 인구배경학적 · 사회경제학적 특성을 어떻게 하는 변화시켰는지를 분석한다. Pew Research Center의 서베이 데이터에 대한 분석은 일상적인 정치적 대화, 정부 공무원과의 접촉, 민원 제기, 정치적 기부 등의 네 가지 차원에 초점을 맞추었다. 분석을 통해, 본 논문은 인터넷이 정치적 참여의 기존 패턴에 어떻게 영향을 미치는지, 그리고 인터넷이 참여적 불평등의 인구배경학적 분포에 어떻게 영향을 미치는지를 파악하였다. 주요한 연구결과는 다음과 같다. 참여의 부가적 도구를 제공하는 인터넷은 불평등과 비례적이지 않은 대표성의 기존 패턴들을 크게 변화시키지 못하였다. 또한 인터넷이 여전히 정치적 활동의 주요한 매개체가 아니기 때문에 인터넷의 새로운 참여를 유발하는 잠재성은 아직은 제한적으로 발현되는 경향이 있다. 인구배경학적 및 사회경제학적 특성에 따라 나누어지는 사회집단 간의 참여적 격차는 인터넷의 활용에도 불구하고 극적인 변화가 나타나지는 않고 있다. 결론적으로 본 연구는 대중 민주주의의 차원에서 볼 때 인터넷의 정치 참여에 대한 효과는 동원(mobilization) 효과보다 강화(reinforcement) 효과가 더 크다는 것을 보여준다.

주제어: 참여적 격차, 정치 참여, 강화 효과, 동원 효과

Internet Effects on Generational, Socioeconomic, and Demographic Representativeness in Political Activity

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Abstract This article assesses and examines democratic potentials of the Internet for U.S. citizens' political participation. The empirical analysis on the data from Pew Research Center's questionnaire survey focuses on four different political activities in both online and offline modes: casual political talk, contact with a government official, petition, and political contribution. The study answers two research inquiries: 1) How does the Internet influence the established patterns of political participation?; and 2) How does the Internet influence the demographic distribution of participatory inequality? Firstly, the Internet, by providing existing participants with additional tools for participation, reinforces conventional participation, rather than mobilizing new participation in politics. Secondly, the online patterns of the participation divide with respect to demographic characteristics imitate the traditional patterns of inequality and disproportionate representativeness in political participation. The Internet is still not a predominant medium for political activities. Citizens' utilization of its transformative and mobilizing potentials remains limited.

Keywords: democratic divide, political participation, reinforcement effect, mobilization effect

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I. Internet Effects on Generational, Socioeconomic, and Demographic Representativeness in Political Activity

The Internet's effect on digital democracy has been controversial, as some view the effect with optimism, while others remain skeptic. Its easily accessible technical features and non-hierarchical nature have the potential to enable equalizing in addition to boosting the level of participation (Brants, 2005; Gastil, 2000; Schwartz, 1995). Optimists champion Internet-driven democratization, which would create new avenues for personal expression and civic activities (Kling, 1996; Negroponte, 1998; Rheingold, 1993, 2001; Valovic, 2000), talk broaden the public's political role (Bowen, 1996; Browning, 1996; Wilhelm, 2000), and revitalize the declining public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002). On the contrary, skepticism emerging from the profound question, "Whose utopia is cyberspace?" has strongly appealed to academics, who assess Internet effects on democracy by comparing between offline and online versions of political participation (Hargittai, 2007b, a; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Norris, 1999, 2001; van Dijk, 2005, 2006).

Despite the democratic potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs), research on digital democracy has provided a volume of compelling caveats and evidence to support cyber-skepticism.

Political participation on the Internet shows the gap between activists and inactivists in terms of demographic and socioeconomic profiles. The pattern behind the gap in online political participation (or the democratic divide) resembles the established participatory inequality in offline politics, thereby shrinking the mobilization effect that invites offline political inactivists to a new sphere. Along with recent discussions on the participation divide, a growing body of literature juggling between reinforcement of conventional participation and mobilization of new participation leans toward the absence of any dramatic transition in participatory patterns (Albrecht, 2006; Best & Krueger, 2005; Brunsting & Postmes, 2002; Gibson, et al., 2002, 2005; Jensen, et al., 2007; Krueger, 2002, 2006).

Focusing on political participation in the United States, this paper investigates the validity of proof—the limited transformative effects of the Internet on political participation—underlying skepticism of digital democracy. To examine the democratic potential of the Internet for political participation, the paper raises two research inquiries: 1) *How does the Internet influence the established patterns of political participation?*; and 2) *How does the Internet influence the demographic distribution of participatory inequality?* By analyzing Pew Research Center's national survey on American citizens' political activities, this study investigates both whether the Internet reinforces conventional participation or

mobilizes new participation in politics and whether the online pattern of demographic equality in political participation follows or overturns the traditional offline pattern. The study establishes four different categories of online and offline political activities: casual political talk, contact with a government official, petition, and political contribution. For the first research question, the online and offline modes of political participation will be tested to determine whether they are categorically different. To answer the second research question, the analysis will assess generational, socioeconomic, and demographic representativeness of political participation, offline and online, in four political activities. The paper is organized as follows: 1) theoretical and empirical considerations for comparative research on online and offline modes of political participation, 2) data and method, 3) the results of weighing the reinforcement vs. mobilization thesis, 4) the results of examining the democratic divide, and 5) conclusive remarks.

II. Empirical Considerations

In terms of three themes, this section reviews previous research that compares and contrasts online and offline modes of political activities. First, the section discusses arguments in research weighing between reinforcement and mobilization. Second, it explores the democratic divide or the participation divide (*i.e.*, the gap in

political use of the Internet) beyond concerns of the access and skills divide. Last, it categorizes political activities considered for comparative research on online vs. offline political participation.

1. Reinforcement vs. Mobilization

A rich body of empirical research tests the two confronting theses: mobilization (equalization) thesis and the reinforcement (normalization) thesis. For the mobilization effect, “the Internet would inform, organize and engage those who are currently less active in, marginalized, or alienated from the established political system” (Norris, 2001: 218). For the reinforcement effect, citizens who are already active and well-connected via existing channels take advantage of online resources (Best & Krueger, 2005; Dalton, 2013; Delli Carpini, 2000).

Some studies inclined toward the reinforcement thesis convey skeptic rather than optimistic conclusions. Political involvement online follows the conventional patterns of participation, and thereby deepens the existing social divide between participants and nonparticipants, and between the information-rich and the information-poor (Chen & Lee, 2008). In the strand of online vs. offline politics research, the Internet hardly plays a pivotal role in transforming participation patterns marked by socioeconomic status (SES) (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Online political participation reinforces, and sometimes exacerbates the

existing social inequalities in offline political participation by marginalizing those from lower socioeconomic classes. Online and offline political participation reinforce each other, but the magnitudes at which each exerts reinforcement may differ. According to Nam's (2009) study, conventional political participants take part in online political activities more frequently than online political participants take part in traditional modes. Gibson et al. (2005) undervalued ICT-driven democratization as "over-vaunted hype"; with the rise of the normalization effect, the Internet is "neither an agent of glorious revolution nor apocalypse now, but a bolster for the status quo" (p. 563).

