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# Citizen competence and its effect on citizen satisfaction with normative ideals in American democracy

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**Citizen competence and its effect on citizen satisfaction with  
normative ideals in American democracy**

by

**Brett M. Daley**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

Major: Political Science

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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2015

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to E. E. Schattschneider. He was an incredibly insightful author and thinker and authored *The Semisovereign People*, the book that has had the single greatest influence on my thoughts and education regarding political science. Anyone reading this dedication who has not read his book should do so.

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## ABSTRACT

Citizen competence—though not always referred to in those exact words—is a common and important topic in political science. This thesis proposes a definition of citizen competence that is heavily, though not entirely, contingent on a person’s effort in gathering political information. Using data from the 2012 ANES pre-election survey, an empirical analysis is also conducted. Forty hypotheses are tested using one-way ANOVAs to look at the correlation between citizen competence and citizen satisfaction with common normative ideals held regarding American democracy. Results indicate that there is strong support for the theory that citizen competence is correlated with citizen satisfaction of two normative ideals: 1) Government pays attention to what the people think and 2) the views of the people affect what the government does.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it. To traverse the world men must have maps of the world. Their persistent difficulty is to secure maps on which their own need, or someone else's need, has not sketched in the coast of Bohemia. (Lippmann [1922] 1956: 16)

The above quote from Walter Lippmann's book *Public Opinion* summarizes the difficulties presented by the American political system to its citizens. To start, there is simply too much information for each American to know all of it. Even if one uses 1776 as the starting point or assumes that information predating the signing of the United States Constitution is irrelevant (which is untrue and unwise), there is no way for people to know all the events, issues, precedents, debates, policies, candidates and elections that are relevant to political life as an American citizen. On top of the exorbitant amount of information lies the limitations of the human mind. Let us assume for one moment there is a person whose mind holds all the information just mentioned. That person would still not be "equipped" to make sense of it all.

Yet all Americans are actors in the theater of American politics. Regardless of individual limitations and the daunting task of making sense of all the information, we all take part at one time or another. Though the human mind is cognitively limited, it has considerable simplifying abilities, creating shortcuts and using cues from others to help us "traverse" the political world. However, one more barrier stands in the way of Americans on their way to political activity. While Americans attempt to navigate using the maps their minds have drawn, others are coming

in and drawing all over the map. Misinformation, misleading, manipulation and downright lying are common occurrences, and they make a great mess of things.

This thesis is an exploration of the various ideas presented in Lippmann's quote. It began as an inquiry into the question, "Are American voters stupid?" The question came to mind because of conversations I had with friends, family and colleagues over the past few years where one participant in the conversation would make a claim about the stupidity of the American people. The conversations were sparked by such seminal political science works as Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter's *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters* and John Zaller's *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. These and other works do an excellent job of advancing social science's ability to explain why people do what they do. However, when conversations about these works moved beyond the content of the book, there was often someone in the conversation willing to posit that people act the way they do because, "People are stupid." Why do Americans exhibit such little knowledge of the workings of the U.S. government? "People are stupid." Why might people be so incapable of holding consistent ideologies? "People are stupid." I argue that this explanation is not sufficient.

The first step in answering any question is to define the words in the question. This question has just three words, two of which need defining: "Are people stupid?" By *people* I mean *American citizens*. The word "stupid" has varying definitions depending on the context in which it is used and the person defining the term. The 1996 edition of Webster's Dictionary which has been at my side throughout the entirety of my education provides three definitions for "stupid": "1. lacking intelligence; dull. 2. showing or proceeding from a lack of intelligence. 3. tediously dull." (Webster's Dictionary 1996: 657) The same concepts were repeated in various online dictionary definitions that I found. I chose the first definition provided in my trusted



dictionary; *lacking intelligence, dull*. The question then became, “Are American citizens unintelligent or dull?”

Not far into a review of the literature regarding this question it became apparent that the question was somewhat invalid. Given the definition of stupid being used, there simply is not evidence to support the claim that American citizens are stupid. There is evidence to support applying many adjectives to American citizens, but “stupid” is not one of them. “Stupid” is a reference to mental capacity, and though humans are limited cognitively, it is not accurate to make such a generalized proclamation with the term. Pressing further, I found that the point being made by people proclaiming the stupidity of Americans was likely more along the lines of “ignorance” and “incompetence” than stupidity. Definitions being as important as they are, there is a large difference between proclaiming that people are stupid versus ignorant or incompetent.

The definition of competence stuck out to me as the likely intended meaning. If true, the question becomes, “Are Americans citizens competent in their civic participation?” Turning again to Webster’s Dictionary we see that “competent” has three definitions: “1. having suitable skill, experience, etc., for some purpose. 2. adequate but not exceptional. 3. legally qualified as to age, soundness of mind, etc.” (Webster’s Dictionary 1996: 133) Online definitions provide another important aspect of competence. For example, the first definition from the aptly titled Dictionary.com is, “1. having suitable or *sufficient* skill, knowledge, experience, etc., for some purpose; properly qualified.” [Emphasis added]<sup>1</sup> Taking these two sources together, competence is a matter of *sufficient skill or knowledge* for the purpose of some task. It is important to keep in mind that competent is not synonymous with exceptional. Competent is adequate, not

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<sup>1</sup> The “qualification” characteristic of competence is not relevant here because America, as I will discuss later in this paper, has nearly universal suffrage. If we are only going to focus on the qualification aspect then every U.S. citizen who is over eighteen years old and has not been convicted of certain crimes is a “competent voter”.

exceptional. Applying this definition to the question at hand, the question becomes, “Are American citizens sufficiently (not exceptionally) skilled or knowledgeable in their civic participation?” This question was not the end of this thesis’ journey, however.

It became apparent that answering such a question, if reserved for anyone at all, is reserved for someone with much greater knowledge than me. During my review of scholarly literature I found it difficult to come to any conclusion other than defending the competence of American citizens by finding holes or semantic inconsistencies in the arguments made by numerous works that claimed the opposite. This tendency to gravitate toward defense of American citizens comes from reading great political science works attempting the same feat such as E. E. Schattschneider’s *The Semisovereign People*. Though the major takeaway from the book is Schattschneider’s profound accusation that the American political system is dominated by the economic upper class, one point that stands out to me is his defense of the American people by attacking the pollsters who claim their ignorance:

One implication of public opinion studies ought to be resisted by all friends of freedom and democracy; the implication that democracy is a failure because the people are too ignorant to answer intelligently all the questions asked by the pollsters. This is a professorial invention for imposing professorial standards on the political system and deserves to be treated with extreme suspicion. Only a pedagogue would suppose that the people must pass some kind of examination to qualify for participation in a democracy. Who, after all, are these self-appointed censors who assume that they are in a position to flunk the whole human race? (Schattschneider [1960] 1975: 132)

Reviewing literature for this thesis combined with echoes of Schattschneider pervading my thoughts shifted this work toward a new way of thinking about citizen competence. The purpose of this thesis is to present that new way of thinking.

Chapter 2 will examine relevant literature regarding the role of a citizen, citizenship in a democracy and how citizens process political information with an eye on the most common form of participation in American democracy: voting. Chapter 2 concludes by presenting two theories.

The first theory that citizen competence is a matter of effort in gathering information. The second theory is that citizen competence promotes citizen satisfaction with two specific normative ideals that many people hold regarding democracy: 1) Public officials care what citizens think and 2) citizens have a say in what the government does. An empirical examination of my second theory is conducted in Chapter 3. The analysis includes a discussion of forty one-way ANOVAs conducting using data from the American National Election Studies (ANES). The results support my theory that citizen competence promotes satisfaction with the normative ideals stated above. Finally, this paper concludes with a short Conclusion in Chapter 4 outlining the implications of my definition of citizen competence and the results of my empirical analysis.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

#### Literature Review

This literature review contains four sections corresponding to various areas of focus. The first section will provide a primer for a topic that will be explored in the theory and empirical chapters of the paper: citizen satisfaction. The second section will focus on theory and history associated with the role of citizens generally. Though the United States currently has a low standard for citizenship, a historical context is needed for full understanding of our current system. The third section will dive further into the role of citizens but focus more on the theoretical role of a citizen in a democracy. This allows one to narrow the focus to the American system of government. The final section combines literature in political science, political psychology and cognitive science to shed light on what we actually know of human behavior in a democracy.

#### **The United States Constitution and Citizen Satisfaction**

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, beginning with the words “We the People of the United States, in Order to...” lays out various objectives that the Constitution—and the subsequent government it outlines—is attempting to achieve. These objectives can be considered the “goals” of the U.S. government at its founding. Two such goals are insuring “domestic Tranquility” and promoting “the general Welfare”. Tranquility refers to a state of being calm, at peace or being without tumult. Welfare is simply a matter of being well; whether that be physical health, mental health or monetary well-being. The reason these concepts are important—as I will

discuss more in-depth later—is because I believe that citizen competence contributes to the satisfaction of citizens in their political life.

### **The Role of the Citizen**

Like many areas of political science, theories on the role of a citizen extend back 2,500 years to ancient Athens. I will begin my discussion of political theory on the role of the citizen with the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle. The reader should keep in mind that the scenarios being laid out here regarding the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle reflect ideal city-states described in each philosopher's writing. The actual function of ancient Athens was different.

In the Socratic dialogue *The Republic*, Plato outlines his views on how a city-state should function. A key characteristic of Plato's Republic is specialization. There are three classes of people with a philosopher-king ruling over the three classes. The top class of people is the guardian or ruling class. This is the class where wisdom or knowledge lies. It may seem odd to modern Americans but it is important to keep in mind that Athens was not a democracy, and its great philosophers did not think it should have been. It was believed that as long as the guardian class was virtuous Athens would be virtuous as the wisdom of the guardian class was the wisdom of Athens. (Bloom 1991)

Below the guardian class in Plato's Republic is the military class, and at the bottom is the service class (blacksmiths, farmers etc.). It is the role of each person, in order to have a functioning state, to perform their respective role. Some citizens are to be "educated" in a way that allows them to participate in dialectic in the agora. One major function of the Republic is to place people in their appropriate class and role. Not only are people assigned classes, but your

class is immutable. There is no opportunity for a blacksmith to move to the guardian class just as there is no opportunity for a guardian to become a farmer. (Ibid.)

Notice that the above paragraph is not describing “citizens”. According to Aristotle, a person not participating in the political system—whether it is because they were not allowed or did not want to—was not considered a citizen. (Stalley 1998) Both Aristotle and Plato echo this sentiment on the importance of participation. Aristotle, however, provides a precise definition of a citizen. A citizen is, “[A person] who is entitled to share in deliberative or judicial office [of a city].” (Ibid.: 87) Aristotle also differs from Plato in that he believed there was not one perfect political system. He argued that different situations required different forms of government. (Ibid.)

John Stuart Mill also notes the importance of participation (if one is to be considered a citizen) in his famous work *Considerations on Representative Government*. Beyond this, he emphasizes that the qualities of the society (citizens) determine how “good” a government can be. An electorate that is ignorant (or stupid), prejudiced, corrupt, passive, inattentive or careless will result in a government that has these qualities. This point cannot be overstated. To Mill, a government can only be good if the citizens are good. They must be competent, knowledgeable, morally righteous and attentive. (Mill [1861] 1895)

At the same time, Mill acknowledges, much like the Athenians, that one role of government is to facilitate these qualities in the citizenry. (Ibid.) Some may be surprised that the idea of a political system promoting civic knowledge among its citizens extends back to ancient Athens. In Book IV of *The Republic* Socrates proclaims to Adeimantus that all the troubles the Republic might face will be “slight” if it takes care of “the one great thing”. When asked by

Adeimantus what that “thing” is, Socrates responds, “[The peoples’] education and rearing.” (Bloom 1991: 101)

Mill believed that citizens were extremely important to the function of a government; however, given their limited time and abilities, Mill’s position is that a representative government is the best form of government. He states that the best government is one where “the whole people participate”. However, since not everyone can participate outside of some small simple functions, “It follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative.” (Mill [1861] 1895: 69)

As can be seen from the writings of Plato and Aristotle, ancient Athenians had a high standard of citizenship. Though the actual function of the Athenian political system changed over time, citizenship was limited—for the most part—to male property owners.<sup>2</sup> A person’s ability to enjoy full participation in the Athenian political system was further restricted by a sort of competency test consisting of three questions. The questions checked a person’s willingness to take care of their elderly family members, their allegiance to the gods and their history of military service to Athens. (Samons 2004)

Citizenship as it exists in the United States today is far less strict than it was in ancient Athens. In the U.S., citizenship is simply a product of the accident of one’s birth or fulfillment of the proper steps to become a naturalized citizen. Though the U.S. practices a low standard of citizenship, it practices a higher standard of voting rights, the most common form of participation in American politics. The restrictions that were placed on citizenship in Athens have made their way into and out of the right to vote in the United States.

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<sup>2</sup> I will speak more about the changes experienced by the Athenian political system and the changing requirements for Athenian citizenship later in this section.

In ancient Athens citizenship was limited to male property owners. (Ibid.) It is commonly taught in American civics courses that when the U.S. was founded only white, male property owners could vote. However, a transformation of voting rights took place in the U.S. between 1790 and 1860. A growing economy created more people who were valued community members that did not necessarily own land; thus, land requirements were eliminated. As America continued to grow and change, more and more restrictions were lifted so that by 1855 there were very few formal economic requirements to voting. Voting rights continued to expand, eliminating restrictions based on race and gender. Currently, the only requirements to vote are that a person is a U.S. citizen over the age of 18 and has not been convicted of certain crimes. (Keyssar 2009)

## **Democratic Theory**

Having looked at popular philosophy about the role of the citizen, it is the task of this section to look specifically at the role of a citizen *in a democracy*. Though this review will end with a look at citizenship in the United States, it begins—like the last section—with a look at democratic theory in ancient Athens.

Citizenship in Athens was limited to male property owners until the policy of *demokratia* was introduced. The word “demokratia” is a combination of two Greek words: *demos* (people) and *kratos* (power). (Samons 2004) After demokratia was introduced, the right to vote in Athenian councils was expanded to the point where nearly all men could vote. This is especially important for the Athenian political system because there was no such thing as a central “government” in ancient Athens. Nor did they practice any sort of separation of powers. The demos (people) literally was the Athenian government. The people (or a select group of them)



voted to go to war and then fought the wars. The people voted to raise taxes and then paid the taxes. (Samons 2004)

The institution of demokratia, Samons argues, was the beginning of the end for Athens. As the vote was expanded to more and more people, and because the people were still the ones who decided to vote for things like wars and deficit spending, poorer decisions were made. According to Samons, the Athenian people chose leaders whom they could feel superior to. Without leaders able to lead, and with the will of the people so present in the decision-making apparatus, Athens was doomed to fail. (Ibid.) This sentiment is echoed by Publius in Federalist Paper No. 63 when he remarks, “What bitter anguish would not the people of Athens have often escaped if their government had contained so provident a safeguard against the tyranny of their own passions.” (Publius Federalist No. 63)

Though demokratia was likely not the sole reason for the fall of Athens, Samons makes a valid point about the ability of citizens to effectively rule themselves. This is why philosophers such as J.S. Mill and Edmund Burke advocated for representative government. Specifically, Burke was a strong advocate for trustee representation. In Burke’s view, though the relationship between representative and constituent is to be close and the opinions of constituents are to weigh on their representatives, the representative is ultimately in a position of judgment. Burke stated that government and legislation are, “Matters of reason and judgment, and not of inclination.” Speaking about the British Parliament, Burke said the job of Parliament is to do what is best for the nation, not what is best for each individual district. (Burke, Speech to the Electors of Bristol)

Strong opposition to heavy involvement by the public is not confined to non-American thinkers and ancient philosophers. Many of the founders of the United States were vehement

anti-democrats. The most insightful glimpse we have into the minds of the founders regarding their views on how the U.S. government should function is found in the Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers. These documents contain many warnings regarding public opinion, majority rule and democracy itself. James Madison's Federalist Paper No. 10 may be the most cited document regarding the dangers of the will of the people. I will continue that tradition here:

[I]t may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose. On the other hand, the effect may be inverted. Men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may, by intrigue, by corruption, or by other means, first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interests, of the people. The question resulting is, whether small or extensive republics are more favorable to the election of proper guardians of the public weal [.] (Madison Federalist No. 10)

Here Madison simultaneously points out one of the dangers of factions and lays out one of the many important questions tackled in the Federalist Papers. The danger is that small groups can gain power by nefarious means and cause major harm to the public. The question is whether small autonomous states can handle such dangers. Later in the same piece Madison provides the answer; a form of government not dissimilar from the one laid out in the final draft of the U.S. Constitution. Madison states, "The federal Constitution forms a happy combination in this respect; the great and aggregate interests being referred to the national, the local and particular to the State legislatures." (Ibid.)

Adding to the anti-democratic corner are works such as Ackerman's *Dualist Democracy* which argues that America is, in practice, a "dualist democracy". In this theory, there are two types of lawmaking in America. There is the everyday lawmaking done by the government, and there is the lawmaking done during extraordinary times when major actions are needed. In this model American government is rarely a government of "we the people" because "the people" are not involved in the vast majority of the decisions. (Ackerman 1993)

The United States has experienced a strong push for democratization and citizen involvement in its recent history. One aspect of this push is the call for a more deliberative democracy. Though deliberative democracy (much like the term democracy itself) is difficult to define, Gutmann and Thompson (2004) provide a good definition:

[Deliberative democracy is] a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future. (Gutmann and Thompson 2004: 7)

For a comprehensive look at how the authors build this definition the reader can refer to Gutmann and Thompson's (2004) *Why Deliberative Democracy?* According to some, understanding deliberation may help us understand the role that citizens can potentially play in a democracy. (Mendelberg 2002) Also, despite a push for a more deliberative democracy, it must be acknowledged that the United States may already have widespread citizen deliberation on a small, local level. (Ibid.) It must also be asked, however, whether or not Americans (and humans in general) are capable of deliberating in the way that such idealistic theories set forth. That question will be addressed later in this paper.

