

Do platforms favour dissidents? Characterizing political actor types based on social media uses and gratifications

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Abstract.

BACKGROUND: The rise of social media has resulted in a dramatic change in citizen engagement in political processes. This raises the question of whether affordances of social network sites motivate alternative politics more than more conventional form of political engagement.

OBJECTIVE: 1) identify differences in social media uses and gratifications among four political personality types (i.e., potential dissidents, allegiants, subordinates, and the alienated), and 2) examine the extent to which political personality types can be discerned using social media uses and gratifications.

METHODS: 313 United States citizens above the age of 18 completed a survey using the revised MAIN model scale to measure social media uses and gratifications. Subjects were categorised into political personality types based on the Gamson Hypothesis and Paige's conceptualisation of actor types. We developed a multinomial logistic regression model to examine the relationship between predictors (uses and gratifications) and political personality types.

RESULTS: Potential allegiants and dissidents are driven by a similar set of social media uses and gratifications as opposed to political subordinates and the alienated.

CONCLUSION: Social media can provide more gratifications for potential dissidents and allegiants, 'favouring' personality types with high political efficacy.

Keywords: Social media, uses and gratifications, uses and grats 2.0, affordances, dissidents, allegiant



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1. Introduction

The rise of social media has resulted in a dramatic change in citizen engagement in political processes. This change can be largely attributed to the fact that social media, as Skoric, Zhu, Goh, and Pang [1] note, offer informational, expressive, and relational uses that can motivate engagement. The current social media discourse includes many studies that examine online political engagement from the perspective of activism and dissidence (e.g., [2–13]). This raises the question of whether affordances of social network sites motivate alternative politics more than more conventional forms of political engagement. Although previous studies highlight the ‘revolutionary potential’ of the Internet, several scholars, those who examine online political polarization and echo chambers in particular (e.g., [14]), indicate that the presence of opposing political perspectives on social network sites is not negligible. Moreover, there is a growing number of research studies that explore online political activity from different points of view, such as Engesser, Ernst, Esser, and Büchel’s [15] study that demonstrates how populist politics manifest on social media, Pearce’s [16] work on the subtle use of social media for authoritarian control, and Groshek and Koc-Michalska’s [17] research on social media support for both Democratic and Republican populist political figures.

Recent research shows that online engagement depends on a range of user-related factors. For instance, Russo and Amnå [18] argue that extraverts and those who are open to new experiences tend to participate in political activity more than conscientious individuals. Bimber, Cunill, Copeland, and Gibson’s [19] study shows moderating effects of political interest on the relationship between digital media use and political participation. Moreover, Boulianne’s [20] work identifies direct and indirect effects of online news consumption on civic and political engagement. While these studies shed light on the topic, there is a dearth of work that connects general social media use, especially uses and gratifications, with political differences. Motivations for social media use span beyond political purposes. While some social media gratifications, such as affection [21], may appeal to those who do not seek to engage in online politics, other gratifications, such as obtaining information and socialising [22], may encourage political engagement. Therefore, differences in perceived uses and gratifications may, at least to some extent, help distinguish between those

who have different political attributes. Accordingly, work that examines whether social media serve as venues that facilitate political dissidence should take into account gratifications that motivate such tendencies as well as other types of political behaviour (e.g., allegiance and subordination). This study examines whether social media uses and gratifications can accurately reveal political differences. This can be examined on two different levels. On one level, researchers can examine if social media data can reveal direct attributes, such as the political orientation or party affiliation of users. On a more abstract level, studies can focus on whether social media consumption can help classify users into categories that display distinct political actor types. This study is concerned with the latter. Accordingly, we test differences in social media uses and gratifications between four political actor types (dissidents, allegiants, subordinates, and the alienated). Examining political differences from the perspective of general social media use is important for several reasons. From a theoretical viewpoint, it shows the relevance of constructs which remain beyond the study of political motivations in examining political behaviour. From a policy perspective, such work can help design social media platforms to encourage political engagement among those who have different political attributes.

1.1. Related literature

We approach the study of social media uses and gratifications focusing on differences among potential political dissidents, allegiants, subordinates, and the alienated. According to Paige [23], combinations of political trust and efficacy display differences among political actor types (allegiants- high efficacy, high trust; subordinates- high trust, low efficacy; dissidents- high efficacy, low trust, and alienated- low trust, low efficacy). This approach is different from the study of conventional political actors, “individuals who have obtained at least some measure of political power and/or authority in a particular society who engage in activities that can have a significant influence on decisions, policies, media coverage, and outcomes associated with a given conflict” [24, p.1]. Our approach shifts the attention from conventional political actors, such as elected officials and policy makers, to different groups within the general public that display different behavioural patterns. Such work is important for several reasons. First, although social media studies examine online dissidence in a range of contexts (e.g., [12, 25–27]), the field lacks

159 academic work on the ways in which social media
 160 gratify those who have ‘dissident potential’. The need
 161 to examine connections between potential dissidence
 162 — representing a layer of social media users who
 163 may transform into active dissidents in democratic
 164 contexts— and new media use relates to the fact that
 165 the accessibility and ease of use of those platforms
 166 may encourage less active individuals to engage in
 167 more active forms of democratic dissidence.

