

Analyzing repeated-wave panel data to identify causal direction:

A meta-analysis of digital media use and political participation

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Conference, “Building Multi-Source Databases for
Comparative Analyses”

Warsaw, Poland – December 17, 2019

Research Agenda

(1) Why and how do people participate politically?

- Citizenship norms and democratic values
- Repertoires of participation (“tool kits”, LCA)
- Inequalities in participation (socio-demographics)
- Digital media use

(2) Participation-Policy Connection?

- **Electoral** - Dassonneville, Hooghe & Oser 2019 (Political Studies)
- **Non-electoral** / non-institutionalized
 - In the U.S. – Leighley & Oser 2018 (Perspectives)
 - Cross-nationally – Hooghe & Oser 2016 (JEPP)

Research Agenda

How, when, and why does

political participation,

including participation beyond the electoral arena,

make a difference for

policies and **political outcomes**

that people care about?

Presentation today

Oser, J., & Boulianne, S. (forthcoming).
Reinforcement effects between digital media
use and political participation: A meta-analysis
of repeated-wave panel data.
Public Opinion Quarterly.

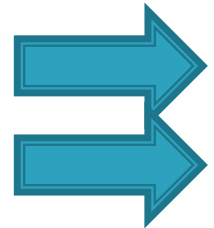
Acknowledgment: Israel Science Foundation
Grant.

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Digital Media use & Political Participation

Theories from the literature (Norris 2000)