It may also be the case that deliberation is best—and can best contribute to a healthy American democracy—when it is highly inclusive. According to Landmore (2013), cognitive diversity is more important for a group's problem-solving ability than the abilities of the individuals in the deliberating group. Cognitive diversity is the variety of mental tools or mechanisms that humans use to solve problems or make judgments. If we assume that cognitive diversity is more important than individual ability, a deliberative apparatus that is more inclusive is preferred because it will increase the cognitive diversity of the deliberating group. With

increased cognitive diversity, the deliberation is better, or as Landemore puts it, “More-inclusive deliberating groups are smarter.” (Landemore 2013: 104)

Another important piece for students of democracy to consider is Downs’ 1957 book, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. The popular conception of this classic work is that it is a rousing cry for the irrationality of voting. Though he does acknowledge that it is entirely possible for people to rationally choose not to vote, my reading of the work suggests that his most important point is how irrational it is for many citizens to exert much effort gathering political information for their vote choices. The work does not conclude by saying that a rational actor will not vote. Downs says, “In general, it is irrational to be politically well-informed because the low returns from data simply do not justify their cost in time and other scarce resources.” (Downs 1957: 259) The irrationality of gathering information is the main point of *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.

Regardless, the popular conception of Downs’ work continues. Riker and Ordeshook (1968) use this perception as the basis of their response to Downs. In this work the authors respond to Downs’ calculus by adding a variable that Downs did not consider. As Riker and Ordeshook explain, despite Downs’ claim about the theoretical irrationality of voting, millions of people vote every election cycle in the United States. If we assume people are rational actors, as they are in Downs’ calculus, why are they voting given the irrationality of the act? The answer is the “D-Variable” or duty. A citizen’s sense of duty adds to the benefits one gets from voting. The benefits of fulfilling one’s duty to their country and their democracy is so great that the benefits outweigh the costs. With benefits outweighing costs, the citizen votes. (Riker and Ordeshook 1968)

There are a host of other theoretical democratic voting models including *retrospective voting* (Fiorina 1981) and two variations on a low-information *reasoning voter* model (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Popkin 1991). Fiorina advances a model often credited to V.O. Key Jr. known as the “reward-punishment” or retrospective voting model. In this model the voter evaluates their economic situation (and possibly the economic situation of those close to them) and assesses whether or not they think the current administration should stay in power given the economic situation. If the voter is displeased they will vote against the incumbent. If the voter is satisfied with the situation they will vote for the incumbent.

Sniderman advances a heuristic-driven voter model. In this model the voter (whom it is assumed has limited cognitive abilities and low levels of political information) is able to make a well-reasoned decision because they receive information from shortcuts or heuristics. Popkin’s book argues for the prototypical “low-information rationality” voter model. The model emphasizes the sources of information that voters use as well as their beliefs about how government works. The low-information rationality voter combines, in an efficient and rational way, learning (from sources of information) and past experiences (from daily life, past elections, etc.) to reason their way to a vote decision.

As can be seen from the above review, democratic theory and the role of the citizen in the United States is largely about the vote. This is understandable and considering it is by far the most common form of political participation in the U.S., with about 70% of the population having voted at some point. (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995: 51)

## **Citizen Behavior and Information Processing**

The final topic to be discussed in this review is what we actually know about voter behavior, especially how voters process information. This is the largest section of the literature review as it is the most important in forming a theory of citizen competence. I will begin by reviewing the literature that has been used as evidence to suggest that people are, indeed, stupid or incompetent. I will then review the pieces that point to an American electorate that is intelligent and competent. While reading the literature and forming summaries of the pieces I used a simple plus-minus (+ or -) system to keep track of the pieces that pointed to incompetence (the minuses) versus those that suggest competence (the pluses). I have transmitted that system to the section headers that follow.

### The Minuses

As mentioned previously, there are two works that seem to come up often in conversations regarding citizen competence. First is John Zaller's *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Second is Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter's *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. Both pieces fall in the lineage of classic 20<sup>th</sup> century authors who painted bleak pictures of the American public, describing the electorate as disengaged and inarticulate (Lippmann [1927] 1993) and voters as either partisan or not much involved (Campbell et al. [1960] 1980). Zaller's argument rests on the premise that the American electorate is so large and each individual occupies such a miniscule space in it that they are exposed to a small fraction of the whole world of political information. Because of this, Zaller argues voters must rely on "others" to receive the information necessary to make a vote decision.

(Zaller 1992: 6) Zaller's argument is elite-centric. He views political elites as the "others" whom voters get information from.

Given that elites strongly influence the information available to citizens when making a vote decision, Zaller outlines a Reception/Resistance-Accessibility-Response (RAS) model to explain how individuals form their opinions. It is in this RAS model that Zaller accounts for the response instability often demonstrated in public opinion polls and surveys. Because humans must rely on the accessibility of information stored in their memory, when asked a survey question at two distinct points in time a person might access different information each time the question is asked. This causes demonstrable variance and inconsistency in answers. (Zaller 1992)

On the surface this model seems to suggest that people do not even hold true opinions, echoing an argument made in 1962 by Phillip E. Converse's seminal piece, *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics*. Converse argues that people do not hold strong political ideologies. (Converse 1962) Continuing this work, Markus and Converse (1979) found evidence to suggest that people adjust their issue preferences to match that of their preferred candidate and, in an opposite manner, people will also adjust the perceived issue preferences of candidates in order to match their own preferences. (Markus and Converse 1979: 1068) Taking the work of Converse and Zaller together paints a bleak picture of public opinion. Not only can we not rely on people to come up with their own opinions—because they rely on the information and opinions of other—but people do not hold strong ideologies and cannot maintain consistent opinions. However, I will argue that they do not paint as bleak a picture as some surface-level readings of them might suggest. I will expand on this idea later in this section.

There are two questions posed in the title of Delli Carpini and Keeter's book. First, what do Americans know about politics? Second, why does what they know matter. I have seen

multiple people walk away from the book answering the first question with something akin to “very little” and the second with “Americans are stupid”. I believe this to be a misreading of Delli Carpini and Keeter’s work.

*What Americans Know* is littered with tables and graphs showing the results of analyses conducted using survey data gathered between 1950 and 1990. They show respondents’ levels of knowledge on a wide variety of political questions. For example, Table 2.2 on pages 70-71 shows results from various surveys measuring “Knowledge of Institutions and Processes [of government]”. There are over 100 questions shown on this chart and the results to some can be disheartening. For example, in 1989 two percent of respondents could name two Fifth Amendment rights.<sup>3</sup> In 1952 nineteen percent could name all three branches of the U.S. government and forty-four percent could name one branch of government. (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: 70-71) When compared to what people do know, such as the identity of pop-culture icons and the ability to match quotes to songs and movies, a disheartening effect may occur. However, there is far more to this book than idiosyncratic survey results. Again, I will discuss the larger picture later in this section.

I will now move from assessments of competence via political knowledge surveys to what we know about how humans process information. The concept of *motivated reasoning* is described as, “both a virtue and a vice.” (Lodge and Taber 2000) The motivated reasoning model presented by Lodge and Taber has three steps or premises. First, humans use “hot cognition”. This means that when someone takes in new information it is assigned an affective measure (a positive or negative feeling, a “like” or “dislike”). Second, humans use “on-line processing”. In on-line processing humans keep a running tally of affectively charged information. (Ibid.) A

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<sup>3</sup> Though disheartening to some, one must ponder the significance of such a response rate in today’s world. After all, I cannot, off the top of my head, name even one Fifth Amendment. I can, however, open the U.S. Constitution application on my smartphone and look it up.



person may, for example, have a running tally of information in their memory that tells them they do not like the Democratic Party. Finally, people use a “How do I feel?” heuristic. When making a vote choice, a person accesses the running tallies relevant to the choice at hand that they have been keeping and have been formed using “on-line processing”. Each piece of information in the tally has been affectively charged through “hot cognition”. These affectively charged ideas give a person a simple positive or negative cue to use when making the decision. (Ibid.) In the case of our anti-Democrat example, when a vote decision requires an assessment of a Democratic candidate, our voter’s perception of the Democratic Party is activated and tells them they do not like the Democratic Party.

But why is motivated reasoning a “virtue and a vice”? On the virtue side, motivated reasoning allows people to make well-reasoned decisions that match their feelings and evaluations of the decision. On the vice side, it biases the assessment of new information. Once an affect is assigned to a specific entity, each new piece of information about that entity is viewed through the lens of that affect; thus, *motivated* reasoning. This eliminates any possibility of a citizen acting free from biased decisions whether they are making a vote decision or evaluating what they think about a piece of U.S. foreign policy.

Motivated reasoning ties into another possible defect in human cognition; the ability (or inability) of humans to adjust an incorrect predisposition when presented with corrective information. Nyhan and Reifler (2010), in their highly popular article *When Corrections Fail*, present evidence that people with strongly held views reject information that contradicts their view. The authors conducted experiments with subjects that held incorrect predispositions about a certain contemporary political issue. When presented with correct information on the issue the subjects who were identified as having strong predispositions rejected the information and

sometimes even demonstrated a strengthening of their incorrect predisposition despite the corrective information. The authors refer to this as a “backfire effect”. (Nyhan and Reifler 2010)

Nyhan et al 2014 found similar effects when studying messages promoting vaccinations. Though they found evidence to suggest the possibility of effective messaging decreasing the misperception that vaccines cause autism, none of the corrective information provided in their survey increased parents’ likelihood to vaccinate their children. Much like Nyhan and Reifler’s 2010 study discussed above, parents who came into the survey with the strongest opposition to vaccinations became even less likely to vaccinate their children after presented with corrective information. (Nyhan et al. 2014: e841) Backfire effect fits the ideas put forth by previous research showing that voters who are politically sophisticated are immutable in their views and decisions. High information voters are more partisan, unflinching in ideology and less responsive to changes in election information. (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011: 75-78)

There is also evidence to suggest that the two saving graces of low-information voter rationality are nonexistent. As Bartels (1996) plainly puts it: “The political ignorance of the American voter is one of the best-documented features of contemporary politics.” (Bartels 1996: 194) In response to the political ignorance literature some researchers began crafting reasons that a politically ignorant electorate might be inconsequential. Two popular theories are: 1) low-information voters can act as though they were high-information voters through the use of information cues or heuristics and 2) individual voter errors are canceled out by a large electorate. Bartels turns these two theories into hypotheses to be tests them using empirical analysis. The results of his analysis disconfirm both theories. (Bartels 1996)

Bartels also tackled a specific contemporary political issue in his article *Homer Gets a Tax Cut* (2005). Here he looks at one of the issues surrounding the Bush tax cuts of the early

2000's. Although the vast majority of Americans disliked or even despised the extent and worsening of income inequality in the United States, they consistently and strongly supported the Bush tax cuts, which resulted in increased income inequality. One explanation for this could be that the opposition to income inequality may have been overstated. Bartels' study suggests that the reason was that Americans failed to connect the effect of increased income inequality to its cause, the Bush tax cuts. (Bartels 2005)

The two proposed saving graces of political ignorance are also far from a certainty. Kuklinski and Quirk (2000) test each of them—low-information rationality through heuristics and mass electoral effects—and find evidence to disconfirm both. The authors propose an alternative theory that is more skeptical of the rationality of the American electorate put forth by such scholars as Page and Shapiro (1992). This more skeptical view not only warns against the overstatement of the competence of citizens and mass electorates, it shows evidence of significant distortions of public opinion and the propensity of the public to send misguided and incorrect signals to policy makers. Perhaps most profoundly, the authors suggest that human cognition is not well-suited for the two main tasks of citizens: voting and evaluating public policy. (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000) Combining this reconsideration of a “rational public” with Nyhan and Reifler's work on the inability of people to accept correct information there is a strong case against the saving graces mentioned above and the push for deliberative democracy.

Another argument regarding the incompetence of American citizens involves their inability to form consensus. McClosky (1964) addressed the question of whether or not consensus among the public is a requisite for democracy and what implications a lack of consensus would have on democracy. He found that there is not a consensus in the general, politically unsophisticated public about basic American ideals and ideologies such as equality

and freedom. However, there is consensus among the small minority of political sophisticates. (McClosky 1964)

Although there are dangers to having no consensus throughout most of the citizenry, McClosky does not view it as much of a problem. McClosky posits that the unsophisticated majority does not have much influence in the political system. The sophisticated minority holds most of the influence, and because they are largely in agreement on their values they can take care of things just fine. (Ibid.) The results of this study and the claims made by its author fly in the face of advocates for a more democratic American political system.

### The Pluses

The first step in presenting the case for citizen competence is to complete the stories told by Zaller and Delli Carpini and Keeter. Zaller's RAS model relies heavily on political elites to distribute information. Because voters are so reliant on political elites (media figures, elected officials, "experts", etc.) for information, citizens are open to misinformation. Zaller says that information is not distributed by elites in a "just the facts" manner. Thus, very few Americans have opinions based on "just the facts". The opinions of Americans rely on the biases of the political elite. (Zaller 1992) This puts the burden of proper information on the political elites, not the average citizen.

Research on the knowledge of the American people up to the point when *What Americans Know* was written was based on relatively small and idiosyncratic data. The goal of the book was to expand on the previous research and provide an alternative to the caricature picture often painted regarding the political sophistication of the American people. (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: xi) The results of their research paint a picture of the American electorate that

is more optimistic than much of the previous research. Levels of knowledge among the American public seem to resemble a normal curve with a small portion being very informed, a small portion being highly uninformed and a large middle section. Though knowledge elites make up a small portion of the public, there is not a vast group of highly uninformed people either. (Ibid.: 18) The authors also found evidence to suggest that people are capable of making rational decisions even with low information. In their own words, “Evidence of political ignorance is not proof that citizens are fools.” (xii)

According to *What Americans Know*, the political knowledge of an individual is the result of the interaction between the ability, motivation and opportunity of that individual to become knowledgeable. This model is distinct from previous models because it places emphasis on both the individual’s observation of the political world *and the presentation of the political world to the individual*. The model does not dismiss or ignore the idea that the public is politically ignorant, but it also recognizes that part of the reason the public may be ignorant is because of how information is presented (or not presented) to them. (8)

Regarding the tables and charts mentioned earlier, Delli Carpini and Keeter believe such surveys are nearly useless as a measure of the competence of American citizens. They conclude that it is meaningless to talk about how much the “public” knows about politics. (269) Their model also does not excuse an uninformed citizenry. The authors make a strong case for an informed citizenry but they think of the question in a different way than previous writers. In the words of the authors, “The fundamental question is not if the American system is democratic, but how democratic it is and for whom.” (61) Put another way, “Being informed is not an either-or proposition, it is a more-or-less proposition.” (61)

The ideas that misinformation plays a role in mass opinion and that being informed is not an either-or proposition are echoed by Kuklinski et al (2000). Kuklinski's political information classification is three-fold. There are informed people, uninformed people and *misinformed* people. Misinformation is widespread in some areas and this has serious implications for literature on the study of heuristics and elite effects on framing and information gathering. Kuklinski treats information as the "currency of democracy". Thinking of the issue this way sheds light on the possibility of manipulation of the system through misinformation. This leads people to firmly hold incorrect beliefs. (Kuklinski et al. 2000) In this sense, people may not be stupid or incompetent, but misinformed.

The existence of misinformed people is evidence of what Talisse (2004) calls belief ignorance. Belief ignorance occurs when a person holds false beliefs for reasons outside of their control (e.g., misleading or biased information or manipulation by political elites). According to Talisse this type of ignorance does not harm the health of democracy; specifically, its deliberative capabilities. However, another type of ignorance, which he labels as agent ignorance, is cause for greater concern. In agent ignorance a person's false beliefs are a result of that person's own cognitive failures. Widespread agent ignorance would be a major blow to the defense of the competence of the American people and, "devastating to every conception of democracy." (Talisse 2004: 461) Talisse posits, however, that research showing the uninterested nature and overall political ignorance of Americans is demonstrating nothing more than belief ignorance. (Talisse 2004)

But what about the act of misleading as opposed to supplying misinformation? Misinformation is more akin to lying while misleading is the ability to fool someone or some group of people. Bartels touches on this idea in his study of the Bush tax cuts. Remember in the

discussion of this article earlier that Bartels' reason for widespread support of the Bush tax cuts was that Americans failed to make the connection between the tax cuts and increased income inequality. (Bartels 2005) The failed connection was likely caused by the fact that, because of the tax cuts, Americans received checks in the mail from the U.S. government. The checks that Americans received, in a way, hid the fact that the wealthiest Americans were receiving much larger monetary breaks because of the tax cuts.