168 Second, there is a need for studies that focus on
 169 political allegiance on social network sites. Social
 170 media may provide a range of uses and gratifications
 171 for political allegiants —those who trust the existing
 172 political system— because, as Rathnayake and Winter
 173 [28] argue, social media gratify users with different
 174 political attributes. Early work done on mobilization
 175 potential [29], as well as subsequent studies [30, 31],
 176 provide a theoretical background to capture poten-
 177 tial dissidence and allegiance in the context of social
 178 media. Third, political subordinates and the alienated
 179 remain largely unexplored in social media studies.

180 Online platforms offer a multitude of benefits
 181 for users. For instance, Facebook, ‘the pleasure
 182 machine’, as Vaidhyathan [32] calls it, enables peo-
 183 ple to derive value from reconnecting, interaction,
 184 joining causes, and entertainment. These perceived
 185 benefits may help differentiate between different
 186 types of users. Uses and Gratifications (U&G), a the-
 187 oretical approach originating in media studies [33]
 188 that captures the essence of benefits perceived by
 189 users, views media consumption as a function of the
 190 needs it gratifies. Scholars have used this approach
 191 to examine social media consumption [34–37]. The
 192 U&G approach serves as a foundation for discerning
 193 political differences, as it helps understand underly-
 194 ing motivations behind media consumption. Recent
 195 work suggests that the field of social media uses
 196 and gratifications needs academic work that cap-
 197 tures nuances in new media platforms. For instance,
 198 Sundar and Limperos [38] show biases in previous
 199 literature towards social and psychological factors.
 200 This exposes a rich field for potential inquiry, as
 201 the fact that social media are a new domain defined
 202 mainly based on user-generated content demands
 203 more platform-oriented studies that consider affor-
 204 dances of new media. Sundar and Limperos provide
 205 a conceptual foundation for such a line of inquiry
 206 by proposing an affordance-driven framework, the
 207 MAIN model, which captures the ability of social
 208 media to create new gratifications. Rathnayake and
 209 Winter [39] followed this work by validating their
 210 Uses and Grats 2.0 framework.

1.2. Social media uses and gratifications 211

212 The U&G perspective, a theoretical approach that
 213 dates back to the origins of mass communication
 214 research [40], holds that media consumption is intrin-
 215 sically connected with the need for gratification.
 216 According to Haridakis [41, p.2], the U&G approach
 217 suggests that “people’s social and psychological char-
 218 acteristics influence their needs and desires which
 219 are manifested in their motives for using commu-
 220 nication channels.” U&G studies include a wide
 221 range of research that has evolved with the trans-
 222 formations in media and communication technology.
 223 According to Papacharissi [42], a typical U&G study
 224 can look at a specific medium, compare it with
 225 another medium, and study different aspects, such as
 226 motives, social and psychological antecedents, and
 227 effects of media consumption. Starting from work
 228 that stressed the need for U&G studies in the con-
 229 text of the Internet [33], social media U&G research
 230 has expanded rapidly during the past decade, focus-
 231 ing on different platforms and effects of a wide
 232 range of variables [e.g., 22, 28, 34, 37, 43–48]. Pre-
 233 vious studies have also highlighted different uses
 234 and gratifications perceived by social media users,
 235 such as information seeking, entertainment, and
 236 social utility [31], social interaction, and information
 237 seeking [49], and socializing and self-status seek-
 238 ing [22]. There is a growing amount of research
 239 examining social media uses and gratifications in
 240 the context of politics. Ancu and Cozma’s [49]
 241 work, for example, identifies interaction as the pri-
 242 mary motive for accessing candidate profiles on
 243 social network sites. Park, Kee, and Valenzuela [22]
 244 claim that informational uses of social networks are
 245 connected to civic and political action, while enter-
 246 tainment does not explain the extent of political
 247 participation.

248 The notion of affordances—the relational structure
 249 between user and technology that allows or con-
 250 strains behaviour within a given context [50]—has
 251 permeated research that examines user activity on
 252 social network sites. Coined by Gibson [51], this con-
 253 cept suggests that affordances of a given environment
 254 should be understood relative to their context. Within
 255 the context of social media, new affordances allow
 256 a range of new behaviours that were not possible in
 257 the conventional media setting. Sundar and Limperos
 258 [38] stress the need for conceptualizing uses and grat-
 259 ifications based on new media affordances and argue
 260 that many studies have only slightly modified older
 261 media gratifications to suit new media. They suggest

Table 1
The Revised MAIN Framework

MAIN Dimension	Definitions of Gratifications
Modality: The presence of multiple modes of information	Realism: The ability to access media content that can resemble real-life situations and contexts Coolness: Positive perceptions that indicate appreciation of style, newness, and attractiveness of something in social contexts. Being There: The ability of social media platforms to create a sense of being present in a given environment
Agency: Users being sources of information	Agency-enhancement: Gratification of being a source of content, rather than a passive recipient of information Community-building: The ability to connect with other social media users and sustain short/long term social networks for various purposes Filtering/Tailoring: The ability to control information shared by others on a user's social media pages and control over information shared by the user
Interactivity: Ability to interact with the platform	Activity: Active engagement of the user in the media use process, via frequent use of input mechanisms Responsiveness: Perceived ability of media platforms to respond to user commands/input
Navigability: Ability to navigate through different types of content and enjoy the platform use process	Browsing/Variety-seeking: Perceived diversity of media content by using design features, such as links and menus. Play/Fun: Perceived enjoyment through the media use process.

Source: Modified from Rathnayake and Winter (2017).

