The Millennial Political Efficacy Crisis

"Our young, best minds must be encouraged to enter politics." – Robert H. Hinckley

In 2020 – just six years away – the first Millennial, born in 1985, could be elected to be

President of the United States. A member of the Facebook generation, post-Generation X and

post-9/11, an entitled, coddled, and hopelessly unemployed text-sending, selfie-snapping "kid"

would be old enough to be the next leader of the free world, according to Article II, Section 2,

Clause 5 of the United States Constitution[1]. Although there exists a legal framework in which this

scenario could happen, the vast odds are that we will not have an Instagrammer in Chief as of

January 20, 2021. As the old saying goes (it's been dubiously attributed to Aaron Sorkin, Woody

Allen, and even President Harry Truman), "[t]he decisions are made by those who show up."[2]

Despite their enormous stature as one-fifth of the electorate with 44 million members[3], Millennials

of voting age are increasingly less interested in participating in the political process. Paradoxically,

while they did make a brief appearance – voter turnout among 18 to 29 year olds surged by 4.3

million voters in 2004, up from 15.8 million in 2000[4] and is often credited for the success of

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[1] US Const. art. II, sec. 2, cl. 5. Print.

[2] Haglund, David. "Sorkin Repeats Himself? Stop the Presses." *Slate*. 16 May 2012. Web.
<http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2012/05/16/aaron_sorkin_s_syracuse_recycled_commencement_speech_also_had_lines_from_the_west_wing_and_sports_night_.html>.

[3] "Who Are Young Voters?" *Rock the Vote*. Mar. 2008. Web.
<http://www.rockthevote.com/about/about-young-voters/who-are-young-voters/young-voters-a-political.pdf>.

[4] "Young Voters: Facts vs. Myths." *Rock the Vote*. Oct. 2008. Web.
<http://www.rockthevote.com/assets/publications/electronic-press-kit/young-voter-myths-and-facts.pdf>.

President Barack Obama in several key states including Florida and Ohio in the 2008 elections[5] –

they aren't making the decisions, or at least they aren't interested in doing so. In a 2007 study of 10

American college campuses, conducted by the Harwood Group for the Center for Information and

All? What %?

Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, "students considered politics 'irrelevant' to their

lives and saw little purpose in ever actively participating in the political system."[6]

With a waning interest in political engagement, compounded with a dip in voter turnout

rates in 2012[7], Millennials are suffering from a vicious cycle of apathy feeding inaction, which

feeds a decline of political efficacy, which feeds a disinterest in government, which feeds a

disinterest in current events, which feeds and even *enshrines* apathy. If Millennials are going to be

legally capable of running the show in six years – and until the day that a President is inaugurated

with a deactivated Snapchat account looming over his or her head like the ominous spectre of a

whole new kind of political demise, if they aspire to contribute great political minds to the leaders

before them – there's an enormous challenge ahead that will need to be addressed, and soon.

Showing up will only be the prerequisite for the real work: caring.

Political efficacy among Millennials

Campbell, Gurin, and Miller describe political efficacy as the, "feeling that political and

social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this

change."[8] Abramson and Aldrich say that political efficacy is an important factor in initiating

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[5] "The Youth Vote in 2012." Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), 10 May 2013. Web.
<http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CIRCLE_2013FS_outhVoting2012FINAL.pdf>.
[6] Abby, Kiesa, et al. "Millennials Talk Politics: A Study of College Student Political Engagement." Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. Web. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED498899>
[7] "The Youth Vote in 2012." Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), 10 May 2013. Web. <www.civicyouth.org//uploads/2013/05/ CIRCLE_2013FS_outhVoting2012FINAL.pdf>
[8] Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & Miller, W. E. (1954). The Voter Decides. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson and Company.