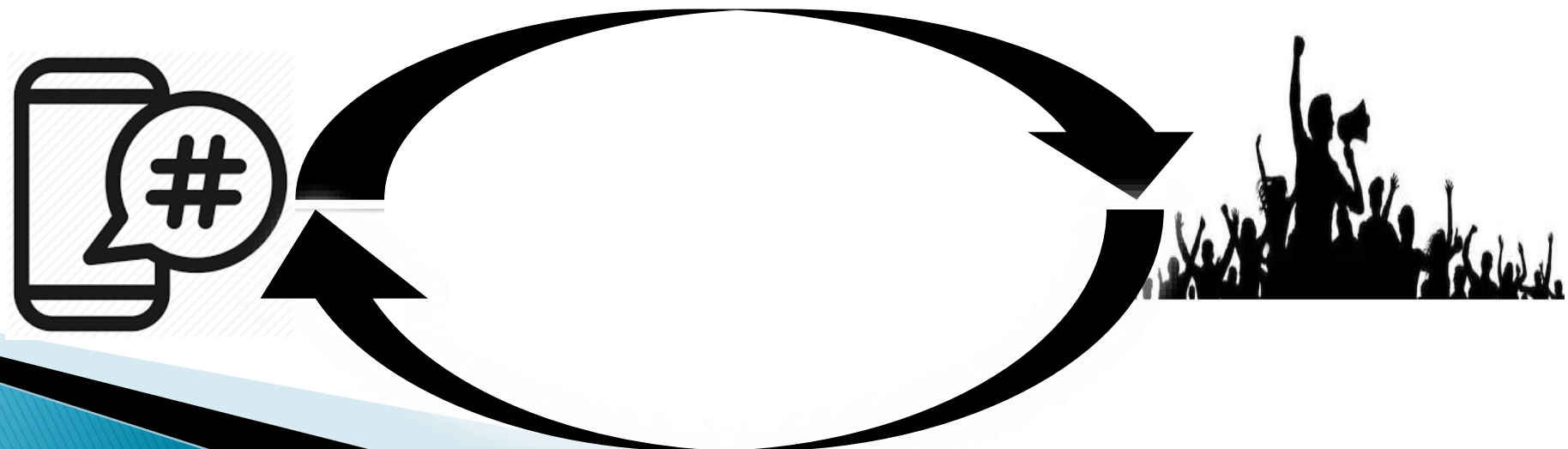
Theory 1 – Mobilization



Theory 2 - Reinforcement



Theory 3 – Virtuous Circle



Why Should We Care? Participatory Inequality

Theory 1 – Mobilization – **DECREASE INEQUALITY**

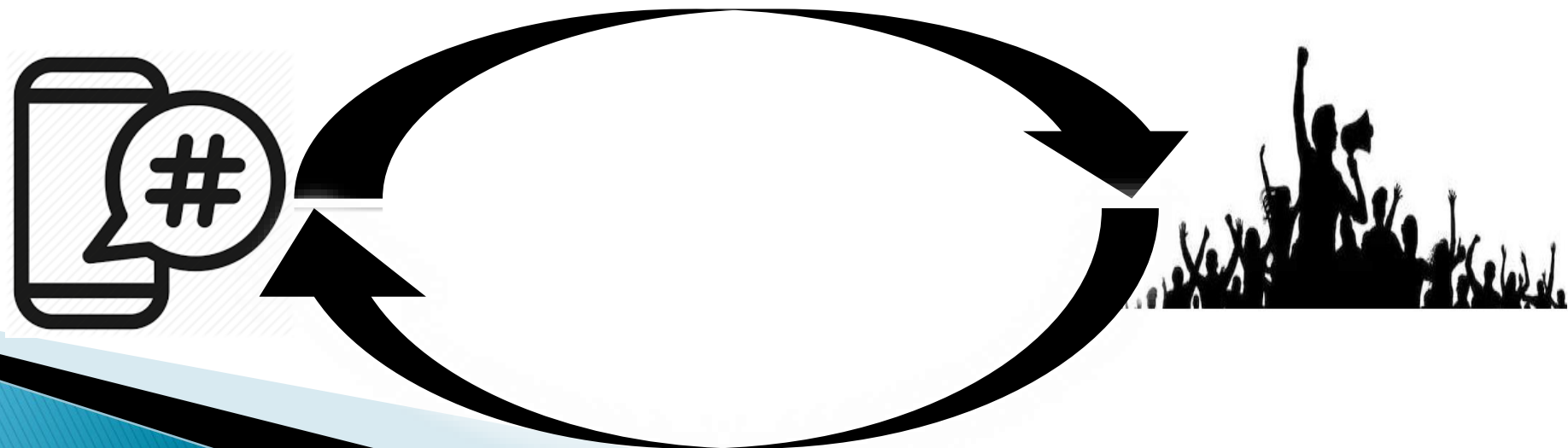
Literature tends to assume “Mobilization”



Theory 2 – Reinforcement – **INCREASE INEQUALITY**



Theory 3 – Virtuous Circle



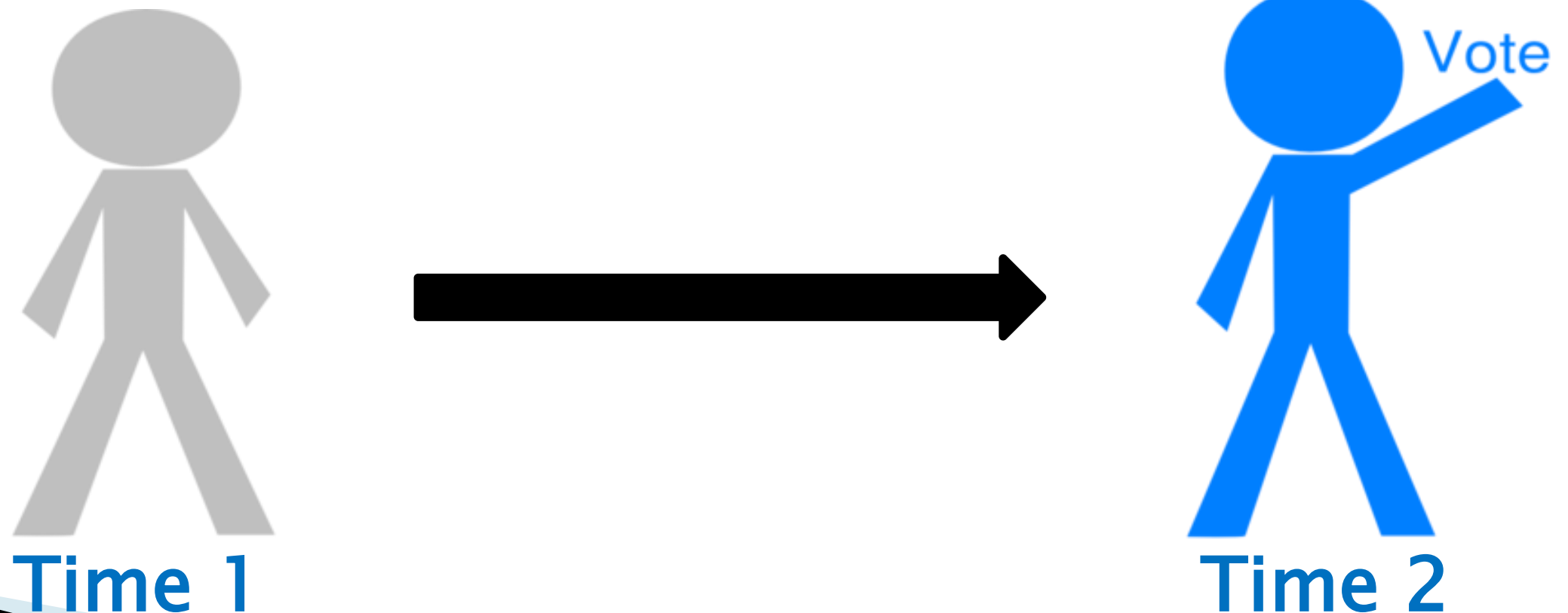
Which Theory is Correct?