262 an affordance-based framework (the MAIN model)
263 that includes 16 gratifications representing four broad
264 classes of affordances (Modality, Agency, Interactiv-
265 ity, and Navigability). Sundar [52] argues that each
266 user is different in terms of the meanings he or she
267 makes from affordances. The MAIN Model suggests
268 that modality cues, agency cues, interactivity cues,
269 and navigability cues embedded in affordances are
270 significant in shaping user assessment of the medium.
271 Sundar argues that the sheer presence of these affor-
272 dances results in users experiencing media content in
273 a certain way. In general, the MAIN Model rejects
274 the idea that all gratifications relate to innate needs
275 and argues that new and distinctive gratifications
276 can emerge from new media affordances. The model
277 emphasizes the capability of a medium to facilitate
278 certain actions and suggests that the user is an inte-
279 gral element as he or she interprets the affordance.
280 The MAIN model suggested a pool of items that
281 led to the development of an affordance-based scale
282 for social media U&G, which was converted into a
283 social media uses and gratifications scale by Rath-
284 nayake and Winter [39]. Validation of the scale led
285 to a revision to Sundar and Limperos' conceptual
286 framework, as results suggested combining several
287 constructs (e.g., Coolness and Novelty, and Brows-
288 ing and Scaffolding/Navigation Aids). The revised
289 MAIN framework for social media U&G is presented
290 in Table 1.

291 Modality, defined by Sundar and Limperos [38]
292 as "different methods of presentation (e.g., audio
293 or pictures) of media content, appealing to different
294 aspects of the human perceptual system (e.g., hear-
295 ing, seeing)" (p.512), acknowledges that the Internet
296 can provide users with content in multiple modal-
297 ities and some of them can be considered unique
298 (e.g., pop-up ads). The modality affordance results
299 in three gratifications (Realism, Coolness, and Being
300 There).The agency affordance of the MAIN Model
301 suggests that the Internet allows users to be agents or
302 sources of information, and this view acknowledges
303 the ability of users to be gatekeepers of content, build
304 communities, and contribute. Agency affordance can
305 lead to Agency-enhancement, Community Building,
306 Bandwagon, and Filtering gratifications. Interactiv-
307 ity, according to Sundar [52], is the most distinctive
308 affordance of digital media and it relates to real-
309 time interaction and activity on a given medium.
310 The revised interactivity affordance [39] includes two
311 gratifications (Activity and Responsiveness). Finally,
312 Sundar and Limperos [38] define navigability as
313 "the affordance that allows user movement through
314 the medium" (p.516). Navigability can include the
315 expectation that users are scaffolded through cer-
316 tain processes (e.g., online transactions) and will
317 encounter some fun elements. Accordingly, the nav-
318 igability affordance can result in two gratifications
319 (Browsing and Play). Table 1 defines each affordance.

1.3. Political actor types

A large number of studies stress the role social media play in explicit political dissent [e.g., 7, 53]. Although social media can gratify users who have different political attributes [28], previous studies pay primary attention to political dissidence. As we argued before, individuals with different political orientations, such as subordinates, are underrepresented in social media research. As Theocharis suggests [54], acts that are considered non-political can be more impactful than conventional forms of participation. In this section, we develop a theoretical basis to identify criteria that can contrast between a range of political personality types.

Early work done by Gamson [29] that highlighted the role discontent —lack of trust in the system— and efficacy —belief that individual actions matter— play in political behaviour provides a foundation for conceptualizing political personality types. Perceived efficacy is characterized by “judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations” [55]. Trust, according to van der Meer [56], is a relational notion linking a subject (who trusts) with an object (that is trusted). Gamson [29] noted that the optimum combination for mobilization is high political efficacy and low political trust, and this combination indicates a belief that influence is possible and necessary. This notion, commonly known as the “Gamson Hypothesis”, has received considerable attention during the past several decades. Craig and Maggiotto [30] hypothesized that discontent is related to unconventional political behaviour among those who are dissatisfied with government policy and believe that they should be considered influential political actors. They conclude that the context has mobilized political discontent in the form of “benign” activities such as single-issue advocacy and tax revolt, and although these acts may not be revolutionary, they may have significant political consequences.

Similarly, Shingles [57] examined black consciousness and argued that policy-related participation is encouraged by political mistrust and internal efficacy. Shingles stresses the importance of understanding different types of political activity (e.g., allegiance to regime and country and influence on government and policy) and argues that efficacy can be conducive to high-initiative behaviour (i.e., activities that need active participation and high levels of effort), while mistrust is related to policy-related behaviour (i.e., efforts to influence

government and policy). As Shingles notes, “strong sense of self-confidence and a deep suspicion regarding the willingness and ability of government to respond to their needs has proved to be an important catalyst, mobilizing blacks to seek to influence the policy process” [p.89].

Paige [23] examined the relationship between trust and efficacy, considering four types of political systems (democratic, traditional, totalitarian, and unstable). According to Paige, combinations of political trust and efficacy display differences among political actors (allegiants- high efficacy, high trust; subordinates- high trust, low efficacy; dissidents- high efficacy, low trust, and alienated- low trust, low efficacy) in these systems. While a responsive and non-coercive (democratic) regime requires little force due to allegiance, political alienation arises in a totalitarian regime that is unresponsive and coercive. This results in political allegiants being politically active but not radical as opposed to the alienated citizens that are resentful. In a traditional system characterised by a lack of trust but high efficacy, citizens can be seen as passive subordinates who are loyal to the existing political structure. Dissidence arises in an unstable (unresponsive and non-coercive) regime. Paige views this as critical, as revolutionary activity, including riot participation, can emerge. Paige claims that democratic, traditional, and totalitarian societies have been politically stable due to the nature of their constituency or the way they respond to interest groups.

