Identity, Culture and Ponies: the Brony Community and Political Self

Alexandra Agostinelli and Peter Yacobucci

SUNY Buffalo State

716-878-6116

agostiaj01@mail.buffalostate.edu

This study aims to examine the impact of popular culture on political beliefs. Specifically whether and how *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* influences the American adult fans efficacy towards the conventional political system, and impacts their civic engagement as expressed through their actions. This research hypothesizes that as individuals become more connected to a culturally homogenous and identifiable community, the more that community will mold their political opinions and actions. In addition, when the cohesiveness that binds a community together is a media product, the explicit and implicit messages contained with that product will influence the opinions and behavior of the individuals in the community and daily life. To collect data both in person, one-on-one interviews of attendees at the BronyCon convention in Baltimore during early August 2014 were conducted, as well as, collecting survey responses administered on a number of social network sites visited by fans of the franchise. This dual data collection technique should ensure a robustness of the findings as the qualitative responses from the personal interviews can be used to validate the findings of the quantitative data collected through the surveys.

Prepared for Delivery at the Western Political Science Association’s Annual Meetings

Las Vegas, Nevada April 2 – 4, 2015

Does having a primarily online association with strong ties, however a lack of physical interaction change how people civically and politically participate, since they are forming a new cultural identity? This is being studied with the thriving, and previously documented large, sub-culture of Bronies, fans of the franchise *My Little Pony*. If proven correct, the idea could be implemented to other media based cultural groups, and possibly to even groups of people who have devotion to a webpage-such as deviantart or tumblr. This research hypothesizes that as individuals become more connected to a culturally homogenous and identifiable community, the more that community will mold their political opinions and actions. In addition, when the cohesiveness that binds a community together is a media product, the explicit and implicit messages contained with that product will influence the opinions and behavior of the individuals in the community and daily life. To collect data one-on-one interviews of attendees at the BronyCon convention in Baltimore during early August 2014 were conducted, as well as, collecting survey responses from a survey placed on a number of social network sites visited by fans of the franchise. This dual data collection technique should ensure a robustness of the findings as the qualitative responses from the personal interviews can be used to validate the findings of the quantitative data collected through the surveys.

**Research on the Impact of Social Cohesion and Political Expression**

*Media Influence*

Media has a strong influence over people’s actions and beliefs ([Dorfman, 1975](#_ENREF_10); [Graber, 2004](#_ENREF_14); [Ismail, 2012](#_ENREF_19); [Koch, 2004](#_ENREF_21); [Nickoli, 2003](#_ENREF_24); [Robertson, 2014](#_ENREF_27); [Sandlin & Milam, 2008](#_ENREF_28)). A specific branch of theory says popular culture, is resisted and attempt to be used to reform the perceived errors of the popular culture, causing a creation of a counter culture. When television started to become a household norm, during the presidential election of 1952, “Miami University carried out a panel study investigating television’s effect’s upon Ohio voters…[and the majority] of the panel judge television to be the source of information most helpful, and three-fourths believed that TV had exerted an influence on the election” (Coffin, 1955, p. 637). Television and media has changed a lot since 1952, and has become more prevalent in our society. David Jackson conducted a survey, with “17 to 29-year-old first university students” and his results “showed that popular culture interacts with parental and peer influences,” however the study faults in making causal links and lacks specificity ([Graber, 2004, p. 193](#_ENREF_14)). In a large N-Study, the results showed that “active social TV users also reported that they weighed the candidates’ social media presence when making voting decisions” ([Nee, 2013, p. 171](#_ENREF_23)).

One view is that culture has transformed into a sales pitch, selling products and emotions, rather than exchanging ideas, due to the influence of television and other media outlets ([Adorno](#_ENREF_1); [Chen, Qimei, Shelly, & William, 2005](#_ENREF_5); [Dorfman, 1975](#_ENREF_10)). This would make the writer’s intention to sell their ideas to the adult fandom much more deliberate than what was expected. Regardless, the large “adult fandom that has developed in response to the show [*My Little Pony*] suggests that it is not only children who are affected by the embedded messages in this program” ([Robertson, 2014, p. 22](#_ENREF_27)). The political structure of Equestria, where *My Little Pony* takes place, can help explain how adult viewers see and interact with the current American government, because “politics and entertainment media are becoming increasingly intertwined…young Americans’ political beliefs are…shaped by what they see and hear through the entertainment media” ([Cobb, 2004, p. 144](#_ENREF_6)), and whether or not they want to help create a more utopian democracy, or if they see it as such, since “the anthropomorphic animal has long functioned as a useful metaphor for the human condition, allowing us to see a reflection of ourselves and yet place a convenient distance between us and the mirror by virtue of our fundamental human/animal difference” ([Robertson, 2014, p. 23](#_ENREF_27)). “Animals are also exempt from the vicissitudes of history and politics, they are convenient symbols of a world beyond socio-economic realities,” allowing for people to explore different political models ([Dorfman, 1975, p. 29](#_ENREF_10)). There is an argument that “fictional narratives are not mirrors of reality. They extract, abbreviate, and amplify relationships that occur in reality, in a similar way to experiments and surveys” ([Chen et al., 2005, p. 30](#_ENREF_5)). *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* is a prime example of how it is not the medium that matters, but how… [one can] communicate ideas and messages to an audience that makes a program appealing,” ([Fross, 2013, p. 26](#_ENREF_12)) and influential.

Another view conversely states that the “while the messages conveyed are themselves important, arguably the technologies also produce new types of association, identity and mobilization shaped by popular sentiments” ([Grayson et al., 2009, p. 158](#_ENREF_15)). Meaning that the community and what the members create is the more important than the message being shown; such as the very identity of being a Brony. Another theory states, “children have been conditioned by…the culture which spawned them. They…reflect in their daily lives the characteristics they are supposed to possess, in order to win affection, acceptance, and …in order to grow up properly and integrate into society” ([Dorfman, 1975, p. 30](#_ENREF_10)). In that theory, Disney films were primarily studied, and the mores that were taught to children. These two theories shall be combined and called the funhouse mirror theory, since it does reflect but also distorts the image. Some scholars “see meaning as being determined by the audience… [that there is] a dynamic relationship between the text and the reader” ([Costello & Moore, 2007, pp. 125-126](#_ENREF_7)). “The use of popular culture … [in a classroom or other intellectual setting, provides people] with the opportunity to critically analyze a form of media that permeates their daily lives” ([Nickoli, 2003, p. 161](#_ENREF_24)), allowing viewers to interpret the possible messages in a show. There has been no research conducted to determine the openness of Celetia’s and Luna’s rule in Equestria. Based on the available media, this study will attempt to classify their leadership methods, to understand what is being reflected or absorbed by the My Little Pony adult fan base. Both the accurate mirror and the more fun house mirror, and interactive audience theories can be helpful in determining certain human traits and themes that are being shown to the viewers.