Two main questions:

- (1) Mobilization vs. Reinforcement
- (2) Long-term effects?

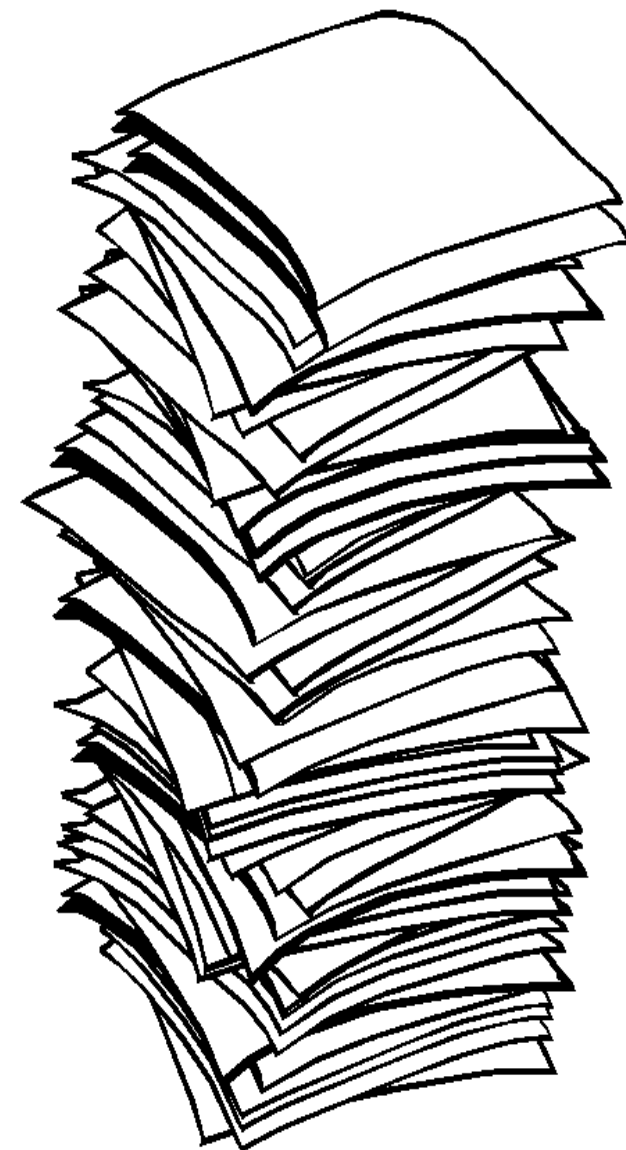
Causal order:

Requires repeated-wave panel survey data



First Meta-analysis on **Digital Media** use & **Political Participation** Based on Repeated-Wave Panel Data Studies

- ▶ **Data:** 38 studies
 - Surveys conducted between 1982-2017
 - About 50% U.S. data (12 other countries)
 - 21 studies published since 2017
 - 70,000+ respondents
 - 279 coefficients
- ▶ **Method:** Meta-analysis, a statistical synthesis of data; tested for enduring effects over time. Vote-counting method



Key Variables

Digital media use:

