Who Are The "Expressive Attentives?"
Identifying Social Media Activists in 2018 US Election Campaign Conversations

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Abstract

This paper explores some ramifications of GW Politics Poll[1] results which show that 40 percent of a panel of registered voters surveyed at four points between May and December 2018 regularly used social media to express their opinion or share someone else's opinion about a candidate, issue or party. In this paper we report on cross-tabular and regression analyses of the poll data with respect to this group, whom we label "expressive attentives," in order to draw inferences about their demographic characteristics, attitudes, and other behaviors. We find that those who used social media for politics in 2018 were much more active than other registered voters in traditional modes of participation as well. Expressing one's opinions online turns out to be well integrated with voicing them in donations, yard signs, and canvassing operations. Moreover, this expressive segment of the population manifest "hyperpartisan" opinions and group-related attitudes as compared to others in their respective parties.

Keywords: Twitter, 2018 Election, Social Media, Campaign Strategy

Many studies show that traditional political participation skews toward the well-educated and financially well-off (see Conway, 2000). But what about those who express their opinions, share information, and call for action on social media? The same segments of the population may dominate in social media as in legacy campaign channels, or the footprint may be larger or simply different in composition. About all we know at this early stage in the use of social media for politicking is that such persons pay attention to campaigners and comment and share from their threads — hence our placeholder characterization of them as "expressive attentives."

This study is about more than just "Who Tweets?" about politics — a topic investigated in two recent studies (Cohn And Quealy 2019, Wojcik and Hughes 2019). We also examine characteristics of the most politically expressive and engaged segments of the social media population. Specifically, this paper explores some ramifications of GW Politics Poll results which show that 40 percent of a panel of registered voters surveyed at four points between May and December 2018 regularly used social media to express their opinion or share someone else's opinion about a candidate, issue or party. This relatively new form of political participation was more frequently deployed than six others we asked about:

- going to meetings or rallies about 1) an issue or 2) a candidate;
- 3) working for a party or candidate;
- 4) displaying campaign paraphernalia such as buttons, bumper stickers, and yard signs;
- 5) signing a petition; and
- 6) donating money to a candidate.

Online campaign participation was engaged in about as much as a seventh mode:

- 7) talking with people about why they should vote for or against a candidate or party.

And except for the three months right before the election (represented by responses for the December wave), social media politicking was more common than:

- 8) being contacted by one of the parties (see Table 1).

We isolated respondents who stated in all four waves of the study that they had used social media for political expression. There was an 87 to 89 percent consistency of doing so for this group between each wave, yielding a final group of 27 percent who had done so in all four waves of the study. We call this active 27 percent of the public "expressive attentives" because throughout this midterm election year they consistently talked about the candidates, issues, and parties they were following, at least through the voiced opinions of others, and likely also following through news reports, campaign statements, and other sources of political information. Our purpose in this paper is to report on cross-tabular and regression analyses of the poll data with respect to this group in order to draw inferences about their demographic characteristics, attitudes, and other behaviors.

Table 1. Political Participation among U.S. Registered Voters, 2018

In the past three months have you done any of the following? (Percentage yes)

	May	July-August	October	December
Used social media to express their opinion or share someone else's opinion about a candidate, issue or party	41	41	40	40
Went to political meetings or rallies focused on a political issue	12	13	11	11
Went to political meetings, rallies, speeches or fundraisers in support of a particular candidate	10	12	11	11
Worked for one of the parties or candidates	7	8	8	7
Wore a campaign button, put a sticker on their car or placed a sign in their window or in front of their house	14	14	17	18
Gave money to an individual candidate	16	17	17	17
Talked to people and tried to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates	36	39	43	41
Signed a petition	n/a	42	39	36
Wrote a letter	n/a	n/a	7	7
Was contacted by one of the parties	24	26	37	42

Our main finding: Those who used social media for politics in 2018 were much more active than other registered voters in traditional modes of participation as well. In other words, their online expressiveness and sharing of information they paid attention to was part and parcel of intense involvement in campaigns. They were opinion leaders and peer mobilizers across communication venues and channels. If being an expressive attentive were mostly an impulsive act, or faked via bots, then we would not see such heavy correlation with offline modes of participation.

Literature Review

Previous studies provide support for this conception of social media politicking as integral to campaigning in general. In a study of national elections in the US (2012) and UK (2010), Aldrich et al. (2015) found that "while offline forms remain most effective in mobilizing turnout, online messages are important for campaign participation, particularly among younger citizens when they are mediated through social networks" (p. 1). Xu et al. (2014) conducted social network analysis of Twitter users including the hashtag #wirecall during the 2012 Wisconsin recall election campaigns and confirmed users' nodal connectivity to others. Settle et al. (2016) found that Facebook users residing in battleground states in 2008 were more likely to discuss politics via status updates than those living in uncompetitive states.

The integration of online with traditional political activity ranges beyond electoral to advocacy politics. Cohn and Quealy (2019), comparing Democrats who post on Twitter with those who don't, found the former were four times as likely (28 to 7%) to say they have attended a protest in the past year, and three times as likely (45 to 14%) to say they donated to a political organization in the past year. Anderson et al. (2018) reported that 69 percent of American adults agreed that hashtag activism networks (#BlackLivesMatter, #Metoo, #MAGA) get politicians to pay attention to issues (69%). The social perception that hashtag activism is effective reinforces the notion that online campaigning works.

Wojcik and Hughes (2019) of Pew reported that "although Twitter users are somewhat more likely to report having voted in the 2018 midterm elections, these differences are relatively modest: 60% of Twitter users reported that they definitely voted in 2018, compared with 55% of all U.S. adults." Cohn and Quealy (2019) report Hidden Tribes data that shows that of those Democrats who use social media to post about politics, 27 percent say they attended a political protest (compared to 7 percent of others), and 45 percent of those posting about politics online reported making a political donation, compared to 14 percent of others. We expect similar results both for Republicans as well as all respondents taken together.

These studies provide empirically grounded reasons to believe that expressive attentives would be more likely to be involved in more traditional political activities, which leads to our first hypothesis:

H1: Expressive attentives are more likely than others to be involved in other traditional modes of political participation.

Turning to politically relevant characteristics, Pew Research found US adult Twitter users to be disproportionately younger and more likely to be Democrats, and that most users actually rarely tweet, with 80 percent of tweets originating from 10 percent of users (Wojcik and Hughes, 2019). A larger share of Twitter users — who as noted above are more likely to identify as Democrats relative to the population as a whole — say that blacks are treated less fairly than whites (64% of Twitter users vs. 54% of Americans). Of those who post political content online, 29 of Democrats identify as moderate or conservative compared to 53 percent of other Democrats. (Cohn and Quealy, 2019). They are also more likely than the U.S. general public to say that immigrants strengthen the U.S. (66% vs. 57%) and that barriers exist in society that make it harder for women to get ahead (62% vs. 56%). Mellon and Prosser (2017) concluded on the basis of a sample of the British population that social media users are better educated than non-users, and they are more liberal and pay more attention to politics. The *New York Times* study said the outspoken group of Democratic-leaning voters on social media is outnumbered, roughly 2 to 1, by a more moderate, more diverse and less educated group of Democrats who typically don't post political content online (Cohn and Quealy, 2019).