However, all demographic antecedents in prior research do not signify the reinforcement argument. Jensen, et al. (2007) found notable distinctions in antecedents between online and offline modes of democratic participation. While traditional markers of SES and age do matter for offline political participation, they are not significant determinants of online participation (Nam, 2009), which suggests the new pattern of more equalized participation by the less affluent, less educated and the younger generations.

2. The Democratic Divide

The democratic divide refers to "a divergence between people who do and do not use digital resources to engage, mobilize

and participate in public life" (Norris, 1999, 2001). The scope of the democratic divide, public life, does not demarcate its boundary clearly, but studies on the democratic divide chiefly highlight engagement, mobilization and participation in online politics and civic activities. Various manifestations of citizenship via the Internet demonstrate an apparent demographic-driven inequality (Nam, 2010). The divide in access to the Internet and web skills predetermines the social level of online political participation because those who lack access and skills cannot join the continuously expanding digital sphere of politics. Socio-demographic disparities in access and skills result in the unequal distribution of technological resources, marginalization of the underprivileged, and resulting amplification of voices echoed by the affluent and well-educated (Davis, 1999; Davis & Owen, 1998; McChesney, 1999; Putnam, 2000). More importantly, recent discussions on the democratic divide, beyond reflecting the influence of the access divide, highlight a fundamental inhibitor dampening the broader spread of online political participation—the socio-demographic disparities between participants and nonparticipants within the population of citizens who already have access and basic skills.

A high volume of research reporting on the democratic divide criticizes the naïve cyber-optimistic ideal that the Internet would dramatically maximize its participatory

potentials (Hargittai, 2007b; Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Norris, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Wilhelm, 2000). An essential point predominant in previous studies inculcates that those from advantaged backgrounds (high SES profiles) access the Internet at higher rates and utilize the participatory opportunities online more frequently (Best & Krueger, 2005; Bimber, 2000b, 2001; Krueger, 2002). The difference in the level of political participation among SES ladders makes for an unavoidable corollary of the democratic divide, which is leveraged by the longstanding SES gap in traditional political participation, far more than by the equalization potential of ICTs (Brady, et al., 1995; Verba, et al., 1995).

The role of ICTs in the democratic divide remains uncertain (Brants, 2005; Moore, 1999; Shah, et al., 2001; Valovic, 2000). The patterns of political participation would be similar between online and offline modes when those endowed with conventional resources (e.g., civic skills, money, and time) required for offline participation disproportionately possess the Internet-specific resources (Krueger, 2002). On the contrary, the demographic pattern in online participation would differ from that in offline participation if the Internet makes it convenient for those lacking political resources to participate in online politics.

Socio-demographic characteristics like age, gender, race, income and education predict who participates in online and offline politics, what the participants do, and how

actively they participate in the two spheres (Albrecht, 2006). Those personal background conditions predetermine the level of online civic engagement (Boulianne, 2009). Findings in extant studies vary with data (mostly questionnaire surveys based on perceptions and experiences) and statistical methods employed. Recent activism of younger digital citizens in online politics, fueled by web-based communication, might overwhelm the general, conventional tendency of seniors' activeness in traditional politics (Livingstone, et al., 2004, 2005). Web-based campaigns of the presidential candidate Barack Obama in the 2008 election successfully attracted younger generations—typically apathetic and disinterested in traditional politics—to Internet politics (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Church, 2010; Libert & Faulk, 2009; Qualman, 2009; Ricke, 2010; Robertson, et al., 2009, 2010; Small, 2009; Smith, 2009; Wallsten, 2010).

Contrary to these facts favorable for upgrading the overall level of political participation, socio-demographics were recognized as determining markers of the democratic divide (Nam, 2010; Norris, 2001). Shelley, et al. (2006) found younger whites more apt to be digital citizens. In the study of Jensen, et al. (2007), wealthy senior citizens are more active in offline civic engagement, but both wealth and age are not a significant determinant for online civic engagement. Analyzing representativeness of online political participation, Best and Krueger (2005) suggested predictors for

online participation differ from those for offline participation.

3. The Category of Political Activities for Empirical Research

The way by which the Internet affects democratic practices varies with the nature of political activity: deliberation (Dahlberg, 2001a, b; Dahlgren, 2005; Jankowski & van Selm, 2000; Wilhelm, 1999, 2000), community activities (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002; Dalton, 2013; Dreyfus, 2001; Kraut, et al., 1998; Nie, et al., 2002; Poster, 2001b; Turkle, 1995; Wellman, et al., 2001; Williams, 2006), and casual political communication (Eliasoph, 1998; Stromer-Galley, 2002a, b, 2003; Verba, et al., 1995; Walsh, 2004). The online-offline differences in such practices have been empirically examined in terms of process (*i.e.*, how citizens interact and discuss with each other) and outcome (*i.e.*, what consequences the practices make for democracy).

Existing research has considered various types of political activity to compare between online and offline modes. Political conversation is considered an important starting point which often leads to political participation as an exercise of citizenship, as Harold D. Lasswell (1941) claimed that “democracy depends on talk.” It can enrich democracy by improving the quality of public opinion and enhancing citizens’ civic-mindedness (Bennett, et al., 2000). Specifically, informal conversation with

family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues has been recognized as crucial for spontaneous, unstructured communication among non-elites. Most natural, everyday conversations about politics occur in an unstructured, casual and grassroots-driven (bottom-up and horizontal) manner, not in institutionalized, systematic and elite-driven (top-down) ways (Walsh, 2004). Casual political conversations, unlike a structured pattern of political participation, do not require a great deal of resources, such as money and organizational skills (Verba, et al., 1995). While a structured pattern of political deliberation and discourse constrains participatory inclusiveness to interlocutors owning political resources in the public sphere, casual-mannered political talks can contribute to the increase in participatory opportunities for those who lack resources. Political subjects are often viewed as taboo in informal settings (Eliasoph, 1998), but ironically, in private (informal conversations) vs. public (formal discussions), people tend to speak more openly about political and public issues, and engage more freely in political conversations (Wyatt, et al., 1996). Regarding the point that the Internet has the potential to facilitate casual political conversation (Stromer-Galley, 2002a, b), the pattern of informal political discourse online and offline deserves empirical research.

A wide array of literature focuses on some typical types of more purposeful and engaged activity in both online and offline

modes. Political activity for online vs. offline comparative research includes contacting a public official or politician, attending a public meeting, signing a petition, and making a contribution or donation to a politician (Albrecht, 2006; di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Gibson, et al., 2002, 2005; Jensen, et al., 2007; Krueger, 2002, 2006; Livingstone, et al., 2004, 2005). The popularization of ICTs has changed the way people shop, work, gather news, and communicate (Krueger, 2002), but a consensus penetrating digital democracy studies claims that the patterns of online political participation repeat the established patterns of participatory inequality. Highlighting four different political activities occurring both online and offline—*i.e.*, casual political conversation, contact with a government official, petition, and political contribution—this study will examine the democratic potentials of the Internet by comparing conventional and Internet patterns.

III. Data, Measurements, and Methods

1. Data

The study analyzes the publicly-available data from the U.S.-based national survey (The Internet and Civic Engagement) that Pew Research Center conducted by telephone interviews during the pre-election season (August) of 2008. By considering only

variables relevant to this study, the dataset (N = 1,738) used in the study is extracted from the original random-sampled dataset (N = 2,251). Table 1 exhibits the demographic distribution of the sample.