If general knowledge surveys are not a sufficient means to test the ability of a citizen to fulfill their role, as *What Americans Know* and other pieces have suggested, maybe a measure of "correct voting" can do it. When evaluating the American electorate against normative democratic theory, Lau and Redlawsk (1997) argue that the most appropriate standard to ascribe is whether or not voters "vote correctly". Voting correctly means that a voter comes to the same decision they would have made if they had been able to know all available information about the decision. Using experimental data the authors find that most people do vote correctly. The authors also determine that the rate of correct voting in the five presidential elections between 1972 and 1988 was about 75%. (Lau and Redlawsk 1997) The obvious question to be asked, though, is whether 75% is a high enough rate to claim that Americans are meeting the normative standard placed on them by democratic theory?<sup>4</sup>

Operating under the same model of correct voting, Lau, Andersen and Redlawsk (2008) tested several hypotheses about the factors that affect correct voting. They found support for seven hypotheses that place the responsibility of voting correctly on both the individual (an individual's motivation and cognitive capacity) and the larger electoral system (the availability

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<sup>4</sup> This is an especially appropriate question to ask when considering the notoriously low turnout rates in American elections, particularly in midterm elections. The national turnout rate for the 2014 midterms was around 36%. (United States Elections Project 2014) If only 36% of people vote and only 75% of those who voted did so correctly, then only 27% of the American electorate voted in 2014 and did so correctly.

of heuristics, the difficulty of a vote decision and an election's information environment). (Lau, Andersen and Redlawsk 2008)

Another determinant of citizen competence may be framing effects. An issue "frame" is the context in which an idea or story is presented. For example, a newspaper story about a proposed oil pipeline through northern Nebraska might be framed as an opportunity for job creation or as a misuse of eminent domain. Druckman (2001) examines framing effects and their impact on citizen competence. Though the author acknowledges some cases of incompetence, on the whole he argues that, "Citizens use frames in a competent and well-reasoned manner." (Druckman 2001: 225)

Druckman's argument is in direct refutation of claims made by scholars that stem from what I consider a misreading of Zaller (1992). The argument, outlined by Druckman, is two-fold. First, "Framing effects imply that citizens base their political preferences on arbitrary information." Second, "Elites often use framing to manipulate citizens' judgments." (Ibid.: 226) Because of this, it is argued that the existence of framing effects proves the incompetence of citizens. I agree that Zaller would argue elites manipulate information in order to manipulate the decisions of voters, but it is not my reading of Zaller that says citizens base their opinions on arbitrary information. The RAS model leaves room for ambivalence and inconsistency but the information is not arbitrary. Moreover, it is a misreading of Zaller to use his book as an argument for the incompetence of citizens purely based on the existence of framing effects.

As mentioned previously, one of the reasons scholars have given showing that a politically ignorant citizenry may be inconsequential is the ability of people to use heuristics or information shortcuts. In order to test the use of heuristics Lupia (1994) conducted an exit poll survey of participants in a 1988 California ballot initiative regarding insurance reform. The



results of the survey showed that people without “encyclopedic” knowledge of the initiative used information shortcuts (provided by information summaries and a “California Ballot Pamphlet”) to act as well-informed voters. This result is especially significant considering the most common and reliable information shortcut (Party ID) was not available in the election. The voters were choosing between a “Yes” vote and a “No” vote, not between candidates from the major parties. The author concludes that in this particular vote choice, the information environment allowed relatively uninformed voters to act as if they were well-informed voters.

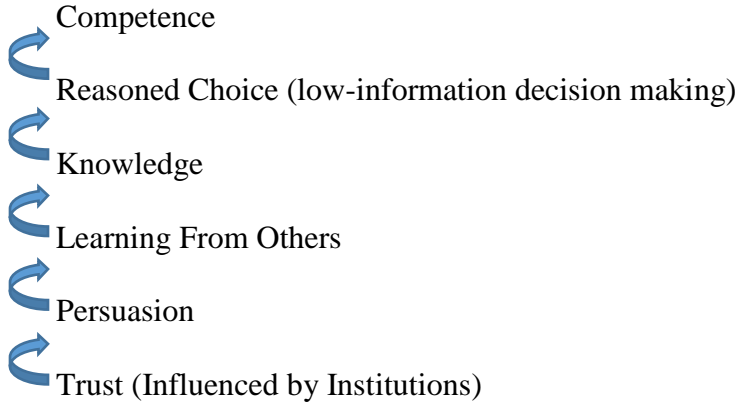
Page and Shapiro (1992) provide strong theoretical and statistical support for low-information rationality theory and the possibility of a large electorate to cancel out individual ignorance. According to the authors there are two sources of skepticism regarding the American citizens’ ability to act competently. First, survey research suggests low levels of knowledge and inattentiveness to politics. Second, views and opinions expressed by individuals are changeable and inconsistent and are, therefore, invalid. (Page and Shapiro 1992) The authors argue that these concerns do not actually address the issue of public opinion, adding to the list of authors who consider general political information surveys to be nearly meaningless. On top of this, they find evidence to suggest that Americans actually hold strong, consistent views about political matters which are formed in a rational way. (Ibid.)

The last area of research to be addressed in this review involves an intersection of disciplines; that of political science, psychology and cognitive science. In *The Elements of Reason* various scholars address the question of why people do what they do in the political realm. To borrow from E. E. Schattschneider, this is the *most legitimate question* for the authors. Where previous research on this topic focused on the outcome of a decision (vote choice, which is measured through post hoc surveys) the authors here make the case that the most important

part of figuring out why people do what they do comes before the vote decision. Before a person chooses to vote a certain way (or not vote at all) they must *reason* about the decision. This book attempts to identify various *elements of reason*. (Lupia, McCubbins and Popkin 2000)

For political scientists to truly understand why people do what they do they must draw from other disciplines, specifically psychology and cognitive science. The idea of shrinking the gap between political science and psychology is credited to Herbert Simon and is affectionately referred to as “Simon’s Bridge”. According to Simon, understanding why people do what they do has less to do with how they can answer survey questions and more to do with science’s ability to understand *how people process information*. (Ibid.) Understanding how people process information is extremely difficult, but it is necessary to address in order to answer this book’s most legitimate question.

Chapter 3 of *The Elements of Reason* is particularly relevant to the topic of citizen competence. Aside from rejecting the conclusion that Americans are largely incompetent political actors because they cannot answer survey questions on political knowledge, the authors come up with a theory for how low-information citizens gain enough information to act competently. (Lupia and McCubbins 2000) The argument presented by Lupia and McCubbins can be demonstrated in a varying number of steps, depending on how specific one wants to be in explaining it. I prefer a six-step argument which is presented below.



The arrows in the above chart could be substituted for the words “leads to”. In the Lupia and McCubbins model trusting sources of information leads to persuasion, which leads to learning from others, etc. It is important to note that the authors argue people take their cues on whom to trust from political institutions. They do not, however, acknowledge that taking cues from political institutions assumes an individual trusts said institutions to give them reliable cues. (Ibid.)

This institution-centric view of low-information citizen competence is echoed in Chapter 4 by Paul Sniderman. According to Sniderman, citizens with little information can make competent, reasoned choices because the decisions are shaped for them. Political institutions, particularly political parties, do the shaping, and the distinctive outcome of the decision is largely contingent on how the citizen goes about making the decision. (Sniderman 2000) Adding this to Lupia and McCubbins’ theory, people make reasoned choices but the choices are between previously set alternatives, and the decision is largely shaped by inputs from political institutions. Thus, even though there is a lot of information to consider when attempting to participate in the American political system, the information being presented and the choices to make have already been trimmed down making the decision easier.

Adding to the understanding of reasoning and choice—and adding to the complexity of the topic—is the idea of motivated reasoning. As mentioned previously, motivated reasoning is based on three premises: Hot cognition, on-line processing and the “How do I feel?” heuristic. As was also mentioned previously, motivated reasoning is seen as both a virtue and a vice. The virtue of motivated reasoning is that it allows people to make well-reasoned decisions that match their feelings and evaluations of the decision. The vice side is that motivated reasoning biases the assessment of new information. (Lodge and Taber 2000)

The final element of reason presented in this volume is the theory of *backstage cognition*. This idea is a bit harder to paraphrase than the others in the book so I will simply restate the definition used by Mark Turner. According to Turner, “Backstage cognition is the integrated activity of intricate, systematic, powerful, and complex mental operations of interpretation and inference.” (Turner 2000) This concept may forever remain a theory because, crucially, it does not take place in conscious thought. Backstage cognition is made up of processes that happen outside of consciousness. In Turner’s opinion, backstage cognition is the most important insight that cognitive science can offer the social sciences. Such an abstract idea is difficult to explain but Turner gives a tremendous example of when backstage cognition takes place involving a 1996 British Airways ad campaign. For this review’s purposes it suffices to say that backstage cognition involves the subconscious blending of concepts that precede conscious thought.

### Theory

My argument here has two parts. First, citizen competence, as I have defined it, is partially determined by effort in information gathering. Second, people who are competent (i.e., those who have put sufficient effort into gathering political information) are more satisfied with

their government than those who are not competent. As was discussed in the literature review above, the level of performance American citizens display in their own political system is a matter of substantial debate. For as long as there have been democratic political systems there has been debate about how involved the citizens should be. Plato and Aristotle warned against the troubles of democracy just as the founders of the United States did, and early seminal pieces in political science claimed that Americans were not as present in the functioning of their political system as was previously thought. (Lippmann [1927] 1993; Campbell et al. 1960)

Studies have suggested that Americans do not hold strong political ideologies (Converse 1962; Markus and Converse 1979); that people are inherently biased, *motivated* thinkers (Lodge and Taber 2000); and that people are dogmatic and unwilling to adjust their beliefs even when presented with correcting information. (Nyhan and Reifler 2010; Nyhan et al. 2014) There is also evidence to suggest that humans are not fit to handle the tasks required of citizens, such as voting and evaluating public policy. (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000) These findings, however, do not condemn American democracy or its participants to failure. They are not a nail in the coffin of democracy. Rather, they serve as insights into the actuality of human behavior in the American system, and political systems in general.

Research also suggests that Americans live in an information environment that is misleading and full of misinformation. (Zaller 1992; Kuklinski et al. 2000; Bartels 2005) Despite this environment, research has found that Americans do a good job coming to correct, well-reasoned voting decisions. (Lau and Redlawsk 1997; Druckman 2001) Despite limited cognitive abilities, humans use low-information rationality (Lupia 1994), motivated reasoning (Lodge and Taber 2000) and backstage cognition (Turner 2000) to overcome the roadblocks presented to them in the information environment presented by the American political system. On top of this,

the legitimacy of using general information surveys to make broad claims about the political sophistication of the American people and about the health of American democracy has been called into question. (Zaller 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Page and Shapiro 1992; Lupia, McCubbins and Popkin 2000)

Given the limitations of political knowledge surveys, the difficulties presented by the information environment in the American political system and the ability of humans (even with limited cognition) to “make some sense of it all”, I argue that a new theory of voter competence is needed. My theory is rooted in what can be termed “modern political psychology”, a new area of social science that focuses on human thought. Keeping the work of political psychology in mind, I take one step back and ask what happens before a voter forms thoughts about a candidate or an issue? What happens in order for a voter to be considered competent? At some time before thoughts and competence are to be considered, an individual must gather information. Therefore, competence, in my theory, is determined—at least in part—by effort in information gathering.

The competence of an individual is a question of whether or not that person is sufficiently qualified to perform some task. If the task is participating in the American political system—voting, for example—then in order to be sufficiently qualified to participate that person must have gathered and processed some amount of information relevant to whatever form of participation they are attempting. In order to gather information a person must seek it out. This is the effort I am looking at.

But why should we care about putting in the effort to make a competent vote decision, even if the effort required may be minimal? The answer to that question lies in the goal of government. The goal of government will vary depending on which individual you ask because different people, even within the same nation, have different expectations of their government.

However, it is safe to say that one commonly held belief among Americans is that the government should promote the happiness of its people—or at the very least not get in the way of their happiness. As discussed at the beginning of the literature, the U.S. Constitution lays out various goals the Constitution and subsequent government are to achieve. Two of the goals are insuring tranquility and promoting general welfare. Each of the goals can be helped by having citizens that are satisfied or content in their political life. Content citizens live a life that has less tumult and difficulty than citizens experiencing discontent. Citizens who are content with the way their government is functioning are living a more tranquil life and a life with greater welfare. If competence can promote contentment, then competence has a direct effect on the goals set forth in the U.S. Constitution.

I argue that effort (and therefore competence) is important because it allows a person to be more satisfied (or content) with their government and political system. In particular, the normative ideals that one holds regarding citizen efficacy will be more satisfied among those who are more competent. Normative ideals are simply ideas, concepts or norms that widely held throughout a group of people. The norms I am discussing here are confined to U.S. citizens.

Though probably not ubiquitous through the entire population, some normative ideals involving American democracy include the idea that “the people” should have a say in what the government does. It is also widely believed that our officials should pay some level of attention to the will of their constituents. I argue that Americans who are more competent (those who put forth greater effort in their information gathering) will also exhibit more satisfaction with such normative ideals. People who are exerting effort to gather information to understand various concepts, ideas or individuals in the American political system will feel like they are a part of the

system. They feel like they are contributing to a system that is important for the function of their country and one they have a duty to contribute to.

The idea that competence contributes to satisfaction may sound odd considering the volume and fervor with which some factions of American politics proclaim their disgust with parts of the American political system. For example, many members of the Republican Party and ideological conservatives throughout the United States have been expressing opposition to President Barack Obama and his policies for much of the last seven years, beginning with his election in 2008. The passing of the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare) in 2010 seemed to ramp up the fervor coming from such groups. Looking at an example on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, President George W. Bush and his administration received strong opposition from Democrats and liberals because of the U.S. military's actions in Iraq in the mid 2000's. In both examples we see groups that certainly would not be considered satisfied or content with their president or his policies.

Why are these groups—which appear to pay close attention to the political system and therefore qualify as competent—so angry? There are two answers to that question. The first is that such people do not actually put as much effort into gathering information as it appears they do. Thus, they are not competent and would not be expected to exhibit more satisfaction according to my theory. The second answer is that the person or concept these people are directing their disgust toward is not the concept that I am looking at here.

My theory is not addressing a particular group's opposition to one person, one policy, or even a host of persons and policies. I am also not arguing that competence leads to complete satisfaction with every aspect of the American government. I am looking at larger, broader concepts that may be affected by the actions of a president or their policies but are not



completely determined by them. Specifically, I am looking at whether or not people feel that public officials care what they think and whether or not those people think they have a say in what the government does. Even if Jane Johnson absolutely despises President Obama, Jane does not necessarily feel that public officials completely ignore the average citizen or that she has absolutely no say in what the government does. People who are more competent are, generally, more satisfied. They may not be completely happy with the way things are going, but they are also not designing campaigns to overthrow the government.

## CHAPTER 3

## DATA AND RESULTS

My analysis will focus on two normative ideals that are a part of American political thought. The first ideal is that Americans have a say in what the government does. The second is that the American government pays attention to what the people think. I theorize that competence will positively affect the outlook that people have on these ideals. In other words, competent citizens will feel more strongly that they have a say in what the government does and that the government pays attention to what they think. However, analyses such as the one here—and all other empirical analyses conducted in scientific research—cannot prove causation. It must be noted that should the results of these analyses support my theory and meet my expectations, they will at best provide evidence to suggest correlation between the variable I have chosen.

In order to test this theory I have run forty one-way ANOVAs using data gathered from the American National Elections Studies (ANES). The ANES are the gold standard of national voter surveys in the United States, conducting methodologically robust pre and post-election surveys for over six decades. ANES provides this data to researchers in order to help with research about American politics and elections. As the reader will see from the tables in the pages to come, the number of respondents to these survey questions ranges from about 1,500 to nearly 6,000, providing statistically significant results for nearly all the analyses. I have selected two sets of questions from the 2012 ANES to be analyzed. One set of questions will measure the competence of respondents and will be used as independent variables. The other set measures the

satisfaction that respondents express regarding the two normative ideals outlined above and will be the dependent variables.

Before moving on I must clarify three points regarding the questions being used in this analysis. First, the questions I am using regarding competence (the independent variables) are in accordance with my definition of competence. These questions ask respondents to identify, generally, how much attention they pay to politics and, specifically, how many days a week they view various news mediums. These questions are not meant to create a comprehensive understanding of what competence looks like precisely. There are innumerable considerations to be taken into account when describing citizen competence; these questions are used to provide us with a glimpse of some of those considerations. For example, respondents who pay less attention to politics are viewed under my theory as less competent than those who pay much attention to politics. Respondents who often watch national TV news are viewed as more competent than respondents who rarely view national TV news.

Second, the questions regarding satisfaction with normative ideals (the dependent variables) are measuring how the respondents feel about these ideals. The goal here is not to measure how responsive the U.S. government is to its citizens in reality; rather, I am looking at whether or not the respondents to the 2012 ANES *feel* the government is meeting these normative standards. If, for example, a respondent answers positively to a question about public officials caring about what people like themselves think, then I take that to mean the respondent feels positively about the general normative ideal that public officials care about what people think. It is important to keep my theory in mind: People who put more effort into their vote decisions will be more satisfied with the normative ideals they hold toward their government. The satisfaction questions might also be considered questions regarding a common political

science term: efficacy. Though these questions may not be perfect for getting at the concept of satisfaction, I am using these efficacy questions as a proxy to look at satisfaction. I am assuming that positive responses to these efficacy questions represent a citizen who is more satisfied with the normative ideal being addressed in the question.

Finally, I must make some clarifications about the format of the analyses and results below. Each question in the ANES survey is associated with a variable title that summarizes the question in shorthand. These shorthand titles are used to make analyzing the data with statistical software easier. For example, the first survey question below is coded as “respons\_elections” in the official ANES survey codebook. I have recoded it to “respons\_elections2” to make the statistical output (the tables and figures) flow more intuitively. The original answer options for “respons\_elections” have thus been flipped to make the most positive response the highest number. Each code in the following pages that has a “2” at the end has been recoded in the same fashion (ensuring that the most positive answers correlate with the highest number) in order to make the tables and figures more intuitive.