As strong partisans, we expect those online to reflect stronger opinions than those who are less partisan, since partisanship is such a strong predictor of issue attitudes (see Flanigan and Zingale, 2009). So strong is partisanship, that it even colors perceptions of the economy, causing individuals to believe that they and the country as a whole are worse off economically when the government, especially the presidency, is controlled by the opposing party (see Bartels 2002; Just, Crigler and Belt, 2006; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Rudolph, 2003).

These findings, along with the documentation by Benkler et al. (2018) of a tight and mostly closed network of Twitter users talking about conservative and populist politics to the right of the *Wall Street Journal,* led us to formulate H2:

H2: Expressive attentives are likely to be more ideological in their issue positions than other members of their respective party.

Another significant question about the composition of the expressive attentives concerns their group cohesion. Apart from ideology, loyalty to party, social identity, and geographic location bind people to one another in politically salient ways; a lively debate revolves around the question of whether online consumption patterns reinforces and intensifies these loyalties as part of the "echo chamber" or "social bubble" effect. As Huddy, Mason and Aarøe (2015) put it, an "expressive partisan identity" leads people to participate in campaigns above and beyond ideology (p. 1).

Recent scholarship into the trend towards hyperpartisanship has, in recent years, confirmed that strong partisans think of themselves as "teams" or "tribes," and view the other party with stronger antipathy than attraction to their own side — a concept known as negative partisanship. This phenomenon (whether it be through physical sorting or psychological affinities) has manifested itself in very strong in-group and out-group attitudes towards individuals associated with one party or another (see Abramowitz, 2018; Fiorina, 2017;

Grossmann and Hopkins, 2016; Hetherington and Weiler, 2018; Mason, 2018; McCarty, 2019; Sides, Tesler and Vavreck, 2018). This leads to our third and final hypothesis:

H3: Expressive attentives are likely to have stronger in-group/out-group attitudes than other members of their respective party.

Methods and Data

As mentioned earlier, this study is a secondary analysis of the GW Politics Poll (for details, see https://smpa.gwu.edu/gw-politics-poll). All variables were recoded to a range of 0 to 1 for ease of comparison. Dichotomous variables are presented as percentages (such as percent of persons engaging in a certain behavior) and ordinal and interval variables are reported as average scores (details of scale gradations are reported in the notes of each respective table). As mentioned earlier, our key variable — the definition of an individual as an expressive attentive was whether an individual had said that they had used social media for political expression in all four waves of the survey. This makes our definition qualitatively different than other studies that have merely compared users and non-users. For traditional political behaviors, we classified having engaged the given behavior if the respondent reported having done so in any of the four waves of the panel study. Issue and group-based attitudes were all measured in the first wave of the study.

Results: Demographics

Of all respondents isolated for this study, 481 (26.9% of the total 1788) were classified as expressive attentives. Because we expected different attitudinal outcomes by party identification, we broke the sample into Democrats and Republicans.[2] This yielded a total of 834 Democrats (46.6% of sample) and 646 Republicans (36.1% of sample). Just as there are more Democrats overall, Democrats were more likely to be expressive attentives than Republicans. Among Democrats, 34.3 percent (n=286) were classified as expressive attentives, compared to 23.1 percent of Republicans (n=149). This meant that the results of analyses of all expressive attentives reflected a majority of Democrats. Breaking partisans into different groups helps to clarify analyses.

The demographic characteristics of expressive attentives as found in the GW Politics Poll are similar in several respects to the results of the 2019 Pew study that found that "the 22% of American adults who use Twitter are representative of the broader population in certain ways, but not others. Twitter users are younger, more likely to identify as Democrats, more highly educated and have higher incomes than U.S. adults overall" (Wojcik and Hughes, 2019, p. 2). The study goes on to report that "the 10% of users who are most active in terms of tweeting are responsible for 80% of all tweets created by U.S. users… compared with other U.S. adults on Twitter, they are much more likely to be women and more likely to say they regularly tweet about politics" (p. 3).

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Expressive Attentives

Percent of ___ who are…

	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	*Other Respondents*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Democrats*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Republicans*
Sex						
Women	52.0	55.3	64.0	60.0	32.9	53.3
Men	48.0	44.7	36.0	40.0	67.1	46.7
Ethnicity						
White	80.0	75.0	79.7	63.5	83.2	88.5
Black	4.6	11.0	7.3	21.5	0.7	1.6
Hispanic	7.9	7.4	7.7	8.9	7.4	5.0
Income						
< $40,000	36.1	37.5	37.0	41.0	33.8	32.6
$40k-$80k	34.3	35.7	32.7	34.2	36.7	37.9
> $80,000	29.6	26.8	30.4	24.8	29.5	29.5
Education						
HS or Less	23.1	30.8	18.5	26.5	30.9	35.8
Some College	26.0	20.3	24.8	21.4	28.9	17.9
College Grad+	50.9	48.9	56.6	52.2	40.3	46.3
Age						
18-29	8.9	9.2	10.5	9.7	6.0	6.8
30-49	28.7	29.8	31.5	32.1	22.2	22.7
50-64	38.9	39.8	36.0	39.2	43.6	42.7
65+	23.5	21.3	22.0	19.0	28.2	27.8

Note: Highlighted comparisons are statistically significant, tests reported in text.

In the GW Politics Poll, we found a majority of expressive attentives overall to be women (52%), and women to be slightly more represented among the expressive attentives who identified as Democrats (64% compared to 60% of other Democrats, see Table 2). A striking difference was found for Republicans, where 67.1 percent of expressive attentives were men compared to a representation of 46.7 percent in the non-attentive sample (χ^2(1, n=646)=19.161, $p < .001$). This finding bears some resemblance to that of Barberá and Rivero (2014), who found that politically active Twitter users during the run-ups to the 2011 Spanish elections and 2012 US presidential election skew male, urban and politically extreme.

In terms of ethnicity, self-identified whites made up 80.0 percent of expressive attentives, compared to 75.0 percent in the non-attentive sample (χ^2(1, n=1788)=4.986, $p < .05$). The pattern was particularly acute among Democrats, with 79.7 percent identifying as white compared to 63.5 percent of the non-attentive public (χ^2(1, n=834)=23.131, $p < .001$). Blacks were less likely to be expressive attentives, comprising only 4.6 percent compared to 11.0 percent in the non-attentive public (χ^2(1, n=1788)=17.335, $p < .001$). This pattern was also apparent among Democrats, with 7.3 percent of attentives identifying as black compared to 21.5 percent of non-attentives (χ^2(1, n=834)=27.245, $p < .001$). These two findings for black respondents are related, as blacks made up only a small fraction of Republicans (less than two percent). Our results for blacks and whites resemble the Hidden Tribes data used in *The New York Times* article, which reported Democrats who post on social media are more likely to be white and Democrats who do not post on social media are more likely to be Black (Cohn and Quealy, 2019).[3]

Surprisingly to us, there were no differences across age and income when it came to hyper-participation, but we did find some regarding education. Those with the lowest level of education (High School or less) comprised 23.1 percent of all expressive attentives compared to 30.8 percent of non-expressive attentives (χ^2(1, n=1788)=10.329, $p < .01$). This pattern was similar among Democrats (probably driving the overall numbers), as 18.5 percent of Democratic expressive attentives had an education of High School or less compared to 26.5 percent of the non-expressive attentives (χ^2(1, n=834)=6.525, $p < .05$). This finding corresponds to that of Mellon and Prosser (2017), who concluded on the basis of a sample of the British population that social media users are better educated than non-users and pay more attention to politics.