political participation[9] in individual citizens, and Finkel adds an increase in political efficacy is also a natural byproduct of political participation.[10] Thus the root of political efficacy is a link between empowerment and action: that citizens must feel that they have the power to bring about effective change in order to act, and feel a heightened sense of power by participating in the political process and seeing a tangible outcome as a result of their action. As adolescents and young adults become socialized to the political process as eligible voters, political efficacy becomes even more vital, both in terms of nurturing self-confidence as it relates to political decision making – known as *internal efficacy* – and in terms of building faith in the system of governance to be, "responsive to individual effort," known as *external* efficacy[11]. Schulz writes that, "[i]n the process of political socialisation during childhood and adolescence, acquisition of political efficacy is often seen as crucial for future participation as an active citizen in a democracy."[12]

Voter Turnout as a Measure of Political Efficacy in Utah

If voting is an essential component of political participation – indeed, Schulz links an increase in external efficacy when citizens vote, even if not for winning candidates – voter turnout rates can be examined to determine which sections of the electorate exhibit the highest levels of political efficacy in any given election. As Adam Brown writes at Utah Data Points, Utah's voter turnout rate has been in the bottom half of the national rankings since 1994, and in the lowest decile since 2006, clocking in at 47th nationwide in the 2010 midterm elections.[13] However, this

[9] Abramson, P. R., and Aldrich, J. H. (1982). The decline of electoral participation in America. American Political Science Review, 76(3), 502-521.
[10] Finkel, S. E. (1985). Reciprocal effects of participation and political efficacy: A panel analysis. American Journal of Political Science, 29(4), 891-913.
[11] Lane, Robert, cited in Harder, Joshua K. (2008). "Why do ᴘɪe vote? The case for Political Efficacy." 1-3. Print.
[12] Schulz, Wolfram. "Political Efficacy and Expected Politicaɪ ᴘarticipation among Lower and Upper Secondary Students." 2. Print.
[13] Brown, Adam. "Purging Utah's voter rolls will not boost turn.   " *Utah Data Points*. N.p., 24 Jan. 2012. Web. . <http://utahdatapoints.com/2012/01/purging-utahs-voter-rolls-   ot-boost-turnout/>.

data is reflective of voter turnout as compared to the voting-eligible population, which excludes disenfranchised felons, non-citizens, and mentally incapacitated people.[14] Brown posits that this methodology yields more accurate results when it comes to measuring real voter turnout; if turnout is measured by analyzing the percentage of registered voters who cast ballots, Utah would have had a rosy 51.6 percent voter turnout rate in the 2010 midterm election. However, if measuring turnout among the voting-eligible population in the same election, Utah's turnout rate was actually a meager 35 percent.[15]

Following the 2010 elections, state elections director Mark Thomas pointed to Utah's youthful population as the cause of low voter turnout. According to Thomas, around one third of registered voters between the ages of 18 and 29 cast ballots in that year, which he noted was 40 percentage points behind all other age groups.[16] However, Brown posits if there is a link between Utah's overall young population and its decreasing voter turnout rates, ramping up voter registration drives on college campuses could potentially be an effective way of increasing the total number of eligible voters through direct-contact activism, rather than just depending on enfranchised individuals of voting age to get themselves to the polls on their own accord.[17]

Get Out the Vote: A Solution to Increasing Youth Turnout?

Based on Utah's dismal voter turnout rates among the 18 to 29 demographic – who, in 2010, would have been born between 1981 and 1992, clearly placing them within the boundaries of the Millennial generation – it seems that the next step to boosting turnout would be organized

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[14] McDonald, Michael P. "Voter Turnout Frequently Asked Questions" *United States Elections Project.*
[15] Brown, Adam. "Is Utah's turnout up or is it down?" *Utah Data Points.* 23 Nov. 2010. Web. <http://utahdatapoints.com/2010/11/is-utahs-turnout-up-or-is-it-down/>.
[16] Davidson, Lee. "Voter turnout best since '94 but still bad." *The Salt Lake Tribune* 23 Nov. 2010. Web. <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home/50729479-76/age-ballots-bell-cast.html.csp>
[17] Brown, Adam. "Why is Utah's turnout falling?." *Utah Data Points.* N.p., 24 Jan. 2012. Web. . <http://utahdatapoints.com/2012/01/why-is-utahs-turnout-falling/>.