Recoding the variables to make the most positive response match the highest number is especially relevant for the means plots that are depicted in the figures below. In each figure I am expecting to see means plots that start in the lower left corner of the figure and progress in a linear fashion to the upper right corner. Recoding the variables does not ensure the ANOVAs will yield means plots that meet my expectations; it ensures that hypotheses which are supported will have means plots that look a certain way. Because I expect high competence to yield high satisfaction, a lower-left-to-upper-right linear shape is both easy to spot and makes intuitive sense.

According to my theory, I expect that the more people pay attention to what is going on in government and politics, the more they feel that elections make government pay attention. This is because people who are paying attention to politics feel more satisfied with the normative ideal that elections make the government pay attention to what the people think. To test this, I ran a one-way ANOVA with `respons_elections2` as the dependent variable and `interest_attention2` as the independent variable. The wording of these survey questions and possible respondent answers can be found below, immediately before the table and figure showing the results of the analysis. My hypothesis is that as respondent scores on the independent variable increase, the average values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 1 (below), the hypothesis is supported by this analysis.

#### RESPONS\_ELECTIONS2

*How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what the people think?*

1. *Not much*
2. *Some*
3. *A good deal*

#### INTEREST\_ATTENTION2

*How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?*

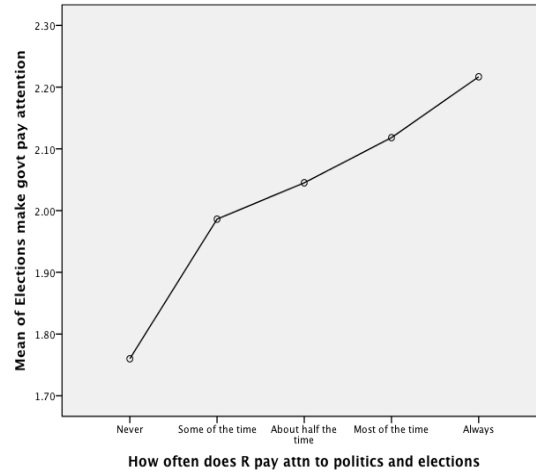
1. *Never*
2. *Some of the time*
3. *About half the time*
4. *Most of the time*
5. *Always*

**Table 1.** One-way ANOVA of  
respons\_elections2 by interest\_attention2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Never	150	1.76 (0.77)
2.00 Some of the time	1515	1.99 (0.70)
3.00 About half the time	1243	2.05 (0.69)
4.00 Most of the time	1955	2.12 (0.70)
5.00 Always	1024	2.22 (0.72)
Total	5887	2.08 (0.71)

F-Statistic	26.391
Significance	.000

**Figure 1.** Means Plots of  
respons\_elections2 by interest\_attention2

As Table 1 shows, the results of this analysis are statistically significant. We can see that as the value of interest\_attention2 increases, the average value for respons\_elections2 also increases.

The average value increases from 1.76 to 2.22. This supports my hypothesis and my theory.

According to my theory, I also expect that the more interest people have for political campaigns, the more they feel that elections make government pay attention to what the people think. This is because people who are more interested in political campaigns feel satisfied with the ideal of government paying attention to what the people think. To test this, I ran a one-way ANOVA with respons\_elections2 again as the dependent variable and interest\_following2 as the independent variable. The wording and possible answers for interest\_following2 can be found below. The dependent variable is the same here as the first ANOVA (and for the first ten ANOVAs), so I will ask the reader to refer back to the first analysis for a refresher on the wording of respons\_elections2. My hypothesis is that as respondent scores on the independent variable increase, values on the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 2 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

### INTEREST\_FOLLOWING2

*Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been [very much interested, somewhat interested or not much interested/ not much interested, somewhat interested or very much interested] in the political campaigns so far this year?*

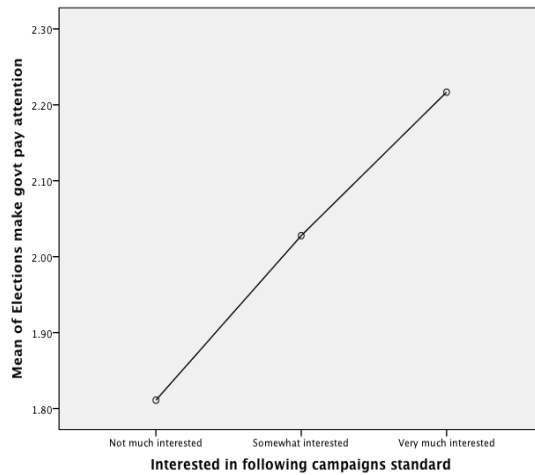
1. Not much interested
2. Somewhat interested
3. Very much interested

**Table 2.** One-way ANOVA of  
respons\_elections2 by interest\_following2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Not much interested	889	1.81 (0.71)
2.00 Somewhat interested	2450	2.03 (0.67)
3.00 Very much interested	2547	2.22 (0.71)
Total	5886	2.08 (0.71)

F-Statistic	122.763
Significance	.000



**Figure 2.** Means Plots of  
respons\_elections2 by interest\_following2

The results of this analysis are statistically significant. Table 2 show that as values for interest\_following2 increase the values for respons\_elections2 also increase with values increasing from 1.81 to 2.22, falling in a nearly straight line. This supports my hypothesis and theory.

I also expect that the more days per week a person views news on the Internet (not including sports), the more they feel that elections make government pay attention to what people think. This is expected because respondents who often view Internet news also feel that the government pays attention to what people like themselves think. To test this, a one-way ANOVA was used with respons\_elections2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wkinews as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as respondent scores for the independent variable

increase, the score for the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 3 (below), this hypothesis is not supported.

#### PRMEDIA\_WKINEWS

*During a typical week, how many days do you watch, read, or listen to news on the Internet, not including sports?*

0. None

1. One day

2. Two days

3. Three days

4. Four days

5. Five days

6. Six days

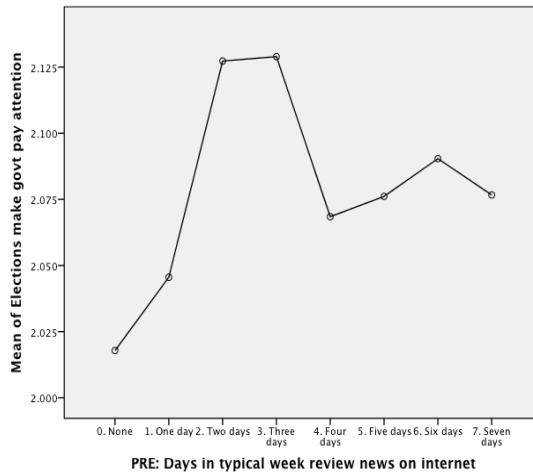
7. Seven days

**Table 3.** One-way ANOVA of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_wkinews

	N	Mean (SD)
0. None	1231	2.02 (0.70)
1. One day	461	2.05 (0.68)
2. Two days	440	2.13 (0.70)
3. Three days	504	2.13 (0.72)
4. Four days	336	2.07 (0.70)
5. Five days	670	2.08 (0.70)
6. Six days	354	2.09 (0.70)
7. Seven days	1604	2.08 (0.72)
Total	5600	2.07 (0.71)

F-Statistic	2.027
Significance	.048



**Figure 3.** Means Plots of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_wkinews

Though the results of this analysis are statistically significant, Figure 3 shows that the means plots do not fall in a line as expected, instead more resembling a normal curve. There is also little substantive difference in the average values of respons\_elections2 here. This does not support my hypothesis or theory.



Also according to my theory, respondents who pay a great deal of attention to Internet news also feel more satisfied with the ideal that the government pays attention to what the people think. Therefore, I expect that as values for *prmedia\_atinews2* increase, the average values for *respons\_elections2* will increase as well.

#### PRMEDIA\_ATINEWS2

*How much attention do you pay to news about national politics on the Internet?*

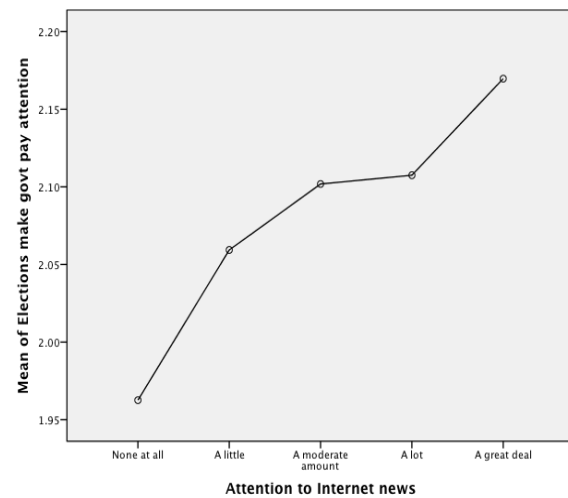
1. None at all
2. A little
3. A moderate amount
4. A lot
5. A great deal

**Table 4.** One-way ANOVA of *respons\_elections2* by *prmedia\_atinews2*

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	401	1.96 (0.75)
2.00 A little	1314	2.06 (0.70)
3.00 A moderate amount	1424	2.10 (0.69)
4.00 A lot	735	2.10 (0.70)
5.00 A great deal	495	2.17 (0.73)
Total	4369	2.08 (0.71)

F-Statistic	5.629
Significance	.000



**Figure 4.** Means Plots of *respons\_elections2* by *prmedia\_atinews2*

Table 4 shows that the results of this analysis are statistically significant. It also shows that as the values for *prmedia\_atinews2* increase, the values for *respons\_elections2* also increase from 1.96 to 2.17. This supports my theory and hypothesis. However, it should be noted that there is little substantive difference, with the overall increase only being about 4% between the two values.

My theory also suggests that the more days in a week a person watches national news on TV, the more likely that person will be to think elections make government pay attention to what

people think. This is because people who watch TV news more often feel more satisfied with the ideal that the government pays attention to what the people think. This hypothesis was tested using a one-way ANOVA with `respons_elections2` as the dependent variable and `prmedia_wktvnws` as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 5 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

#### PRMEDIA\_WKTVNWS

*During a typical week, how many days do you watch national news on TV, not including sports?*

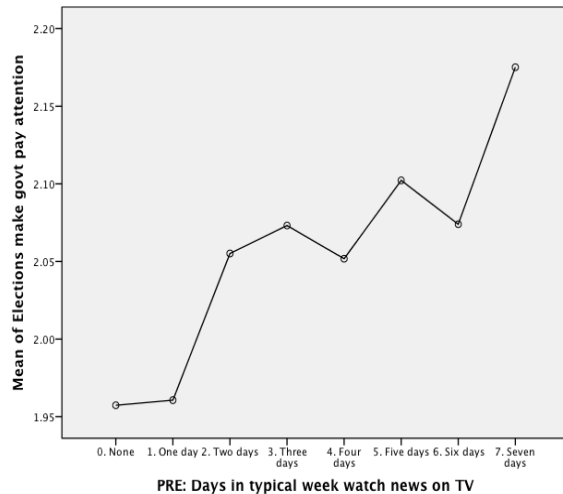
0. None
1. One day
2. Two days
3. Three days
4. Four days
5. Five days
6. Six days
7. Seven days

**Table 5.** One-way ANOVA of `respons_elections2` by `prmedia_wktvnws`

	N	Mean (SD)
0. None	891	1.96 (0.71)
1. One day	483	1.96 (0.69)
2. Two days	544	2.06 (0.70)
3. Three days	533	2.07 (0.71)
4. Four days	425	2.05 (0.70)
5. Five days	851	2.10 (0.70)
6. Six days	446	2.07 (0.70)
7. Seven days	1713	2.18 (0.71)
Total	5886	2.08 (0.71)

F-Statistic	10.596
Significance	.000



**Figure 5.** Means Plots of `respons_elections2` by `prmedia_wktvnws`

Table 5 shows another statistically significant relationship, and we can see that as the values of the independent variable increase the values of the dependent variable also increase. This

supports my hypothesis and theory. However, this is another analysis yielding little substantive difference between the average values of the dependent variable. The increase shown here is from 1.96 to 2.18, a difference of about 4%.

I also expect that the more attention a person pays to TV news about national politics, the more they will feel that elections make government pay attention to what the people think. This is because people who pay more attention to national political news on TV feel more satisfied with the normative ideal that elections make the government pay attention to what the people think. Using a one-way ANOVA with `respons_elections2` as the dependent variable and `prmedia_attvnews2` as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. I hypothesize that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 6 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

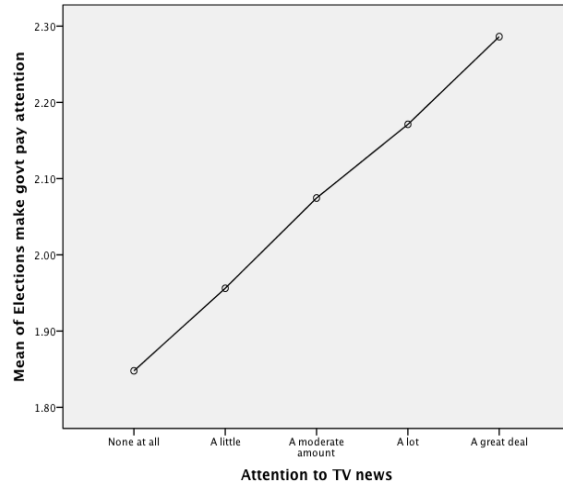
#### PRMEDIA\_ATTVNEWS2

*How much attention do you pay to news about national politics on TV?*

1. *None at all*
2. *A little*
3. *A moderate amount*
4. *A lot*
5. *A great deal*

**Table 6.** One-way ANOVA of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_attvnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	138	1.85 (0.78)
2.00 A little	1164	1.96 (0.68)
3.00 A moderate amount	1730	2.07 (0.69)
4.00 A lot	1110	2.17 (0.70)
5.00 A great deal	849	2.29 (0.71)
Total	4991	2.10 (0.71)
F-Statistic	35.478	
Significance	.000	

**Figure 6.** Means Plots of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_attvnews2

The results of this analysis are statistically significant, and we can see that as the value of prmedia\_attvnews2 increases, the average value for respons\_elections2 also increases. Table 6 shows that the average value of the dependent variable increases from 1.85 to 2.29. This supports my hypothesis and my theory.

According to my theory, I expect that the more days per week a person reads news in newspapers, the more they feel that elections make government pay attention to what people think. I expect this because people who read news in the newspaper more often will feel that the government pays attention to what people think. To test this I ran a one-way ANOVA with respons\_elections2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wkpaprnws as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as respondent scores for the independent variable increase, the score for the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 7 (below), this hypothesis is not supported.

## PRMEDIA\_WKPAPRNWS

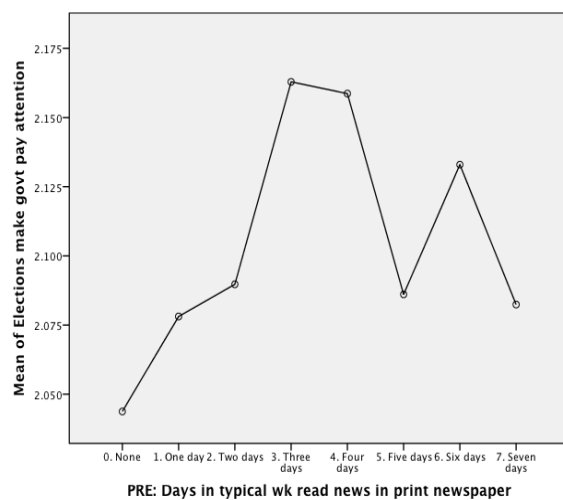
*During a typical week, how many days do you read news in a printed newspaper, not including sports?*

- 0. None
- 1. One day
- 2. Two days
- 3. Three days
- 4. Four days
- 5. Five days
- 6. Six days
- 7. Seven days

**Table 7.** One-way ANOVA of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	2422	2.04 (0.71)
1 1. One day	909	2.08 (0.71)
2 2. Two days	546	2.09 (0.70)
3 3. Three days	399	2.16 (0.68)
4 4. Four days	208	2.15 (0.70)
5 5. Five days	302	2.09 (0.74)
6 6. Six days	188	2.13 (0.67)
7 7. Seven days	910	2.08 (0.70)
Total	5884	2.07 (0.71)

F-Statistic	2.201
Significance	.031



**Figure 7.** Means Plots of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

Table 7 shows that these results are statistically significant, but the expected shape is not present.

As Figure 7 shows, the means plots resemble a normal curve more than a line as expected. This does not support my hypothesis or theory.