Various groups of respondents are created with respect to the six demographic characteristics. Age is categorized into six generations in terms of the birth year (Howe & Strauss, 1991, 2000): Generation Y (born after 1976), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976), Trailing Boomers or Young Boomers (born between 1955 and 1964), Leading Boomers or Old Boomers (born between 1946 and 1954), Matures or Silent Generation (born between 1937 and 1945), and After-Work or GI Generation (born before 1937). In addition, the study also uses a simpler categorization of only three groups: younger generation (Generation X and Y), middle generation (Baby Boomers), and older generation (Matures and GI Generation). 83% of respondents identified themselves as Caucasian in the interview. Education and household income fall into four strata. The level of school attainment is stratified by high school graduation and college education: high school incompletes (grade 11 or lower), high school graduates (grade 12), some college (any higher education after secondary education, but not including four-year college graduation), and four-year college graduate or higher. While college graduates make up the highest percentage of the sample (37%), high school incompletes constitute only 8%. Household

<Table 1> The Demographic Distribution of the Sample

N = 1,738	Groups	Number	Proportion
Generation (Mean of age = 51)	Generation Y (born after 1976)	228	13%
	Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976)	339	20%
	Trailing boomers (born between 1955 and 1964)	369	21%
	Leading boomers (born between 1946 and 1954)	342	20%
	Matures (born between 1937 and 1945)	242	14%
	After work (born before 1937)	218	13%
Gender	Female	858	49%
	Male	880	51%
Race	Non-White	290	17%
	White	1,448	83%
Education	High school incompletes	135	8%
	High school graduates	530	31%
	Some college	426	25%
	College graduate or higher	640	37%
Household income	Less than \$20,000	308	18%
	\$20,000 to under \$50,000	372	21%
	\$50,000 to under \$75,000	450	26%
	\$75,000 or more	608	35%
Residence	Urban	451	26%
	Suburban	920	53%
	Rural	367	21%

Source: <http://www.pewinternet.org/datasets/august-2008-civic-engagement/>.

annual income is grouped at \$20,000, \$50,000 and \$75,000. In addition, the dataset is diverse in the type of communities where respondents live. Residential setting types comprise urban, suburban and rural areas.

2. Measurements

Focal variables include six socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, education, household income, and residence) and four different types of online

and offline political activity. Since this study spotlights differences between segments divided in terms of demographic conditions, demographics are coded in categorical values to create comparable groups. Much of prior research for comparison of online and offline political participation included age, gender, race, education and income as key antecedents for estimating the level of political participation (Albrecht, 2006; Brunsting & Postmes, 2002; Gibson, et al., 2002, 2005; Jennings & Zeitner, 2003;

Jensen, et al., 2007; Krueger, 2002, 2006; Livingstone, et al., 2004, 2005; Williams, 2006). These existing studies on the divide in political participation highlighted participatory inequality caused by those basic socio-demographics (Hargittai, 2002, 2007a, b; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Norris, 1999, 2001; van Dijk, 2005, 2006). Additionally, residential situation is also considered to be a demographic marker in making distinctions in online vs. offline political participation (Best & Krueger, 2005).

This study uses the following measures as variables for political activities. All four types of political activities are measured in a binary scale (1 = yes or frequent; 0 = no or infrequent). The original questions are described in the Appendix.

Casual political discussion. Casual political discussion is measured in terms of the frequency (every day, at least once a week, at least once a month, less than once a month, or never) at which a respondent discussed politics and public affairs with others (family members, friends, neighbors or colleagues) by online (email or instant message) and offline modes (face-to-face or by phone). Affirmative responses of “every day” or “at least once a week” are recoded as “1 = frequent political discussion” (online: 17%, offline: 55%), and other responses have the value of “0 = infrequent political discussion.”

Contact with a government official. This variable represents whether a respondent has experience contacting a national, state

or local government official in the past year by online (by email: 22%) or offline (in person, by phone, or by letter: 28%) method. Using either or both modes, 35% of total respondents have contacted a government official.

Petition. The petition-related question inquires whether a respondent has signed a petition during the preceding year on paper or online. The proportion of those who have signed paper petitions (27% of the sample) is higher than online petitioners (16%).

Political contribution. The measure for the political activity by political contribution is based on responses to the question of whether a respondent has contributed money to a political candidate, party, or any other political organization in the preceding year. 19% of the total sample had made offline contributions, but only 6% had contributed online.

3. Methods

The study adopts two methods. First, the cross-tabulation between online and offline modes of political participation tackles the first research question. All four political activities compare online and offline conditional frequencies. The online-offline contrast generates four quadrants for each tabulation: 1) offline active and online active, 2) offline active but online inactive, 3) offline inactive but online active, and 4) offline inactive and online inactive. The difference in the proportional composition allows us to

judge whether we should weigh normalization over mobilization or vice versa.

Second, the cross-group difference in terms of probability facilitates investigation into the other research topic. The within-group average of responses on a binary scale implies the probability that each demographic group would conduct a particular political activity. The illustration of probability differences demonstrates has two implications. It reveals the pattern of the participatory divide among multiple segments of the population with respect to each demographic condition, and it discloses whether the online pattern of political participation follows the offline pattern or diverges from it.

IV. Internet Effects: Reinforcement or Mobilization?

1. Offline Talk vs. Online Talk

Percentages by row, column, and cell, demonstrate the result of cross-tabulation by various approaches. The proportion of people who talk about politics online (by email, instant messaging, and online chatting) constitutes a mere 13% of the whole sample, while those who make casual political conversation offline make up almost 60% of the sample. The simple contrast between the two proportions indicates that most people primarily use traditional means (face to face or by phone) for daily political discussions. It is very rare (1% of the sample) that people only discuss politics online. Most of the online-talkers also categorically fall into the offline discussion group because 91% of those who engage in political discourse online answered that they also talk politics offline. By contrast, 21% of offline discussion respondents casually communicate about politics via online media. Almost four fifths of people who casually discuss politics rely entirely on face-to-face or telephone

〈Table 2〉 Cross-Tabulation between Online and Offline Talk

		Online Talk									
		Yes			No			Total			
Offline Talk	Yes	Row	21%			79%			100%		
		Column		91%			55%				
		Cell			12%			47%			59%
	No	Row	3%			97%			100%		
		Column		9%			45%				
		Cell			1%			39%			41%
	Total	Row									
		Column		100%			100%				
		Cell			87%			13%			100%

Note. Significance of cross-tabulation: $\chi^2 = 108.91$ ($p < 0.0001$), Pearson pairwise correlation: $r = 0.35$

communication rather than on computer-mediated communication.

