[Accepted Article Manuscript Version (Postprint)] Citizen Journalism Practice Increases Civic Participation

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Citizen journalism practice increases civic participation

By Seungahn Nah, Kang Namkoong, Rachael Record and Stephanie K. Van Stee

Abstract
Drawing on the theory of reasoned action, this study examines direct and indirect effects of citizen journalism on civic participation. Through a quasi-experimental design, analyses show that citizen journalism practice has a direct effect on civic participation and enhances attitudes toward nonprofit and voluntary organizations leading to volunteering and donating behavioral intentions.

Keywords
citizen journalism, civic participation, nonprofit and voluntary organizations, reasoned action, volunteering and donating, attitude, social norms, media use, interpersonal discussion.

Citizen journalism research has garnered a growing amount of attention as citizens participate in news-making processes and the production of news-related content, such as stories, photos, videos and comments. These citizen-generated contents (CGCs) can play a pivotal role in prompting democratic conversation in the

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public sphere.1 Citizen journalists may offer alternative perspectives from ordinary citizens, which otherwise may not have been covered by mainstream news media;2 thus citizen journalism simultaneously competes with and complements professional journalism. The major line of scholarship in this regard centers on the similarities and differences between citizen and professional journalism, such as journalistic role conceptions,3 news content and sources4 and identity, values and ideological stances.5

Despite prolific research, previous scholarship has paid less attention to how CGC or citizen journalism can influence civic outcomes. Some research considers citizen journalism as a form of civic participation6 and examines the impact of CGC on such democratic consequences as political knowledge and participation.7 Yet little is known about whether and how citizen journalism practices (e.g., working as a citizen journalist) can enhance civic participation. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the direct and indirect effects of citizen journalism on civic participation and reveal the driving theoretical mechanism of the process and carry practical implications. Drawing on the theory of reasoned action,8 this study developed a theorized model that explains the relationship between citizen journalism practice and civic participation.

## Literature Review

### Civic Participation and Citizen Journalism

Prior scholarship has shown that civic participation plays a vital role in maintaining, building, growing and enhancing the health of communities.9 For instance, Liu10 provides a thorough review of the importance of civic participation as an essential learning outcome for higher education, emphasizing the relationship between civic participation and the solving of “real world” problems. Similarly, McLeod and his associates11 have explored the relationship of civic participation and community, finding civic participation to be a significant factor positively related to various dimensions of community. Civic participation—also known as community integration12 and civic engagement13—refers to community acts of awareness, involvement and building.14

The American Psychological Association15 defines these behaviors as “individual or collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.” Examples include volunteering/community service, voting, youth activism, media literacy and workings of government.16 Civic participation behaviors benefit both the community and the individual performing the behavior. Verba and Nie17 suggest that the performance of civic participation behaviors is a source of satisfaction for the performer and can be an educational experience. Similarly, Shah, et al.18 discuss how the simple act of volunteering can create a sense of belonging within the performer.

Political participation is one of the most studied forms of civic participation.19 Within this larger body of literature, the role that media play is the most extensively investigated. For instance, the relationship of media use and political participation has been explored through the lens of uses and gratifications theory with regard to the impact of mobile phone use,20 through the framework of community integration with regard to local news media consumption21 and atheoretically to explore the relationship across a variety of channels, such as interpersonal, newspaper and television.22 Compared to political participation, most other forms of civic participation are understudied in the literature, including the act of volunteering/donating.
However, some research exists that demonstrates the importance of these behaviors related to civic participation. \(^2\) For instance, some studies have used volunteerism as part of the conceptualization of civic participation; \(^2\) whereas, others have used volunteerism as an operationalization of civic engagement. \(^2\) Despite the contributions of these few studies, there remains a lack of understanding related to volunteerism as a form of civic participation. Volunteering refers to “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization.” \(^2\) Donating often is grouped with volunteering because both are intended to be given freely as gifts (of time, money or objects). Although personal benefits may come from volunteering/donating behaviors, the main purpose of volunteering/donating is to assist another person, group or organization—most commonly nonprofit organizations. \(^2\) Nonprofit organizations rely on volunteers and donations to support their efforts. \(^2\) The purposes of the various nonprofit organizations are endless, covering every aspect of society from animals and environment to human health and safety. \(^2\) Therefore, increasing volunteering/donating behaviors can have significant positive effects on vast areas of society. \(^2\)