According to my theory, I expect that as the values of prmedia\_atpprnews2 increase, the average values for respons\_elections2 will also increase. This is expected because people who pay more attention to newspaper news will feel that the government pays attention to what people think. To test this I ran a one-way ANOVA with respons\_elections2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atpprnews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as

respondent scores on the independent variable increase, values on the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 8 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

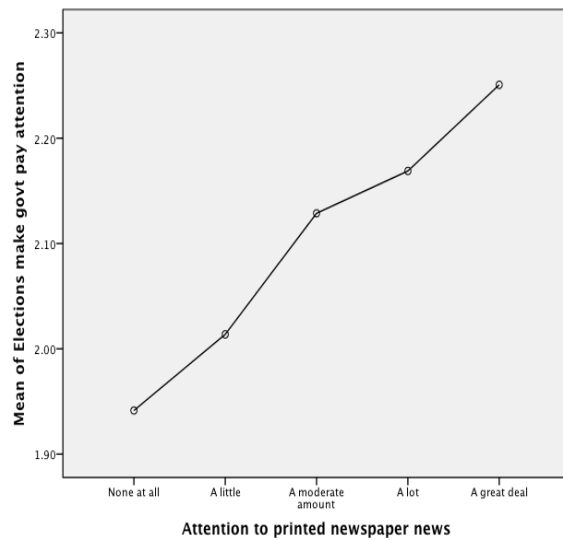
#### PRMEDIA\_ATPPRNEWS2

*How much attention do you pay to news about national politics in printed newspapers?*

1. None at all
2. A little
3. A moderate amount
4. A lot
5. A great deal

**Table 8.** One-way ANOVA of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_atpprnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	239	1.94 (0.374)
2.00 A little	1096	2.01 (0.69)
3.00 A moderate amount	1150	2.13 (0.69)
4.00 A lot	610	2.17 (0.71)
5.00 A great deal	367	2.25 (0.70)
Total	3462	2.10 (0.70)
F-Statistic	13.477	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 8.** Means Plots of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_atpprnews2

Table 8 shows that as values for prmedia\_atpprnews2 increase the values for respons\_elections2 also increase (from 1.94 to 2.25). The results of this analysis are also highly significant and the means plots fall in a line as expected; therefore, my hypothesis and theory are supported.

According to my theory, people who put in the effort to listen to radio news often feel more satisfied with the ideal that government pays attention to what people think. To test this hypothesis I used a one-way ANOVA with repsons\_elections2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wkrdnws as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as values for the

independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 9 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

#### PRMEDIA\_WKRDNWS

*During a typical week, how many days do you listen to news on the radio, not including sports?*

0. None

1. One day

2. Two days

3. Three days

4. Four days

5. Five days

6. Six days

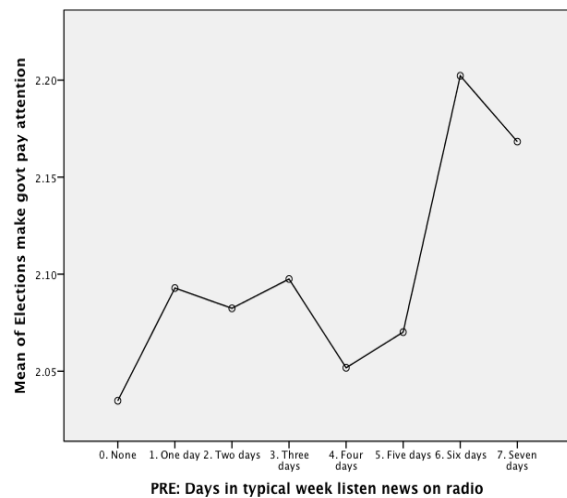
7. Seven days

**Table 9.** One-way ANOVA of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_wkrdnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	2273	2.03 (0.71)
1 1. One day	474	2.09 (0.66)
2 2. Two days	534	2.08 (0.72)
3 3. Three days	441	2.10 (0.68)
4 4. Four days	309	2.05 (0.70)
5 5. Five days	955	2.07 (0.71)
6 6. Six days	178	2.20 (0.72)
7 7. Seven days	719	2.17 (0.73)
Total	5883	2.07 (0.71)

F-Statistic	3.820
Significance	.000



**Figure 9.** Means Plots of  
respons\_elections2 by prmedia\_wkrdnws

As can be seen in Table 9, the results of this analysis are significant and we can see that—though it is not a neat line—the values of the independent variable increase as the values of the dependent variable also increase. This supports my hypothesis and theory. However, it should be noted that this relationship has little substantive difference. The overall increase is from 2.03 to 2.17, a difference of less than 3%.

My theory also suggests that the more attention a person pays to radio news about national politics, the more they will think that elections make the government pay attention to the people. This is because respondents who pay more attention to radio news about national politics feel more strongly that the government pays attention to what the people think. In order to test this hypothesis I ran a one-way ANOVA with *respons\_elections2* as the dependent variable and *prmedia\_atrdnews2* as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will increase. Table 10 (below) shows this hypothesis to be supported.

#### PRMEDIA\_ATRDNEWS2

*How much attention do you pay to news about national politics on the radio?*

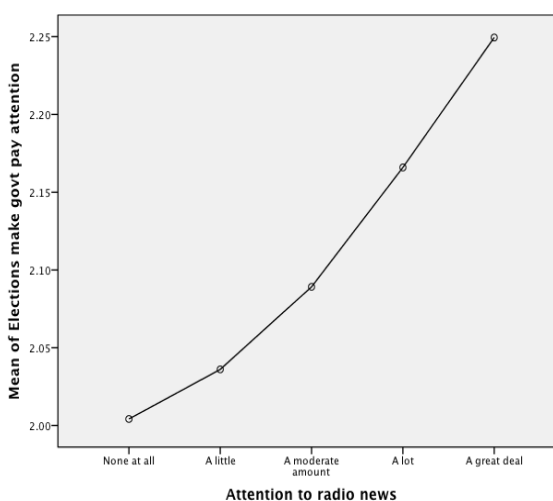
1. None at all
2. A little
3. A moderate amount
4. A lot
5. A great deal

**Table 10.** One-way ANOVA of *respons\_elections2* by *prmedia\_atrdnews2*

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	238	2.00 (0.70)
2.00 A little	1080	2.04 (0.68)
3.00 A moderate amount	1155	2.09 (0.70)
4.00 A lot	681	2.17 (0.73)
5.00 A great deal	453	2.25 (0.72)
Total	3607	2.10 (0.71)

F-Statistic	10.047
Significance	.000



**Figure 10.** Means Plots of *respons\_elections2* by *prmedia\_atrdnews2*

Table 10 shows highly significant results and Figure 10 shows that the means plots fall in a line. This supports my hypothesis and theory. However, this is another analysis with little substantive



difference. The low mean value for `respons_elections2` is 2.00 and the high value is 2.25, an overall difference of 5%.

According to my theory, I expect that the more people pay attention to what is going on in government and politics, the more they feel that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. In order to test this, I ran a one-way ANOVA with `effic_saystd` as the dependent variable and `interest_attention2` as the independent variable. The wording of the survey question and possible respondent answers for `effic_saystd` can be found below. The independent variables for the rest of the ANOVAs are the same as those used in the first ten ANOVAs. The reader can refer back to previous analyses for the survey wording of the independent variables in the remaining analyses. My hypothesis is that as respondent scores on the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase.

According to Table 11 (below), the hypothesis is supported by this analysis.

#### EFFIC\_SAYSTD

*People like me don't have any say about what the government does.*

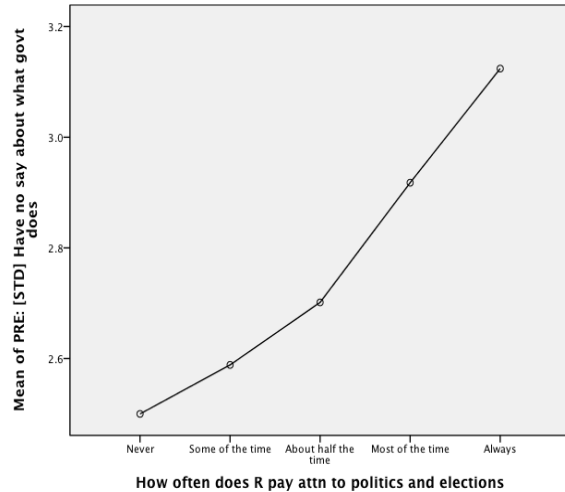
1. *Agree strongly*
2. *Agree somewhat*
3. *Neither agree nor disagree*
4. *Disagree somewhat*
5. *Disagree strongly*

**Table 11.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by interest\_attention2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Never	80	2.50 (1.18)
2.00 Some of the time	763	2.59 (1.20)
3.00 About half the time	630	2.70 (1.22)
4.00 Most of the time	1034	2.92 (1.28)
5.00 Always	500	3.12 (1.37)
Total	3007	2.81 (1.27)

F-Statistic	17.922
Significance	.000

**Figure 11.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by interest\_attention2

The results of this analysis are statistically significant. Table 11 and Figure 11 show that as the value of interest\_attention2 increases, the average value for effic\_saystd also increases. The average value increases from 2.50 to 3.12. This supports my hypothesis and my theory.

My theory also suggests that the more interest people have for political campaigns, the more strongly they feel that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. This is because people who are interested in political campaigns feel satisfied with the normative ideal that they have a say in what the government does. To test this, I ran a one-way ANOVA with effic\_saystd as the dependent variable and interest\_following2 as the independent variable. The wording of the survey question and responses for the variables in this analysis can be found above. My hypothesis is that as respondent scores on the independent variable increase, values on the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 12 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 12.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by interest\_following2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Not much interested	445	2.45 (1.18)
2.00 Somewhat interested	1248	2.70 (1.21)
3.00 Very much interested	1313	3.05 (1.32)
Total	3006	2.81 (1.27)

F-Statistic	46.990
Significance	.000

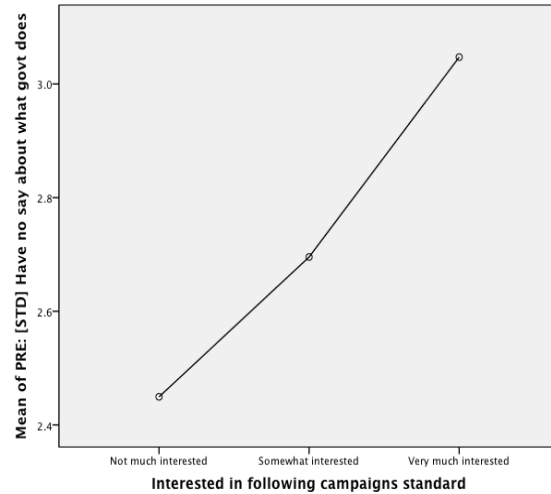
**Figure 12.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by interest\_following2

Table 12 shows that the results of this analysis are statistically significant. Also, as values for interest\_following2 increase the values for effic\_saystd also increase with the low value being 2.45 and the high value being 3.05. As can be seen in Figure 12, the means plots for this analysis fall in a nearly straight line as expected. This supports my hypothesis and theory

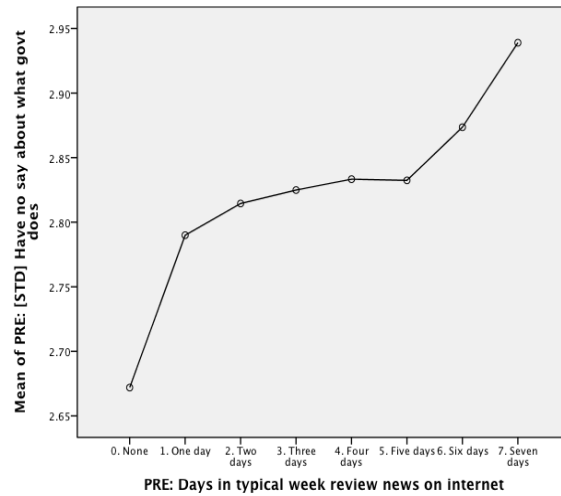
I also expect that as the values for prmedia\_wkinews increase, the average values for effic\_saystd will increase. This is because respondents who often view news on the Internet will feel that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. I used a one-way ANOVA to test this. My dependent variable here is effic\_saystd while the independent variable is prmedia\_wkinews, and my hypothesis is that as the value of the independent variable increases, the value of the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 13 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 13.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wkinews

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	634	2.67 (1.26)
1 1. One day	238	2.79 (1.22)
2 2. Two days	221	2.81 (1.26)
3 3. Three days	257	2.82 (1.25)
4 4. Four days	174	2.83 (1.25)
5 5. Five days	364	2.83 (1.27)
6 6. Six days	182	2.87 (1.26)
7 7. Seven days	787	2.94 (1.28)
Total	2857	2.82 (1.27)

F-Statistic	2.314
Significance	.024

**Figure 13.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wkinews

This is another statistically significant analysis, and we can see from Table 13 that, as expected, the values of the dependent variable increase as the values of the independent variable increase. These results support my hypothesis and theory. However, similar to the analysis of respons\_elections to by prmedia\_wkinews, the range of average values for the dependent variable here (2.67 to 2.94) is not substantively different.

According to my theory, I expect that the more attention a person pays to news about national politics on the Internet, the more they will feel that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. In order to test this a one-way ANOVA was used with effic\_saystd as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atinews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 14 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 14.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_atinews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	199	2.49 (1.24)
2.00 A little	697	2.75 (1.23)
3.00 A moderate amount	686	2.88 (1.23)
4.00 A lot	380	3.06 (1.25)
5.00 A great deal	261	3.14 (1.37)
Total	2223	2.87 (1.26)

F-Statistic	11.400
Significance	.000

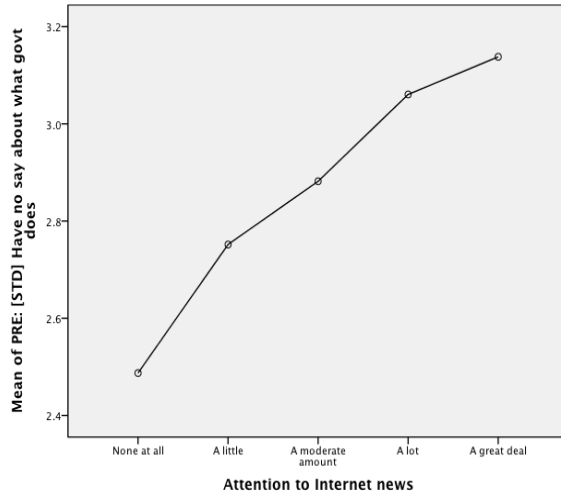
**Figure 14.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_atinews2

Table 14 shows that these results are statistically significant. It also shows that as the values for prmedia\_atinews2 increase, the values for effic\_saystd also increase from 2.49 to 3.14. This supports my theory and hypothesis.

Also according to my theory, I expect that the more days in a week a person watches national news on TV, the more likely that person will be to think they have a say in what the government does. This is because people who often view national news on TV feel more satisfied with the normative ideal that the people have a say in what the government does. This hypothesis was tested using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_saystd as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wktnws as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 15 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 15.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wktnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	460	2.71 (1.27)
1 1. One day	232	2.62 (1.19)
2 2. Two days	272	2.69 (1.22)
3 3. Three days	273	2.74 (1.19)
4 4. Four days	217	2.92 (1.25)
5 5. Five days	453	2.80 (1.24)
6 6. Six days	227	2.96 (1.26)
7 7. Seven days	873	2.92 (1.35)
Total	3007	2.81 (1.27)

F-Statistic	3.237
Significance	.002

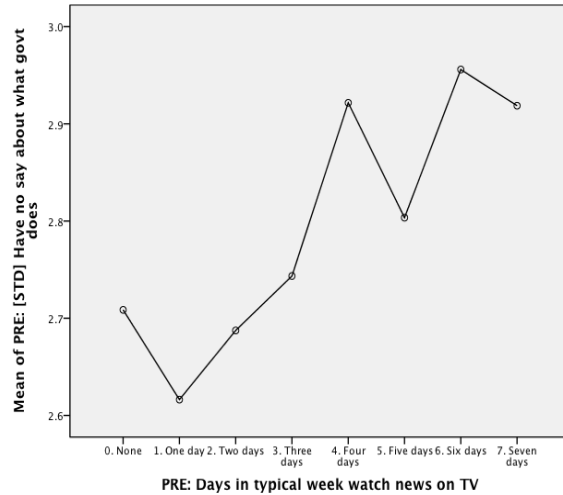
**Figure 15.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wktnws

Table 15 shows another analysis with statistically significant results, and we can see that as the values of the independent variable increase the values of the dependent variable also increase. This supports my hypothesis and theory. The average value for the dependent variable increase from 2.71 to 2.92, a change of about 4%, meaning there is little substantive difference between the low and high average values for the dependent variable.

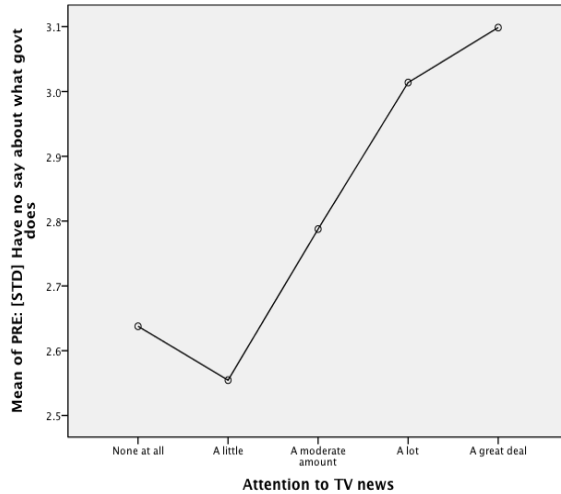
According to my theory, I expect that the more attention a person pays to TV news about national politics, the more they will feel that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. This is because respondents who pay a great deal of attention to TV news will feel more satisfied with the ideal that the people have a say in what the government does. Using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_saystd as the dependent variable and prmedia\_attvnews2 as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. I hypothesize that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 16 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 16.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_attvnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	69	2.64 (1.24)
2.00 A little	604	2.55 (1.19)
3.00 A moderate amount	876	2.79 (1.23)
4.00 A lot	578	3.01 (1.31)
5.00 A great deal	416	3.10 (1.35)
Total	2543	2.83 (1.27)

F-Statistic	15.665
Significance	.000

**Figure 16.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_attvnews2

Here we see another analysis with highly significant results. We also see that, except for a slight dip between “None at all” and “A little”, as the value of prmedia\_attvnews2 increases, the average value for effic\_saystd increases. As can be seen in Table 16, the average value increases from 2.64 to 3.10. This supports my hypothesis and my theory.