Societies with dissidents, unlike the other three types, are highly unstable, as the mistrust and high efficacy can result in radical actions. The intricate connection between trust and efficacy provides a solid conceptual foundation to identify political personality types. Paige [23] argues that the behaviour of a given regime may move a system towards either democracy or totalitarianism. The above classification [29, p.23] allows considering every social media user as a political actor. For instance, lack of political engagement among a population of social media users may mean subordination or alienation. On the other hand, tendency to critique or support a political system as part of general social media use may indicate dissidence or allegiance. Accordingly, our effort to connect general social media use with political actor types is based on the premise that even the least politically active social media user plays an important role that helps understand the ways in which political activity is embedded in platforms. In particular, a comparative analysis among actors can reveal

423 how general social media uses and gratifications may
424 appeal to certain actor types.

425 Several researchers have used political efficacy and
426 measures of political disaffection, such as political
427 cynicism, to examine online political activity. For
428 instance, Lee [58] argues that the use of online news
429 and interaction with public agencies can increase
430 internal political efficacy, while visiting websites of
431 public agencies can positively affect internal effi-
432 cacy. Chan and Guo [59] argue that the effect of
433 Facebook use on political participation is moder-
434 ated by political efficacy. An effort to directly apply
435 Gamson's proposition in the context of the Internet
436 was made by Johnson, Kaye, and Kim [60], who
437 addressed different web platforms, bulletin boards,
438 chat rooms, portals, and blogs, and the effects of rely-
439 ing on these platforms. Their work shows that Internet
440 users are equally divided into dissidents and assureds
441 (allegiants). They claim that the results do not
442 strongly support using the two categories (dissidents
443 or assureds) as predictors of reliance on different
444 platforms. However, a recent study conducted by
445 Johnson and Kaye [61] shows that dissidents tend
446 to use more polarizing media sources, such as radio
447 talk shows and political blogs, while assureds avoid
448 those sources. Johnson and Kaye claim that the use of
449 online mainstream broadcast TV news predicts being
450 an assured, while dissidence can be predicted by the
451 use of alternative sources. These findings show that
452 dissidents and allegiants can differ in terms of their
453 use of online sources. However, arguably, any online
454 platforms may have uses for both these parties.

455 Accordingly, the objective of this study is twofold:
456 1) identifying differences in social media uses and
457 gratifications among potential dissidents, allegiants,
458 subordinates, and the alienated, and 2) examining the
459 extent to which political actor types can be discerned
460 using social media uses and gratifications.

461 2. Method

462 Data from a sample of 313 United States citizens
463 above the age of 18 (see Table 2 for sample statis-
464 tics) was collected through Qualtrics survey service.
465 The data collection team was advised to target the
466 general population of the United States, rather than
467 a selected group of strata from the population. They
468 were also advised to continue data collection until a
469 reasonable number of responses were received from
470 different gender and ethnic groups, and individuals
471 representing different age levels, education levels,

Table 2
Sample Composition

Demographic Variable	Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	131	41.9
	Female	182	58.1
Age	Between 18–25 years	23	7.3
	Between 26–32 years	53	16.9
	Between 33–40 years	64	20.4
	Between 41–47 years	48	15.3
	Above 47 years	125	39.9
Ethnicity	Caucasian	236	75.4
	African American	33	10.5
	Asian	15	4.8
	Native American	1	0.3
	Pacific Islander	2	0.6
	Hispanic	19	6.1
	Other	7	2.2
Education	College Freshman	17	5.4
	Sophomore	20	6.4
	Junior	12	3.8
	Senior	26	8.3
	Graduate Student	95	30.4
	Other	143	45.7
Political Self-identification	Liberal	80	25.6
	Conservative	63	20.1
	Conservative Democrat	32	10.2
	Social Conservative	12	3.8
	Moderate	68	21.7
	Independent	58	18.5
Political Party Affiliation	Democratic	155	49.5
	Republican	85	27.2
	Other	73	23.3
Social Media Use	Several times day	193	61.7
	About once a day	50	16
	3–5 days a week	33	10.5
	1–2 days a week	21	6.7
	Every few weeks	12	3.8
	Less often	4	1.3

472 political orientations, and party affiliations. Respon-
473 dents were asked to reflect upon their use of Facebook
474 and Twitter as they answered the survey questions.
475 These two platforms were used as the main focus,
476 as political engagement is common on Facebook and
477 Twitter.

478 We used the revised MAIN model scale devel-
479 oped and validated by Rathnayake and Winter [39]
480 to measure social media uses and gratifications.
481 This scale includes 11 gratifications (Realism, Being
482 There, Agency-enhancement, Community Building,

Table 3
Political Efficacy and Trust Measures

Construct	Items
Efficacy	I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics
	I feel I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people
	I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people
	I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country
Trust in the government	Most of our leaders are devoted to the service of our country
	Politicians never tell us what they really think
	I don't think public officials care much about what people like me think

Bandwagon, Filtering, Interaction, Activity, Responsiveness, Browsing, and Play) and was built on the Uses and Grats 2.0 framework [38, 52].