Although there are a variety of strategies for encouraging and improving civic participation, such as awareness interventions and media campaigns, citizen journalism is a growing trend in this area that has already received some previous support. For example, one study argues participation in high school journalism is related to the development of critical civic participation-related skills. \(^3\) Citizen journalists are defined as follows:

...individuals [not considered professional journalists] who produce, disseminate and exchange a wide variety of news and information, ranging from current topics and common interests to individual issues. \(^3\)

Likewise, citizen journalists are considered to be citizens without professional journalism training who produce such content and/or generate such discussions related to civic, health and other issues relevant to improving communities. \(^3\) Research has found citizen journalism to be a tool for various purposes, including information sharing during risk/crisis events \(^3\) and increasing involvement in political campaigns. \(^3\) Moreover, the citizen journalism act of blogging has been found to be an effective educational tool in classrooms. For example, one study found that at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, blogs facilitate student engagement with materials and with their classmates. \(^3\)

Research on the connection between citizen journalism and civic participation is by no means extensive; however, these studies contribute important findings to scholarship. For example, Mody \(^3\) wrote about an extensive citizen journalism project that aimed to increase civic participation for humanitarian efforts in Darfur. The project found strong support for the use of citizen journalism for increasing awareness of civic participation issues and for increasing the likelihood of civic participation.

The reason for the success of citizen journalism at improving civic participation is simple: Citizen journalism practice works as an educational tool that can result in unintended influences on attitudes and perceptions. For instance, a theoretical investigation of civic education found that deliberative forms of civic education—such as citizen journalism—can positively impact civic participation, which in this case was measured through political participation. \(^3\) Similarly, education level has been explored
in volunteerism research with findings that higher education is associated with an increase in willingness to volunteer.39

These findings can be supported by behavior change theories, such as the theory of reasoned action, which postulates that improvements to attitudes and perceptions, in this case through the use of educational tools such as citizen journalism, will result in a change of behavior.

Theoretical Framework: The Theory of Reasoned Action

The purpose of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) is to explain the relationships between attitude, subjective norm and behavioral intention.40 The significance of this theory is that behavioral intention is related to beliefs; that is, behavior change is likely to be a result of the changes in attitude and/or subjective norms about the behavior.41 Therefore, interventions that address attitudes and norms will be more effective at changing behavior. Although hundreds of definitions of attitude exist,42 for the purposes of this theory it has been conceptualized as “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal.”43 The term “subjective norm” has been conceptualized as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior.”44 The theory postulates that attitude and subjective norms will predict behavioral intention, in turn, leading to behavior change. Specifically, when attitudes and subjective norms are perceived favorably, it is expected that individuals’ intentions to perform a behavior will be stronger.45

The TRA has been supported across various disciplines in numerous contexts. For example, Roberto, et al. found that both a favorable evaluation of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination attitudes and a perceived social normality of HPV vaccine behaviors were significantly associated with pediatrician intentions to encourage girls to receive the HPV vaccine. Similarly, Richardson, Wang and Hall47 found that the intention to report Greek hazing behaviors was significantly associated with having a favorable attitude toward the reporting of hazing behaviors and with perceptions of social normalcy of reporting hazing behaviors. Other contexts that have found support for the TRA as a framework for predicting behavioral intention include early onset of sexual behaviors,48 research participation behaviors49 and organ donation behaviors.50 Although the theory of planned behavior51 was proposed as an updated model of the TRA, the previous examples demonstrate that the TRA remains a commonly-used theoretical framework for predicting behavioral intentions.

Despite the various contexts that the TRA has been applied to, there is limited scholarship with regard to the context of civic participation. Because civic participation is a broad context, there are many independent components that could be tested. For example, an extensive literature search revealed that the theory of planned behavior (which is similar to the TRA; see Ajzen52) has been tested in a broad civic participation context53 and a specific civic participation context of environmental awareness/protection.54 Similarly, the TRA appears to also have limited investigation although it has been tested in a volunteerism to peer tutor civic participation context.55 Gastil56 postulated that the TRA would be an appropriate model for explaining why educational tools (such as citizen journalism) can improve civic participation-related attitudes and perceptions. Because the TRA has been heavily supported as an effective model for behavior change, we expect that the civic participation context of volunteering/donating will yield similar results to those of previous studies.
Hypotheses