*Groups, Subcultures, and Fandoms*

Another view of media theory focuses on the power and influence of subcultures and fandoms ([Hebdige, 2012](#_ENREF_18); [Jindra, 1994](#_ENREF_20); [Robertson, 2014](#_ENREF_27)). Subcultures and fandoms are similar to “voluntary associations [where] dissenters have the easy out of withdrawal…” ([Pennock, Chapman, American Society for, & Legal, 1975, p. xvi](#_ENREF_26)). And “group concepts have been an important focus of political analysis” ([Ulmer, 1961, p. 189](#_ENREF_32)). “The context of a group− including the physical space, the characteristics of the membership, and its purpose− matters because it affects the range of resources people have for connecting to one another”([Walsh, 2004, p. 64](#_ENREF_33)). This is not a group consciousness argument regardless of the fact that Bronies are fairly homogenous-white, educated males. The Brony fandom, “was not created by a shared class structure or other cultural similarities; instead the participants have in common only an interest in a program, a desire to talk about it, and access to the interest,” as other fandom communities are, based on what a “web-based survey to qualitative data about online fans’ use of the internet for keeping up with a favorite television program and for interaction with other fans” found ([Costello & Moore, 2007, pp. 124-135](#_ENREF_7)). Nor it is able to be considered a classic group since there is no set, “advantage…or disadvantage…by the major political parties and their candidates…and that [Bronies] political preference…are [not] powerfully shaped by group identification…however we believe that Bronies are like classic groups, because “political…perceptions are powerfully shaped by group identification” ([J. W. Koch, 1995, pp. 67-68](#_ENREF_16)). An example of this new version of groups is how volunteering and donations are organized. The amount of “volunteering is up [however] charitable contributions have fallen as a percentage of GDP. Despite large increases in formal education, measures of political knowledge have remained flat for decades” ([Galston, 2007, p. 623](#_ENREF_13)). Fans of *Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* have formed charity groups, which is not the first time that a television show has inspired such generosity. Fans of *Star Trek*, have formed groups “stress community service projects; this aspect distinguishes them from a mere fan group and underlies the seriousness with which they take their beliefs about building a better world” ([Jindra, 1994, p. 36](#_ENREF_20)). And from many personal statements, both collected in person and unprompted declarations, claim the subculture has influenced and changed lives. The Brony culture is an online originated, counter culture, fighting against stereotypical gender norms. “Group efficacy is hypothesized to be a determent of subjective political competence (also referred to as internal efficacy), political participation, and willingness to engage in collective action…” ([J. W. Koch, 1995, p. 67](#_ENREF_16)). Previously, there has been “no statistical evidence for the presence of direct effects of group influence on electoral forms of participation” (J. W. Koch, 1995, p. 79), however Internet use in North America has led, “analysts…from seeing it as an external world to…[an] integrated into the complexity of everyday life” (Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001, p. 437), and with the changing world, we are modifying the word group is in order to begin to understand group efficacy and participation.

Civic bonds are the connections felt by a community and the willingness of the citizens to band together in various groups. Civic participation includes both conventional and unconventional political participation. “Conventional political activities…are actions that intend to influence the political process through the electoral arena…[and] unconventional political participation aims to influence politics through non-institutionalized means” ([Stockemer, 2014, p. 202](#_ENREF_31)). We are including civic bonds primarily as a form of unconventional participation because it is a hands-on approach verses relying on the conventional systems to fix a solution, of course there are exceptions, such as act of voting, or belonging to a political party, which will fall under conventional political participation.

Membership in clubs is another way of civic participation, however “membership in major national organizations has declined, as has active participation in local clubs and groups” ([Galston, 2007, p. 634](#_ENREF_13)). However, in order to participate civically, it does not need to be in a formal group. “It does not take participation in a social movement, or…political participation, to develop social identities with political relevance....people… informal talk[ing], can also collectively define what it means to be people like themselves in the world” ([Walsh, 2004, p. 54](#_ENREF_33)). Facebook and other social networking sites users, according to Nee, “were no more inclined to participate in politics than users of other media early in the 2008 presidential primary ([Nee, 2013, p. 175](#_ENREF_23)). However, in the same study Nee said that there is an “established a positive relationship between those who used social networking sites for information purposes and civic engagement” ([Nee, 2013, p. 175](#_ENREF_23)). So those who participate in both pro- and anti- *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* forums, to discuss the show and theories might be more inclined to participate in civic matters others than voting. By “engaging with political information through expressive communicative activities online… users effectively think about political issues…relate to politics, eliminate uncertainty, and form or reconsider issue stances” ([Yamamoto, Kushin, & Dalisay, 2013, p. 13](#_ENREF_35)). This can be expanded to television, books, and comics, since it is common to find both likeminded and different people online where it can be discussed. Using a remodeled dichotomous variables from the ESS, the general “argument that people are disengaging with electoral politics but are instead taking up alternative forms of political participation does not garner much support” ([Saunders, 2014, p. 583](#_ENREF_29)). This unconventional participation, is higher among Bronies verses the rest of the general American public, data which was collected from the General Social Survey.

A survey conducted by National Geographic and a research group, had 39,211 North American respondents, which were the specific group studied to see if social capital was affected by the internet. Social capital is the outcome of “the reciprocal relationship between civic engagement [which is] formal group memberships and social participation…and interpersonal trust [which is] generalized faith in the honesty and integrity of others” ([Shah, 1998, p. 470](#_ENREF_30)).One of their findings suggests that “the Internet supplements and increases organizational involvement…[which] was measured by 20 items asking questions…to indicate the extent to which they were involved in different organizations…[and] the length of time people have been online is not associated with the extent of their organizational involvement” ([Wellman et al., 2001, pp. 444-452](#_ENREF_34)).

*Predictors of Political Participation*

“Insuring that the interests of each are given equal consideration in … every adult member of an association be entitled to participate in making collective and binding decisions…which can be achieved only in a fully democratic political system” ([Dahl, 1996, p. 639](#_ENREF_9)) is the ideal of procedural democracy established by Dahl over a half century ago. “Only through active participation will the people of this great nation better understand…[the] importance of all three branches of government, and feel empowered to protect our past and make a difference in our future” ([Zack, 2010, p. 8](#_ENREF_36)). In that view, voting and having insight on what is being voted on, is most important, as well as participation. “In well governed democracies, voice typically takes the form of voting or protest. Voice can also take the form of revolt, especially… [when] citizens cannot rely on democratic institutions to make their voices heard” ([Hanssen & Fleck, 2013, p. 26](#_ENREF_16)). For a democratic system to function it is important that every citizen is able to voice their concerns, however “the American electoral system…makes it exceedingly difficult for political protest movements to become institutionalized as third parties” ([Brym, 1986, p. 46](#_ENREF_3)). Voices are projected but they are not long lasting or institutionalized directly in an independent political party. We hypothesizes this lack of political voice is felt by many and forces individuals to participate in non-traditional ways. Our research Bronies and the ponies have an enhanced sense of civic virtue, and are committed to making their community a better place. “Higher civic participation has been linked to greater policy innovation and improvements in government performance,” ([McAtee & Wolak, 2011, p. 46](#_ENREF_22)).

However, the ideal of democratic participation is not reflected in the governance displayed in *My Little Pony*. Instead of a governance system based on the democratic expression of the majority, the fictional ‘country’ of Equestria is governed by two leaders who are not even of the same status as the main characters of the show. Instead of open participation the characters of the program are governed by a ‘benevolent’ dictatorship. It is unclear whether the main characters of the show accept this political arrangement out of loyalty or fear. What is both explicit and implicit in the show’s programming is that open challenge to this governance system is both irrational and untenable. In our research, the adult viewers of the show share the feeling that the American government is ‘unbeatable,’ not because the politicians and leaders are physically more powerful, like in Equestria, but legally and financially so. For example, “when Congress blocks off one avenue for funding political campaigns, millionaires find other routes—or bulldoze new ones through the wilderness”([Chapman, 2014](#_ENREF_4)). Laws are hindrance not strict rules for certain people. However the idea that the ponies are ruled by fear does not take in account for a lack of fleeing, as seen in real world countries with horrible, oppressive conditions, where “hundreds of thousands of…people have risked their life…at the risk of [drowning, if escaping by boat], arrested, repatriated, and charged with treason” ([Hanssen & Fleck, 2013, p. 36](#_ENREF_16)). Although, that might not occur, because the idea that the rulers of Equestria are powerful is not propaganda (they actually raise and lower the sun and moon) and there is just no location where the citizens can be safe from their reach. The findings that adults fans of the program express more civic virtue and alienation from the government is statistically significant.

However, another school of thought claims “the more knowledge citizens have of civic affairs, the less likely they are to experience a generalized mistrust of, or alienation from, public life” ([Galston, 2007, p. 637](#_ENREF_13)). Participation may decrease distrust or feelings of separations from the community, sadly though “scholars, elected officials, and ordinary citizens are concerned about the apparent weakening of civil society” ([Galston, 2007, p. 621](#_ENREF_13)). Our research suggests this well established relationship is disjointed for the fans of the program. While their level of traditional political participation is muted, their non-traditional participation is on par with those sampled through the General Social Survey (GSS).

Others, such as parents, guardians, teachers, and peers can influence whether a young person votes or participate in civic events. “Generally, important others affect young people’s political participation in several ways: Besides explicit discussions, being a role model, or providing access to social network” ([Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz, 2013, p. 429](#_ENREF_11)). The referred social networks is just having access to different people, and the more social networks one has, the more different views they have access to, which can include social networking sites. The Cutie Mark Crusaders, a subset of characters in *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic,* start as a group of friends, and expanded into a collection of groups throughout Equestria. “The approval of political behaviors by… others represents one possible way of influence, it is certainly not the only kind of a social predictor” ([Eckstein et al., 2013, p. 433](#_ENREF_11)). It is clear from the program that the individuals in this collective share many beliefs and norms. The same appears to be true of the adult fans of the program. While their responses to copies of questions from the GSS show remarkable consistency to other adult fans of the program, their homogeneity is lost when comparing adult fans to typical U.S. citizens.

Internal reasons for voting and participating in government issues are the most powerful. Another view says that “civic knowledge is an important determinant of civic capability and character…recent findings suggest that formal, classroom-based civic education provides an effective means of teaching civic knowledge” ([Galston, 2007, p. 639](#_ENREF_13)), and “schools are still more or less a common experience and as such, they are one of the few vehicles available for the character development and reinforcement of the necessary features of our civic life” ([Healy, 2011, p. 238](#_ENREF_17)). Meaning that schools are one of the places where civic virtue and the building of community is a generality in America. The mention of schooling within the program is limited. There seems to be an elementary school that is actually required in Equestria although the school itself or any of the lessons provided therein are never covered. In addition, there is mention of a post secondary system of education but again its presence in the show is tangential at best. As a result, it seems unlikely any political messaging is being transmitted through the schooling system in the program. Along with schooling, “[o]nline political expression was found to have a mobilizing effect on offline political participation for those who use,” social networking sites (Yamamoto et al., 2013, p. 13). A large predictor to vote is depending on if one has a “political interest... [and] a person's resources and interest in politics help explain involvement at the state level as well as at other levels of government” (McAtee, 51). Adult viewers participate in their communities and political matters in other ways than voting, as mentioned before. “The self-actualizing citizen… sees political engagement in very personal terms, motivated by a desire to enhance the quality of his or her personal life and social relations rather than to support government institutions” ([Atkinson, 2012, p. 193](#_ENREF_2)). Adult fans of the program show a highly enhanced social media presence with the vast majority expressing they use multiple social media platforms and that use of social media has become an important part of their daily behavior and their life. Another reason that people may vote or participate in civic matters is that “the greater the reward a citizen receives or expects to receive from politics, the greater is his participation. Thus, the more concerned he is over politics, the greater is his participation” ([Dahl, 1961, p. 1348](#_ENREF_8)). This basic expression of the rational political actor is not expressed in the results of our study. Nearly all participants in our study expressed other-directed motives to their political participation.

 “Across Western industrialized nations, citizens appear to express high levels of disengagement from formal political institutions…[and there are] increased levels of participation in citizen groups and social movements” ([Saunders, 2014, p. 547](#_ENREF_29)), and we argue that this polarization is higher in the subculture of Bronies, due to a funhouse reflection being shown to them through the medium of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*. This case study findings on what drives political motivation and perception can be applied to other social groups that are both based off of media or are more common.

**Study and Results**

To examine the political beliefs and behavior of adult fans of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* we created a two-part data collection strategy. First, one-on-one interviews were conducted at BronyCon 2014, a large convention of adult fans of the program that had over nine thousand fans pay the registration fee to attend. Based on the responses we received in this first phase, we crafted an online survey that was distributed on several social media sites frequented by adult fans of the program. This snowball sampling process was necessary because any random distribution process was unattainable; Bronies are a very small minority of the general populace but come from a variety of geographical areas and display a wide diversity on almost all common demographics. The interviews were conducted using purposive sampling at BronyCon, however not all people in attendance were fans of the show. There were drivers, friends or family members who accompanied the Bronies, and local people who thought it looked interesting to stop in. These individuals were included in the interview process. The demographics of our sample, compared to the information gathered from the General Social Survey, emphasizes the differences in composition between these two groups (Table I).

|  |
| --- |
| Table I: Demographic Comparison of Adult fans of My Little Pony and GSS |
|  | Brony | GSS |
| Sex |  |  |
| Male  | 93.1 | 44.1 |
| Female  | 5.0 | 55.9 |
| Other  | 1.9 | Not Asked |
| Marital Status |  |  |
| Married  | 4.6 | 53.9 |
| Widowed  | .4 | 9.7 |
| Divorced  | 1.0 | 12.4 |
| Separated  | .5 | 3.5 |
| Never Married  | 93.4 | 20.5 |
| Race |  |  |
| White (Including Hispanic)  | 79.1 | 81.2 |
| Black  | 1.8 | 13.9 |
| Other  | 19.1 | 4.9 |
| Education |  |  |
| Less Than High School – Coded 0  | 3.8 | 22.3 |
| High School  | 44.0 | 51.5 |
| Associate/Junior College  | 24.8 | 5.4 |
| Bachelor's  | 18.5 | 14.1 |
| Beyond Bachelor’s – Coded 4  | 8.9 | 6.8 |
| Mean  | 1.85  | 1.32  |
| Median  | 2  | 1  |
| Standard Deviation  | 1.054  | 1.162 |

Two important demographic question encountered difficulties. The question about age had a flaw when the survey was administered. As a result, responses to this question are excluded from our analysis. In addition, our question about a respondent’s income originally asked from the income of that individual alone and not the income of the respondent’s entire household that is traditional in GSS. While we still use our income variable on a limited basis as the two measures have a high correlation, calculations based off this demographic are excluded from our analysis.

In order to measure an individual’s connection to the Brony community, we constructed an index variable of a large number of responses concerning the cohesion of the adult fan community. The questions internal to this index came from three sources: our own creation, a survey conducted at the 2013 Brony Convention entitled, the State of the Herd, and those administered through the General Social Survey. While a slight problem exists in that individuals could have completed all three surveys, based on the populations of each of the three surveys, it is unlikely that any but a very small number of individuals will have completed even two of these devices. These component measures included how frequently respondents watched the program, whether the respondent open considered fan theories about the show, the level of purchase of products connected to the program, how often they participated in activities related to the show, whether they have ever donated to charities sponsored by the show, and how many fan-created groups they joined. The amalgam of these variables created a ‘Bronyism’ measure. This measure was then visually binned into a five category BRONYCAT measure (Table II).

|  |
| --- |
| Table II: BRONYCAT – Connectivity of Adult Fans of *My Little Pony* to the Franchise |
| Category | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| Very High | 23.1 | 23.1 | 23.1 |
| High | 19.0 | 19.0 | 42.0 |
| Moderate | 20.5 | 20.5 | 62.6 |
| Low | 17.8 | 17.8 | 80.3 |
| Very Low | 19.7 | 19.7 | 100.0 |
| Mean | 2.92 |  |  |
| Median | 3.00 |  |  |
| Standard Deviation | 1.44 |  |  |

Three additional variables were created to measure the overall political viewpoints of the adult fans of the program: Alienation, CONFIDENCE, and Cynicism. ALIENATION was created as an index variable using five separate measures of whether adult fans of the program felt disconnected from political leaders, political institutions and overall society; a strong correlation (above .85) exists among all of these variables. The ALIENATION index is a ten category Likert variable displaying little skewness approximating a normal curve. In contrast the CONFIDENCE variable was created using three separate measures assessing the confidence adult fans have in the political leaders of the three branches of government. Again, there is a why correlation among these three component variables. In aggregate, the Bronies displayed poor confidence in our political institutions as few of the fans reported having any more than moderate confidence in the leaders of any of the three branches and a majority of all respondents have poor to very poor confidence in the leaders of at least two branches. Finally, the CYNICISM index variable was created five component measures of whether adult fans perceived political leaders as honest representatives of their constituents’ preferences. Somewhat surprisingly, CYNICISM did not display a strong sense of cynicism among the fans of the program. Instead a consistent belief that the median elected official has the best intentions in conducting their job representing her constituents. This holding remained robust when all the demographics listed above isolated the effect.

In addition of these variables, a basic two dimensional representation of the political ideology of adult fans of the program revealed both that Bronies were more left-of-center than Americans but that their positioning on this simple measure is more divergent (Table III).

|  |
| --- |
| Table III: Two Dimensional Ideology: Liberal or Conservative? |
|   | Brony | GSS |
| Extremely Liberal – Coded 1 | 9.9 | 1.9 |
| Liberal  | 23.8 | 10.5 |
| Lean Liberal  | 19.1 | 17.4 |
| Moderate  | 20.2 | 38.1 |
| Lean Conservative  | 11.5 | 18.5 |
| Conservative  | 11.7 | 11.8 |
| Extremely Conservative – Coded 7 | 3.8 | 1.8 |
| Mean  | 3.50  | 4.03  |
| Median  | 3.00  | 4.00  |
| Standard Deviation  | 2.709  | 1.584  |

 A large number of additional measures were included in the survey instrument (Appendix).

**Results**

 To determine the impact of an individuals connection to the Brony community on their political opinions we conducted three simple linear regressions using ALIENATION, CONFIDENCE and CYNICISM as our dependent variable along with regressors of Bronism, and our demographics (Table IV).

|  |
| --- |
| Table IV: Is Bronyism a Predictor of ALIENATION, CONFIDENCE and CYNICISM |
|  | ALIENATION | CONFIDENCE | CYNICISM |
| Variable | Coefficient (S.E.) | Coefficient (S.E.) | Coefficient (S.E.) |
| ConstantBronyism | -.119 (.441) | 2.371 (.405)\*\*\* | 2.350\*\*\* |
| Bronyism | -.114 (.045)\*\*\* | -.031 (.041) | .096 (.047)\*\* |
| Education | -.030 (.061) | -.058 (.057) | .127 (.068)\* |
| Sex | -.087 (.147) | -.241 (.138)\* | -.179 (.164) |
| Marital Status | -.001 (.074) | .077 (.067) | -.065 (.082) |
| Race | -.447 (.153)\*\*\* | -.371 (.141)\*\*\* | .307 ((.170)\* |
| Adj. R2 | .013 | .009 | .008 |
| F | 3.569\*\*\* | 2.509\*\* | 2.480\*\* |
| Sig. | \*-<.1; \*\*<.05; \*\*\*<.01 |

 As can be seen, all three models woefully predicted the opinions of the respondents. However, there are some interesting results that do appear. First, our main variable of interest, Bronyism, did show a statistically significant impact in two of the three models. The more an individual is connected to the Brony community, the lower the level of that individual’s alienation but the higher the level of cyncism. The results of our statistical analysis are flected in the comments provided by attendees at the convention in Baltimore in the summer of 2014. A 23-year-old female stated that the show has changed her life and helped her to “become a conservative.” This puts her in two minority groups of the Brony fandom−female and conservative. Another young female fan when asked how she felt about the rulers of Equestria, said “[Celestia] always has the good of her people in mind and would protect them with her life.” When this same individual was question on their views of the American government, expressed “the government doesn't care about poor people. The government is a bunch of rich old white WASPs who only care about winning elections and making money. Their constituents, especially those in poverty, are completely unimportant to them.” This goes against the findings above which suggest as an adult fan of the program become more connected to this social community, their cynicism declines. When this same individual was asked if she believe the franchise influenced her, she responsed, “[It is] quite possible. I do definitely prefer the government and society in *My Little Pony*.” Another fan stated, “I believe *My Little Pony* has an… [effect on my] political view perhaps. It really makes people wonder if they are being a good friend to others and how they can make a difference in the world.”

In our interviews, male fans were significantly less likely to consider the ability of the program to impact their political attitudes. As one fan plainly stated, “My fandom does not impact [my] political opinions.” The cynicism that exsists within a segment of the Brony community and the general U.S. populace was evident. A 19-year-old male attendee remarked, “Look at a group of friends, maybe just 4 or 5. One of these kids is very likely to take advantage of the others in some sense of the word. Everyone is 'corrupt' in the sense that everyone will never come into complete agreement on any subject…Someone will always have more power and opinion will operate.”

**Conclusion**

Instead of meeting in a town square, they are meeting on web forums. Instead of funding local art and music, there are Brony patron accounts that have many monthly payments, to allow the fan artist to continue. Instead of feeling alienated from the world around them, Bronies feel as though they are apart of a powerful force. One person in *A Bronies Tale,* said that “I think the best part about being a Brony is that it just really is, you know, like, it's more than a fandom. It's more than a community. It really is like a big family.” Another interview says, “And about that sense of solidarity, that sense of community, and all those different things that really bring people together under a really wonderful umbrella.” Bronies are not socially isolated, but there are not physical interactions with Bronies available every day. However, as one of the members of SoCal Bronies, they “are excited to meet up,” and meet fellow Bronies.

Future research could be done on other fandoms, seeing if this phenomena is isolated to Bronies.

Works Cited

Adorno, T. W. *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception. Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader. SAGE Publications Ltd*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Atkinson, L. (2012). Buying In to Social Change: How Private Consumption Choices Engender Concern for the Collective. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 644*(1), 191-206. doi: 10.1177/0002716212448366

Brym, R. J. (1986). Politics. *Current Sociology, 34*(1), 43-74. doi: 10.1177/001139286034001006

Chapman, S. (2014). Rich People Will Always Beat Campaign Finance Restrictions. *Reason.com.* 2014

Chen, Q., Qimei, C., Shelly, R., & William, D. W. (2005). Learning from Pop Culture. *Marketing research (Chicago, Ill.), 17*(4), 26.

Cobb, M. D. (2004). Entertainment and Politics: The Influence of Pop Culture on Young Adult Socialization by David J. Jackson. *Perspectives on Politics, 2*(1), 144-145. doi: 10.2307/3688376

Costello, V., & Moore, B. (2007). Cultural Outlaws: An Examination of Audience Activity and Online Television Fandom. *Television & New Media, 8*(2), 124-143. doi: 10.1177/1527476406299112

Dahl, R. A. (1961). Who Participates in Local Politics and Why. *Science, 134*(3487), 1340-1348.

Dahl, R. A. (1996). Equality versus Inequality. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 29*(4), 639-648. doi: 10.2307/420786

Dorfman, A. M. A. (1975). *How to read Donald Duck : imperialist ideology in the Disney comic*. New York: International General.

Eckstein, K., Noack, P., & Gniewosz, B. (2013). Predictors of intentions to participate in politics and actual political behaviors in young adulthood. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT, 37*(5), 428-435. doi: 10.1177/0165025413486419

Fross, J. (2013). A Musical Survey of My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic.

Galston, W. A. (2007). Civic Knowledge, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement: A Summary of Recent Research. *International Journal of Public Administration, 30*(6-7), 623-642. doi: 10.1080/01900690701215888

Graber, D. A. (2004). Entertainment and Politics: The Influence of Pop Culture on Young Adult Political Socialization by David J. Jackson. *Political Science Quarterly, 119*(1), 193-194. doi: 10.2307/20202319

Grayson, K., Davies, M., & Philpott, S. (2009). Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture-World Politics Continuum. *Politics (Manchester, England), 29*(3), 155-163. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9256.2009.01351.x

Hanssen, F. A., & Fleck, R. K. (2013). When voice fails: potential exit as a constraint on government quality. *International review of law and economics, 35*, 26-41. doi: 10.1016/j.irle.2012.11.003

Healy, M. (2011). Civic Friendship. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 30*(3), 229-240. doi: 10.1007/s11217-011-9221-3

Hebdige, D. (2012). *Subculture : the meaning of style*: Taylor and Francis.

Ismail, Z. (2012). Media Influence on Public Opinion And The Perceptions Of Media Owners And Consumers About Its Effects. *International Journal of Psychology, 48*, 173-174.

Jindra, M. (1994). Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon. *Sociology of Religion, 55*(1), 27-51.

Koch, N. S. (2004). Entertainment and Politics: The Influence of Pop Culture on Young Adult Political Socialization Entertainment and Politics: The Influence of Pop Culture on Young Adult Political Socialization By David J. Jackson. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002. Pp. 167. $24.95 paper). *The Journal of Politics, 66*(03), 975-977. doi: doi:10.1111/j.0022-3816.2004.286\_7.x

McAtee, A., & Wolak, J. (2011). Why People Decide to Participate in State Politics. *Political Research Quarterly, 64*(1), 45-58. doi: 10.1177/1065912909343581

Nee, R. C. (2013). Social TV and the 2012 Election: Exploring Political Outcomes of Multiscreen Media Usages. *Electronic News, 7*(4), 171-188. doi: 10.1177/1931243113515677

Nickoli, A. (2003). Pop culture, crime and pedagogy. *Journal of criminal justice education, 14*(1), 149.

Norris, P. (1996). Does Television Erode Social Capital? A Reply to Putnam. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 29*(3), 474-480.

Pennock, J. R., Chapman, J. W., American Society for, P., & Legal, P. (1975). *Participation in politics* (Vol. 16). New York: New York : Lieber-Atherton, 1975.

Robertson, V. L. D. (2014). Of Ponies and Men: My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic and the Brony Fandom. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 17*(1), 21-37. doi: 10.1177/1367877912464368

Sandlin, J. A., & Milam, J. L. (2008). "Mixing Pop (Culture) and Politics": Cultural Resistance, Culture Jamming, and Anti-Consumption Activism as Critical Public Pedagogy. *Curriculum Inquiry, 38*(3), 323-350. doi: 10.2307/25475909

Saunders, C. (2014). Anti-politics in Action? Measurement Dilemmas in the Study of Unconventional Political Participation. *Political Research Quarterly, 67*(3), 574-588. doi: 10.1177/1065912914530513

Shah, D. V. (1998). Civic Engagement, Interpersonal Trust, and Television Use: An Individual-Level Assessment of Social Capital. *Political Psychology, 19*(3), 469-496. doi: 10.1111/0162-895X.00114

Stockemer, D. (2014). What drives unconventional political participation? A two level study. *The Social Science Journal, 51*(2), 201-211. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2013.10.012

Ulmer, S. S. T., David. (1961). *Introductory Readings in Political Behavior* (S. S. Ulmer Ed.). Chicago: Chicago, Rand McNally.

Walsh, K. C. (2004). *Talking about politics: informal groups and social identity in American life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press Chicago.

Wellman, B., Haase, A. Q., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet Increase, Decrease, or Supplement Social Capital?: Social Networks, Participation, and Community Commitment. *American Behavioral Scientist, 45*(3), 436-455. doi: 10.1177/00027640121957286

Yamamoto, M., Kushin, M. J., & Dalisay, F. (2013). Social media and mobiles as political mobilization forces for young adults: Examining the moderating role of online political expression in political participation. *New Media & Society*. doi: 10.1177/1461444813518390

Zack, S. N. (2010). Invest Now For Future Dividends: Better Civic Education Will Inform Our Children and Inspire Them To Participate. *ABA Journal, 96*(12), 8.

**Appendix: Online Survey and Variables Included in the Online Survey Instrument**

|  |
| --- |
| **MLP Questions** |

Have you ever watched My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic?

*  Yes
*  No

On a scale from 1 to 100, with one being 1 being very little and 100 being full detailed knowledge, how well would you rate your knowledge of My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic?

|   |  |  | 010 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Knowledge Level |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |

Have you looked up, read or investigated fan created theories of the show?

*  Yes
*  No

Have you ever been to any convention focused on My Little Pony?

*  Yes, and I plan on going again
*  Yes, and I do not plan on going again
*  No, I have been unable to attend
*  No, I have no interest in going

Interest in Brony Activities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not Interested | Slightly Interested | Interested | Strongly Interested | Have Already Done |

 |  |  |
|   |  |  | 010 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |  |  |
| Attending a casual meetup with brony friends |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Attending a scheduled meet up that included strangers |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Attending a non-brony event with a group of bronies |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |

Would you be comfortable displaying brony behaviors...

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very Uncomfortable | Somewhat Uncomfortable | Somewhat Comfortable | Very Comfortable |

 |  |  |
|   |  |  | 010 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |  |  |
| around the house |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| around relatives |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| at school or work |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| in public |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| in a romantic situation |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |

What type of My Little Pony merchandise have you bought? Please click all that apply

*  Toys (Hasbro or a Licensee)
*  Clothing
*  Comics from IDW
*  Calenders, Posters, Books, or Other Printed Products
*  Fan Produced Music
*  Fan Produced Toys (Plushies, Customs, Etc)
*  Commercially Produced DVDs
*  Officially Licensed Games
*  Other

How many days during a typical week do you do generally do the following?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

 |  |  |
|   |  |  | 01 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |  |
| Watch Episodes of My Little Pony |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Listening to music from My Little Pony aside from watching the show |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Watch PMVs and Other Fan Created Video focused on the topic of My Little Pony |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Listen to "Brony Music" |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Read Brony Fanfic - fiction created around the Brony community |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Create Brony Art |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Write Brony Fanfic |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Create Brony Music |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |

Have you, or would you ever, donate to Brony created Charities? Please click all that apply

*  Yes, I have donated to Bronies for Good, the Brony Thank You Fund, and/or Kiki's Fund.
*  Yes, I have donated to other Brony Charities
*  No, I have no interest in donating
*  No, but I have interest in donating to any of the organizations
*  No, but I have interest in donating to one of the organizations

Who is your favorite pony?



Who is your favorite non-pony character?



What is your favorite season?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|   |   |   |   |

What is your favorite episode?



|  |
| --- |
| **Agree or Not** |

Now we are interested in your general opinions on society. Please answer whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

What you think doesn't count very much anymore.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree/ Unsure | Disagree | Not Applicable | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

Most people with power try to take advantage of people like yourself.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | Neither agree or disagree/ Unsure | Disagree | Not Applicable | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

You're left out of things going on around you.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree/ Unsure | Disagree | Not Applicable | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |
| **Agree or Not Detailed** |

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Most public officials (people in public office) are not really interested in the problems of the average man.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | Neither agree or disagree/ Unsure | Disagree | Not Applicable | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

The people running the country don't really care what happens to you.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | Neither agree or disagree/ Unsure | Disagree | Not Applicable | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

 I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Applicable | Unsure or Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Most of the time you can be sure other people want the best for you.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Applicable | Unsure or Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

People who are better off should help friends who are less well off.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Applicable | Unsure or Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

All in all, one can live well in America.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Applicable | Unsure or Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Helpful | Looking Out For Themselves | I think it is equal | Not Applicable | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |
| **Block 2** |

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time only some of the time, or almost never?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Almost Always | Most of the Time | Some of the Time | Almost Never | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

Most politicians are in politics only for what they can get out of it personally.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

People we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they have made during the election.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Does the federal government have too much power or too little power?

|   | Far Too Much Power | Too Much Power | Right Amount of Power | Too Little Power | Far Too Little Power | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |   |   |   |   |  |   |  |

Which of these two statements comes closer to your view?

*  Decisions should be left to government representatives.
*  Citizen organizations should be involved.
*  Unsure
*  Do not wish to answer

|  |
| --- |
| **Personal Interests** |

How interested would you say you personally are in politics?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very Interested | Fairly Interested | Somewhat Interested | Not At All Interested | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

Do you belong and actively participate to a political party?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Belong and Actively Participate | Belong But Don't Participate | Used To Belong | Never Belonged | Never belonged but do participate | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

In the past year have you made any financial donations to the following: Please click all that apply

*  Organizations involved in the Arts, Culture, or the Humanities
*  Local Religious Congregation
*  Any Group Advocating Social Change

|  |
| --- |
| **Groups** |

Now we would like to know something about the groups or organizations to which you belong. Here is a list of various organizations. Please check any that belong to.

*  Fraternal Groups
*  Service Clubs
*  Veterans Groups
*  Political Clubs
*  Labor Unions
*  Sports Groups
*  Youth Groups
*  School Service
*  Hobby Clubs
*  Nationality Groups
*  Farm Organizations
*  Literature or Arts Groups
*  Professional Societies
*  Religious Groups
*  Any Other Groups

Have you done any voluntary activity in the past 12 months in any of the following areas? Voluntary activity is unpaid work, not just belonging to an organization or group. It should be of service or benefit to other people or the community and not only to one's family or personal friends. During the last 12 months did you do volunteer work in any of the following areas:

|   |   |   | No | Yes 1-2 Times | Yes 3-5 Times | Yes 6 or More | Not Applicable |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political activities (helping political parties, political movements, election campaigns, etc.) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Charitable activities (helping the sick, elderly, poor, etc.) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Religious and church related activities (helping churches and religious groups) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Any other kind of voluntary activities |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| **Local Gov.** |

How much of the time do you think you can trust your **local** government to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time, only some of the time, or almost never?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Almost Always | Most of the Time | Some of the Time | Almost Never | Don't Know | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

Do you always vote in **local** elections, do you sometimes miss one, or do you rarely vote, or do you never vote?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Vote in All | Sometimes Miss | Rarely Vote | Never Vote | Unsure or Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

Suppose you wanted the **local** government to bring about some improvement in your local community. How likely is it that you would be able to do something about it?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very Likely | Somewhat Likely | Not Very Likely | Not At All Likely | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

If you had some complaint about a **local** government activity and took that complaint to a member of the local government council, would you expect him or her to pay a lot of attention to what you say, some attention, very little attention, or none at all?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Lot of Attention | Some | Very Little | None | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

How much influence do you think people like you can have over**local** government decisions -- a lot, a moderate amount, a little, or none at all?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A Lot | Moderate Amount | Little | None | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

Have you ever worked with others in your community to try to solve some community problems?

*  Yes
*  No
*  Unsure
*  Do not wish to answer

Have you ever personally gone to see, or spoken to, or written to -- some member of **local** government or some other person of influence in the community about some needs or problems?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | No | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |

Was this need or problem primarily of concern to you, your friends and family, or was it an issue of wider concern?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Self, Friends, Family | Both | Wider Concern | Don't Know |
|   |   |   |   |
| **Closeness** |

How close do you feel to...

|   |   |   | Very Close | Close | Not Very Close | Not Close At All | Cannot Decide | Do Not Want To Answer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| America? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| Your state? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Your town or city? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Your neighborhood (or village)? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Obligations** |

I'd like to ask now about certain obligations that some people feel American citizens owe their country. I just want your own opinion on these--whether you feel it is a very important obligation, a somewhat important obligation, or not an obligation that a citizen owes to the country.

First, to vote in elections?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not An Obligation | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

Keeping fully informed about news and public issues

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not An Obligation | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

How about volunteering some time to community services?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not An Obligation | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |

Please answer the following general questions. Please rate your opinion on a scale from Not important to very important. How important is it…

|   |   |   | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Slightly important | Neither Important nor Unimportant | Slightly unimportant | Very little importance | Not Important at All | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| To help people in America who are worse off than yourself |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| To help people in the rest of the world who are worse off than yourself |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| That citizens may engage in acts of civil disobedience when they oppose government actions |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| That government authorities respect and protect the rights of minorities |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| That politicians take into account the views of citizens before making decisions |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| That government authorities treat everybody equally regardless of their position in society. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Confidence in Institutions** |

As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

|   |   |   | A Great Deal | Only Some | Hardly Any | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Executive Branch of the Federal Government |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| U.S. Supreme Court |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Congress |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Press |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Demographics** |

Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

|   |   | Haven't Thought About it | Extremely Liberal | Liberal | Lean Liberal | Moderate | Lean Conservative | Conservative | Extremely Conservative | Unsure | Do not wish to answer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

What is your sex?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Male | Female | Other | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |

Are you currently--married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Married | Widowed | Divorced | Separated | Never Married | Do not wish to answer |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

What is your ethnicity?

*  Caucasian/White
*  African American/Black
*  Hispanic/Latino
*  Asian
*  Middle eastern
*  Pacific Islander
*  Native American/Alaskan
*  Multiple ethnicities
*  Unsure/Unwilling to answer

What is your highest level of education?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Less Than High School | High School | Associate/Junior College | Bachelor's | Graduate |
|   |   |   |   |   |

What is your total income? Total income includes interest or dividends, rent, Social Security, other pension, alimony or child support, unemployment compensation, public aid (welfare), armed forces or veteran’s allotment.



Survey Powered By [Qualtrics](http://www.qualtrics.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Variable Name | Description | Reasoning |
| alienat1 | Question asking if respondents agree, are neutral, or disagree with the following statement: The people running the country don't really care what happens to you. | To help see the Bronies perception of Government |
| alienat3 | Question asking if they agree, are neutral, or disagree with the following statement: What you think doesn't count very much anymore. | To help see the Bronies perception of Government and society  |
| alienat4 | Question asking if respondents agree, are neutral, or disagree with the following statement: You're left out of things going on around you. | To help see the Bronies perception of Government and society |
| alienat5 | Question asking if respondents agree, are neutral, or disagree with the following statement: Most people with power try to take advantage of people like you. | To help see the Bronies perception of Government and society |
| anomia7 | Question asking if respondents agree, are neutral, or disagree with the following statement: Most public officials (people in public office) are not really interested in the problems of the average man. | To help see the Bronies perception of Government and society |
| citviews | Scale question from “Not at All Important” to “Very Important,” asking “That politicians take into account the views of citizens before making decisions” | To help see the Bronies perception of Government and society, as well as values |
| clsenei | Scale question from “Not Close at All” to “Very Close” asking, how close do the respondents feel to their neighborhood (or village)?” | To see if Bronies are closer to certain levels of location stronger than others |
| clsestat | Scale question from “Not Close at All” to “Very Close” asking how close do the respondents feel to their state? | To see if Bronies are closer to certain levels of location stronger than others |
| clsetown | Scale question from “Not Close at All” to “Very Close” asking how close do the respondents feel to their town or city? | To see if Bronies are closer to certain levels of location stronger than others |
| clseusa | Scale question from Not Close at All” to “Very Close” asking how close do the respondents feel to America? | To see if Bronies are closer to certain levels of location stronger than others |
| confed | A scale question asking from “Hardly Any” to “A Great Deal,” about the people running the Executive Branch of the Federal Government are concerned how much do you trust them? | To see the perception that Bronies have of the people running Government, rather than just the institution |
| conjudge | A scale question asking from “Hardly Any” to “A Great Deal,” about the people running the U.S. Supreme Court are concerned how much do you trust them? | To see the perception that Bronies have of the people running Government, rather than just the institution |
| conlegis | A scale question asking “Hardly Any” to “A Great Deal,” about the people running the Congress are concerned how much do you trust them? | To see the perception that Bronies have of the people running Government, rather than just the institution |
| conpress | A scale question asking from “Hardly Any” to “A Great Deal,” about the people running the Press are concerned how much do you trust them? | To see the perception that Bronies have of the people running Government, rather than just the institution |
| eqtreat | Scale question from “Not At All Important” to “Very Important,” asking how the respondent feels about if “government authorities treat everybody equally regardless of their position in society.” | To see the type of Government Bronies find ideal |
| equal6 | A scale question from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” to the statement “All in all, one can live well in America.” | To see if Bronies are cynical of the ability to thrive in America. |
| fedtrust | A scale question from “Almost Never” to “Almost Always,” asking “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?” | To see the perception that Bronies have of the institution |
| givart | A question asking if in the past year has the respondent “made any financial donations to organizations involved in the Arts, Culture, or the Humanities?” | To see if Bronies participate in civic activities |
| givchng | A question asking if in the past year has the respondent “made any financial donations to a local religious congregation?” | To see if Bronies participate in civic activities |
| govngos | A question asking “Which of these two statements comes closer to your view?” with the responses ranging from decisions should be left to government representatives, to citizen organizations should be involved. | To see if Bronies participate in civic activities |
| govtpow | A scale question from, Far too Little Power to Far too Much Power, asking “Does the federal government have too much power or too little power?” | To see the perception that Bronies have of the institution |
| grpparty | A scale question regarding political parties with the selections: “Never Belonged”, “Never belonged but do participate”, “Used To Belong”, “Belong But Don't Participate”, “Belong and Actively Participate.” | To see if Bronies participate in civic activities |
| helpfrds | A scale question from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” to the statement, “People who are better off should help friends who are less well off.” | To see if Bronies are cynical. |
| helpful | A question asking, “Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?” | To see if Bronies are cynical. |
| helpusa | Scale question from “Not At All Important” to “Very Important,” asking how the respondent feels about helping “people in America who are worse off than yourself.” | To see if Bronies are cynical. |
| helpwrld | Scale question from “Not At All Important” to “Very Important,” asking how the respondent feels about helping “people in the rest of the world who are worse off than yourself | To see if Bronies are cynical. |
| KeepUp | A scale question asking about if respondents feel it is an obligation to keep fully informed about news and public issues, ranging from “Not an Obligation” to “Very Important?” | To see what Bronies feel is a citizen’s obligation.  |
| localgvt | A scale question about how much the respondent believes they can bring about change in their local government, ranging from “Not At All Likely” to “Very Likely.” | To see Bronies efficacy  |
| loccare | A scale question asking how much the respondent thinks that local officials are willing to listen to problems, ranging from “None” to “Lot of Attention.” | To see Bronies opinion of local government and their efficacy |
| locinflu | A scale question asking how much the respondent thinks that people like them can have over local government decisions, ranging from “None” to “A Lot.” | To see Bronies opinion of local government and their efficacy |
| loclobby | A question asking if the respondent has ever lobbied local government. | To measure Bronies efficacy and civic engagement |
| locprob | A dichotomous question asking if the respondent has ever worked with others in their community to try to solve some community problems. | To measure Bronies efficacy and civic engagementTo measure Bronies efficacy and civic engagement |
| locself | If yes to loclobby, further exploration into the issue was explored if the problem was primarily of concern to the respondent, friends or family, or an issue of wider concern, or was it a mix of both. |  |
| loctrust | A scale question asking how much of the time does the respondent trust their local government, ranging from “Almost Never” to “Almost Always.” |  |
| locvote | A scale question asking how much of the time does the respondent vote in local elections, ranging from “Never Vote” to “Vote in All” |  |
| oppsegov | Scale question from “Not At All Important” to “Very Important,” asking how the respondent feels if citizens are able to “engage in acts of civil disobedience when they oppose government actions.” |  |
| Orgs\_1 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Fraternal Groups |  |
| Orgs\_10 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Nationality Groups |  |
| Orgs\_11 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Farm Organizations |  |
| Orgs\_12 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Literature or Arts Groups |  |
| Orgs\_13 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Professional Societies |  |
| Orgs\_14 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Religious Groups |  |
| Orgs\_15 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Any Other Groups |  |
| Orgs\_2 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Service Clubs |  |
| Orgs\_3 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Veterans Groups |  |
| Orgs\_4 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Political Clubs |  |
| Orgs\_5 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Labor Unions |  |
| Orgs\_6 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Sports Groups |  |
| Orgs\_7 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Youth Groups |  |
| Orgs\_8 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any School Service |  |
| Orgs\_9 | Asking if the respondent is a part of any Hobby Clubs |  |
| poleff13 | A scale question from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” to the statement “I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country” |  |
| poleff16 | A scale question from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” to the statement, “People we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they have made during the election.” |  |
| polgreed | A scale question from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” to the statement, “Most politicians are in politics only for what they can get out of it personally.” |  |
| rghtsmin | Scale question from “Not At All Important” to “Very Important,” asking how the respondent feels “that government authorities respect and protect the rights of minorities.” |  |
| Vol\_ComSer | A scale question asking about if respondents feel it is an obligation to volunteer some time to community services, ranging from “Not an Obligation” to “Very Important”? |  |
| volwkchr | A question asking if the respondent has done any voluntary activity in the past 12 months in charitable activities (helping the sick, elderly, poor, etc.) with the responses: “No”, “Yes 1-2 Times”, “Yes 3-4” , “Yes 6 or more.” |  |
| volwkoth | A question asking if the respondent has done any voluntary activity in the past 12 months in any other kind of voluntary activities with the responses: “No”, “Yes 1-2 Times”, “Yes 3-4” , “Yes 6 or more.” |  |
| volwkpol | A question asking if the respondent has done any voluntary activity in the past 12 months in political activities (helping political parties, political movements, election campaigns, etc.) with the responses: “No”, “Yes 1-2 Times”, “Yes 3-4” , “Yes 6 or more.” |  |
| volwkrel | A question asking if the respondent has done any voluntary activity in the past 12 months in religious and church related activities (helping churches and religious groups) with the responses: “No”, “Yes 1-2 Times”, “Yes 3-4” , “Yes 6 or more.” |  |
| Vote | A scale question asking about if respondents feel it is an obligation to vote in elections, ranging from “Not an Obligation” to “Very Important” | To see what if anything Bronies see as an obligation |
| wantbest | A scale question from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” to the statement, “Most of the time you can be sure other people want the best for you.” | To see if Bronys are cynical. |

Table XIII. Modified Dependent Variables

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Variable Name | Description | Reasoning |
| grpparty\_stat | A modified coding of the question “Do you belong and actively participate to a political party?” to:“Never Belonged”, “Used To Belong”, “Belong But Don't Participate”, “Belong and Actively Participate.” | We wanted to see how many people went through the conventional means of political participation |
| Org\_15\_Coded\_YN | Any Other Groups, Forced Yes No Organizations | We wanted to be able to statistically analyze the answers |

Tabel XIV. Index Dependent Variables

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Variable Name | Description | Reasoning |
| alienation\_combined | COMPUTEalienation\_combined=SUM(alienat3,alienat5,alienat4,anomia7,alienat1) |  |
| cynicism | COMPUTE cynicism=SUM(wantbest,polgreed,poleff13,helpfrds,equal6) |  |
| clse\_all | COMPUTE clse\_all=SUM(clseusa,clsestat,clsetown,clsenei) | To see if Bronies feel close to all locations |
| clse\_far | COMPUTE clse\_far=SUM(clseusa,clsestat) | To see if Bronies are closer to certain levels of location stronger than others |
| clse\_local | COMPUTE clse\_local=SUM(clsetown,clsenei) | To see if Bronies are closer to certain levels of location stronger than others |
| confidence\_institutions | COMPUTE confidence\_institutions=SUM(confed,conjudge,conlegis,conpress) |  |
| Feel\_Important | COMPUTE Feel\_Important=SUM(helpusa,helpwrld,oppsegov,rghtsmin,citviews,eqtreat) |  |
| obligations\_Combined | COMPUTE obligations\_Combined=SUM(Vote,KeepUp,Vol\_ComSer) |  |
| Org\_Participation | Combination of all the different organizations the Respondents are a part of | To see how civically active Bronies are. |
| trust\_gov | fedtrust+loctrust |  |
| volwk\_combined | COMPUTE volwk\_combined=SUM(grppol,volwkchr,grpchurh,grpoth) |  |