Definitions of each construct and gratifications are given in Table 1. The scale includes 66 questions re-written specifically to focus on social media. Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs were above 0.7 except for Filtering (Realism: 0.70, Coolness: 0.76, Being There: 0.80, Agency: 0.832, Community Building: 0.787, Filtering: 0.64, Activity: 0.77, Responsiveness: 0.835, Browsing: 0.88, Play: 0.8). A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) indicated reasonable fit, supporting the appropriateness of this scale (Model-fit: χ^2 : 768.89, df: 389, $p \leq .001$, GFI: 0.850, AGFI: 0.821, IFI: 0.924, TLI: 0.914, CFI: 0.923, RMSEA: 0.056).

Seven items (Table 3) developed by Johnson and Kaye [61] were used to measure trust and efficacy (Cronbach's Alpha- political efficacy: 0.805; political trust: 0.654). A CFA that included political trust and efficacy showed adequate fit (Model-fit: χ^2 : 42.35, df: 13, p :.000, IFI: 0.956, TLI: 0.928, CFI: 0.956, RMSEA: 0.085).

Subjects were categorised into political personality types based on the Gamson Hypothesis [29], Paige's [23] conceptualisation of actor types, and related recent work [e.g., 60, 61] that used political trust and efficacy to identify dissidents, allegiants, subordinates, and alienated. While political allegiants indicate high trust and high efficacy, dissidents show low trust and high efficacy. Thus, political trust differentiates between allegiants and dissidents while these two groups share a sense of capability in

political engagement. Those who trust the government, but indicate low efficacy, are identified as subordinates. Moreover, the alienated category shows low trust and low efficacy. Item totals were used to classify actors into personality categories. Following earlier work [e.g., 61], for constructs measured using four items (e.g., political efficacy), totals less than 12 were considered low and totals greater than 16 were categorized as high. Similarly, for constructs with three five-point Likert scale items (e.g., political trust), totals less than nine were categorised as low while totals higher than 12 were considered high. Accordingly, the sample included 11 dissidents, 37 allegiants, 50 subordinates, and 32 alienated subjects. A separate category was created for moderates to aid comparison of high and low categories with subjects that have moderate scores. The sample included 183 moderate subjects who did not fall into any of the main categories. This is a reasonable composition, as dissidents are political minorities who attempt to change the system, and it is typical that there are reasonably large groups that trust and support the existing system (allegiants). Moreover, it is possible that there are even larger groups that trust the system but are politically inactive (subordinates), and perhaps smaller inactive groups that do not trust the system (alienated). We used mean ranks and the Mann-Whitney U test to examine differences among political personality types due to unequal group sizes. We develop a multinomial logistic regression model to examine the relationship between predictors (uses and gratifications) and political personality types. Four extra variables (age, political party identification, political self-identification, frequency of social media use) were added to the regression model to improve classification accuracy. Political party identification was measured using a three-item scale (Democratic, Conservative, and Other) and five-item scale developed using the political typology suggested by the Pew Research Center [62] was used to measure political self-identification.

3. Results and discussion

Table 4 shows means and standard deviations for U&G constructs for each political personality type. While both dissidents and allegiants gravitated towards high mean values for some constructs (e.g., Realism, Coolness, Agency, Community Building, and Activity), they appeared to differ in terms of Filtering. However, both allegiants and dissidents

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations

		Mean	SD
Realism	Moderates	2.44	0.839
	Dissidents	3.39	0.998
	Allegiants	3.26	1.250
	Subordinates	2.27	0.838
	Alienated	2.70	1.038
	Total	2.57	0.973
Coolness	Moderates	3.66	0.600
	Dissidents	4.27	0.389
	Allegiants	4.26	0.782
	Subordinates	3.65	0.617
	Alienated	3.51	0.568
	Total	3.74	0.656
Being There	Moderates	3.32	0.888
	Dissidents	3.58	1.044
	Allegiants	3.70	1.146
	Subordinates	3.11	0.980
	Alienated	3.27	0.759
	Total	3.34	0.939
Agency	Moderates	3.77	0.650
	Dissidents	4.36	0.526
	Allegiants	4.35	0.603
	Subordinates	3.85	0.697
	Alienated	3.69	0.829
	Total	3.86	0.698
Community Building	Moderates	3.75	0.698
	Dissidents	4.09	0.634
	Allegiants	4.12	0.759
	Subordinates	3.57	0.774
	Alienated	3.63	0.665
	Total	3.77	0.726
Filtering	Moderates	3.92	0.486
	Dissidents	3.70	0.752
	Allegiants	4.26	0.663
	Subordinates	3.89	0.596
	Alienated	3.64	0.551
	Total	3.92	0.563
Activity	Moderates	3.23	0.815
	Dissidents	3.64	0.567
	Allegiants	3.77	0.916
	Subordinates	3.04	0.727
	Alienated	2.99	0.760
	Total	3.25	0.828
Responsiveness	Moderates	3.21	0.746
	Dissidents	3.24	1.184
	Allegiants	3.85	0.915
	Subordinates	2.96	0.755
	Alienated	3.16	0.616
	Total	3.24	0.807