People who do not participate in casual political discourse offline will be very unlikely to do so online. Only 3% of those who do not discuss politics offline do so online. The mobilization thesis is, therefore, not validated in regard to casual political conversation. The reinforcement effect is stronger than the mobilization effect because the percentage (21%) of offline conversationalists who talk politics online is higher than the percentage (3%) of people who do not participate in casual political conversation via either mode, offline or online. There is additional proof to support the normalization effect. Whereas most of the online conversationalists talk politics offline, only 21% of the offline conversationalists talk politics online. Since the online conversationalists also belong to the category of offline conversationalists, and not vice versa, those who discuss politics both online and offline utilize online tools as a supplementary or additional way to a conventional means of casual political communication rather than as an alternative means. There are three types of casual political conversation: only offline (47% of the whole sample, 78% of the political conversationalists), only online (1% and 2%, respectively), and both online and offline (12% and 20%, respectively). Because the preference for exclusively online casual political conversation is very unlikely, the leading channel for political discussion in

daily unstructured and informal settings is still face-to-face and telephone communication. Therefore, political use of the Internet for casual political discussion makes the online option sufficient, but not necessary for such conversations to take place.

2. Offline Contact vs. Online Contact

The pattern for contacting a government official is quite different from the pattern for casual political conversation. 65% of respondents answered that they did not, in the past year, contact a government official. There is not a great difference among the three ways of contact with a governmental official: 13% utilizing exclusively offline contact, 7% utilizing exclusively online contact, and 15% employing both online and offline channels for contact. Out of those who contacted a government official, the greatest percentage used both online and offline modes. The contrast between online and offline means for contacting a government official stays less severe than the distinction for casual political discussion: online conversation (13%) vs. offline conversation (59%), and online contact (22%) vs. offline contact (28%). It appears that the majority of respondents still prefer conventional media for casual political conversation; when discussing politics, people like to engage in such conversations face-to-face or by telephone. However, the Internet provides citizens with a more

<Table 3> Cross-Tabulation between Online and Offline Contact with Government Officials

			Online Talk					
			Yes		No		Total	
Offline Talk	Yes	Row	54%		46%		100%	
		Column		70%		17%		
		Cell			15%		13%	
	No	Row	9%		91%		100%	
		Column		30%		83%		
		Cell			7%		65%	
	Total	Row						
		Column		100%		100%		
		Cell			22%		78%	

Note. Significance of cross-tabulation: $\chi^2 = 410.58$ ($p < 0.0001$), Pearson pairwise correlation: $r = 0.50$

efficient way for such a purposive activity as contacting a government official. More people use the Internet as a medium for contact with a government official than for daily political conversation.

The reinforcement effect is more salient than the mobilization effect. Only 9% of the offline-noncontact respondents contacted a government official by email, but no less than half of the offline-contact respondents did so. People who have contacted a governmental official offline will likely do so online, but those who have never contacted a governmental official offline are less likely to do so online. Email serves as a supplementary means for contact in person or by phone because those who have contacted a government official via offline mode also tend to try contacting by email. Drawing on major arguments in previous literature, further interpretation of this result insinuates that people who feel

efficacy in offline contact and possess political resources (i.e., time, knowledge and skills) for offline contact tend to use email for achieving the same purpose (Anduiza, et al., 2008; Krueger, 2002, 2006; Shah, et al., 2005). 70% of the online-contact people also contacted a government official offline, while 83% of the online-noncontact people do not do so offline. An offline-contact citizen is highly likely to be an online-contact one, and vice versa. In turn, an offline-noncontact citizen is likely to be an online-noncontact one, and vice versa. Such a correlation between offline contact and online contact supports the reinforcement thesis for contacting a governmental official.

3. Offline Petition vs. Online Petition

Signing a petition as a form of political activity, and the difference between doing so offline versus online, has been considered in

〈Table 4〉 Cross-Tabulation between Online and Offline Petition

			Online Talk					
			Yes		No		Total	
Offline Talk	Yes	Row	32%		68%		100%	
		Column		53%		22%		
		Cell			9%		18%	
	No	Row	11%		90%		100%	
		Column		47%		78%		
		Cell			8%		65%	
	Total	Row						
		Column		100%		100%		
		Cell			17%		83%	

Note. Significance of cross-tabulation: $\chi^2 = 116.78$ ($p < 0.0001$), Pearson pairwise correlation: $r = 0.25$

many studies (Anduiza, et al., 2008; di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Hilton, 2006; Jenkins, et al., 2003; Lopez & Marcelo, 2008; Macintosh, et al., 2002). In previous research, whether a person signs an online petition is a significant predictor for probability to sign a paper petition, and vice versa. This result has been interpreted as reciprocal causality between the propensity for offline and online petition. However, Table 2 exhibits a somewhat different finding. If paper petitions and online petitions were to have a high correlation, the ratio of offline-petition to offline-non-petition in the online-petition group should obviously be opposite of that in the online-non-petition group. Both ratios do not sharply oppose each other; while the former ratio is almost 1:1, the latter ratio is 1:3. Also, the very low proportion (9% of the whole sample) of signing petitions both online and offline is not consistent with the

relatively high proportion (65%) of non-petition for both modes. The proportional difference between non-petition and petition online does not correlate with that difference offline.

A third of the offline-petitioners signed a petition online, whereas only 11% of the offline-non-petition respondents answered they did so online. In petition activity, the reinforcement effect appears larger than the mobilization effect. As in other activities, the probability that the online-petitioners also sign paper petitions (0.53) exceeds the probability that the offline-petitioners sign online petitions (0.32). People who sign only paper petitions make up half of all petitioners. Accordingly, the usual way of signing petitions is still traditional. However, Hilton's (2006) case study found that once the method of petition was transferred online, paper petitions were seldom used by frequent petitioners.

Regardless of a mode for political activity, the total proportion of petitioners (35%) is the same as that of people who contact a government official. However, the ratio among different types of users—exclusive use of offline mode, exclusive use of online mode, and flexible use of both modes—is noticeably different between contact and petition. While the proportion (18%) of offline-only petitioners is approximately the same as the summed proportion of online petitioners—exclusive online (8%) plus both online and offline petitioners (9%)—those who use exclusively online mode (7%) or both modes (15%) outnumber offline-only contact respondents (13%).

4. Offline Contribution vs. Online Contribution

Of the four activities, monetary contribution—to a candidate, a campaign camp, a political group or a cause—is least

likely to be made via an online medium. 22% of the total sample makes contributions or donations for political purpose. Among the contributors, no more than 25% have ever contributed online. The only-offline type outnumbers the other contributor types (online-only and both modes). 16% of the whole sample relies entirely on offline modes for political contribution, and only 3% uses both online and offline modes. Thus, the dominant channel for political contribution is offline such as in person, by telephone or by letter. The online-offline cross-contingency in political contribution resembles that in signing petitions but not that in contacting a government official. The proportion of offline-only contributors is higher than that of online-only contributors and those using both online and offline modes.

Like other activities, online activeness for contribution is reinforced more than mobilized by offline activeness. While only 4% of the offline non-contributors make

〈Table 5〉 Cross-Tabulation between Online and Offline Petition

			Online Talk						
			Yes		No		Total		
Offline Talk	Yes	Row	18%		82%		100%		
		Column		54%		17%			
		Cell			3%		16%		19%
	No	Row	4%		96%		100%		
		Column		46%		83%			
		Cell			3%		78%		81%
	Total	Row							
		Column		100%		100%			
		Cell			6%		94%		100%

Note. Significance of cross-tabulation: $\chi^2 = 88.98$ ($p < 0.0001$), Pearson pairwise correlation: $r = 0.23$

political contributions online, 18% of the offline contributors do so online. The conditional probability (0.18) that an offline contributor also contributes online is greater than quadruple times as high as the conditional probability (0.04) that an offline non-contributor makes political contributions online. On the other hand, more than half of the online contributors are likely to contribute offline, but only 17% of the online non-contributors contribute offline. The conditional probability (0.54) that an online contributor makes a political contribution offline is three times as high as the conditional probability (0.17) that an online non-contributor does so as well. The contingency table differentiates between the two types of conditional probabilities for a person who makes political contributions both online and offline. The conditional probability (0.54) that an online contributor makes a political contribution offline is three times as high as the conditional probability (0.18) that an offline contributor does so online.