Among Republicans, having some college was associated with higher levels of online political expression. Of the Republican expressive attentives, 28.9 percent had some college, compared to 17.9 percent of other Republicans (χ^2(1, n=646)=8.457, $p < .01$). We now turn to the behavioral ramifications of expressive attentiveness.

Results: Political Participation

Moving on to what expressive attentives do offline, our first hypothesis was confirmed for every group we studied and every behavior queried. Table 3 reports the results of seven different political behaviors, broken out by the expressive attentives versus non-attentives in three groups: all respondents, Democrats and Republicans. Our main finding: those who used social media for politics in 2018 were much more active than other registered voters in the

traditional modes of participation as well. In every single instance, the highly-engaged group outperformed the other respondents: talking to others, attending meetings (for issues and for candidates), working/volunteering, displaying paraphernalia, making a donation, and signing a petition (see Figures 1 and 2). In other words, their online expressiveness and sharing of information they paid attention to was part and parcel of intense involvement in campaigns. They were opinion leaders and peer mobilizers across communication venues and channels. If being an expressive attentive were mostly impulsive (or faked via bots), then we would not see this heavy correlation with offline modes of participation.

We note that some of the most dramatic differences between the expressive attentives and the non-attentives occurred in aspects of traditional political participation that had an "expressive" element: talking to others, displaying paraphernalia, and signing a petition. All three expressive behaviors showed the biggest differences between expressive attentives and others for all three groups: Democrats, Republicans and all respondents). We will circle back to these aspects of expression when we dive deeper into who the expressives are later in this study.

Table 3. Political Participation of Expressive Attentives

Percent of ___ who…	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	Other Respondents	Expressive Attentives	Other Democrats	Expressive Attentives	Other Republicans
Talk to others about politics	91.0 χ^2(1, n=1775)=252.176***	49.5	91.9 χ^2(1, n=830)=16.480***	54.9	90.5 χ^2(1, n=638)=82.359***	48.6
Attend meeting about an issue	37.2 χ^2(1, n=1774)=113.760***	14.2	43.0 χ^2(1, n=826)=59.018***	18.1	25.3 χ^2(1, n=642)=19.375***	10.9
Attend meeting about a candidate	33.3 χ^2(1, n=1777)=93.351***	13.2	38.0 χ^2(1, n=828)=49.311***	16.2	23.6 χ^2(1, n=642)=14.798***	11.1
Work/volunteer in politics	26.5 χ^2(1, n=1767)=89.375***	9.1	32.2 χ^2(1, n=825)=42.783***	13.1	15.6 χ^2(1, n=640)=13.628***	6.1
Display paraphernalia	50.0 χ^2(1, n=1777)=163.628***	19.4	52.3 χ^2 (1, n=828)=65.609***	24.2	44.3 χ^2(1, n=644)=39.277***	19.0
Donate	43.1 χ^2(1, n=1779)=129.662***	17.1	50.5 χ^2(1, n=829)=71.199***	21.8	29.5 χ^2(1, n=644)=20.539***	13.5
Sign Petition	84.7 χ^2(1, n=1778)=249.975***	42.5	89.4 χ^2(1, n=831)=123.932***	50.3	75.5 χ^2(1, n=641)=67.511***	37.0

Note: * $p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

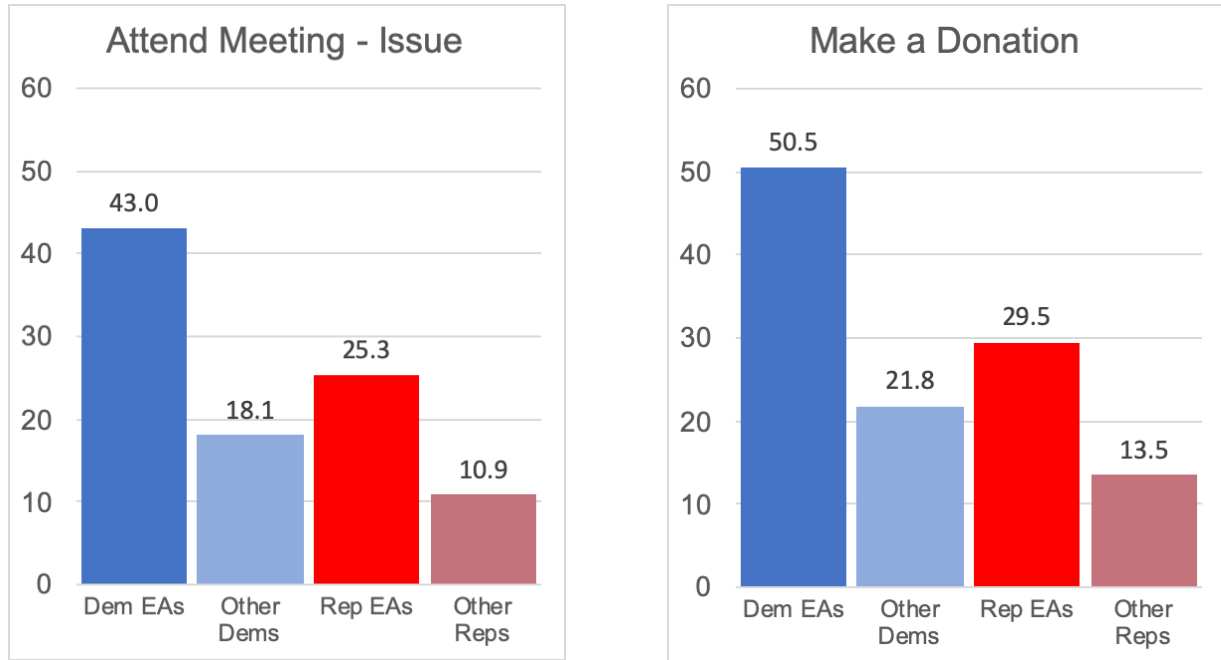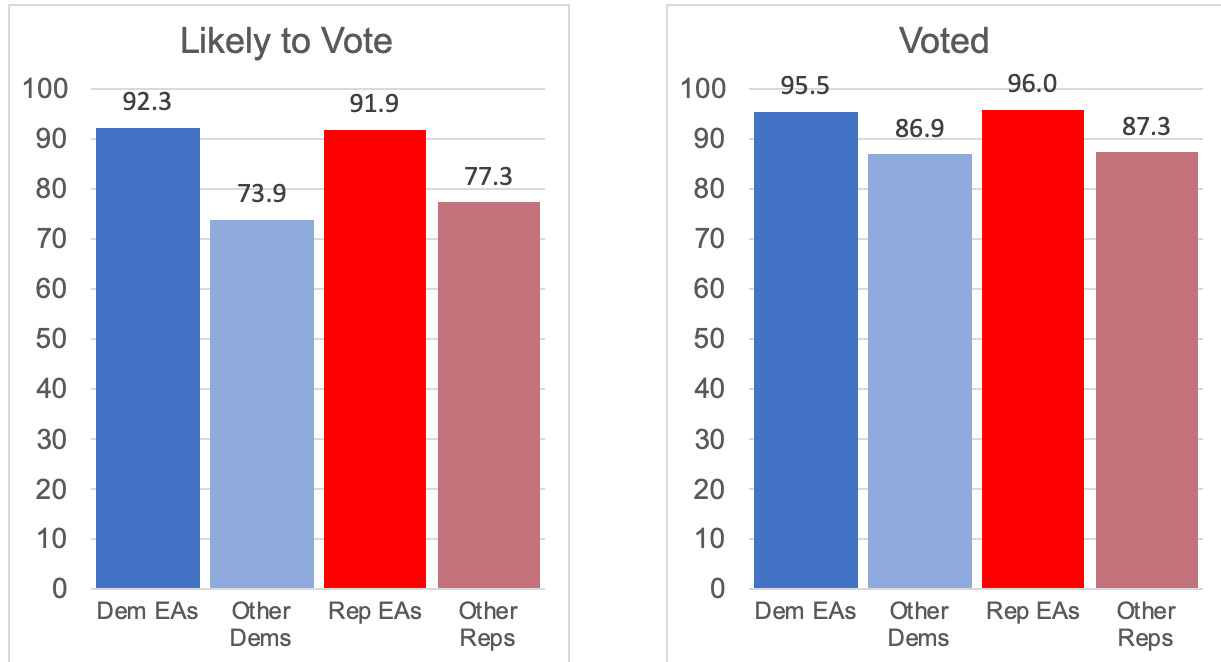**Figures 1 and 2. Political Participation of Expressive Attentives (EAs)**