Table 4
Continued

		Mean	SD
Browsing	Moderates	3.82	0.644
	Dissidents	4.03	0.505
	Allegiants	4.12	0.630
	Subordinates	3.75	0.699
	Alienated	3.62	0.615
	Total	3.83	0.653
Play	Moderates	3.47	0.856
	Dissidents	3.79	0.688
	Allegiants	3.94	0.984
	Subordinates	3.49	0.817
	Alienated	3.30	0.658
	Total	3.52	0.855

had considerably different mean values from subordinates, moderates, and the alienated actors. Charts illustrated in Fig. 1 show corresponding mean values for each actor type.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test (Table 5) show that dissidents and allegiants did not differ from each other in terms of their perception of uses and gratifications, except for Filtering. Allegiants had a significantly higher mean rank than dissidents (mean ranks- dissidents: 136.32, allegiants: 213.55, Mann-Whitney U: 111.00, $p < .05$) for their perception of Filtering. However, both these groups differed significantly from other groups. For instance, perception of Realism, Coolness, Agency, Community Building, and Activity was significantly different between dissidents and subordinates. Similarly, dissidents and the alienated were different from each other in terms of their perception of Coolness, Agency, Community Building, and Activity. Although dissidents did not differ from subordinates and allegiants for some constructs (e.g., Being There, Filtering, Responsiveness, and Browsing), differences between political allegiants and the two groups with low political efficacy (subordinates and the alienated) were more prominent. For instance, political allegiants and the alienated were significantly different from each other for all uses and gratifications constructs. Similarly, allegiants and subordinates were different from each other for all constructs except Being There. Accordingly, we have convincing evidence to argue that, from the perspective of uses and gratifications, dissidents and allegiants do not differ much from each other, but do differ from other groups, such as subordinates and the alienated. This similarity may relate

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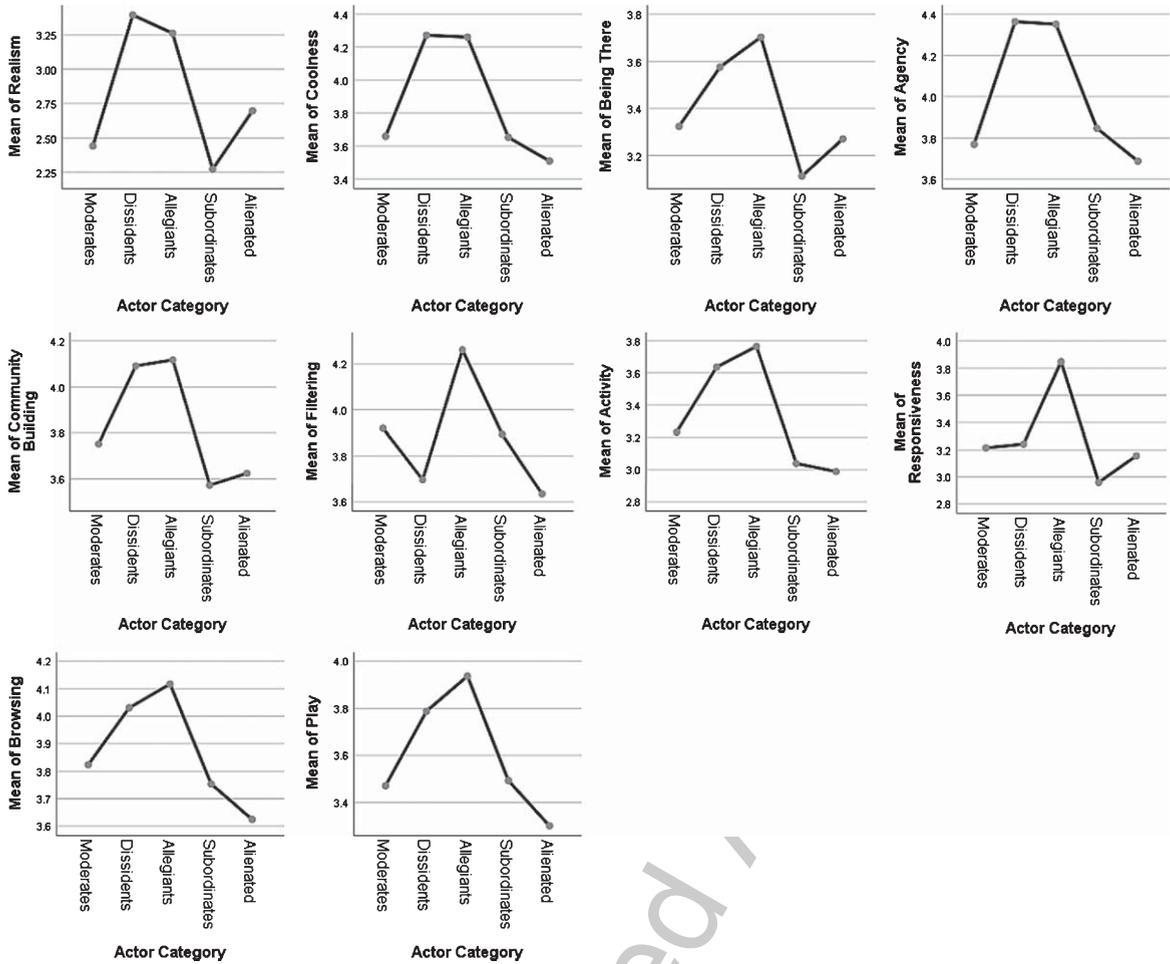


Fig. 1. Political Actor Category and Uses and Gratifications (Mean Values).