The reciprocal causality may exist between online contribution and offline contribution, but the strength shifts with the direction of causation. Online contributors are more likely to contribute offline, but offline contributors are less likely to contribute online. Since donating money online requires the same financial resources as donating offline (Krueger, 2002), an individual contributor will choose between an online medium and an offline one. Financial

resources are not duplicated for both an online mode and an offline mode unlike immaterial, reproductive, and more easily discretionary resources such as skills, knowledge and time, which can be used concurrently in both modes for casually discussing politics, contacting a government official, and signing a petition.

V. Socio-Demographic Representativeness of Political Activity

The major advocacy for digital democracy arises from the belief that the Internet would enhance equality and representativeness in political participation. This section considers whether the promising effect conducive to democratic ideals is being actualized, and particularly, if socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, education, income and residence make a significant difference in the probabilities of political activities online and offline.

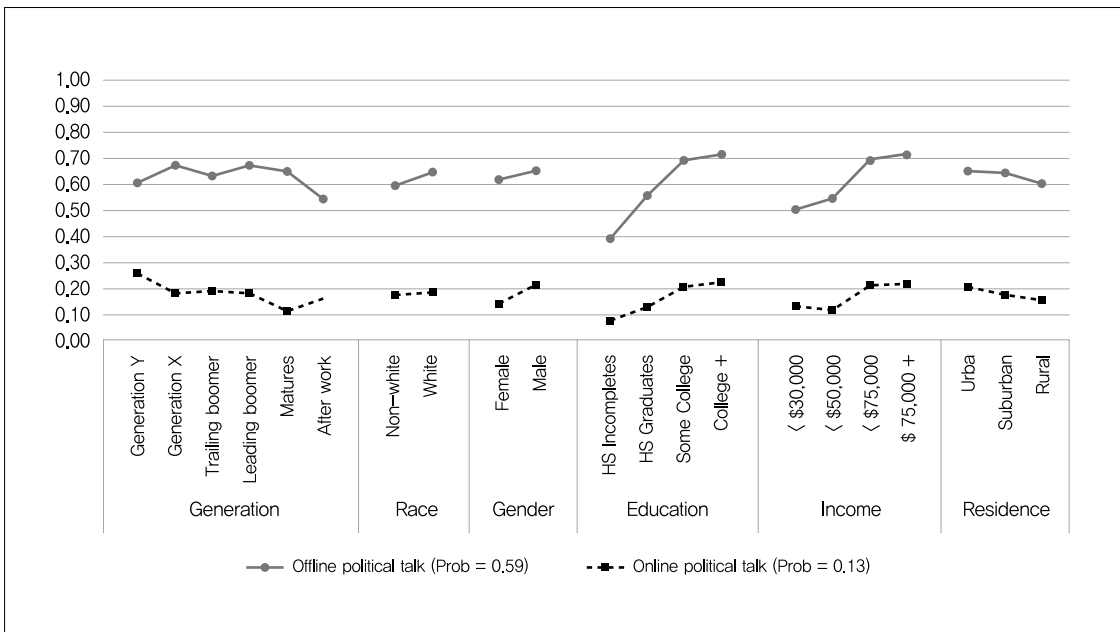
1. Offline Talk vs. Online Talk

The probability that an individual citizen casually discusses politics is estimated at 0.13 for online and 0.59 for offline. Figure 1 exhibits the large probability gap between online and offline conversations. The online pattern of the democratic divide is almost the same as its offline pattern. The gap in the probability of political conversation is most apparent in education and income. The

better-educated and more affluent are likely to discuss politics. Whites, males, and urban residents are more likely to discuss politics than their counterparts, but the difference in the estimated probabilities is marginal relative to the gap in education and income. The pattern of the participation divide is seemingly identical between online and offline probability. However, there are some notable differences. The divide in groups categorized by education and income is sharper offline than online. The likelihood that well-educated and affluent individuals discuss politics is more prominent in the offline probability than in the online probability. The divide across generations is not shown in offline probability, but the online mode shows probability incrementally

decreasing with age. The youngest generation—Generation Y, the so-called Millennials or digital natives (Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003; Prensky, 2001)—is more likely to discuss politics online than are other generations.

Figure 1 exhibits the following findings: 1) the demographic pattern for casual political conversation does not differ much between offline and online modes; and 2) the demographic pattern for the probability of online casual political conversation seems to imitate the pattern for offline probability of casual political conversation, but the gap between the most participatory (high SES profiles) and the least participatory (low SES profiles) decreases in the online mode. The Internet may not fundamentally prevent



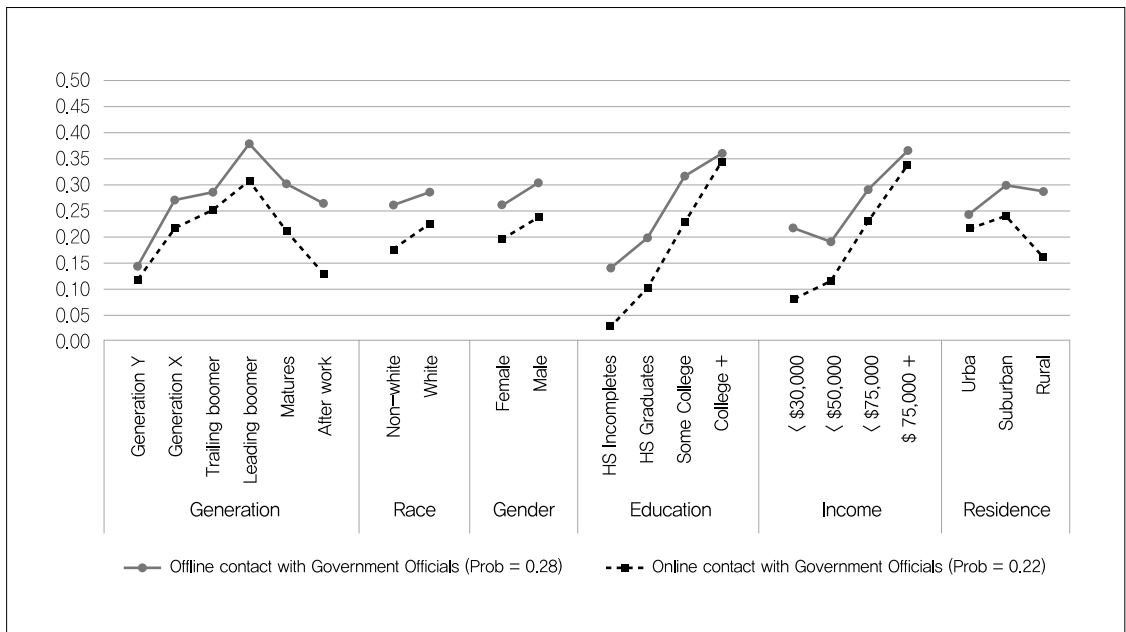
〈Figure 1〉 The Online vs. Offline Probability Difference in Casual Political Talk

disparities between the participatory rich and the participatory poor (Krueger, 2002), but it can contribute to democracy by gradually closing the divide.