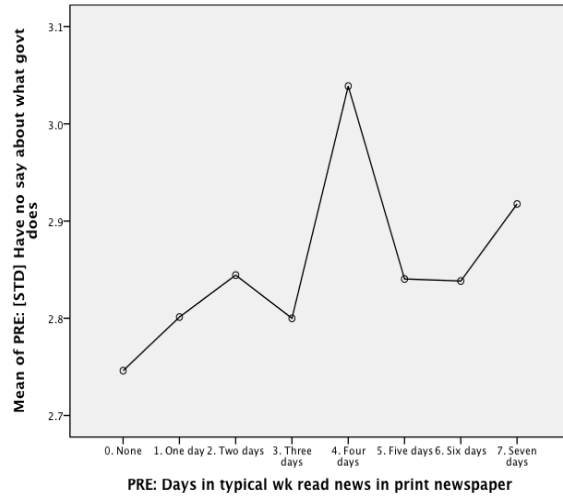
I also expect that the more days per week a person reads news in newspapers, the more they feel that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. To test this, I ran a one-way ANOVA with effic\_saystd as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wkpaprnws as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as respondent scores for the independent variable increase, the score for the dependent variable will increase. According to Table 17 (below), this hypothesis is not supported.

**Table 17.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	1249	2.75 (1.30)
1 1. One day	473	2.80 (1.23)
2 2. Two days	270	2.84 (1.25)
3 3. Three days	200	2.80 (1.26)
4 4. Four days	103	3.04 (1.27)
5 5. Five days	163	2.84 (1.31)
6 6. Six days	99	2.84 (1.33)
7 7. Seven days	449	2.92 (1.24)
Total	3006	2.81 (1.27)

F-Statistic	1.436
Significance	.186

**Figure 17.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

Looking at Table 17, we see that the results of this analysis are not statistically significant. The expected shape in the means plots is also not present. Therefore, these results do not support my hypothesis or theory.

According to my theory, I expect that as values for prmedia\_atpprnews2 increase, the values for effic\_saystd will increase. This is because respondents who pay more attention to news about national politics in newspapers feel more strongly that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. Using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_saystd as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atpprnews2 as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. I hypothesize that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 18 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

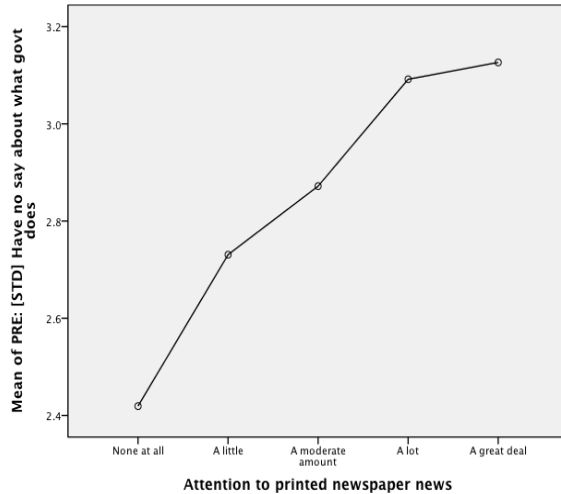


**Table 18.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_atpprnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	124	2.42 (1.24)
2.00 A little	576	2.73 (1.21)
3.00 A moderate amount	578	2.87 (1.20)
4.00 A lot	305	3.09 (1.27)
5.00 A great deal	174	3.13 (1.42)
Total	1757	2.86 (1.26)

F-Statistic	10.112
Significance	.000

**Figure 18.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_atpprnews2

The results of this analysis are statistically significant. As the value of prmedia\_atpprnews2 increases the average value for effic\_saystd increases, giving us means plots that fall in a line as expected. Table 18 shows that the average value increases from 2.42 to 3.13. This supports my hypothesis and my theory.

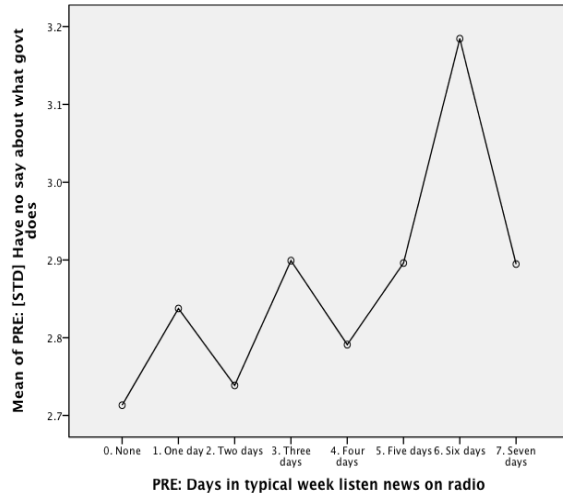
I also expect that the more days in a week a person listens to news on the radio, the more likely they are to think that people like them have a say in what the government does. This is because people who often listen to news on the radio feel strongly that they have a say in what the government does. Using effic\_saystd as my dependent variable and prmedia\_wkrdnws as my independent variable, I used a one-way ANOVA to test this. My hypothesis is that as the value of the independent variable increases, the value of the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 19 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 19.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wkrdnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	1144	2.71 (1.25)
1 1. One day	234	2.84 (1.21)
2 2. Two days	268	2.74 (1.21)
3 3. Three days	228	2.90 (1.26)
4 4. Four days	158	2.79 (1.23)
5 5. Five days	510	2.90 (1.28)
6 6. Six days	103	3.18 (1.26)
7 7. Seven days	361	2.89 (1.41)
Total	3006	2.81 (1.27)

F-Statistic	3.089
Significance	.003

**Figure 19.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_wkrdnws

Looking at Table 19, we see that the results of this analysis are statistically significant, and, as expected, the values of the dependent variable increase with the values of the independent variable. This supports my hypothesis and theory. However, the substantive difference of the range here is in question as the average value for people who listen to the radio six days a week is 3.18, but that value jumps down to 2.89 for people who listen to the radio seven days a week.

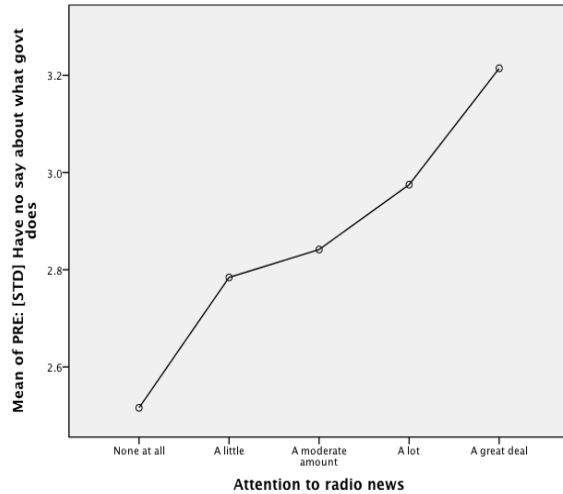
My theory also suggests that the more attention a person puts toward news about national politics on the radio, the more they will feel that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. This is because respondents who pay more attention to radio news are more likely to feel satisfied with the normative ideal that people like themselves have a say in what the government does. Using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_saystd as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atrdnews2 as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. I hypothesize that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 20 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 20.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_atrdnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	126	2.52 (1.20)
2.00 A little	556	2.78 (1.28)
3.00 A moderate amount	593	2.84 (1.24)
4.00 A lot	361	2.98 (1.28)
5.00 A great deal	224	3.21 (1.38)
Total	1860	2.87 (1.28)

F-Statistic	7.854
Significance	.000

**Figure 20.** Means Plots of effic\_saystd by prmedia\_atrdnews2

The results of this analysis are statistically significant. As the value of prmedia\_atrdnews2 increases, the average value for effic\_saystd increases, supporting my expectation. Also, Table 20 shows that the average value of the dependent variable increases from 2.52 to 3.21. This supports my hypothesis and my theory.

According to my theory, I expect that the more often a person pays attention to news about government and politics, the more that person feels that public officials care what people like them think. I expect this because people who pay more attention to government and politics feel more satisfied with the normative ideal that public officials care about what the average person thinks. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and interest\_attention2 as the independent variable. The wording of the survey question and answers for effic\_carerev2 can be found below. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 21 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

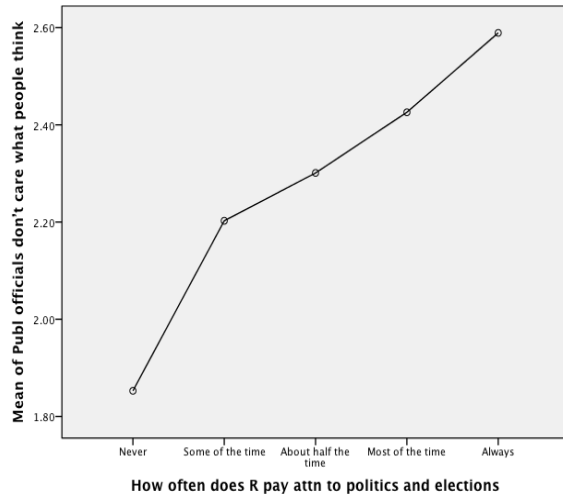
## EFFIC\_CAREREV2

*How much do public officials care what people like you think?*

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. A moderate amount
4. A lot
5. A great deal

**Table 21.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_carerev2 by interest\_attention2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Never	68	1.85 (0.98)
2.00 Some of the time	750	2.20 (0.95)
3.00 About half the time	611	2.30 (0.91)
4.00 Most of the time	918	2.43 (0.92)
5.00 Always	521	2.59 (1.05)
Total	2868	2.36 (0.96)
F-Statistic	19.203	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 21.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2 by interest\_attention2

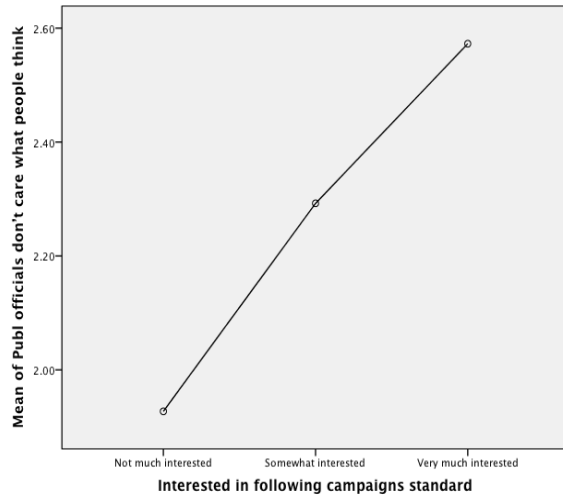
Looking at Table 21 and Figure 21 we see that as the values for the independent variable increase, the average values for the dependent variable increase from 1.85 to 2.59. Given that this is the expected relationship and the results are statistically significant, these findings support my hypothesis and theory.

I also expect that the more interested a person is in political campaigns, the more that person feels the government cares what people like them think. I expect this because people who are interested in political campaigns are more likely to think that the government cares what they think. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and interest\_following2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as the values for the

independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 22 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 22.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_carerev2 by interest\_following2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Not much interested	439	1.93 (0.88)
2.00 Somewhat interested	1197	2.29 (0.90)
3.00 Very much interested	1231	2.57 (0.99)
Total	2867	2.37 (0.96)
F-Statistic		81.600
Significance		.000



**Figure 22.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2 by interest\_following2

Figure 22 shows that the average values for effic\_carerev2 increase as the values for interest\_following2 increase, as expected. Table 22 shows that these results are statistically significant. These findings support my hypothesis and theory.

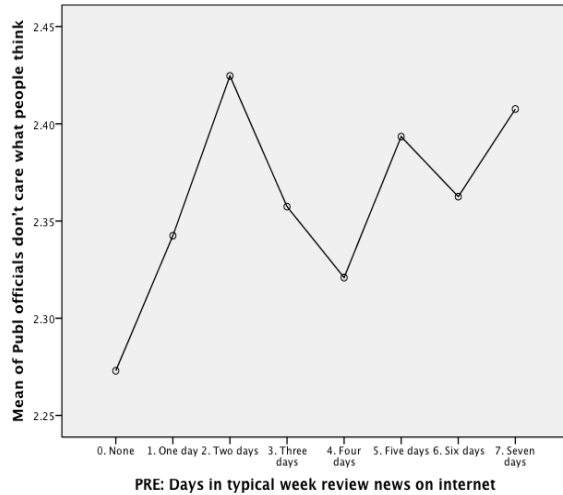
My theory also suggests that respondents who often view news on the Internet will feel more satisfied with the ideal that public officials care about what people like themselves think. Using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wkinews as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. I hypothesize that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 23 (below), this hypothesis is not supported.

**Table 23.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_wkinews

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	597	2.27 (1.01)
1 1. One day	219	2.34 (0.90)
2 2. Two days	219	2.42 (1.01)
3 3. Three days	249	2.36 (0.90)
4 4. Four days	162	2.32 (0.91)
5 5. Five days	305	2.39 (0.94)
6 6. Six days	171	2.36 (0.82)
7 7. Seven days	812	2.41 (0.96)
Total	2734	2.36 (0.95)

F-Statistic	1.248
Significance	.272



**Figure 23.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2  
by prmedia\_wkinews

As Table 23 shows, the results of this ANOVA are not statistically significant. Because there is not statistical significance, this hypothesis is not supported.

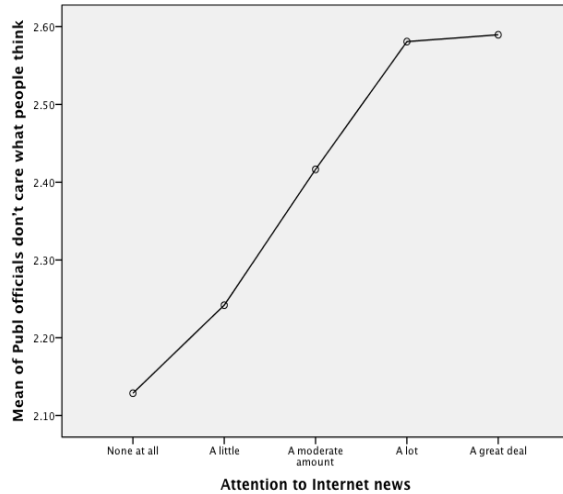
According to my theory, I expect that the more attention a person pays to news about national politics on the Internet, the more that person feels that public officials care what people like them think. I expect this because respondents who pay a great deal of attention to Internet news will also feel more satisfied with the ideal that public officials care about what the people think. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atinews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 24 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 24.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_atinews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	202	2.13 (0.94)
2.00 A little	616	2.24 (0.90)
3.00 A moderate amount	737	2.42 (0.86)
4.00 A lot	353	2.58 (0.97)
5.00 A great deal	229	2.59 (1.11)
Total	2137	2.38 (0.94)

F-Statistic	14.529
Significance	.000



**Figure 24.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_atinews2

As can be seen in Table 24 and Figure 24, the average values for the dependent variable increase (from 2.13 to 2.59) as the values for the independent variable increase. These results support my hypothesis and theory given that the results are statistically significant.

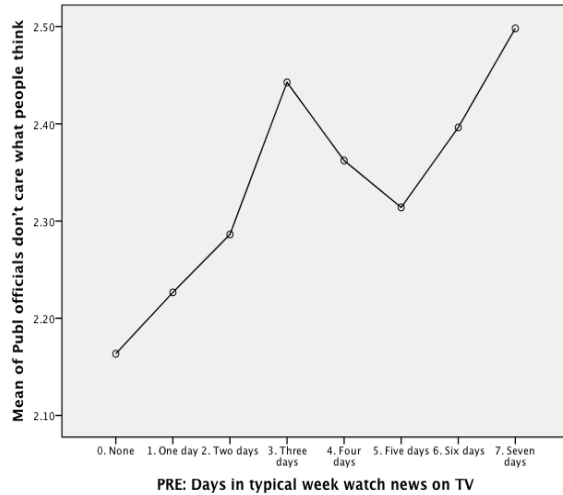
I also expect that as a person's weekly national TV news consumption goes up, there belief that public officials care what they think will also go up. This is because people who often view TV news feel more strongly that public officials care about what people like themselves think. In order to test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wktnws as the independent variable. The hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase the values for the dependent variable will also increase. The results (shown in Table 25 below) support this hypothesis.

**Table 25.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_wktvnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	428	2.16 (0.96)
1 1. One day	247	2.23 (0.86)
2 2. Two days	269	2.29 (0.96)
3 3. Three days	262	2.44 (0.98)
4 4. Four days	207	2.36 (0.99)
5 5. Five days	398	2.31 (0.91)
6 6. Six days	217	2.40 (0.88)
7 7. Seven days	839	2.50 (1.00)
Total	2867	2.36 (0.96)

F-Statistic	6.439
Significance	.000



**Figure 25.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2  
by prmedia\_wktvnws

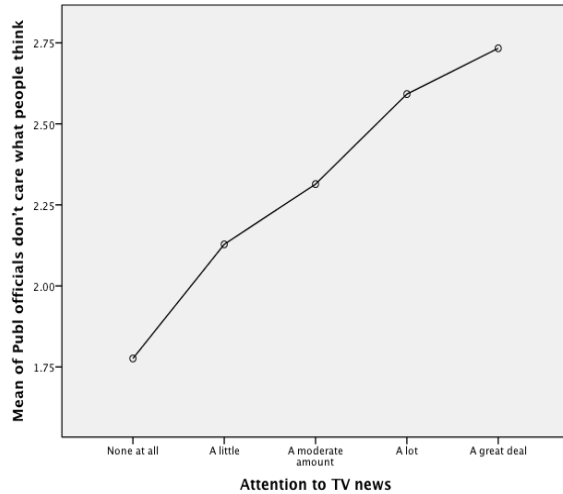
Looking at Table 25, we see that the results of this ANOVA are statistically significant. Though there is a spike at three days per week, the relationship has the expected shape; as the independent variable increase the dependent variable also increase from 2.16 to 2.50. This results support my hypothesis and theory.