599 to high efficacy among dissidents and allegiants. In
 600 other words, these results show that social media constitute a ‘level playing field’ for those who believe
 601 in the significance of individual actions in politics. Mean ranks given in Table 4 and charts that provide a
 602 comparative perspective of mean values (Fig. 1) also showed that potential dissidents and allegiants perceive
 603 uses and gratifications differently than the other two groups. This shows that social media can gratify
 604 dissidents and allegiants more than subordinates and the alienated.
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610 A multinomial logistic regression model was used
 611 to examine the relationship between social media
 612 uses and gratifications and political personality
 613 types. Age of the respondents, frequency of social
 614 media use, political party affiliation, and political
 615 self-identification were included to improve the
 616 model. The model with the predictors indicated

reasonable fit (χ^2 : 702.874, df: 424, p:0.00, Cox and Snell R^2 :0.894, Nagelkerke R^2 :0.981, McFadden R^2 :0.928). Likelihood ratio test results (Table 6) showed that seven out of thirteen variables (i.e., age, political self-identification, frequency of social media use, Coolness, Filtering, Activity, and Play) included in the final model were significant ($p < .05$). Classification results (Table 7) show that the predictors can classify users into political personality types with more than 98 percent accuracy. A second multinomial logistics model that did not include political party affiliation and self-identification classified the sample into political personality categories with 92.3% percent accuracy (moderates: 94.5%, dissidents: 100%, allegiants: 100%, subordinates: 74%, alienated: 96.9%) (Model Fit- Log Likelihood: 107.191, χ^2 : 646.13, df: 408, p:0.00). This demonstrates that a model that does not include predictors

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Table 5
Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Group Differences

	Test 1: <i>Dissidents vs. Allegiants</i>		Test 2: <i>Dissidents vs. Subordinates</i>		Test 3: <i>Allegiants vs. Subordinates</i>		Test 4: <i>Dissidents vs. Alienated</i>		Test 5: <i>Allegiants vs. Alienated</i>	
	Mann-Whitney U	<i>p</i>	Mann-Whitney U	<i>p</i>	Mann-Whitney U	<i>p</i>	Mann-Whitney U	<i>p</i>	Mann-Whitney U	<i>p</i>
Realism	200.500	0.941	106.500	0.001	488.000	0.000	111.000	0.068	413.500	0.031
Coolness	177.000	0.506	107.000	0.001	401.500	0.000	48.000	0.000	200.000	0.000
Being There	182.500	0.604	206.500	0.195	607.000	0.006	140.500	0.317	401.000	0.021
Agency	200.500	0.940	155.000	0.022	533.000	0.001	77.000	0.004	287.000	0.000
Community Building	187.000	0.677	161.500	0.031	464.500	0.000	102.500	0.036	288.500	0.000
Filtering	111.000	0.021	241.500	0.515	574.500	0.002	151.500	0.472	249.500	0.000
Activity	166.500	0.359	139.500	0.010	464.500	0.000	90.000	0.015	289.000	0.000
Responsiveness	138.000	0.105	226.500	0.359	388.000	0.000	162.000	0.693	286.500	0.000
Browsing	176.500	0.500	222.500	0.316	648.000	0.016	112.000	0.068	333.000	0.002
Play	163.000	0.312	208.500	0.206	592.500	0.004	107.500	0.054	303.000	0.000

^aGrouping Variable: Actor Category.

Table 6
Multinomial Logistic Regression- Likelihood Ratio Tests

Effect	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept	54.607	0.000	0	
Age	97.094	42.487	4	0.000
Political party identification	58.304	3.697	4	0.449
Political self-identification	67.527	12.921	4	0.012
Frequency of social media use	67.213	12.606	4	0.013
Realism	95.978	41.371	48	0.739
Coolness	359.907	305.301	40	0.000
Being There	86.331	31.724	48	0.966
Agency	82.797	28.190	44	0.969
Community Building	94.569	39.962	44	0.645
Filtering	236.856	182.249	40	0.000
Activity	186.211	131.604	48	0.000
Browsing	101.249	46.643	48	0.529
Play	124.599	69.993	48	0.021

related to political attributes of respondents can still achieve high classification accuracy.

The above results allow us to make two claims: 1) potential allegiants and dissidents are driven by a similar set of social media uses and gratifications as opposed to political subordinates and the alienated, and 2) social media uses and gratifications can be used to classify political personality types with considerably high accuracy. This answers the general

question, 'can data related to how and why users are driven to use social media accurately reveal political differences?', in the affirmative. Our results also show that social media can provide more gratifications for potential dissidents and allegiants, 'favouring' personality types with high political efficacy. We will discuss below the implications of these findings. Starting from early work that discussed the impact of the Internet on political participation in general [e.g.,

Table 7
Classification Results

Observed	Predicted					Percent Correct
	Moderates	Dissidents	Allegiants	Subordinates	Alienated	
Moderates	181	0	0	1	1	98.9%
Dissidents	0	11	0	0	0	100.0%
Allegiants	0	0	37	0	0	100.0%
Subordinates	3	0	0	47	0	94.0%
Alienated	0	0	0	0	32	100.0%
%	58.8%	3.5%	11.8%	15.3%	10.5%	98.4%

63] previous studies have reached into numerous dimensions of online politics. For instance, studies that examine dissidence in different contexts, such as political uprisings and oppression [e.g., 27, 53, 64], provide ample evidence to understand the role social media play in enabling political activity. These studies approach online political dissidence from an issue-based perspective, focusing on specific contexts. In contrast, our aim was to provide a more general view of how political behaviour is connected to social media use. Our approach allows examination of less-oppressive and non-issue-specific political contexts and takes different political actor types, including passive actors, into account.