2. Offline Contact vs. Online Contact

The probability that an individual citizen contacts a government official shows the smallest disparity between online (0.22) and offline (0.28) modes as the demographic pattern of probability is almost the same for online and offline contact. The Leading Boomers generation is more likely to contact a government official than any other generation. Older generations are more active in offline rather than online contact. Probabilities for the Matures and After-

Work generations to contact a government official are 0.30 and 0.26, respectively, for an offline mode, while the probabilities for utilization of an online mode drop to 0.21 and 0.13. The online-offline probability difference is greater in older generations than in younger generations. The general pattern that high-resource individuals (the well-educated and affluent) are more likely to participate in political activities is comparable for casual political discussion and contact with a government official; however, the difference between online and offline modes distinguishes the two activities. In political conversation, using an online mode narrows the conventional gap between the most participatory (the resource rich) and the least participatory (the



<Figure 2> The Online vs. Offline Probability Difference in Contact with Government Officials

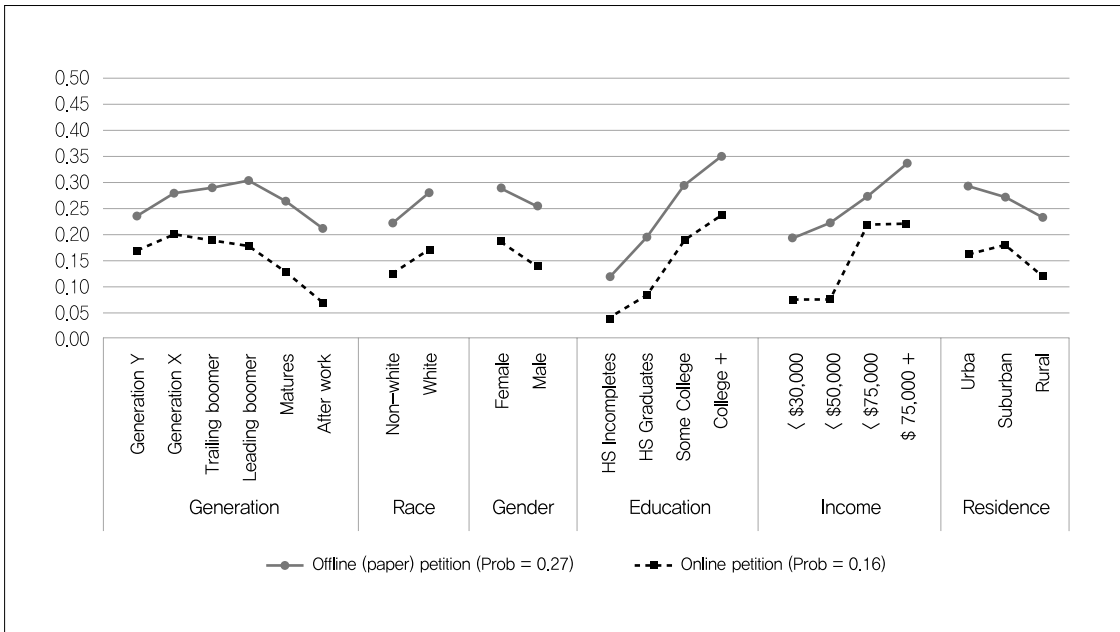
resource poor) to some degree; whereas, an online mode widens the democratic divide for contacting a government official as portrayed in Figure 2.

While there is little difference between online and offline probability in the highest SES group, the difference is large in the lowest SES group. The Internet works as an advantage to those already equipped to engage in political activity or those with higher SES backgrounds (Lijphart, 1997; Verba, 1996; Verba et al., 1995). Another probability difference divide occurs with residential areas. People living in suburban or rural areas tend to contact government officials in person or by telephone more frequently than those in urban areas. Accordingly, people living in urban settings,

along with suburban residents, are more prone to contact a government official by email or via a website. The possible association among demographic determinants of the participation divide may account for the pattern in political web use to contact a government official. The likelihood that seniors and those below the national average for education and household income fall into the category of rural residents—rather than the category of (sub)urban residents—creates a significant gap between residential types in the activity of contacting a government official.

3. Offline Petition vs. Online Petition

There is little difference between online



<Figure 3> The Online vs. Offline Probability Difference in Petition

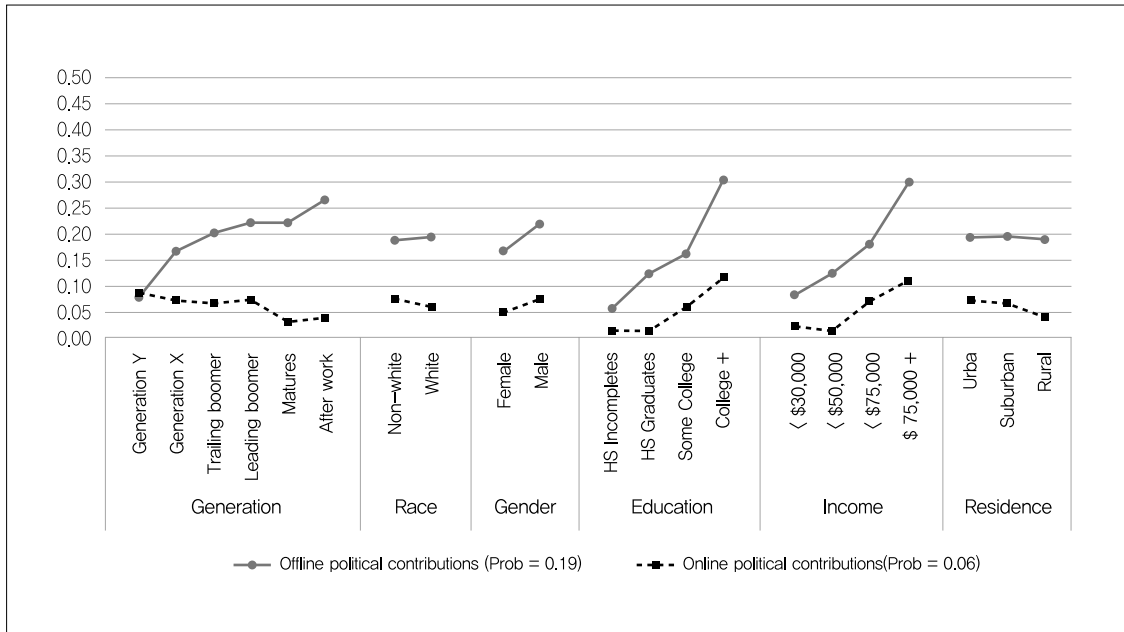
and offline patterns for signing a petition. Demographic conditions, which past empirical studies (Anderson et al., 1995; Bimber, 2000a; National Telecommunication and Information Administration, 2002) identified as the cause of the access divide, are also the root cause for the democratic divide in the political activity of signing a petition. As displayed in Figure 3, whites, males, better-educated and affluent people, and (sub)urban residents are generally more likely to sign petitions, either online or offline.