efforts in three key areas: simplifying the voter registration process and encouraging young people to register; enabling easier access to voting information; and day-of voter mobilization efforts, such as bussing students who live in on-campus housing at local universities to their polling places on Election Day.[18] All of these tactics fall under the umbrella of "get out the vote" (GOTV) strategies, which are coordinated efforts undertaken by political campaigns and non-partisan groups alike, albeit with differing motives. Known for riding to victory partially on the youth vote, President Barack Obama's campaign masterfully used GOTV strategies like last-minute, door-to-door canvassing of known supporters – of all age demographics – in key electoral states to secure their victory in the 2012 presidential election.[19] On the other hand, nonpartisan groups like the League of Women Voters – arguably one of the largest voting rights organizations in the country – work in five key areas to promote political participation in elections regardless of partisan preferences: protecting and expanding voting rights, improving elections, registering voters, educating voters, and advocating for voting rights for residents of the District of Columbia.[20]

While these strategies are noble regardless of their ulterior political motives – if one is rooting for a democracy that engages its entire citizenry, one cannot argue against any effort to get citizens voting en masse – it is also worth examining whether these highly-coordinated efforts are the most effective means of increasing political efficacy among Millennials. In a study of 10 American college campuses conducted for the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Kiesa, Orlowski, and Levine, et al. found that while

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[18] "Tried and True: Campus Voter Registration Strategies." . Harvard University Institute of Politics, 1 Jan. 2005. Web. . <http://www.iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files_new/research-policy-papers/voter_reg_st.pdf>.
[19] Issenberg, Sasha. "Why Obama Is Better At Getting Out the Vote." *Slate* 5 Nov. 2012: Web. <http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/11/obama_s_get_out_the_vote_effort_why_i t_s_better_than_romney_s.html>.
[20] "Protecting and Engaging Voters." *League of Women Voters*. Web. <http://www.lwv.org/content/protecting-and-engaging-voters>.

Millennials are interested in engaging politically, they do not see voting as the most effective means to bring about change – "very few" of 386 students involved in 47 different focus groups at 10 American universities between 2006 and 2007 see voting as "the most beneficial vehicle for addressing public issues."

GREAT! — *A Political Selfie: How Millennials View Themselves*

Despite this signaling of distrust in the electoral system, the CIRCLE study produced several other remarkable findings that could shift the paradigm when it comes to addressing the Millennial political efficacy crisis. Firstly, the study found that, politically-speaking, Millennials, are "neither cynical nor highly individualistic" as the common criticism of the generation often goes. Secondly, Millennials are eager to engage in politics, especially via organizing people into political action. Thirdly, Millennials are hungry for information to better understand political issues, yet are so bombarded with information that they often feel simultaneously overwhelmed, but also afraid of being manipulated by media spin. [21]

Considering a growing distrust of the electoral system and of their own ability to use voting as a means of political change, the Millennial political efficacy crisis seems to be happening both internally and externally in the voting booth. Compounded by slips in the youth voter turnout rate nationally and death plummets in the youth voter turnout rate locally, there are several key areas to which we must pivot to strengthen Millennial political efficacy: encouraging localized political organizing around highly specific issues, refining avenues of news consumption to provide information that builds momentum for political efficacy, and redefining the Millennial image away

[21] Abby, Kiesa, et al. "Millennials Talk Politics: A Study of College Student Political Engagement." Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. Web. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED498899>

from that of the indolent hipster to that of the empowered and passionate leader of the future.