My theory also suggests that the more attention one gives to TV news about national politics, the more they will feel that public officials care about what people like them think. This is because respondents who pay a great deal of attention to news about national politics on TV are more likely to think that public officials care about what people like them think. Using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_attvnws2 as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. My hypothesis is that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 26 (below), this hypothesis is supported.



**Table 26.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_attvnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	67	1.78 (0.95)
2.00 A little	561	2.13 (0.85)
3.00 A moderate amount	853	2.31 (0.90)
4.00 A lot	527	2.59 (0.95)
5.00 A great deal	431	2.73 (1.04)
Total	2439	2.39 (0.96)
<hr/>		
F-Statistic	40.656	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 26.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2  
by prmedia\_attvnews2

Table 26 shows that these results are statistically significant, and that as scores for the independent variable increase average scores for the dependent variable increase from 1.78 to 2.73. These findings support both my hypothesis and my theory.

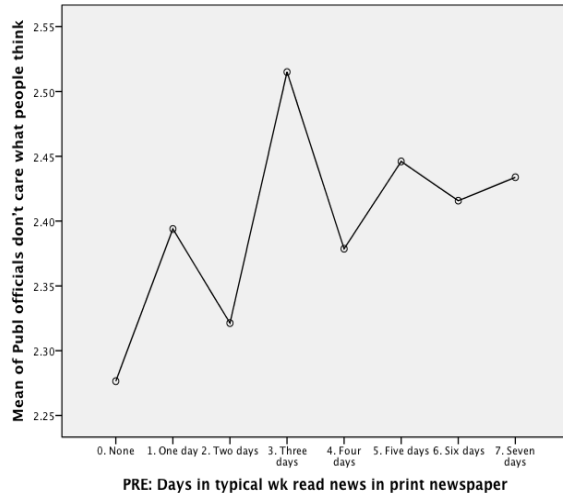
According to my theory, I also expect that the more days in a week a person reads news in newspapers, the more likely they are to think that public officials care about what people like them think. Using effic\_carerev2 as my dependent variable and prmedia\_wkpaprnws as my independent variable, I used a one-way ANOVA to test this. My hypothesis is that as the value of the independent variable increases, the value of the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 27 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 27.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	1168	2.28 (0.97)
1 1. One day	429	2.39 (0.99)
2 2. Two days	277	2.32 (0.92)
3 3. Three days	200	2.52 (0.96)
4 4. Four days	103	2.38 (0.95)
5 5. Five days	139	2.45 (1.02)
6 6. Six days	89	2.42 (0.93)
7 7. Seven days	461	2.43 (0.93)
Total	2866	2.36 (0.96)

F-Statistic	2.731
Significance	.008



**Figure 27.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2  
by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

Looking at Table 27, we see that these results are statistically significant, and, as expected, the values of the dependent variable increase with the values of the independent variable. This supports my theory and hypothesis. However, the range between the low and high average values of the dependent variable is too low for there to be any substantive difference.

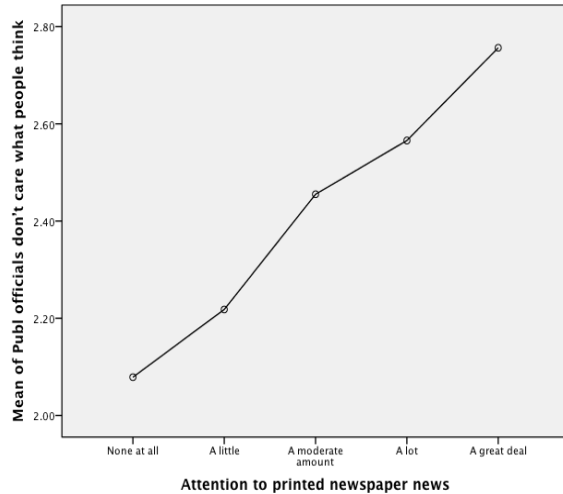
According to my theory, I expect that the more attention a person pays to news about national politics in newspapers, the more that person feels that public officials care what the average person thinks. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atpprnews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 28 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 28.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_atpprnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	114	2.08 (0.99)
2.00 A little	518	2.22 (0.91)
3.00 A moderate amount	569	2.46 (0.91)
4.00 A lot	304	2.57 (0.95)
5.00 A great deal	193	2.76 (1.05)
Total	1698	2.41 (0.96)

F-Statistic	17.947
Significance	.000



**Figure 28.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2  
by prmedia\_atpprnews2

Table 28 show that as the values for the independent variable increase, the average values for the dependent variable increase from 2.08 to 2.76. The means plots for this ANOVA also fall in a linear shape as expected. These findings support my hypothesis and theory.

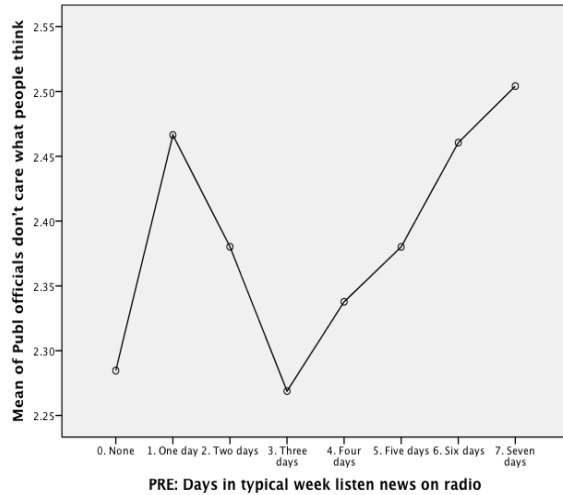
My theory also suggests that the more days in a week a person listens to news on the radio, the more likely they are to think that public officials care about what people like them think. This is because people who often listen to news on the radio feel strongly that public officials care about what people like them think. Using effic\_carerev2 as my dependent variable and prmedia\_wkrdnws as my independent variable, I used a one-way ANOVA to test this. My hypothesis is that as the value of the independent variable increases, the value of the dependent variable will also increase. Table 29 (below) shows that this hypothesis is not supported.

**Table 29.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_wkrdnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	1124	2.28 (0.96)
1 1. One day	238	2.47 (0.86)
2 2. Two days	263	2.38 (0.99)
3 3. Three days	212	2.27 (0.93)
4 4. Four days	151	2.33 (0.96)
5 5. Five days	442	2.38 (0.90)
6 6. Six days	76	2.46 (1.10)
7 7. Seven days	359	2.50 (1.05)
Total	2865	2.36 (0.96)

F-Statistic	3.000
Significance	.004



**Figure 29.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2  
by prmedia\_wkrdnws

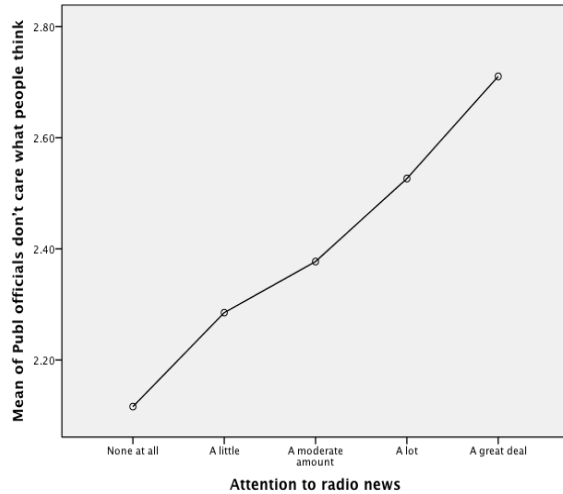
Looking at Table 29, we see that the results of this ANOVA are statistically significant.

However, the results do not show the linear shape that was expected unless one excludes the results for respondents listening to radio news zero, one and two days a week. There is also little substantive difference between the high and low average values of effic\_carerev2. These results do not support my hypothesis and theory.

According to my theory, people who pay more attention to radio news feel more strongly that public officials care what they think. Therefore, I expect that respondents who pay greater attention to radio news about national politics will also respond with greater satisfaction to the normative ideal that public officials care about what people like themselves think. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_carerev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atrdnews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 30 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 30.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_carerev2 by prmedia\_atrdnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	112	2.12 (0.99)
2.00 A little	519	2.29 (0.88)
3.00 A moderate amount	562	2.38 (0.95)
4.00 A lot	319	2.53 (0.95)
5.00 A great deal	228	2.71 (1.06)
Total	1740	2.40 (0.96)
F-Statistic	12.024	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 30.** Means Plots of effic\_carerev2  
by prmedia\_atrdnews2

The results of this analysis are statistically significant and, as can be seen in Figure 30, the expected linear shape is present in the means plots. Table 30 shows that as values for the independent variable increase, the average values for the dependent variable increase from 2.12 to 2.71. These findings support my hypothesis and theory.

According to my theory, I expect that the more often a person pays attention to news about government and politics, the more a person feels that people like them can affect what the government does. I expect this because people who pay more attention to what is going on in government and politics feel more satisfied with the normative ideal that people like themselves affect what the government does. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and interest\_attention2 as the independent variable. The wording of the survey question and possible answers for effic\_sayrev2 can be found below. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 31 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

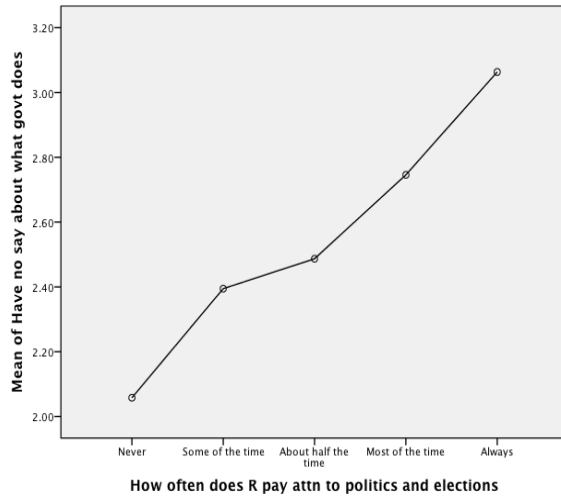
## EFFIC\_SAYREV2

*How much can people like you affect what the government does?*

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. A moderate amount
4. A lot
5. A great deal

**Table 31.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_sayrev2 by interest\_attention2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Never	69	2.06 (1.20)
2.00 Some of the time	755	2.39 (1.07)
3.00 About half the time	612	2.49 (1.03)
4.00 Most of the time	921	2.75 (1.07)
5.00 Always	521	3.06 (1.21)
Total	2878	2.64 (1.12)
F-Statistic	39.144	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 31.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2 by interest\_attention2

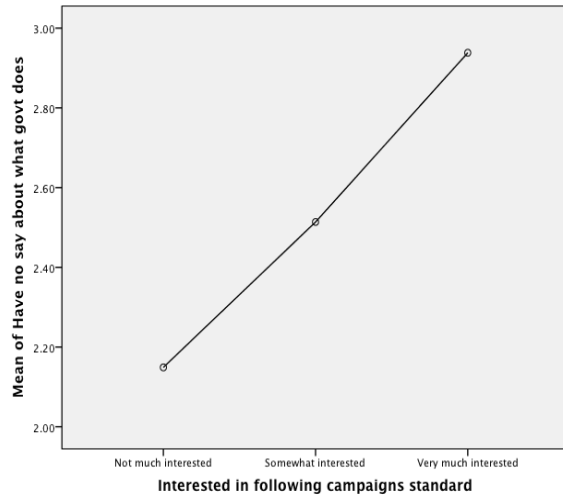
Table 31 we see that the results of this analysis are statistically significant. It also shows that as values for the independent variable increase, the average values for the dependent variable increase from 2.06 to 3.06 in a linear fashion. These results are in line with my expectations and they support my hypothesis and theory.

Also according to my theory, I expect that the more interested a person is in political campaigns, the more that person feels that people like them can affect what the government does. I expect this because people who are interested in political campaigns are more likely to think that they can affect what the government does. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and interest\_following2 as the independent variable. My

hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 32 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 32.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_sayrev2 by interest\_following2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 Not much interested	443	2.15 (1.04)
2.00 Somewhat interested	1201	2.51 (1.05)
3.00 Very much interested	1233	2.94 (1.13)
Total	2877	2.64 (1.12)
F-Statistic	100.227	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 32.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2 by interest\_following2

As Table 32 shows, the average values for the dependent variable increase as the values for the independent variable increase. Figure 32 shows the means plots for this ANOVA, revealing a neat line as expected. Given that these results are also statistically significant, these findings support my hypothesis and theory.

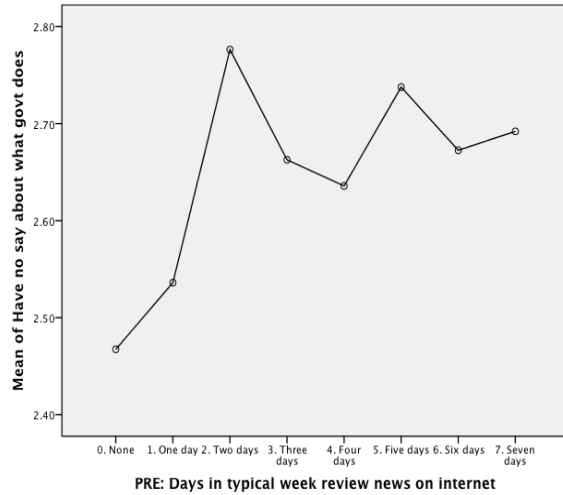
My theory also suggests that the more often a person views Internet news, the more they will feel that people like themselves can affect what the government does. This is because people who often view news on the Internet feel more satisfied with the ideal that people like themselves can affect what the government does. Using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wkinews as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. My hypothesis is that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 33 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 33.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_wkinews

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	599	2.47 (1.14)
1 1. One day	222	2.54 (1.03)
2 2. Two days	219	2.78 (1.17)
3 3. Three days	249	2.66 (1.15)
4 4. Four days	162	2.64 (1.05)
5 5. Five days	305	2.74 (1.08)
6 6. Six days	171	2.67 (0.94)
7 7. Seven days	815	2.69 (1.14)
Total	2742	2.63 (1.11)

F-Statistic	3.440
Significance	.001



**Figure 33.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2  
by prmedia\_wkinews

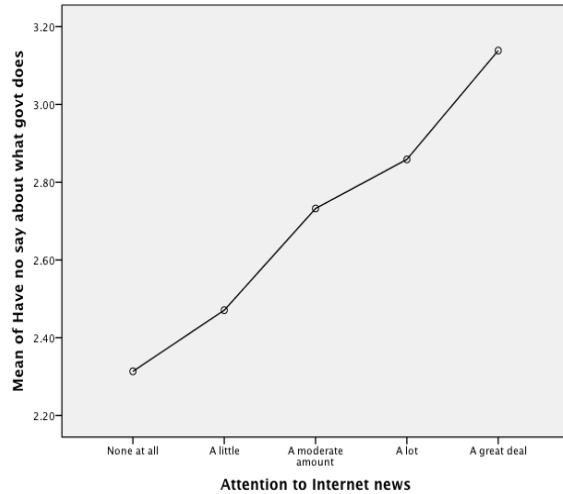
Table 33 shows another set of statistically significant results. Though the means plots do not fall in a neat line, the overall trend is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the average values for the dependent variable also increase. This supports my theory and hypothesis. However, there is little substantive difference between the values of 2.47 and 2.69, an overall increase of about 4%.

I also expect that the more attention a person pays to news about national politics on the Internet, the more they person will feel as though people like themselves can affect what the government does. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atinews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 34 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.



**Table 34.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_atinews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	204	2.31 (1.09)
2.00 A little	618	2.47 (1.09)
3.00 A moderate amount	736	2.73 (1.02)
4.00 A lot	354	2.86 (1.05)
5.00 A great deal	231	3.14 (1.25)
Total	2143	2.68 (1.10)
F-Statistic	24.975	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 34.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_atinews2

As can be seen in Table 34, the results of this ANOVA are highly significant. We also see that as the values for prmedia\_atinews2 increase, the average values for effic\_sayrev2 also increase from 2.31 to 3.14. These findings support my hypothesis and theory.

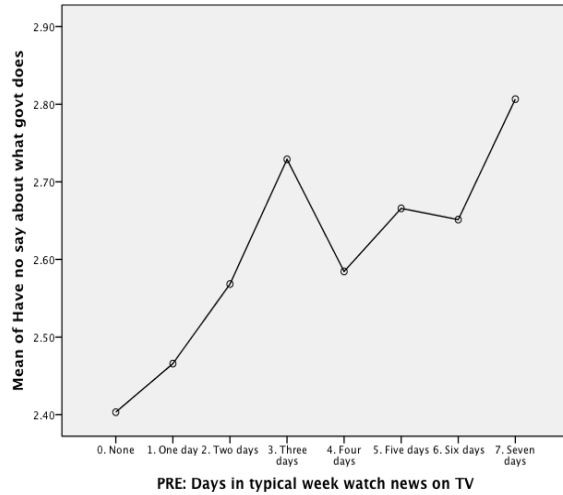
According to my theory, I expect that as a person's weekly national TV news consumption goes up, there belief that people like themselves can affect what the government does will also go up. This is because people who often view TV news feel more strongly that people like themselves can affect what the government does. In order to test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_wktnws as the independent variable. The hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase the values for the dependent variable will also increase. The results (shown in Table 35 below) support this hypothesis.