The online-offline difference is obvious in generation and income. Old Boomers are the most active generation in offline petitions. About one-third of them would sign a paper petition. The probability of offline signing of a petition increases with age, incrementally to the Leading Boomers generation, and then decreases in older generations. The pattern of rising and then falling with age is quite different between online and offline modes. Generation X is most likely to sign an online petition. The online probability drops in generations older than Generation X. Whereas the online and offline probability patterns in the democratic divide are similar for education level, the probability patterns for household income differ between online and offline. The probability of signing a paper petition goes up marginally with an increase in income, but the probability of signing an online petition shows a large divide between the less affluent and the more affluent. Online petition signing,

rather than offering an effective participatory tool for low-income people who are less participatory in offline politics, actually broadens the democratic divide created by the income gap. With the augmentation of a new participatory medium such as an online petition system, resource-rich citizens in the upper echelons of SES would likely take advantage of the new participatory tool.

4. Offline Contribution vs. Online Contribution

Political contribution does not signify the on-offline difference in the demographic pattern with the exception of generation. The probability of offline contribution increases with age. Figure 4 illustrates a remarkable gap between older and younger generations regarding the traditional way of political donation. However, the probability for making an online contribution is not significantly different across generations because older generations rarely make online contributions, while younger generations with relatively less financial resources are the least likely to contribute. The democratic divide in education and income shrinks in an online mode, compared to an offline mode. The probability difference between high-SES and low-SES groups is much smaller for online contributions than for offline contributions. Yet, most online contributors come from people of higher socioeconomic backgrounds than from the average



〈Figure 4〉 The Online vs. Offline Probability Difference in Contribution

population (Solop, 2001). Although the magnitude of the participation divide for political contributions may decrease in an online mode to some extent, the greatest proportion of contributions come from groups advantaged in terms of political resources and access, and not from all segments of the population.

In addition, the offline contributions by gender and the online contributions by residence show the difference across groups. There is a greater disparity between genders in contributing offline than online, since men and women contribute more equally online than offline. As for residential demographic considerations, there is not much difference in the probability for offline contributions; however, urban citizens are

more likely to make political contributions online than rural citizens.

VI. Further Discussions

1. Recap and Implications of the Findings

The analysis up to this point offers answers to the two research inquiries addressed at the beginning of this paper. By comparing online political activity with offline political activity, this study reveals that the Internet potential for political participation is constrained to certain segments of the U.S. population. Focusing on the four political activities drawn from previous research, the paper demonstrates

that the Internet reinforces conventional participation more than it mobilizes new participation in politics. The participation divide with respect to socio-demographic characteristics exhibits the same patterns or participatory inequality for both online and offline modes. The answers to the research questions are not favorable for cyber-utopian democracy. The Internet provides those who already have influential voices with additional and supplemental tools, rather than providing those who have been excluded from conventional participation with complementary tools (Best & Krueger, 2005; di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Gibson et al., 2002, 2005; Jensen et al., 2007). Furthermore, the demographics-determined inequality for offline political participation reappears in online political participation (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Gibson et al., 2002, 2005).

Empirical findings of this study require further interpretations and discussions. The effect of ICTs on democracy magnifies the voice of traditional power-holders rather than allowing for extension and expansion with new voices via online modes. The manifestation of the Internet actually does little to expand political participation to new individuals (Krueger, 2002, 2006) who are likely to fall into segments which are, and have been, historically underrepresented and disadvantaged in conventional politics. The contingency tabulation for identical political activity in online and offline modes offers simple, albeit valid, evidence of the stronger

reinforcing effect. Individuals who conduct political activities offline are also likely to do so online, but those who do not participate in such activities offline rarely do so online. Offline activists and online activists categorically fall into generally the same demographic groups, characterized by high socioeconomic profiles, but the tendency that younger people, in general, are more active on the Internet creates the generational difference between online and offline activism.

Secondly, the participation divide patterns across socio-demographic groups are almost identical for both online and offline activity. The same socio-demographic markers which influence differences in offline political participation also affect online politics (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Age, education, and income are significant predictors for determining who participates (Best & Krueger, 2005). The similar probability patterns between online and offline modes serve as persuasive evidence that the demographic pattern in the online participation divide mirrors that in the offline participation divide. The participation divide created by socioeconomic conditions, which has been expressed as “democracy’s unresolved dilemma” (Lijphart, 1997), does not become narrower in online political activities. The limited representativeness in conventional political participation (Bucy & Gregson, 2001) also prevails in Internet political participation.

However, the four activities that this study spotlighted produce slightly different types

of pattern imitation, especially with respect to generation, education, and wealth. While the probability for casual political discussion does not vary much between generations, contacting a government official and signing petitions occur more frequently among Baby Boomers than in any other generation, both younger and older. Finally, the probability of making a contribution offline increases with age, but the probability of making an online contribution does not show much variation across generations because older generations make up the majority of contributors, and they do not rely on online modes for this activity. The democratic divide between high SES and low SES appears in both online and offline modes, but the degree of the divide measured by the probability difference distinguishes the online mode from the offline mode. In casual political discussion and political contribution, the probability gap is smaller online than offline. However, the participatory gap between high and low socioeconomic brackets gets wide even further since the upper SES groups utilize online and offline modes in equal proportion for contacting a government official, while the lower SES groups hardly participate in this activity online or offline.

2. Limitations of the Study

The main findings bear the following concerns, which may shrink the implications of the study. First, the effect of the Internet on participatory equality can change with

the type of political activities. One cannot assert, with a handful of evidence, that the Internet generates the reinforcing and/or mobilizing effect (Nam, 2012). The modes of political participation are diverse in online as well as offline, and the nature of the Internet effect depends on what type of political activities is considered. For example, Dalton's book (2013) discussed "who participates?" focusing on campaign activity, direct contacting, communal activity, protest, and internet activism. He found the correlates of different activities for political participation. The existence of the correlates means that while correlated activities show a similarity in the Internet effect, less correlated activities reveal a difference. Hence, whether the Internet soothes the existing pattern of participatory inequality depends on the type of activities for political participation. The study of Hargittai and Shaw (2013) suggested that online forms of political engagement complement offline engagement. Their argument keeps inclined toward the reinforcing effect but also mildly offers new possibilities for mobilization, concluding that "although Internet usage alone is unlikely to transform existing patterns in political participation radically, it may facilitate the creation of new pathways for engagement" (p. 115). Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) raised a research question: "Is online political engagement really different to offline?". Their finding from the analysis of the U.K. 2010 General Election data supports both integration (offline forms

are replicated online, and they mix together) and independence (offline forms and online forms operate in separate spheres) beyond the replication effect. Active forms of political Internet use may have different consequences on citizens' political involvement from passive forms (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegthart, & de Vreese, 2014). Like this, recent discussions deliver quite diverse messages differing with the type of political activities, and what this study offers is meaningful in the certain category of political activities.