It can be expected that when attitudes toward nonprofit organizations are favorable and normative beliefs are perceived to be positive (e.g., other people think supporting nonprofit organizations is important) then intention to perform the behavior (e.g., donation of money/time/goods to nonprofit organizations) will be enhanced. More importantly, because of the educational aspect of the intervention, post-citizen journalism participation responses are expected to reveal significant improvements to attitudes and perceptions, resulting in significant increases in behavioral intention to volunteer for and/or donate to nonprofit organizations. Because previous research has found limited support for the relationship between volunteerism and attitudes/beliefs, this study sought to fill this gap in the literature. The hypotheses have been formulated specifically to test the mediating effects of the theory of reasoned action between citizen journalism practice and civic participation. Each hypothesis corresponds to a particular component(s) of the TRA model.

H1a-c:
Participation in citizen journalism practices will be positively related to: a) attitudes toward nonprofit/voluntary organizations, b) perceived social norms for volunteering/donating to nonprofit/voluntary organizations and c) intentions to volunteer/donate to nonprofit/voluntary organizations.

H2a-b:
The relationship between citizen journalism practices and intentions to volunteer/donate will be mediated by a) attitudes toward nonprofit/voluntary organizations and b) perceived social norms for volunteering/donating.

Method
Design
This study used a pretest/posttest quasi-experimental design. Because of the lack of random assignment of participants in a quasi-experimental design, it is less likely that the groups being compared will be equivalent in terms of relevant characteristics. Although the lack of random assignment is a disadvantage of the quasi-experimental design, the quasi-experimental design is appropriate because it reflects conditions with which the intervention could be used in communities or university courses. For instance, the implementation would occur at the course level and not the individual level, so the design has the advantage of strengthening the study’s external validity.

Procedures
Participants in both groups filled out pretest surveys that consisted of mostly closed-ended questions, which asked about relevant variables including demographics, attitudes, social capital and behavior. The control group simply engaged in their normal classroom activities (no treatment control) during the six-week intervention period. After
the intervention period ended, researchers administered posttest surveys to control and treatment groups. Most of the posttest survey questions were identical to those on the pretest survey, although some questions (e.g., demographics) were excluded from the posttest and intervention-related questions were added (e.g., news sources used for the citizen journalism project) to treatment group posttests. All students were given the opportunity to participate in the pretest and posttest surveys. If a student were absent on the day that surveys were completed in class, one of the researchers provided him/her with a link to an identical online survey and consent form.

**Intervention**

Treatment group participants participated in a citizen-journalism project for which they were to imagine themselves as promoters of a local nonprofit organization with the goal of expressing the importance of the particular nonprofit organization to the community. Participants completed one news article and two blogs about a local nonprofit organization for a local citizen-journalism website. Students were instructed to interview at least one person about their selected organization, such as a community member, director/founder, or volunteer/employee. Researchers also told participants to include at least one photo or video with the approval of someone at the organization to go along with their article and blogs for the citizen-journalism website. Students received specific prompts for each of the blog post assignments, which encouraged them to write about the contributions of the organization to the community, (Blog 1) as well as any of the organization’s upcoming event(s) and ways for the community to get involved/contribute (Blog 2).

**Measures**

**Control Variables**

Shah et al. found demographic variables such as age and education to be positively correlated with civic participation. Therefore, the following demographic variables were used as control variables: age, sex, hometown location (urban vs. rural) and personal involvement with nonprofit/voluntary organizations.

**Media Use and Communication on Nonprofit/Voluntary Organizations**

The purpose of the following items was to control for media exposure and provide a baseline understanding of communication about nonprofit/voluntary organizations and other news media use. All items were completed on a seven-point Likert scale pre- and post-intervention. These items were answered by both the treatment and control group.

**Interpersonal Communication**

Similar to Kwak et al.'s measure of interpersonal political discussion, a five-item measure of interpersonal communication was developed. Participants were asked to indicate how often they discussed nonprofit/voluntary organizations with (1) family members, (2) friends, (3) neighbors, (4) acquaintances and (5) other people. This measure was found to be reliable both pre- ($M = 3.11, SD = 1.61, \alpha = .91$) and post- ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.72, \alpha = .91$) intervention.
**Mass Media Use and Attention**

The media use and attention measures were adapted from McLeod, Scheufele and Moy. Participants were asked to respond to a three-item measure of media use as well as a three-item measure of attention paid to media consumed. First, participants were asked to report how often they (1) read news stories in newspapers, (2) watched news stories on television and (3) listened to news stories on the radio. Second, participants were asked to report how much attention they paid to news stories (1) in newspapers, (2) on television and (3) on the radio. These six items were combined to create a uni-dimensional measure, which was found to be reliable both pre- ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.57, \alpha = .92$) and post- ($M = 3.95, SD = 1.50, \alpha = .92$) intervention.