An online straw poll of Millennials

For the purposes of my research, I conducted an online straw poll of 51 Millennials between the ages of 15 and 27. The poll reached 56 respondents overall, five of whom were not Millennials, who ranged between the ages of 49 to 60. The poll contained six questions as outlined below and one question to establish the respondent's age. The poll was publicized to my 798 Facebook friends in two separate postings over the course of two days. All respondents accessed the poll by clicking through from Facebook. For the purposes of gauging Millennial political participation, the data below is only reflective of Millennial responses.

Question 1: How involved are you in the political process?

To the question, "How involved are you in the political process?" three respondents indicated that they were very involved; 23 respondents indicated that they were involved; 19 indicated that they were kind of involved; 4 indicated that they were not very involved; and none indicated that they were not involved at all. One 19-year-old respondent commented that, "I always vote, it's usually then when I realize how far behind I am on political news. I have a definite opinion on my political beliefs (as far as where I am on the Republican to Democrat scale) but I really only read news headlines featured on Facebook from my liked pages (NPR) and trending topics. I feel guilty for not staying up to date on political news, but I often feel confused and out of my depth when I do read political articles." A 22-year-old respondent commented that, "No part of our government represents my personal morals or ideals, and I think it is a shameful representation of the people. The old people running our country have been bought, and in Utah I don't even get a chance to vote for someone that might see things as I do."

Question 2: Do you feel like your actions have an ~~affect~~ E affect on government or the political process?

In response to the question, "Do you feel like your actions have an affect on government or the political process?" 10 respondents indicated yes; 12 respondents indicated kind of; five respondents indicated maybe; 14 respondents indicated not really; eight responded not at all; and one responded unsure. One 20-year-old respondent wrote, "I know that my vote doesn't matter, and I feel like my political opinion is discounted because I am a young female." Another 20-year-old respondent wrote, "My influence as an individual voter is eroded by the sheer size of the voting populace." A 23-year-old respondent wrote, "I think voting for national elections is pointless, but local races are important, and special interest causes can be supported in other ways, like rallies and protests that help raise awareness and put things on the agenda."

Question 3: Do you vote in elections?

Rather than include a question inquiring whether respondents are registered to vote, I structured a question that would more accurately gauge political efficacy as it relates to specific elections, rather than an umbrella "yes or no" question. The structure of this question also evaluates attitudes towards voting that Millennial respondents under 18 years old harbor.

In response to the question, "Do you vote in elections?" 26 respondents indicated that they vote in every election; 10 responded that they vote only in presidential election years; one indicated that they only vote in non-presidential election years; six indicated that they were registered voters but do not vote regularly; none indicated that they were registered voters who did not vote at all; four indicated that they were not registered to vote, but wanted to be; one indicated that they were not registered to vote but didn't care enough to register; three indicated that they were not eligible to vote, but would like to one day; and none indicated that they were not eligible to vote but did

not care about voting. One 23-year-old respondent who indicated that they only vote in presidential elections wrote, "I have lived out of state for college during the whole time I've been old enough to vote, and local interests back home mean less to me. I will vote again in local off-year elections when I settle in a state more permanently." A 20-year-old respondent who indicated that they vote in every election wrote, "It's a right, duty, and privilege any citizen of age holds. Plus, if I don't give my voice, I have no right to complain about the ass-backwards things that occur within our government, from local to federal."

Question 4: If you felt like you had an impact on politics or a voice in the discussion, would you care more about the outcome?

In response to the question, "If you felt like you had an impact on politics or a voice in the discussion, would you care more about the outcome?" 30 respondents indicated yes; two indicated no; two said they would care slightly more; fifteen said that they already care about the political process; and one indicated that they were not sure.

Question 5: Do you consume news on a regular basis?

This question was constructed to gauge news consumption among Millennials and to attempt to establish a link between news consumption and political efficacy.

In response to the question, "Do you consume news on a regular basis?" 29 respondents indicated that they consume news every day; 12 respondents indicated that they consume news most days; five respondents indicated that they consume news some days; one respondent indicated that they consume news rarely; and none indicated that they never consume news.

Question 6: What kind of news do you consume?

This question was structured to allow respondents to select multiple responses, and asked respondents to select every news source that they consumed out of the following options: any news consumed via Reddit; any news consumed via Facebook; any news consumed via Twitter; national newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, or *The Washington Post*; local newspapers, such as *The Salt Lake Tribune* or the *Deseret News*; national news magazines, such as *TIME* or *The New Yorker*; local news magazines such as *City Weekly*; other magazines, which includes any magazine that is not a news magazine; national TV news, like *NBC Nightly News* or PBS *NewsHour*; national "comedy news" shows like *The Colbert Report*; local TV news, like KSL News or Fox13; radio news shows, like NPR; reader-supported news, like *Mother Jones*; what I called Group A, which included *Slate, Salon,* and *Gawker*; Group B, which included *Think Progress, Alternet,* and *The Daily Kos*; Group C, which includes *Breitbart, The Daily Caller*, and *The Blaze*; and Group D, which includes *Truth-Out, Disinformation*, and *RT*.

Analyzing how many respondents indicated in each group is misleading, as every respondent selected at least two groups. Instead, I analyzed the data by looking at which groups were the most popular as an indication of where the Millennials polled are getting their news. News consumed via links shared on Facebook was the most popular, followed by national newspapers in second, local newspapers in third, radio news in fourth, national comedy news shows in fifth, national news magazines in sixth, national TV news shows in seventh, other magazines and local magazines tied for eighth, news consumed via Twitter in ninth, local TV news shows in tenth, Group A websites in eleventh, news consumed via links shared on Reddit in

twelfth, reader-supported news in thirteenth, Group B sites in fourteenth, Group D sites in fifteenth, and Group C sites in sixteenth.

The poll also asked respondents to indicate in a comment box any news sources that they consume that were not listed as options. These news sources were: Al Jazeera, which three individual respondents indicated in their response; BBC; *The Guardian*; *Science Daily*; *The Scientist*; KSL's website; *The Daily Utah Chronicle*; and news aggregation apps, like Pulse. *Question 6: If you felt that you had more of a voice in the political process, would you consume more news?*

This question was constructed to establish a link between political efficacy and news consumption among Millennials. In response to the question, "If you felt that you had more of an outcome in the political process, would you consume more news?" 39 respondents indicated that if they felt like they had a voice in the political process that they would consume more news; eight respondents indicated that they might consume more news if they felt like they had a voice in the political process; four indicated that they would not consume more news if they felt like they had a voice in the political process; and none indicated that they do not care enough to read news. A 22-year-old respondent who demonstrated high internal political efficacy but low external political efficacy wrote, "I will always consume as much news as I can, regardless of how much influence I have in the political process." A 21-year-old respondent who demonstrated high external and internal political efficacy wrote, "I already believe that being informed has an impact on the political process." A 21-year-old respondent who demonstrated low political efficacy both internally and externally wrote, "I don't trust the news media to provide an truthful unbiased view of what is actually going on."

Main findings of the straw poll

Despite being informal and unscientific in its methods, this straw poll could be used as a starting point for a larger, more scientific survey of Millennials and how they tie their political efficacy to news consumption. However, even these results serve as a springboard from which to form solutions to two major questions plaguing the Millennial generation: how can these findings be used to encourage Millennials to consume more news? And, therefore, how can that increase in news consumption be used to increase Millennials' political efficacy? The answer lies in the main findings of the straw poll: that the Millennials polled link their political participation to their political efficacy, and that they indicated that they would consume more news if they felt an increase in their sense of political efficacy.

Media solutions to increasing political efficacy

If political efficacy is directly tied to an individual sense of effectiveness – that one can bring about change in their world via political participation on their part – one step towards increasing political efficacy could begin with revitalizing the news that Millennials consume in three key ways: by using user data to tailor news without creating a filter bubble; by the hyperlocalization of news; and by encouraging citizen reporting on the local scale.