As Gillespie [65] notes, choices made by platforms regarding the nature of content that can appear, organization and monetization of such content, and prohibition of some information are crucial interventions into the public discourse. However, platforms may not favour certain political ideologies or orientations. Given the vast amount of studies that examine alternative politics such as protest action [e.g., 7, 8, 53, 66–69], social media platforms may seem favourable venues for alternative politics, particularly dissidence. However, arguably, the types of affordances identified by social media scholars (e.g., persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability, as discussed by boyd [70]), do not appeal in particular to a specific political group. Similarly, informational, expressive, and relational uses of social media that are positively linked to engagement [1] can appeal to users with different political orientations. Moreover, social media uses and gratifications identified by previous studies (e.g., information seeking, entertainment, social interaction, self-status seeking) cannot be limited to specific political ideologies. Therefore, although accessibility of platforms may encourage dissident politics that is less likely to be promoted in broadcast media, the potential for allegiant or pro-regime politics on

platforms is not negligible. For instance, as Pearce [16] argues, despite the optimistic view towards the democratic potential of the Internet, social media can make control easy for authoritarian regimes. Similarities in uses and gratifications between potential dissidents and allegiants that we identified above may, therefore, reflect the potential of platforms to enable both pro and anti-system politics.

These results can also explain the intricate connection between political efficacy and online political engagement. Mean values for political efficacy (based on a five-point Likert Scale) were similar between potential dissidents and allegiants (mean = dissidents: 4.36, allegiants: 4.41) and both groups had a mean rank of 24.5 (the Mann-Whitney U test was not significant). As both potential dissidents and allegiants have high political efficacy, they may perceive some social media uses and gratifications more than those who have less political efficacy. This is possible, as social media is characterised by user-generated content and interaction. Differences in uses and gratifications between personality types with high and low political efficacy was clearly noticeable in the mean ranks given in Table 4, as dissidents and allegiants had higher mean ranks for all uses and gratifications than subordinates and the alienated. Partial correlations between Political Trust, Efficacy, and uses and gratifications (Table 8) indicated that, while only one gratification (Filtering) is significantly related to Political Trust, Political Efficacy had significant correlations with all the uses and gratifications variables. This confirms that social media tend to gratify users with high political efficacy more than others. In other words, our results show that social media provide higher levels of gratifications for those who believe in the significance of individual political activity. This observation is consistent with the study conducted by Velasquez and LaRose [71] who highlighted the correspondence between perceived efficacy and levels of agency at which political engagement occurs.

Table 8

Partial Correlations among Political Trust, Efficacy, and Uses and Gratifications

	Trust	Efficacy
Realism	-0.014	0.214**
Coolness	0.073	0.250**
Being There	-0.037	0.154**
Agency	0.066	0.152**
Community Building	0.064	0.226**
Filtering	0.180**	0.154**
Activity	0.055	0.259**
Responsiveness	0.045	0.190**
Browsing	0.096	0.172**
Play	0.101	0.167**

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level, *Correlation is significant at 0.05 level, Control variable: frequency of social media use.

Political efficacy influences many aspects of human functioning, such as strategic thinking, optimism or pessimism, choice of course of action, goals, effort put to certain endeavours, perseverance, and resilience [72]. Bandura notes that shared beliefs in people's collective power to achieve desired outcomes can be seen as a key element of collective agency. Arguably, the ability of social media platforms to allow collective activity may correlate with collective efficacy of social media users. However, effects of collective efficacy on social media uses and gratifications should be examined further as it is beyond the scope of the current study.

The above results can offer valuable insight for both governments and platforms, especially in terms of developing policies to encourage democratic engagement. As mentioned previously, social media use is not limited to political motives. Therefore, in contexts where the population is diverse in terms of political position, different groups, including those who have dissident or allegiant tendencies, may find social media sites gratifying. However, as both dissidents and allegiants share a similar set of gratifications, measures taken to encourage or restrict engagement of one group may affect the other similarly. Paige [23] explains that repressive responses to control dissidence may transform an unstable regime into a totalitarian regime. Use of social media for such control may exacerbate the issue as such measures may negatively affect political allegiants. For instance, measures such as access control and limiting opportunity for interaction adversely affect both dissidents and allegiants as they reduce gratifications such as community building, agency, and activity.

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This may result in dissatisfaction among allegiants, minimising support for government. Paige describes democratic, traditional, and totalitarian systems as stable, as opposed to unstable regimes characterised by dissidence. In stable, yet democratically unhealthy systems, such as totalitarian political contexts, social media can be used to encourage political engagement among both potential dissidents and allegiants.

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4. Conclusion

The findings discussed above reveal a nuanced relationship between political personality types and social media uses and gratifications. Social media are double-edged swords that not only afford, but also gratify, individuals engaged in anti- as well as pro-system politics. However, they are not necessarily 'level playing fields', as they tend to provide more gratifications for those who believe in the value of individual political activity. While this study sheds light on the topic, further work is necessary to examine factors that mediate and moderate the relationships between social media uses and gratifications and political personality types. In particular, work that examines political motivations can help shed light on the topic. Unequal group sizes within the sample also demands similar work in different contexts.

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Our classification above reveals the possibility of discerning political differences using data related to social media consumption. This could prove to be problematic, as it helps uncover individuals that support or oppose existing political systems, leading to potential harms. However, this work should not be understood as an attempt to expose political actors, those who have mobilization potential in particular. Instead, our work should be understood as empirical evidence as to the possibility of such exposure using survey data. Nefarious use of such potential indicates democratic decay, and this demands strong policy frameworks for platform use, analytics, and micro targeting.

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