Secondly, this study can be seen as a snapshot that reflects the 2008 U.S. presidential election, not as a dynamic perspective over time. The presidential election year has been considered monumental in the eye of academics and practitioners that are interested in digital democracy (see Copeland & Bimber, 2015; Hargittai & Shaw, 2013; Nam, 2012). However, the incessantly speedy development of digital technologies has the potential to transform citizen behaviors for political participation, and thus the configures of digital democracy in the second decade of Millennium may differ from the first decade. One may say that the global expansion of mobile technologies dramatically enhances the level of participatory equality unlike in the early years of personal computer-based Internet use. Social media and social networking sites have become core venues for political participation to many mobile technology

adopters (Farrell, 2012; Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014; Vissers & Stolle, 2014; Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014; Ziga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). Self-publicizing behaviors via Facebook and personal blogs may alter citizen attitudes on basic democratic values—freedom of expression and liberty (Swigger, 2013). Especially, as this study suggests, the networked young citizens (the cohort that has been sceptical of politicians and mainstream conventional political institutions) can play a more significant role in reconfiguring democratic practices. Similarly, Xenos et al. (2014) see social media use as an equalizer in political engagement of young people in Australia, U.S., and U.K. Mobile technologies and social networking sites often exercise spillover effects on offline protest. In particular, Facebook political activity is both mobilizing and reinforcing (Vissers & Stolle, 2014). These effects may change without expected consistency in quite a rapid pace of technology development.

Finally, the proportion-based diagnosis on participatory inequality may make a certain degree of over-judgment. An issue is how contemporaries can judge the increase and decrease in the level of participatory inequality. Nevertheless, ongoing efforts to diagnose the society have been improved and upgraded in both theoretical and empirical aspects. Wei (2012) strongly argued that “number matters”. Although the number doesn't say all, it can be at least an indicator that helps evaluate the level of democracy.

Instead, Wei (2012) put emphasis on the multimodality of Internet use as a critical indicator of digital inequalities. What his study found is very similar with the finding of this study: “Female, older, poorer, and less educated only use the Internet for very limited basic applications, which are associated with fewer political communication and participation (p. 303).” Wei’s study suggested that the number of types matters in examining potential inequalities and their social consequences. The number is itself value-free; rather, it needs value-added explanation. If the number supports the reinforcing effect, one should say that the background of owners of resources required for information acquisition and communication has not changed even in the age of digital media. As such, the number should entail deep explanation of the political phenomenon. Favorably for the mobilizing effect, the number-based analysis of Morris and Morris (2013) demonstrated that greater levels of access to the Internet are significantly associated with greater political knowledge and engagement for low SES individuals, but not high SES individuals. Proportion cannot be the best option for interpretation, but it can be still meaningful as at least fact-based evidence for continuous understanding of our society.

3. Directions for Further Research

Future research should revisit and

reexamine the current (and inevitably tentative) finding that the online democratic divide imitates the classical participation inequality in offline modes. In particular, a longitudinal study will be able to trace the trajectory of the pattern in the democratic divide over time. For today, while citizens primarily utilize the Internet as reinforcement of offline political activities, the Internet is providing us with additional outlets for political participation. For tomorrow, its chief role may extend to providing new opportunities for offline non-participants’ political activities and bridging the democratic divide anchored by socio-demographics. Empirical research should ask again in the future about whom are the main players whose political voices are resounded via the Internet, and then follow up by examining the extent to which ICTs mitigate participatory inequality by socio-demographic conditions. In addition, the snapshots that illustrate participatory inequality need to be accumulated over time. For example, the study of Copeland and Bimber (2015), examining the relationship between digital media use and political participation in the United States between 1996 and 2008, found that the relationship exhibits highly idiosyncratic variation over time. There has been very little research that takes such a dynamic view beyond a simple snapshot. Further research should take on the long horizon of participatory equality changeable by digital media.

VII. Concluding Remarks

This paper weighs the normalizing and reinforcing effects of the Internet against its transformative and mobilizing effects. To those who believe ICT-driven democratization leads to a new pattern of political participation, the findings prove quite unfavorable. The Internet does provide participants in offline politics with a variety of new (oftentimes more efficient and/or more effective) instruments and venues for participation; however, the optimistic expectation that the Internet provides those traditionally excluded from existing politics with new opportunities of participation is not yet being significantly realized. The level of political participation is not equal across demographic groups because participation is dependent on ownership of political resources, or more specifically, SES (Best & Krueger, 2005; Delli Carpini, 2000; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Verba et al., 1995). The finding that the online participation pattern parallels the offline participation pattern inevitably supports the growing consensus (Best & Krueger, 2005; Krueger, 2002, 2006) that conventional ownership of political resources has greater leverage on political participation than distribution of technological resources being equalized across diverse demographic groups. In spite of more equal access to the Internet and relevant web skills, the pattern of the conventional divide in political participation is repeated in online politics. The

technologically revolutionary changes driven by ICTs, despite their democratic capabilities for equalization, have not significantly bridged the classical gap in political participation. In this sense, the role of the Internet on political participation is currently a “social leveler” (Krueger, 2002) rather than an equalizer.

The paper carefully delivers the message that the political potential of the Internet is limited to pushing out “new tools” for reinforcing existing participation, rather than going further to offer “new opportunities” for inducing new participation. It does not appear that the Internet will become a predominant medium for politics any day soon (Grönlund, 2001), but the spread of political Internet use has gradually been increasing the level of openness and diversity in online politics (Poster, 2001a). At a future stage of digital democracy, the reinforcement vs. mobilization contrast would be neither confrontational nor dichotomous, but rather hopefully simultaneous and reciprocal to each other.

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Appendix. Original Questions from the Questionnaire

Casual Political Talk Offline

Q. *How often do you discuss politics and public affairs with others in person, by phone, or by a letter?*

Original disposition of responses

- ① Every day (19%), ② At least once a week (36%), ③ At least once a month [13%],
④ Less than once a month (11%), or ⑤ Never (20%)

Recoding for a binary scale: ⑤ Frequent (55%), ① Infrequent (45%)

Casual Political Talk Online

Q. *How often do you discuss politics and public affairs with others on the Internet - by email or instant message, on a social networking site, or in an online chat?*

Original disposition of responses

- ① Every day (4%), ② At least once a week (13%), ③ At least once a month [8%],
④ Less than once a month (10%), or ⑤ Never (65%)

Recoding for a binary scale: ① Frequent (17%), ① Infrequent (83%)

Offline Contact with a Government Official

Q. *In the past 12 months, have you contacted a national, state or local government official in person, by phone or by letter about an issue that is important to you?*

- ① Yes (25%), ① No (75%)

Online Contact with a Government Official

Q. *In the past 12 months, have you sent an email to national, state or local government official about an issue that is important to you?*

- ① Yes (25%), ① No (75%)

Offline Petition

Q. *In the past 12 months, have you signed a paper petition?*

- ① Yes (25%), ① No (75%)

Online Petition

Q. *In the past 12 months, have you signed a petition online?*

- ① Yes (20%), ① No (80%)

Offline or Online Political Contributions

Q. *Thinking about the past 12 months, have you contributed money to a political candidate or party, or any other political organization or cause?*

① Yes (19%), ② No (81%)

Q. *Now thinking about the political contributions you have made in the past 12 months, did you make those contributions on the Internet? Or did you make those contributions offline, say, in person, by phone or through the mail? Or have you made contributions both on the Internet and offline?*

① On the Internet (15% of contributors), ② Offline (70%), ③ Both ways (15%)