Tailored news, without the filter bubble

With Facebook being the predominant source of news – albeit, through link aggregation – for Millennial respondents in my straw poll, news organizations could be tapping into this resource more effectively by utilizing user data from Facebook and other social networks. For instance, if a Facebook user likes *The Salt Lake Tribune*, local businesses like Avenues Bistro on Third and Ninth Avenue Salon, works at Cafe on First, and attends the University of Utah, it could be

reasonably assumed that this user would be more interested in seeing hyper-localized news related to the Avenues neighborhood, and thus only tailor content towards this specific niche. Users who were interested in receiving hyperlocal news could selectively choose to see only hyperlocal news in their newsfeed, just as they can choose not to see other types of content. By increasing a focus on hyperlocal news, users would see more news that is immediately relevant to them, enabling them to glean more information that could be used to make immediate impacts in their local communities. A common response from the Millennial respondents in the straw poll was that they often feel overwhelmed when consuming news, which leads them to feeling out of control of the situation and "too small" to bring about effective change; honing the spectrum of news down by focusing on locality it might be one way to combat this overwhelmingness.

However, such tailoring of newsfeeds does have the potential to create what Eli Pariser calls the filter bubble[22] in which, "issues like homelessness or climate change can't compete with goofy viral videos, celebrity news, and kittens." When a website's user algorithms choose which content its users would like to see, content that users might *not* want to see – like investigative reporting on government corruption, for example, or any other number of inconvenient truths – doesn't make it through the filter. By relying too heavily on Facebook newsfeeds to deliver a healthy serving of all different kinds of news to users, the inherent algorithms that allow such feeds to function effectively and their pitfalls are not sufficiently addressed. Fixing these algorithms to break the barrier of the filter bubble would require a massive citizen lobbying effort of Facebook, which relies on these same algorithms to tailor native advertising towards their users and thus deliver revenue; considering the level of organization that would be needed to bring about this

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[22]Pariser, Eli. *The Filter Bubble*. 2012. Web. <http://www.thefilterbubble.com/>.

change, and the sheer human energy that would go into lobbying for such a change, our efforts would be better spent engaging in more important activism.

Location, location, location

In today's edition of *The Salt Lake Tribune*, news from the Associated Press wire service will dominate the coverage on the front page. Under pressure to be a viable competitor in an industry broadened with the wealth of information available online, local newspapers – *The Salt Lake Tribune* among them – are starting to offer more coverage of national and international news through the use of expensive wire services. However, offering this additional section of coverage often bumps local stories with immediate impact on readers to the B section, with the national and international news dominating the A section. While newspapers should continue to offer this coverage – especially in an increasingly global world where issues often extend far beyond a reader's immediate community – there should be a refocusing of resources when it comes to reporting local news, and giving it the priority it deserves.

In September 2013, *The Salt Lake Tribune* announced that in addition to laying off 19 staff members and forcing the retirements of its editor in chief Nancy Conway and editorial page editor Vern Anderson, that the newspaper would also cut its Close Up section.[23] Previously, the Close Up section was tailored to specific areas of Salt Lake City – "The City" which included the Avenues, the University of Utah area, Sugar House, downtown, Rose Park, and other smaller neighborhoods around Salt Lake City proper; Mid-Valley; South Valley; Valley West; and Davis County – and provided localized news coverage within these communities. Stories were pitched to a Close Up desk editor by a dedicated group of about 100 stringers – none of whom were

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[23] Tribune Editors. "News release: Trib changes leadership, reduces staff by nearly 20 percent." *Salt Lake Tribune* 12 September 2013. Web. <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/56863517-78/editor-tribune-news-newspaper.html.csp>.

employed officially by the *Tribune*, but instead were interested, engaged citizen reporters who wanted to report on their communities for very meager freelance stipends from the newspaper. However, delivering highly localized news from highly localized reporters became less of a priority for the newspaper's holding company Digital First Media, which saw the cuts as a necessary move towards a digitized, globalized media landscape.