**Table 35.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_wktnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	429	2.40 (1.07)
1 1. One day	249	2.47 (1.05)
2 2. Two days	271	2.57 (1.16)
3 3. Three days	262	2.73 (1.05)
4 4. Four days	207	2.58 (1.11)
5 5. Five days	398	2.67 (1.13)
6 6. Six days	218	2.65 (1.10)
7 7. Seven days	843	2.81 (1.15)
Total	2877	2.64 (1.12)

F-Statistic	6.852
Significance	.000



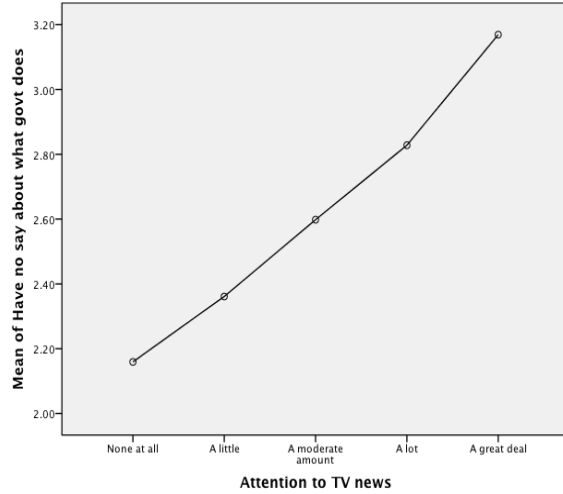
**Figure 35.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2  
by prmedia\_wktnws

My expectations for this analysis are met. Looking at Table 35, we see that the results are statistically significant, and as the values for the independent variable increase the average values for the dependent variable increase from 2.40 to 2.81. This supports my hypothesis and theory.

My theory also suggests that the more attention one gives to TV news about national politics, the more they will feel that people like themselves can affect what the government does. This is because people who pay more attention to national political news on TV are more likely to feel that they can affect what the government does. Using a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_attvnews2 as the independent variable I tested this hypothesis. My hypothesis is that as values for the independent variable increase, values for the dependent variable will also increase. According to Table 36 (below), this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 36.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_attvnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	69	2.16 (1.17)
2.00 A little	562	2.36 (1.05)
3.00 A moderate amount	856	2.60 (1.08)
4.00 A lot	529	2.83 (1.05)
5.00 A great deal	432	3.17 (1.17)
Total	2448	2.68 (1.12)
F-Statistic	41.414	
Significance	.000	

**Figure 36.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_attvnews2

The results of this ANOVA strongly support my theory and hypothesis. The means plots in Figure 36 show that as the scores for the independent variable increase, average scores for the dependent variable also increase from 2.16 to 3.17. The results are also statistically significant, as shown in Table 36.

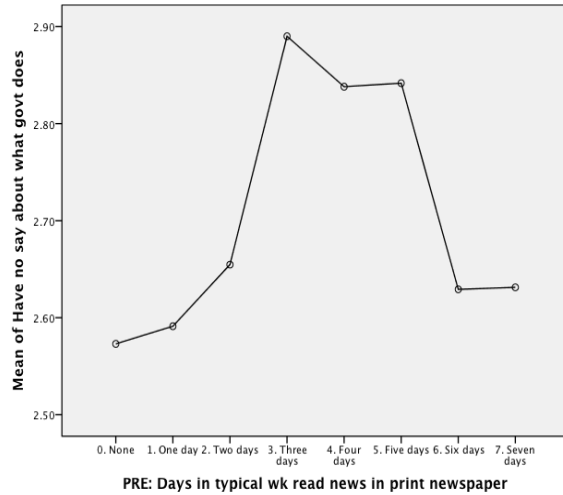
According to my theory, I also expect that the more days in a week a person reads news in newspapers, the more likely they are to think that they can affect what the government does. This is because people who often read news in newspapers believe strongly in the normative ideal that people like themselves can affect what the government does. Using effic\_sayrev2 as my dependent variable and prmedia\_wkpaprnws as my independent variable, I used a one-way ANOVA to test this. My hypothesis is that as the value of the independent variable increases, the value of the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 37 (below) shows, this hypothesis is not supported.

**Table 37.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	1171	2.57 (1.15)
1 1. One day	433	2.59 (1.07)
2 2. Two days	278	2.65 (1.10)
3 3. Three days	200	2.89 (1.07)
4 4. Four days	105	2.84 (1.15)
5 5. Five days	139	2.84 (1.16)
6 6. Six days	89	2.63 (1.15)
7 7. Seven days	461	2.63 (1.08)
Total	2876	2.64 (1.12)

F-Statistic	3.282
Significance	.002



**Figure 37.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2  
by prmedia\_wkpaprnws

We again have highly significant results from this analysis. However, Figure 37 shows that the means plots resemble more closely a normal curve than a line. The average values for effic\_sayrev2 increase initially with the scores for prmedia\_wkpaprnws, but then dip down again as the values for the independent variable continue to increase. These findings do not support my theory or hypothesis.

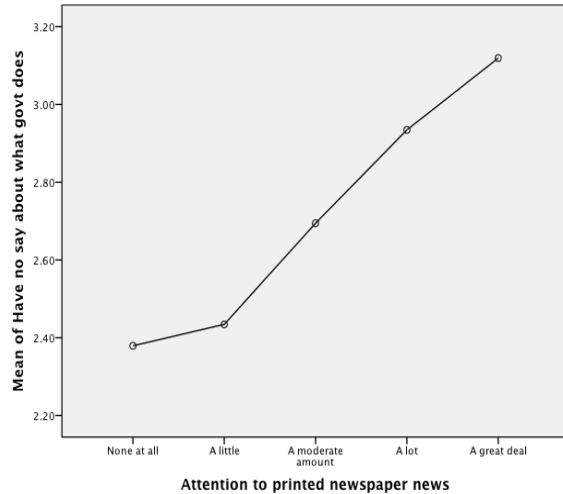
According to my theory, I expect that the more attention a person pays to news about national politics in newspapers, the more that person will feel that people like themselves can affect what the government does. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atpprnews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 38 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 38.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_atpprnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	116	2.38 (1.20)
2.00 A little	518	2.43 (1.04)
3.00 A moderate amount	573	2.69 (1.04)
4.00 A lot	305	2.93 (1.07)
5.00 A great deal	193	3.12 (1.19)
Total	1705	2.69 (1.10)

F-Statistic	21.366
Significance	.000



**Figure 38.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2  
by prmedia\_atpprnews2

Looking at Table 38, we see that the results of this analysis are highly significant. As expected, the values of the dependent variable increase with the values of the independent variable. The average values of effic\_sayrev2 start at 2.38 for respondents answering “None at all” and steadily increase to 3.12 for respondents answering “A great deal”. This supports my theory and hypothesis.

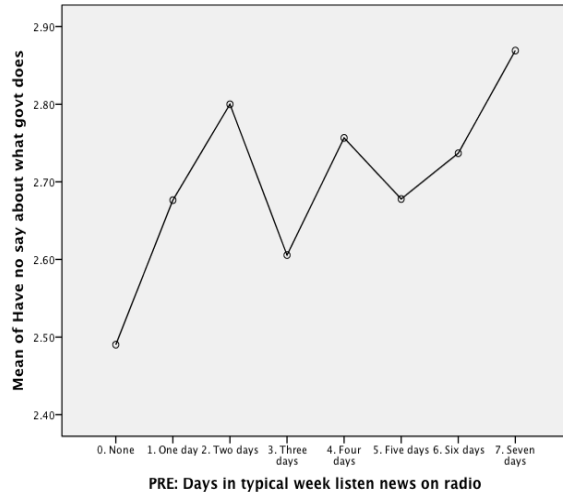
My theory suggests that the more days in a week a person listens to news on the radio, the more likely they are to think that people like themselves can affect what the government does. This is because people who often listen to news on the radio often feel more satisfied with the ideal that people like themselves can affect what the government does. Using effic\_sayrev2 as my dependent variable and prmedia\_wkrdnws as my independent variable, I used a one-way ANOVA to test this. My hypothesis is that as the value of the independent variable increases, the value of the dependent variable will also increase. Table 39 (below) shows that this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 39.** One-way ANOVA of  
effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_wkrdnws

	N	Mean (SD)
0 0. None	1128	2.49 (1.09)
1 1. One day	238	2.68 (1.07)
2 2. Two days	265	2.80 (1.13)
3 3. Three days	213	2.61 (1.10)
4 4. Four days	152	2.76 (1.13)
5 5. Five days	444	2.68 (1.12)
6 6. Six days	76	2.74 (1.14)
7 7. Seven days	359	2.87 (1.17)
Total	2875	2.64 (1.12)

F-Statistic	6.331
Significance	.000



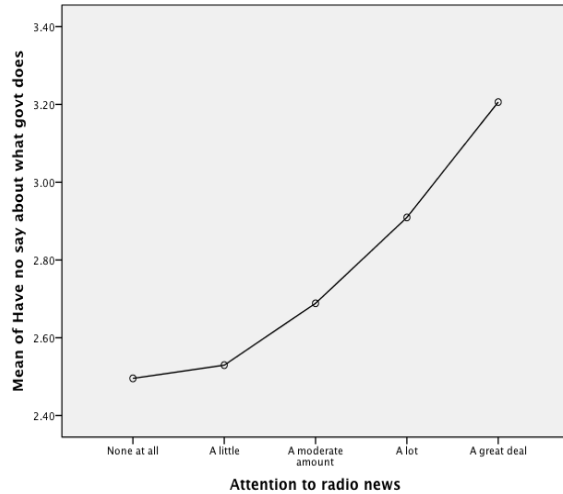
**Figure 39.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2  
by prmedia\_wkrdnws

Though there is some up and down movement in the means plots as seen in Figure 39, the overall trend in the average values for the dependent variable is upward as expected. Given that these results are statistically significant, as seen in Table 39, these results support my theory and hypothesis.

According to my theory, I expect that the more attention a person pays to news about national politics on the radio, the more that person thinks that people like them can affect what the government does. To test this, I used a one-way ANOVA with effic\_sayrev2 as the dependent variable and prmedia\_atrdnews2 as the independent variable. My hypothesis is that as the values for the independent variable increase, the values for the dependent variable will also increase. As Table 40 (below) shows, this hypothesis is supported.

**Table 40.** One-way ANOVA of effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_atrdnews2

	N	Mean (SD)
1.00 None at all	113	2.50 (1.19)
2.00 A little	523	2.30 (1.05)
3.00 A moderate amount	562	2.69 (1.09)
4.00 A lot	320	2.91 (1.06)
5.00 A great deal	228	3.21 (1.27)
Total	1746	2.74 (1.13)
F-Statistic	18.453	
Significance	.000	



**Figure 40.** Means Plots of effic\_sayrev2 by prmedia\_atrdnews2

As has been the case for all of my ANOVAs that use prmedia\_atrdnews2 for the independent variable, the results here are statistically significant and the means plots fall in a line as expected. The average values of effic\_sayrev2 in this analysis increase from 2.50 to 3.21. These findings support my hypothesis and theory.

The results discussed above show strong support for my theory. Though not ubiquitous throughout all forty ANOVAs—and though we cannot say there is causation here—the results give credence to the idea that people who put more effort into gaining political knowledge feel more content with their government. The results here show that there is a correlation between these two variables. Even excluding ANOVAs that yielded little substantive difference between the high and low average values of the dependent variable, twenty-five of the forty ANOVAs discussed above support my theory. Those twenty-five analyses yielded results that were statistically significant and met my expectation that as respondent scores for the independent (competence) variables increased, scores for the dependent (satisfaction) variables would also increase.

Analyses yielding low substantive difference are not included in those twenty-five because the increases in average values for the satisfaction variables in those analyses were very small. Results for those ANOVAs yielded significant results and often had means plots showing the expected shape; however, the average values of the dependent variable increased so little that there was little substantive difference between respondents with low competence and respondents with high competence. If we include the analyses that failed to make the cut only because they lacked substantive difference, the number of ANOVAs that support my theory jumps to thirty-four. Put another way, only six out of the forty ANOVAs showed no support whatsoever for my theory.

There are limitations, however, to how much we can learn from these results. Though many of the analyses yielded results with substantive difference in the range of values for the dependent variable, many had limited substantive difference. Another limitation is in how well the ANES questions I used actually measure the concepts I was using them to look at. Though the questions I used were the best questions available in the ANES for the task, questions that are more carefully crafted to measure the desired concepts will do a better job of measuring both the competence of the respondent and their feelings about normative ideals. For example, primers that briefly state the ideals being looked at may allow respondents to better assess whether or not they feel that public officials truly care about what people like themselves think.

Future research should look more closely at the idea of competence being a matter of effort by diving further into the various things that American citizens do on a day-to-day basis that add to their political knowledge. Though my study used ten different measurements for competence, there are hundreds if not thousands of possible factors that go into citizen competence which were not taken into account here. The number of factors affecting citizen



competence is reminiscent of the quote from Walter Lippmann that began this thesis. Lippmann described the environment that humans operate in as having, “So much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations.” This is true of a more specific concept like citizen competence as well. News outlets on the Internet, TV, radio and newspapers are just a few of the possible sources of political information for Americans.

The expansion of Internet and smartphone use has greatly increased the number of information sources for citizens. Each major news outlet now has one or more smartphone applications available to consumers that need to be taken into account when assessing the effort a citizen exerts gathering political information. Twitter and Facebook are also common sources of political news for Americans. Taking every single source of information into account may not be possible but future research should include interactions with peers, political rallies, debates, speeches, the newer technologies mentioned above and much more if a comprehensive understanding of citizen competence is to be acquired.

## CHAPTER 4

## CONCLUSION

As I mentioned in the Introduction to this paper, the lens through which I view political science was built, in part, by the work of E. E. Schattschneider. In his book *The Semisovereign People*, Schattschneider says, “Democracy is like nearly everything else we do; it is a form of collaboration of ignorant people and experts.” (Schattschneider [1960] 1975: 134) But ignorance is not failure; it merely means that one does not have a deep understanding of a subject or idea. That is what the experts are for. In a system of collaboration between experts and non-experts, what matters for the non-experts is the effort they put into the collaboration.

I argue that effort in information gathering is one of the contributing factors to citizen competence. This means that many previous studies looking at citizen competence need to be reexamined. Much of the literature I read during my research for this piece contained negative conclusions about the intelligence or competence of the American people. From such conclusions the authors would make profound claims about the implications that an unintelligent or incompetent electorate has on a democracy. Studies that condemn the American public, and American democracy in general, because citizens do not know enough about their political system need to be rethought with this definition of competence in mind. Nearly every book I read in the process of writing this thesis had a section—or at least a few pages—dedicated to arguing that democracy is best with an informed citizenry. I do not doubt the importance of being informed, but in order for a person to be informed they have to attempt to gather information. This is not a chicken-and-egg scenario. Information gathering comes first.

Another implication of my effort-based definition of citizen competence deals with theories of large number, specifically Condorcet Jury Theorem (CJT). This theory states that as the number of people taking part in a decision grows, the likelihood of the correct decision being made increases. (Landemore 2013: 70) According to CJT, the judgement accuracy of a group is directly tied to the number of people in it. The theory assumes that each person has a slightly greater than fifty percent chance of being right; therefore, as you increase the number of people, the judgement accuracy of the group grows to the point where massive groups like the American electorate are almost certainly going to be correct in their decision. My definition of competence adds another dimension to such theories. If competence is tied to effort, and if competence affects the judgement accuracy of an individual, then not only must a group be large in order for strong decisions to be made; the group members must also put effort into their decisions. This is not the only reason to track, study and promote an effort-based definition of competence, however.

As was shown in Chapter 3, there is a correlation between citizen competence and the satisfaction citizens feel with normative ideals. This has some important implications for future studies looking at the various aspects of citizen satisfaction and how competence affects satisfaction or contentment. One might, for example, look at the effect competence has on other widely held normative ideals. Does competence increase a person's satisfaction with the idea that elections matter? Looking at specific groups is another option for future work. Studies may look at the effect competence has on members of one political party or another, strong partisans versus weak partisans or people of varying ages.

Finally, this research has important implications regarding the goal of government. Various philosophers throughout history have prescribed different goals that governments are to

promote. There likely isn't one true goal, but a variety of goals that citizens think their government *should* do. Some common claims regarding the goal of government are that the government is supposed to promote the public good, which often means promoting property ownership and commerce in the nation. Other goals that people commonly give to governments are that a government should maintain law and order or liberty. Still others feel that the purpose of government is to promote the utility or happiness of its citizens, and this is where my research comes in.

If the main goal of government—or at the very least a priority of government—is to promote the happiness of its citizens, then the results of the analyses above need to be paid careful attention. Even if the satisfaction I have discussed in this thesis is only one small part of overall citizen contentment, it is still important to note because the goal of government is to promote the happiness of its people. According to the results above, one way government can promote the happiness of its citizens is by having competent citizens. This means that creating a political system that people *want* to know about and participate in and one that is easy to learn about and easy to participate in will develop happy citizens. Rather than having a political and social system that sometimes considers gathering political information, discussing politics or general political activity taboo, our system should promote and foster such behavior.

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