**Internet Use**

To assess Internet use, a four-item measure was adapted from McLeod, Scheufele and Moy. Participants were asked how often they used the Internet regarding nonprofit/voluntary organizations to (1) read news stories, (2) express their opinions, (3) pass along information and (4) search for information. This measure was found to be reliable both pre- ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.74, \alpha = .91$) and post- ($M = 3.90, SD = 1.64, \alpha = .92$) intervention.

**Attitude**

Using a seven-point polar adjectives scale format, the following items were adapted from Crites, Fabrigar and Petty. Participants responded to the following pairs of words to evaluate nonprofit and voluntary organizations: bad/good, undesirable/desirable, negative/positive, unlikeable/likeable, unimportant/important and worthless/valuable. This measure was found to be reliable both pre- ($M = 5.86, SD = 0.99, \alpha = .90$) and post- ($M = 6.05, SD = 1.03, \alpha = .92$) intervention.

**Social Norms**

To assess participants’ perceived level of social norms, researchers had them respond to two statements on a seven-point scale: (1) Most people who are important to me support nonprofit/voluntary organizations and (2) most people who are important to me participate in activities for nonprofit/voluntary organizations. This measure had a low (but acceptable) level of reliability pre-intervention ($M = 4.54, SD = 1.33$, inter-item correlations = .70) and had an acceptable reliability post-intervention ($M = 4.81, SD = 1.44$, inter-item correlations = .85).

**Dependent Variable: Volunteering/Donating**

Civic participation was operationalized by the key indicators of volunteering and donating in the nonprofit/voluntary sector with one item adapted from Campbell and Kwak. To assess participant willingness to volunteer/donate, participants responded to two questions on a seven point Likert scale pre- and post-intervention. These questions were as follows: (1) how willing would you be to work as a volunteer for a nonprofit or voluntary organization in the next year and (2) how willing would you be to donate money or items (e.g., food, clothing, blood) to a nonprofit or voluntary organization in the next year? In
addition, participants were asked to respond from zero to 100 on how many total hours they would be willing to work for a nonprofit or voluntary organization in the next year? These three items were combined to construct a civic participation variable, after being standardized [pretest: $M = -0.01, SD = 0.82, \alpha = .73$ and posttest: $M = -0.02, SD = 0.83, \alpha = .71$].

### Statistical Analyses

To test for the significance of the mediation effect more robustly, along with a series of regression analyses introduced by Baron and Kenny,\textsuperscript{68} Preacher and Hayes’s\textsuperscript{69} bootstrap approach was used for calculating standard errors and 95 percent confidence intervals for the effect of citizen journalism practice on civic participation through attitude and social norms. Using this method, 5,000 bootstrapped samples were conducted to estimate the bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals.

### Findings

**Participants Baseline Demographic Characteristics**

Considering the quasi-experimental design of this study, differences in study variables between the two groups at baseline were examined. Table 1 and Table 2 demonstrate that

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>T-test and Chi-Square Test Results of Demographics, Personal Involvement, Community Context and Community Communications</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>Mass Media Use</td>
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<td>Interpersonal Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
there were no significant differences in demographic, community context, personal involvement or communication variables between groups. Additionally, there were not any significant differences in means for the three main variables of attitude, social norms and behavioral intention between participants in the control and treatment groups. However, given that the mass media use variable was marginally different between the two groups at baseline \([t(99) = -1.85, p = .07]\), all analyses were conducted while adjusting for all control variables including demographic and communication variables.

**Main Effects**

The first set of hypotheses predicted that participants in the treatment group would have greater positive changes in attitude (H1a), social norm (H1b) and civic participation (H1c), compared to participants in the control group. As predicted, being in the citizen journalism practice group was positively associated with changes in attitude toward nonprofit organizations \((\beta = .28, p < .05)\) and willingness to engage in civic participation \((\beta = .30, p < .05)\). However, being in the treatment group was not related to changes in social norms related to nonprofit organizations \((\beta = .00, ns)\). [See Table 3] Thus, H1a and H1c were supported, but H1b was not supported.