- Email
- Social networking sites
- Campaign websites



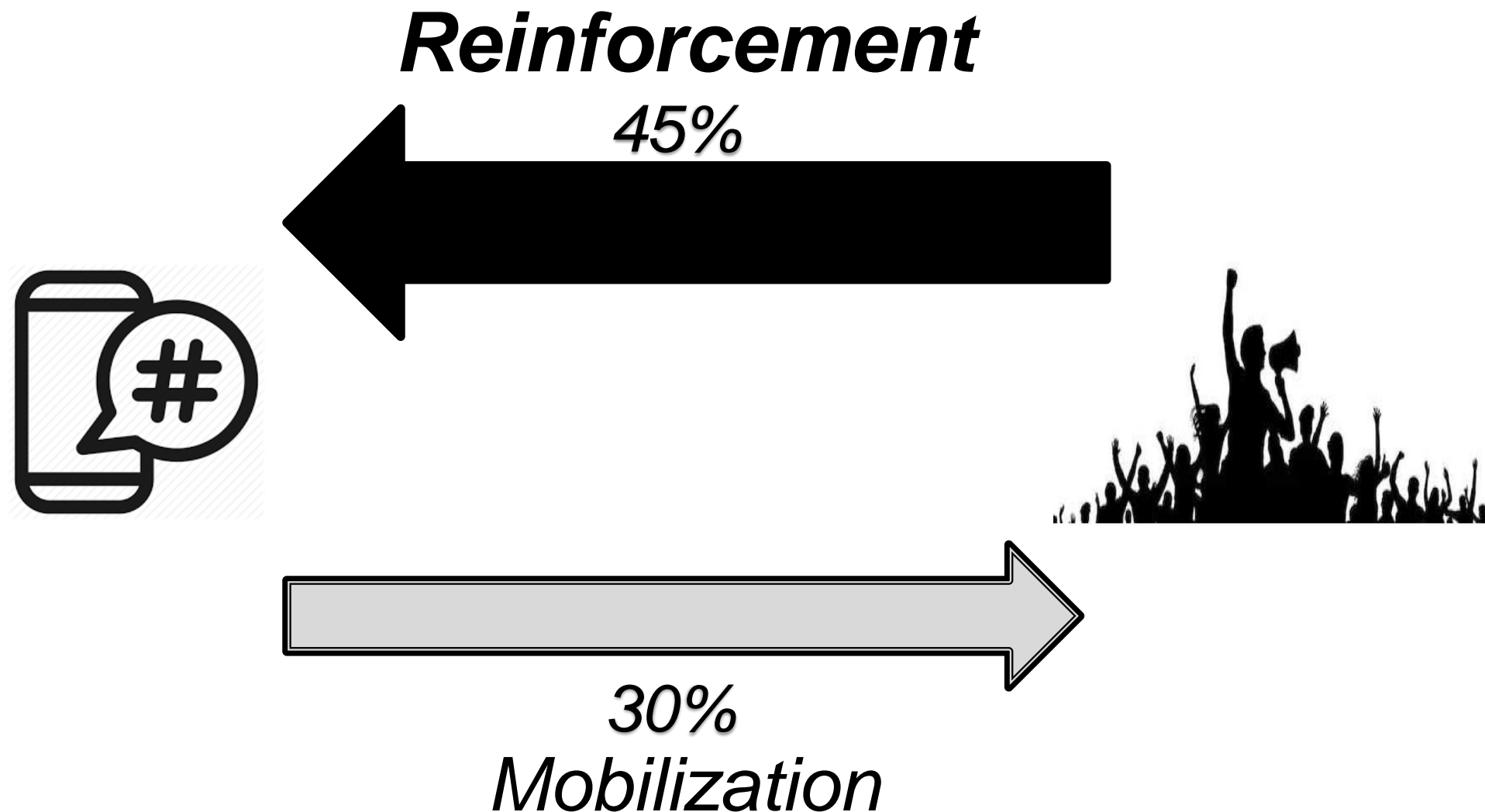
Political participation: Offline engagement, e.g.

- Voting
- Boycotting
- Protest



Findings: Reinforcement effect

% of tests that are positive and statistically significant



Evident in 1st panel study in this area of research analyzing 1982 -> 1997: Jennings & Zeitner 2003 (POQ)

Conclusions

Meta-analysis of Digital Media use & Political Participation

- ▶ Stronger reinforcement than mobilization – in contrast to the literature assumptions
- ▶ Enduring effects over time – higher percentage of positive effects for time lag > 6 months
- ▶ Reinforcement effect & inequality:
Digital media use will
“strengthen and not radically transform the existing patterns of social inequality and participation” (Norris 2000, pp.121–122)

Next-step Project, Work in Progress: *Political Efficacy*

What is the relationship between

Political Efficacy (PE),

**Online Political Participation (OnPP) and
Offline Political Participation (OffPP)?**

Urgent Question, Democratic Legitimacy

“Yes I can...? Political Efficacy in the Digital Era”

Systematic Literature Review & Meta-analysis

- **Trends:** Has political efficacy decreased in the past 20 years of the digital era?
- **Efficacy & online vs. offline participation:** is there a meaningful difference in the association of efficacy with online vs. offline pp?
- **Internal versus external efficacy** in the literature and trends (including assessment of measurement approaches)

Harmonization connections

Repeated-wave meta-analysis

- **Causal ordering:** Importance of connecting repeated cross-section surveys with additional data to gain insight into causal relations and underlying mechanisms between key variables
- **Meta-analysis variable identification:** Meta-analysis of existing single-country studies can identify theoretically important social science variables for harmonization (e.g., efficacy).
- **Contribution of identifying trends:** e.g., efficacy, trust, participation – important contribution in the literature

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