With such a drastic move, it begs a question that may not have been asked and certainly wasn't answered in the process of deciding to cut back on cheap-to-produce, easy-to-read local news and prioritize on expensive-to-buy (few readers realize that the *Tribune* pays for an AP subscription to be able to utilize their wire reporting) and tough-to-swallow national and international news: is this what *Tribune* readers want? Is it really necessary to have all of the news from every corner of the globe on the front page of your hometown newspaper, or would the *Tribune*, its readers, and its community be better off by engaging in, prioritizing, and offering to its readers the hyperlocal coverage that literally no one else could?

The effect on Millennials: Making news more democratic

One 21-year-old respondent to the straw poll, who demonstrated high internal political efficacy but low external political efficacy, and who also indicated a strong reliance on the news media for their information wrote, "If the people had more influence in the political process then the news wouldn't be so full of garbage to calm our nerves and mask what is really happening." The vast majority of the Millennials I polled would agree with this statement based upon their other answers: not only is there a link between reliance on the news media for information, but that there is a link between political efficacy and the substance of the content in the news media. If readers engage the news media democratically with their page clicks and subscription dollars, what the

readers want becomes what the news media provides. As a generation of news consumers who

desperately want to be more politically active and to be seen as having the potential to be, let's

ensure that what our news media will deliver to us will be substantive, in-depth reporting on the

issues that matter to us – starting at the local level, where we feel we can effect the most

meaningful change – rather than cat videos, exercise tips, and Buzzfeed quizzes. *But at expense of vital nat'l. & int'l. news?*

Conclusion

It is clear that there is a paradoxical crisis at hand: that Millennials are suffering from low

levels of external political efficacy – faith that their individual political participation can have

meaningful, lasting change on government – while demonstrating high levels of internal efficacy –

confidence in their own ability to understand and participate in the political process. If we hope to

engage young people in the political process, to enable them to feel capable of participating in our

democratic society, they must feel empowered to do so. They must feel that not only do they have

a voice, but that they can use it to bring about lasting political change. There are hundreds of

potential solutions to the Millennial political efficacy crisis, but the media solutions proposed above

could not only connect Millennials with the information that they crave, but could also assuage

many media industry anxieties about dropping readership numbers from the 18-29 demographic,

which many tie to a waning interest in political issues.

In reality, Millennials are more interested in consuming news now than ever; with so many

ways to do so, and many less cumbersome and expensive than buying a newspaper and parsing

?. through its unwieldy pages, how could they be less interested? But when that news becomes

overwhelming to them – by presenting issues too large-scale, too unmanageable, too beyond their

grasp or control – they lose interest in the small-scale, manageable issues that could benefit greatly

from their action. The solution is not promoting or tolerating ignorance of the broader world, but encouraging and promoting action from the ground up, on a much more local level. From that springboard of direct, local action, Millennials have the potential to gain a remarkable sense of empowerment and, from there, political efficacy – that their actions *do* have an impact on the political process, and that engaging in such processes are not just noble acts, but their civic *duties*.

If we want to have a democracy that is of the people, for the people, by the people, we must encourage, enable, and empower all of its citizens to engage in it. Selfies and texting aren't the problem that keeps Millennials away from the political process, as many Sunday morning columnists (most of whom are members of a generation that got its own fair share of flack from the elders of their day) would tell you; it's a lack of political efficacy. If we fix the Millennial political efficacy crisis, we will fix democracy – or, at least, we will have a generation of passionate, engaged leaders who not only *can* fix it, but *will* fix it.

I certify that this paper was researched, written, and edited solely by me.

Signed: _____ Dated: 4-23 '14

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