**Mediation Effects**

The second set of hypotheses predicted that attitude (H2a) and social norm (H2b) would mediate the effect of citizen journalism practice on civic participation. The causal step approach outlined by Baron and Kenny\(^{70}\) was used for an initial test of mediation. As addressed in the hypothesis tests of main effects, citizen journalism practice has a direct influence on changes in attitude toward nonprofit organizations and civic participation, but not on perceived social norms. These results meet the first and second causal steps, allowing for additional testing for the mediating role of attitude toward nonprofit organizations. When attitude change was entered as an independent variable in the regression equations for civic participation, the influence of citizen journalism on civic participation decreased \((\beta = .22, p < .05)\). [See Table 3] Thus, in terms of Baron and Kerry’s approach, attitudes toward nonprofit organizations partially mediated the effect of citizen journalism practice on civic participation, but social norms did not mediate the effect of citizen journalism.

<p>| Table 2 |
| T-test Results of Pretest Value of Attitude, Social Norm and Engagement in Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations |
| Control (n = 45) | Treatment (n = 59) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t(df)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.34 (101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Norm</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>–1.87 (102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>–0.10</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>–.96 (102)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As addressed in the hypothesis tests of main effects, citizen journalism practice has a direct influence on changes in attitude toward nonprofit organizations and civic participation, but not one perceived social norms.

A bootstrapping method was also employed that allowed us to address the mediation hypothesis more directly than did the causal step approach, by showing that the difference between the total and direct effects is statistically different from zero.71
Results of the bootstrapping method are presented in Figure 1 and Table 4. As shown in Figure 1, citizen journalism practice has an initial impact on attitude toward nonprofit organizations (B = .50, p < .05) and, in turn, the change in attitude influences civic participation (B = .22, p < .01). It can be concluded that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at p < .05 (two tailed), because zero is not in the confidence interval (point estimate = 0.110, SE = 0.070, 95 percent CI = 0.009, 0.274; Bias=.003, Bias Corrected 95 percent CI = .015, .304; 5000 bootstrap samples; Table 4). In other words, the change in attitude toward nonprofit organizations mediates the effect of citizen journalism practice on civic participation. However, social norms did not mediate the effect of citizen journalism practice on civic participation (point estimate = -0.008, SE = 0.042, 95 percent CI = -0.105, 0.074; Bias=-.001, Bias Corrected 95 percent CI = -.118, .063; 5000 bootstrap samples). Thus, of the second set of hypotheses H2a was supported, but H2b was not.

**Discussion**

This study reveals that citizen journalism practice has a direct effect on citizen journalists’ attitude and civic participation concerning volunteering/donating to nonprofit and voluntary organizations where the attitude mediates the relationship between citizen journalism and civic participation. These findings offer the following theoretical and practical implications.

First, this study tested the theorized model of relationships based on the theory of reasoned action with empirical support that citizen journalism practice enhances
attitude and civic participation and positive attitudes serve as a necessary condition for citizen journalism to enhance intentions to volunteer/donate. These findings are consistent with those from previous studies. For example, both Fortini and Gastil found the TRA to be a significant model for predicting civic participation behaviors. Previous studies have also found that attitude has a greater influence on behavioral intentions relative to social norms.

Second, given that citizen journalism practice has a direct effect on citizen journalists’ attitudes and behavioral intentions, community-based citizen journalism sites may offer opportunities for ordinary citizens to cover the nonprofit and voluntary sector (e.g., activities, events, staff, volunteer needs) that can shape citizens’ attitudes and mobilize them to engage in civic activities. Likewise, professional journalism sites vis a vis community-based citizen journalism sites can adopt a citizen journalism model that may help nonprofit and voluntary organizations reach out to the community through constant and sustainable coverage, including news stories of their major activities and community events as well as interviews with directors, staff, members and volunteers. In particular, nonprofit journalism websites, both professional and citizen, can share community and charity-oriented philosophical foundations and thus achieve their mission and goals together. In doing so, nonprofit journalism websites should work in tandem with other community media, community institutions, voluntary and nonprofit organizations and business groups.