Table 4. Vote Intention and Turnout of Expressive Attentives

_Percent of ___ who…_						
	All Respondents		_Democrats_		_Republicans_	
	Expressive Attentives	_Other Respondents_	_Expressive Attentives_	_Other Democrats_	_Expressive Attentives_	_Other Republicans_
Likely to vote	92.1	71.4	92.3	73.9	91.9	77.3
	$\chi^2(1, n=1787)=85.212$***		$\chi^2(1, n=833)=40.248$***		$\chi^2(1, n=646)=15.836$***	
Voted	95.6	86.0	95.5	86.9	96.0	87.3
	$\chi^2(1, n=1788)=32.297$***		$\chi^2(1, n=834)=15.161$***		$\chi^2(1, n=646)=8.989$**	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

A second test of our first hypothesis regarding political behavior of expressive attentives involves intention to vote and reported turnout.[4] Table 4 reports the results of these tests, showing expressive attentives were significantly more likely to say they would vote (in all of the first three waves of the panel) and reporting to have voted (in wave four of the panel) than their non-attentive peers. This pattern was true among all three groups: all respondents, Democrats and Republicans (see Figures 3 and 4). Our finding confirms the previous test — that those highly active online are also more likely to be active in offline behaviors. Next, we investigate attitudinal differences between the active political social media users and the others.

Figures 3 and 4. Vote Intention and Turnout of Expressive Attentives (EAs)

Likely to Vote

Dem EAs	92.3
Other Dems	73.9
Rep EAs	91.9
Other Reps	77.3

Voted

Dem EAs	95.5
Other Dems	86.9
Rep EAs	96.0
Other Reps	87.3

Results: Ideological and Issue Attitudes

The next three tables report the results of comparisons testing our second hypothesis that expressive attentives would be more ideological in their issue positions than the non-attentives. In our first test, we compared self-reported ideological scores. As expected, the expressive and attentive online Democrats were more liberal than other Democrats (by .123 points) and the expressive attentive Republicans were more conservative than other Republicans (by .057 points, see Table 5 and Figure 5). Overall, expressive attentives were more liberal than other respondents (by .109 points). Again, this is an artifact that the number of Democratic expressive attentives is nearly twice as large as the number of Republicans (286 to 149). The "liberal bias" seen in social media by conservatives may be real, but may be due simply to the fact that they are outnumbered among the most expressive individuals online.

The ideological bent of expressive attentives was manifested in attitudes about the economy and the direction of the country. Democratic expressive attentives were less likely to say that the country was on the right track than other Democrats, and Republican attentives were more likely than other attentives to say that it was on the right track during the second year of the Trump administration in 2018 (see Table 6 and Figures 6, 7 and 8). And, again, because of the predominance of Democrats as expressive attentives, the overall pattern mirrored that for Democrats. Political activity on social media was also associated with personal and national evaluations of economic circumstances. Democratic expressive attentives were more likely to say they were worse off than a year ago as compared to other Democrats, and Republican

attentives were more likely than other Republicans to say that they had fared better off than the previous year. A similar pattern held true for evaluations of the national economy. The overall grouping of expressive attentives, however, did not significantly diverge in their economic assessments than other respondents.

Table 5. Ideology of Expressive Attentives

	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	*Other Respondents*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Democrats*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Republicans*
Ideology[1]	0.428	0.537	0.203	0.326	0.819	0.762
n	473	1238	279	525	149	488
test	$F(1, 1709)=42.946{***}$		$F(1, 802)=59.380{***}$		$F(1, 635)=10.197{**}$	

Notes: $* p < .05$, $** p < .01$, $*** p < .001$
[1] Ideology: 0 = Very Liberal, 1 = Very Conservative

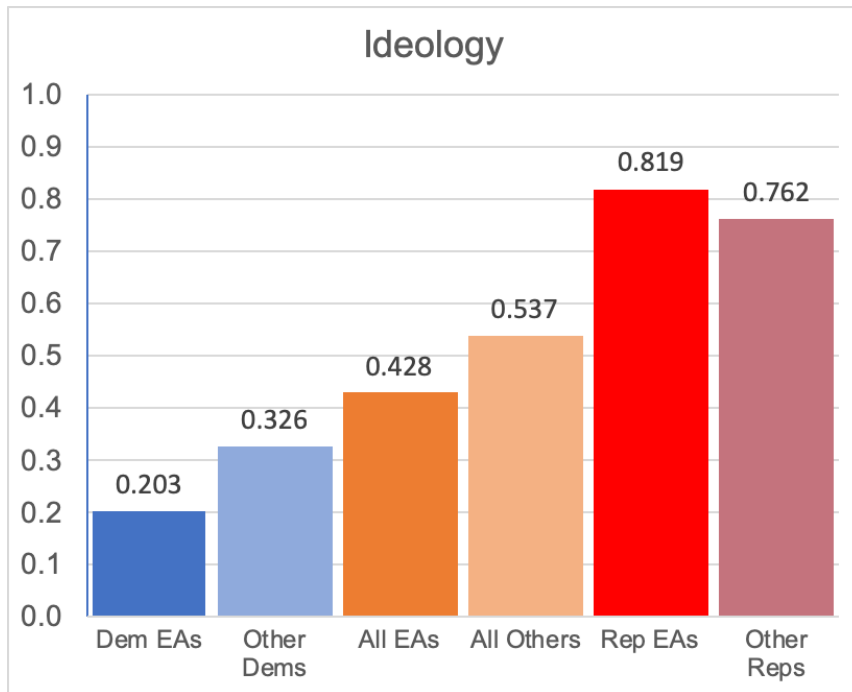## Figure 5. Ideology Expressive Attentives (EAs)

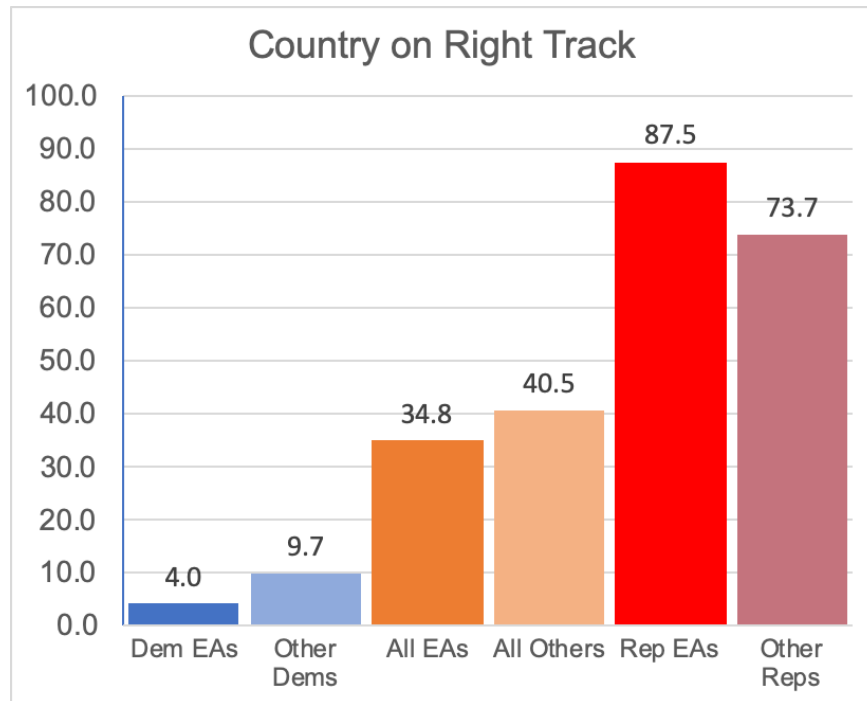**Table 6. Attitudes about Economy and Direction of Country of Expressive Attentives**

Percent of ___ who... (unless noted)

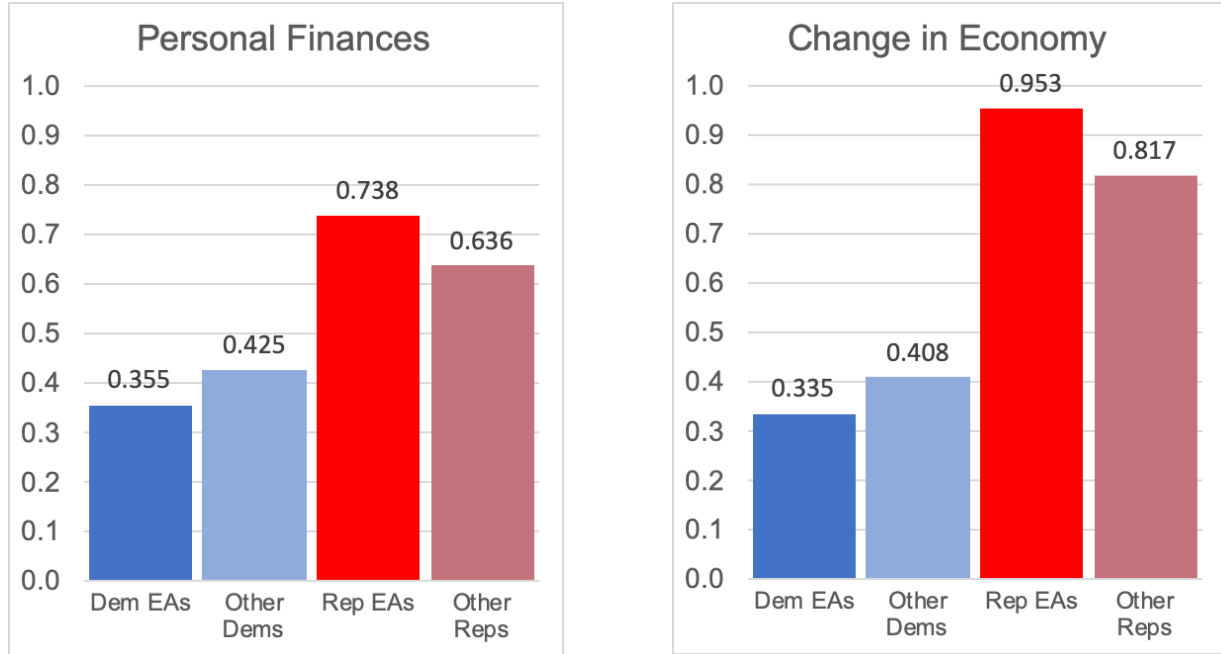|	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	*Other Respondents*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Democrats*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Republicans*
Country on right track	34.8 χ^2(1, n=1676)=4.471*	40.5	4.0 χ^2(1, n=784)=8.216**	9.7	87.5 χ^2(1, n=615)=11.873***	73.7
Personal finances vs. last year[1]	.505 F(1, 1737)=.961	.523	.355 F(1, 812)=9.621**	.425	.738 F(1, 635)=11.783***	.636
Change in economy[1]	.571 F(1, 1688)=2.259	.602	.335 F(1, 781)=9.449**	.408	.953 F(1, 629)=28.809***	.817

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$
[1] Personal finances vs. last year and Change in economy: 1=better, 0.5=same, 0=worse.

Figure 6. Attitudes about the Direction of the Country among Expressive Attentives (EAs)

Country on Right Track

Dem EAs: 4.0; Other Dems: 9.7; All EAs: 34.8; All Others: 40.5; Rep EAs: 87.5; Other Reps: 73.7

Figures 7 and 8. Attitudes about the Economy among Expressive Attentives (EAs)

Our final tests of our hypothesis regarding the ideological polarity of the expressive attentives has to do with three issue items from the GW Politics Poll: impeachment and removal of President Trump, abortion, and the government's responsibility for ensuring healthcare coverage. For impeachment and removal, the usual pattern emerged: Democratic expressive attentives were more likely than other Democrats to support impeachment and removal of President Trump and the reverse was true for Republican attentives and the non-attentive Republicans. As with other tests, the overall group of expressive attentives were similar to Democrats in terms of their divergence with other respondents (see Table 7 and Figures 9 and 10). A similar pattern was found for agreement with the statement that it is the government's responsibility to ensure that everyone has healthcare — Democratic expressive attentives were more likely to support than other Democrats, reverse pattern among Republicans, and overall pattern similar to Democrats.

On this issue of abortion, the same ideological pattern emerged for all respondents and Democrats — greater support for abortion rights among the expressive attentives. Among Republicans, however, the expressive attentive group was slightly, but not significantly, more opposed to abortion rights than the rest of Republicans. So, to sum up, of the 14 tests for divergence between Democratic expressive attentives versus other Democrats as well as Republican expressive attentives versus other Republicans, 13 of the tests showed the expressive attentive group to be more polarized than the rest of those identifying with the party. Considering this strong support for polarization among these groups, we now turn towards testing whether these groups manifest the in-group/out-group attitudes found in the hyperpartisanship literature.

## Table 7. Issue Attitudes of Expressive Attentives

Percent of ___ who… (unless noted)

	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	*Other Respondents*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Democrats*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Republicans*
Impeach and remove Trump[1]	.531 $F(1, 1657)=18.925$***	.427	.848 $F(1, 760)=10.330$**	.779	.038 $F(1, 625)=7.534$**	.096
Gov. responsible for ensuring healthcare	63.9 $\chi^2(1, n=1653)=12.203$***	54.5	96.7 $\chi^2(1, n=781)=15.442$***	88.6	10.5 $\chi^2(1, n=591)=6.308$*	19.6
Abortion should be legal[2]	.664 $F(1, 1689)=16.046$***	.588	.836 $F(1, 799)=15.646$***	.750	.368 $F(1, 635)=2.066$	.409

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$
[1] Impeach and remove Trump: 1=definitely yes, 0.667=probably yes, 0.333=probably no, 0=definitely no.
[2] Abortion Should be legal: 1=legal in all cases, .5=legal in some cases, 0=illegal in all cases.

Figures 9 and 10. Issue Attitudes among Expressive Attentives (EAs)
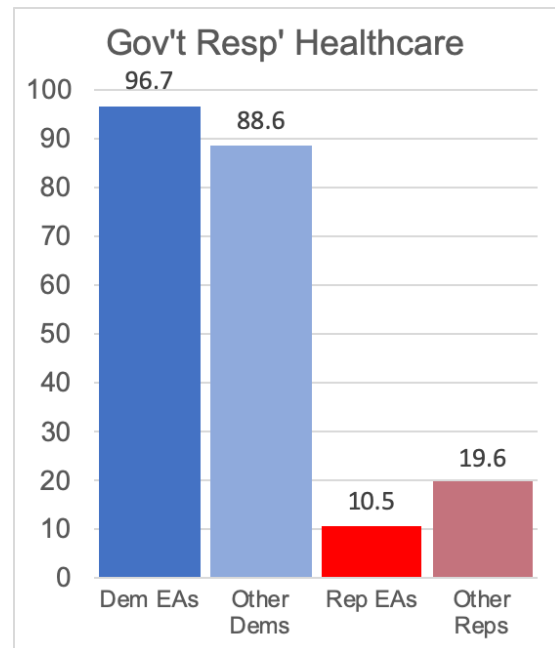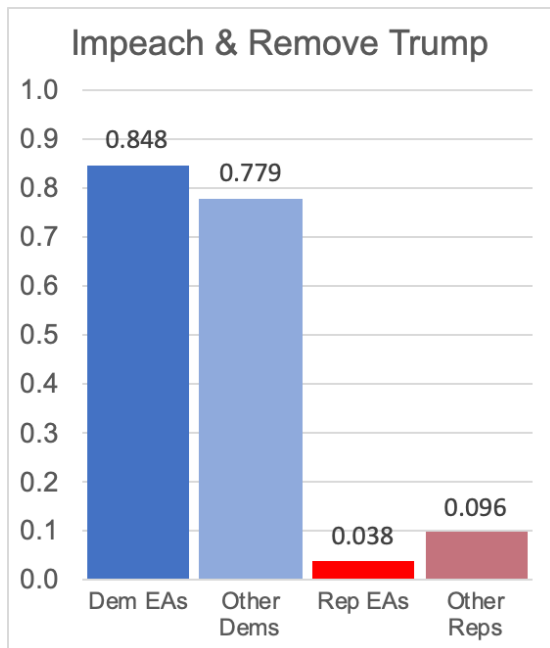
Results: Group-based Attitudes

Our third hypothesis, based on the recent literature on hyperpartisanship, is tested first with data regarding attitudes toward President Trump's ban on Muslim immigration, and whether or not illegal immigrants mostly contribute to the nation's welfare or are a drain on the nation's resources. In line with our hypothesis, the Democratic expressive attentives were less likely to support a temporary ban on Muslim immigration than other Democrats. The pattern was reversed for Republicans, with the expressive attentives significantly more likely than other Republicans to support such a ban. The pattern for all respondents, once again, mirrored that for the Democrats (see Table 8 and Figures 11 and 12).

Similar attitude blocs supporting the third hypothesis emerged regarding all illegal immigrants. Democrats actively posting political information online were more likely than other Democrats to agree that illegal immigrants mostly contribute to the nation's welfare. Republican expressive attentives were more likely than other Republicans to say that illegal immigrants were a drain. Once again, the difference seen in the entire subpopulation reflected the dominant presence of Democrats.

Table 9 reports results of queries about race- and gender-based attitudes. The first four items test attitudes regarding racial discrimination against blacks. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed the following statements:
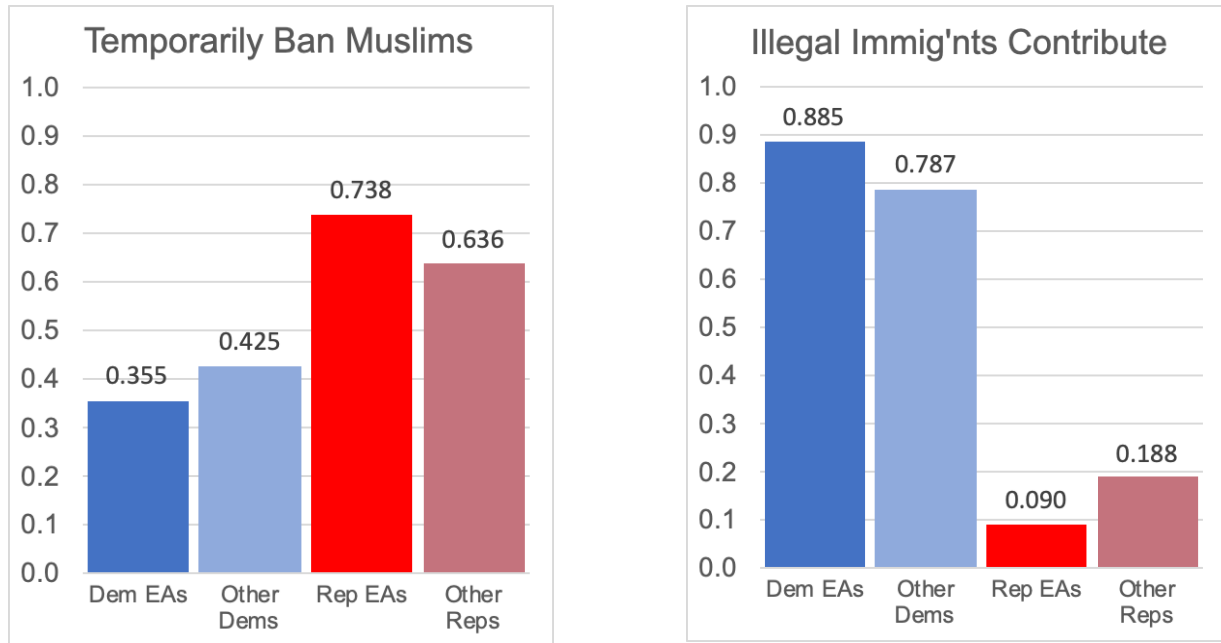
- Blacks have gotten less than deserved.
- White minorities overcame prejudice and blacks should do the same.
- If blacks tried harder they'd be as well off as whites.
- The legacy of slavery makes it hard for blacks to climb out of the lower class.

Table 8. Immigration Attitudes of Expressive Attentives

	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	*Other Respondents*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Democrats*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Republicans*
Temporarily ban Muslims[1]	.396 $F(1, 1617)=18.234$***	.490	.144 $F(1, 759)=18.895$***	.242	.812 $F(1, 588)=8.732$**	.730
Illegal Immigrants contribute[2]	.586 $F(1, 1693)=19.443$***	.479	.885 $F(1, 790)=15.668$***	.787	.090 $F(1, 622)=9.983$**	.188

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$
[1] Temporarily ban Muslims: 1=strongly favor, 0.667=somewhat favor, 0.333=somewhat oppose, 0=strongly oppose.
[2] Illegal immigrants: 1=mostly make a contribution, .5=neither, 0=mostly a drain.

Figures 11 and 12. Immigration Attitudes among Expressive Attentives (EAs)

Democratic expressive attentives as well as all respondents in the category under scrutiny were significantly more likely than their less attentive counterparts to say that blacks have gotten less than deserved and that the legacy of slavery makes it hard for blacks to climb out of the lower class (first and fourth statements). Expressive attentive Republicans were more likely than other Republicans to disagree with these statements. The reverse of these patterns occurred for the second and third statements: White minorities overcame prejudice and blacks should do the same, and if blacks tried harder they'd be as well off as whites. These tests provide strong evidence that expressive attentives exhibit stronger opinions regarding black Americans than others in their parties.

Our next tests of the third hypothesis involve whether respondents believe different groups have faced discrimination. These groups were: whites, blacks, Hispanics, women and LGBT individuals. For Republicans, the expressive attentives were slightly (but not significantly) more likely to say that whites face discrimination than other Republicans. The expressive attentives in the Democratic party were significantly less likely than their non-attentive counterparts to say that whites faced discrimination (as usual, all respondents were similar to Democrats). For all the other groups (Blacks, Hispanics, women and LGBT), Democrats who were expressive attentives were significantly more likely than their party counterparts to say that these groups had been discriminated against. The same was true for all respondents, and the reverse was true among Republicans (see bottom five items of Table 9).

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Table 9. Racial and Gender-based Attitudes of Expressive Attentives

	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	*Other Respondents*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Democrats*	*Expressive Attentives*	*Other Republicans*
Blacks have gotten less than deserved[1]	.543 $F(1, 1781)=23.445$***	.454	.763 $F(1, 828)=29.866$***	.650	.180 $F(1, 643)=15.497$***	.271
Blacks should over-come like whites	.516 $F(1, 1782)=30.245$***	.618	.300 $F(1, 830)=28.817$***	.423	.873 $F(1, 642)=12.021$***	.801
If Blacks try harder they'd be well off	.390 $F(1, 1782)=32.142$***	.494	.174 $F(1, 830)=43.976$***	.314	.752 $F(1, 642)=13.060$***	.665
Legacy of slavery makes it hard	.549 $F(1, 1781)=23.224$***	.454	.785 $F(1, 830)=30.888$***	.663	.154 $F(1, 641)=18.986$***	.264
Whites face Discrimination[2]	.342 $F(1, 1767)=15.494$***	.407	.215 $F(1, 822)=11.636$***	.280	.561 $F(1, 637)=2.549$	.517
Blacks face discrimination	.764 $F(1, 1778)=15.386$***	.706	.921 $F(1, 828)=24.365$***	.848	.499 $F(1, 641)=12.878$***	.585
Hispanics face discrimination	.693 $F(1, 1773)=11.179$***	.645	.829 $F(1, 824)=20.861$***	.751	.470 $F(1, 641)=11.661$***	.547
Women face discrimination	.635 $F(1, 1771)=4.987$*	.603	.769 $F(1, 828)=13.650$***	.711	.405 $F(1, 637)=18.880$***	.504
LGBT face discrimination	.751 $F(1, 1776)=10.302$**	.702	.911 $F(1, 826)=30.964$***	.818	.494 $F(1, 641)=17.314$***	.599

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$
[1] First four items: 1=strongly agree, .75=somewhat agree, .5=neither, .25=somewhat disagree, 0=strongly disagree.
[2] Next five items (discrimination): 1=a great deal. .667=some, .333=not very much, 0=none at all.

While the question items dealing with discrimination provide strong evidence for the hyperpartisanship of expressive attentives, our next test relates more closely to the tribal affinities that much of the literature associates with hyperpartisanship. Table 10 reports the average feeling thermometer scores that respondents gave to various groups (0=felt very cold, 100=felt very warm, 50=felt somewhere in the middle towards people in the group). Interestingly, expressive attentives in both parties did not significantly differ from other members of their party when it came to feelings towards blacks, with Democrats averaging in the high 70s and Republicans in the low to mid 60s. Curiously, among all respondents, the expressive attentives gave significantly higher average feeling thermometer ratings to blacks than other respondents.

Results for tests of warmth towards Hispanics and immigrants were similar. Expressive attentives among all respondents and Democrats held significantly warmer feelings for Hispanics and immigrants than their non-expressive counterparts did. For Republicans, the feelings of the expressive attentive group did not vary significantly from other republicans, and for the entirety of Republicans, was, on average, lower for these groups than among Democrats and all others. In terms of warmth towards these two groups (Hispanics and immigrants), there was no association with expressive online activity.

Of all groups queried about, the coldest feelings were reserved for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement among Republicans. The expressive attentive Republicans gave the BLM very cold scores (an average of 11.2), and this was significantly less than the scores given by other Republicans (21.1). While not exactly a mirror image, scores for BLM among Democrats were at the other end of the spectrum, with Democratic expressive attentives giving BLM an average score of 78.0, compared to 70.5 for other Democrats. Among all respondents, the expressives gave significantly warmer ratings to BLM than others. BLM was as polarizing for partisans as the opposite party, and significantly more so for expressive attentive partisans.

Overall, the two least favored groups were Wall Street bankers and the Alt-Right movement, and patterns were as expected for Democrats and all respondents, but there were no significant patterns for Republicans. The expressive attentive segment of all respondents as well as among Democrats gave significantly lower feeling thermometer scores to the Wall Street bankers and the Alt-Right than did their non-expressive counterparts. With the exception of Republicans, these two groups brought out the coldest feelings for Democrats. Feelings towards Evangelicals showed similar patterns to those for Wall Street bankers and the Alt-Right movement, but not quite as extreme in difference.

Negative partisanship is a real thing on social media, and it greatly outstrips the phenomenon among the wider public. The biggest differences between Democrats and Republicans was in how each viewed the other's party: expressive attentives did not view their own party any differently than the other members of their party did. However, the expressive were significantly more likely to give colder ratings to the opposition party than the rest of their party members gave.

Table 10. Warmth towards Various Groups among Expressive Attentives

	All Respondents		Democrats		Republicans	
	Expressive Attentives	Other Respondents	Expressive Attentives	Other Democrats	Expressive Attentives	Other Republicans
Blacks[1]	74.4 $F(1, 1730)=17.842***$	68.8	79.6 $F(1, 815)=3.331$	76.7	65.5 $F(1, 624)=1.764$	62.2
Hispanics	73.1 $F(1, 1712)=28.067***$	65.9	78.5 $F(1, 803)=11.555***$	72.9	64.6 $F(1, 621)=3.041$	60.2
Immigrants	67.3 $F(1, 1678)=35.494***$	58.2	78.0 $F(1, 797)=20.206***$	.70.5	48.9 $F(1, 600)=.496$	47.0
Black Lives Matter	51.8 $F(1, 1644)=17.857***$	43.4	75.1 $F(1, 799)=14.765***$	67.3	11.2 $F(1, 579)=18.831***$	21.1
Wall Street Bankers	26.9 $F(1, 1598)=21.665***$	33.0	20.0 $F(1, 750)=27.242***$	29.0	42.0 $F(1, 583)=.393$	40.6
Alt-Right Movement	21.4 $F(1, 1346)=16.676***$	28.5	8.9 $F(1, 645)=31.400***$	20.4	43.2 $F(1, 481)=3.575$	37.7
Evangelicals	41.6 $F(1, 1608)=27.803***$	51.8	20.9 $F(1, 728)=40.702***$	35.4	75.3 $F(1, 608)=2.751$	.71.1
Democrats	53.5 $F(1, 1689)=9.152**$	47.6	78.2 $F(1, 820)=2.643$	75.7	13.8 $F(1, 599)=17.577***$	23.0
Republicans	34.6 $F(1, 1680)=41.197***$	46.1	12.54 $F(1, 771)=48.911***$	23.7	73.7 $F(1, 633)=.205$	72.9

Notes: $* p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$
[1] All feeling thermometer items: 100=warm, 0=cold.

The results of these tests for the third hypotheses reveal an asymmetry. Republican expressive attentives deviate from other Republicans partisans in many but not all ways when it comes to warmth towards various groups. Democrats, by contrast, have a more systematically polarized active segment on social media than elsewhere. The current notion that "the Twitter electorate is not the Democratic electorate" seems to be supported by this evidence.

Results: Who are the Expressive Attentives?

To consider the relative impacts of the many associations evident in the data, we specified a logistic regression model in order to develop a more robust description of who the expressive attentives are. We do not claim this to be a causal model, but rather, a way to construct a description that takes into account that many demographic and behavioral factors are correlated.[5] Table 11 reports the results of this model.

Table 11. Predicting All Expressive Attentives

	B	SE
Strength of Party ID[1]	.371*	.184
Strength of Ideology[1]	.590***	.171
Woman	-.086	.131
White	-.029	.185
Black	-1.094***	.327
HS or Less	.170	.161
Some College	.444**	.161
Talk to others about politics	1.599***	.198
Attend meeting about an issue	.224	.215
Attend meeting about a candidate	-.192	.224
Work/volunteer in politics	.218	.199
Display paraphernalia	.481**	.152
Donate	.136	.160
Sign Petition	1.262***	.161

Logistic regression analysis, -2 Log likelihood = 1491.824,
Nagelkerke R^2 = .347, 76.0% predicted, n=1645.
Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$
[1] Strength of Ideology and Partisanship: 1=stronger to
0=independent/moderate.

Three results stand out. First, we found that strength of ideology and strength of partisanship were associated with expressive attentiveness. Second, when controlling for all variables in the model, women and whites were no more likely to be expressive attentives, in contrast to what previous studies without such controls have shown. Third, among other demographics, we find that blacks were less likely to engage in online political participation, and those with some college were more likely to do so.

A particularly intriguing pattern emerges for the political behavior variables as they relate to online expression. The three behaviors that were significantly associated with online expression were: talking to others, displaying paraphernalia, and signing a petition. In a sense, these are all expressive forms of behavior — putting one's name on one's political beliefs in public. The more (but not exclusively) private modes of behavior: attending meetings, working, and donating did not have an association with expressive attentiveness when controlled for in the model. Social media is, indeed, the new soapbox for expressing (or as some might say, performing) one's political identity and beliefs.

Conclusion

The Internet scarcely existed in public life in 1995, the year Verba, Schlozman and Brady published their monumental study of political participation. They built an explanatory Civic Voluntarism Model based on a random phone survey of 15,000 citizens in 1989, then interviews with 2517 of them especially activists, Latinos and African-Americans in 1990. In doing so, they established an alternative paradigm to rational choice theory through which to study what they called civic voluntarism. Instead of positing rational citizens who calculated or at least considered costs and benefits before acting, they argued that participation depends on motivation and capacity, and secondarily on networks of recruitment.

Nearly three decades later Americans went online a record 6.3 hours a day in 2018, up 7 percent from the year before; upwards of 90% of them use the Internet (Anderson et al., 2019). Most citizens carry screens with connections to social media and other internet platforms wherever they go. The potential changes applying the Civic Voluntarism Model to this trend are imaginable, argued about, but just getting tested. Motives may be affected by how the world looks through the platform; capacity is famously eased once past the access hurdle, giving rise to the slacktivism critique which is fair for clicks but not as fair for posts, comments or campaign-coordinated/responsive calls to action. Network recruitments raises the question of effective and popular digital campaign strategies and tactics — part of the cultures of testing and marketing. Plus, we can go beyond survey data and interviews to observe participatory behavior instead of asking about it (Verba et al. did not examine evidence regarding peer to peer communication). For these reasons, the basic "Civic Voluntarism Model" may need modification for application to the social media universe.

The midterm election year 2018 data provides us with a starting point for revision. Explaining the Democratic advantage seen in 2018 results and our polling, it could be that there is an educational/ideological affinity for political use of social media among social media users, a cosmopolitan and liberal outlook leading people to want to post opinions for the

world to see. And/or it could be that political intensity drives use and in 2018 Democrats were more intense (hence the Blue Wave). In that case we would expect more Republican use in 2016. In 2020 we may learn more about this, through social monitoring data and analytics as well as polling and revise the model. We can tie in small donor data, news media and advertising data, and more I future studies.

Five years after the Verba et al. book was published, Robert Putnam (2000) ignited a debate over (among several topics) the deleterious effects of television on civic engagement and political participation. *Bowling Alone* made the case that, whereas newspaper reading and good citizenship were compatible, television viewing drained collective activities out of Americans' lives, and that their dependence on the medium for entertainment was "the single most consistent predictor" of civic disengagement among the variables the author examined (p. 231).

Putnam's work and the studies it inspired remind us that media effects can be authenticated and profound but tend as well to be variegated, situational, mutable, and at times and places cross-cutting. For example, as Conway 2000 points out, viewing news has been associated with greater political participation. It seems to us as well that differentiations and nuances will be more pronounced with social media, a multi-vocal and iteratively changing communications setting, than television. Our findings presented here, from a single panel study of a single election year, set us on course to learn more as 2020 rolls around about patterns and impacts made by expressive attentives.

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Notes:

[1] YouGov interviewed 2260 panel respondents (from an initial sample of 3150) for a four wave recontact study, who were then matched down to a sample of 2000 to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the November 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration supplement sample of adult registered voters, with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file).

The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and region. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles. The weights were then post-stratified on 2016 Presidential vote choice, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weight.

Source: https://smpa.gwu.edu/about-gw-politics-poll

[2] Strong, not strong, and independent leaners were combined together for each party as leaners tend to behave like partisans (see Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Sides, 2014).

[3] In the Hidden Tribes data, whites comprise 71 percent of Democrats who post political content on social media compared to 55 percent of other Democrats, and Blacks comprise 11 percent of Democrats who post political content on social media compared to 24 percent of other Democrats.

[4] We recognize the problematic nature of reported turnout, but there is no turnout check in the GW Politics Poll.

[5] We recognize the endogeneity problem in this model as currently specified, but since the GW Politics Poll is a four-wave panel study, we can address this in a future study.