Third, nonprofit and voluntary organizations can strategically frame and publicize their activities for the community that they serve, through their websites and social media. Given that mainstream news media pay less attention to the nonprofit and voluntary sector compared to corporate groups and governments, nonprofit and voluntary organizations should develop effective and efficient communication strategies through websites and social media. Use of these media forms through which they

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediators</th>
<th>Mediation Effect (SE)</th>
<th>Bias</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval, Bias Corrected</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
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<td>Lower</td>
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<td>Lower</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bias</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude*</td>
<td>.110 (.070)*</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.009*</td>
<td>.274*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Norm</td>
<td>-.008 (.042)</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-.105</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Highlights a significant effect as determined by the 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval (95% CI).
interact directly with news media organizations and community members can influence community members to have positive attitudes toward nonprofit organizations, participate in their activities and events and support their missions, goals and causes.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Despite the theoretical insight and practical implications, the study has some limitations and accordingly, suggestions for future studies. First, although the current study tested a theorized model of relationships based on the theory of reasoned action, future scholarship should be able to advance the theoretical underpinning to fully understand the roles that attitude and norms play as a civic education for citizen journalists to engage in community activities. Unlike an experimental setting, this study acknowledges that citizen journalists in a real world may engage in civic activities without necessarily having positive attitudes toward the nonprofit and voluntary sector. Notably, given the study measured behavioral intentions, future studies should continue to test the theoretical model to examine how citizen journalism practice enhances actual behavior changes with/without attitude changes.

Second, methodologically, the pretest/posttest quasi-experimental design was relevant in a school setting to examine the effect of citizen journalism practice on democratic outcomes. However, the results from the experimental design without randomization among college students may not be generalizable to ordinary citizens or citizen journalists in a real world setting. Therefore, an experimental design with randomization and representative sampling among typical citizens should be able to enhance the generalizability of results to other groups and communities.

Third, future research should examine the effects of citizens’ objective reporting concerning public affairs and common interests in their communities given that the current study focused on a more issue specific coverage of nonprofit and voluntary organizations in an experimental/classroom setting. In doing so, future studies should investigate how citizen journalists perform in a natural and community setting as do professional journalists.

These limitations notwithstanding, this study, as the first of its kind to test the theory of reasoned action, offers unique contribution that citizen journalism practice could produce civic-minded citizens with increased positive attitudes toward the nonprofit and voluntary sector, thus leading to civic participation among those citizens who practice citizen journalism (“citizens as news producers”). This study is similar but distinct from previous studies, which looked at how public journalism influences citizenship and volunteerism and whether use of user-generated content, along use of professional journalism, influences civic knowledge and participation (“citizens as news consumers”).

In conclusion, this study presents a unique combination of research and practice through citizen journalism practice as civic education related to nonprofit and voluntary organizations in a university community setting. Additionally, the study lends support to the notion that citizen journalism can improve civic participation. Given that citizen journalism practice was implemented as a community-based participatory campaign, it should be able to achieve sustained contributions to the community through ongoing civic education. To do so, the community based citizen journalism
websites should be able to play a key role in sustaining the campaign program,\textsuperscript{82} while simultaneously working together with the whole community to nurture civil society.

Notes

30. Mason, Putting Charity to the Test,” 193.
40. Fishbein, Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement.
42. Fishbein and Ajzen, Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior.
45. Fishbein and Ajzen, Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior.


52. Ajzen, “From Intentions to Actions,” 11; Ajzen, Attitudes, Personality and Behavior.

53. Jugert et al., “Offline and Online Civic Engagement among Adolescents and Young Adults from three Ethnic Groups,” 123.


59. We recruited participants taking upper-level undergraduate courses in community communication and leadership development within an interdisciplinary department at a large southeastern university. Control group participants were recruited from a leadership course with 68 students enrolled, whereas treatment group participants were recruited from a community communication course with sixty students enrolled. Students who have declared a major in the department are required to take one of the two aforementioned courses, making the courses fairly similar in terms of the types of students who tend to enroll. Even though only one of the courses was required, there were some students who were simultaneously enrolled in the control and treatment group course. Therefore, only the forty-nine students in the leadership class who were not also enrolled in the community communication class were eligible to participate in the control group. Students who were enrolled in both courses were, however, still invited to participate as members of the treatment group.

60. Shah et al., “Nonrecursive Models of Internet use and Community Engagement,” 964.


63. Ibid.


71. Preacher and Hayes, “Mediation Analysis,” 717
72. Fishbein, Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement; Fishbein and Ajzen, Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior.