

Use of Social Media in Presidential Campaigns: Do Social Media Have an Effect on the Political Behavior of Voters Aged 18-24?

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Abstract

Today, the idea of social media is radically different from the media of a decade ago. While a decade ago the Internet and talk radio were considered new media, our society now turns to Facebook, Twitter, and blogs as sources of information. In the United States during election cycles, the use of social media by presidential candidates has become a way for many voters to find out about candidates, as well as their beliefs and stances. As a result, presidential candidates have had to adapt their campaign strategies to work with these media in a way that will effectively target these audiences. This study examines whether campaigns that are more “social media savvy” will ultimately garner more votes, specifically from those aged 18-24. By analyzing social media tactics of the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections and surveying likely voters in this age range, I hope to show the relationship between social media usage and youth voting behavior. The findings will be discussed in light of future presidential campaigns.

Introduction

On February 10, 2007 a relatively unknown junior Senator from Illinois announced his candidacy for president. Almost 20 months later, that unknown senator was elected President of the United States. Barack Obama's presidential campaign was unorthodox. As Simba (2009) noted, Obama's campaign success had frequently been credited to his public speaking and ability to inspire. However, his use of the Internet and social media to engage new voters provided Obama with a level of support that most candidates never see.

Having utilized these media, Obama was able to get a new generation of voters involved in the political process. The Obama campaign not only revolutionized how campaigns reached out to their audiences, but it also affected how they fundraised. Simba pointed out that the Obama campaign outspent their Republican opponent for the first time in years. The use of the Internet as a fundraising tool led to a remarkably high number of small donations.

Although Barack Obama's campaign marked the most successful use of new and social media by a presidential candidate, it certainly did not mark the first. Howard Dean's 2004 bid for the democratic presidential nomination was the country's first glimpse into what Internet campaigning was capable of producing. Murray (2005) stated that Howard Dean's rise to fame was centered around his use of new and social media. Much like Barack Obama, Howard Dean was unknown prior to announcing his candidacy. By disseminating his message through the new and social media, Dean was able to mobilize a new group of supporters. These supporters thrived on the ease the Internet provided in making a donation, getting information, or coordinating an event.

Although Internet use was the main factor in setting Dean's campaign apart from other

candidates, Murray also pointed out that Dean utilized this new technology to target a new demographic: young voters. Murray stated that young voters were typically early adopters of new technology so Dean's use of these methods clearly showed his dedication to reaching out to these voters in particular.

Murray goes on to cite a study by the Pew Charitable Trust's Internet, Politics, and Democracy Online project, which found that the majority of individuals who engaged with candidates online during the 2004 primary were individuals who had never before been politically engaged. The influx of newly involved voters was pivotal to the support that Dean was able to gain, as he “would not have been able to gain the support of the traditional active party base with his seemingly progressive platform” (Murray, 2005, pg. 5).

The successful utilization of new and social media by both the Obama and Dean campaigns' could ultimately prove to be a models to follow in engaging the youth vote. As new and social media changes and evolves, it is those in the 18-24 age group who adopt and practice these new types of Internet use. The Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that 95% of 18-29 year-olds use the Internet, and 78% of all American adults use the Internet on a daily basis. As a result, it appears that it will be extremely important for politicians to tap in to this network moving forward. This research will ultimately test how important the use of social media is for voters aged 18-24 when voting in a Presidential election.

What are New Media?

Although several scholars have looked at the new media's impact and influence (Baum and Groeling 2008, Graber 1996, Han 2008, Morris 2002), few have actually provided a working definition of the term. In the most general sense, new media is an umbrella term for “emerging

communications technologies” (Peters, 2009, pg. 16), and is most commonly associated with those technologies that pertain to the Internet. However, Peters (2009) stated that for new media to remain new the definition has to constantly be evolving and changing as what is considered “new” is constantly evolving and changing. Peters then went on to provide two definitions for new media. The first was that “new media can be understood as emerging communication and information technologies undergoing a historical process of contestation, negotiation and institutionalization” (Peters, 2009, pg. 18). This definition relied on the readers understanding of the media evolution arc. The five stages of the arc include invention, innovation, regulation, distribution, and mainstream. However, without prior knowledge of this process of media adaptation, the aforementioned definition makes little sense.

Peter's also defined new media as “media we do not yet know how to talk about” (2009, pg. 18). Ultimately, although it may prove true, this particular definition offers little help in understanding new media. As a result, I will utilize a combination of the previous ideas. The term new media will refer to an umbrella term for communications technologies that utilize the Internet as their primary platform and are constantly changing and evolving.

What are Social Media?

Social media can be characterized as a type of new media. However, it is important to recognize that while social media may fall under the broad umbrella term of new media, social media has its own distinguishing factors. Social media utilizes social networking sites as its primary form of communication. The networking sites themselves are the platforms through which social media occurs. In order to appropriately define social media, a working definition for social networking sites must first be established. Boyd and Ellison defined social networking

sites as:

web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (2008, pg. 211).

This definition provided an outline for describing social media. The platform that social media is carried out on is a system that allows individuals to share information with other individuals they list and find new individuals through their friends' lists. This is generally the model that social media follows. As a result, this paper will define social media as any technological communication that utilizes peer-to-peer networking as its primary form of disseminating information. Specifically, social media will refer to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs within this analysis.

Participation Effects on Voters in Presidential Elections

Participation effects are those influences which generally induce individuals to participate in the political process. Claasen (2007) claimed that “in a spatial model, citizens participate when their proximity calculations reveal a non-zero policy stake in the election outcome” (pg. 370). In other words, if an individual recognized that their personal beliefs are not challenged by either candidate in an election, they will not participate. And conversely, an individual on the opposite end of the political spectrum from a candidate would be much more likely to participate as their personal beliefs are challenged. Although this theory had been the traditionally accepted model, Claasen went on to claim that extremity of views may not play as large of a role in political participation as previously believed. Claasen ultimately concluded that extreme policy-motivated individuals participated in the political process because of their extreme views regardless of the

election, whereas proximity-motivated individuals only participated when they have a perceived stake in the outcome of the election.

In addition, studies done in the 60s and 70s showed that racial solidarity also proved to be a factor in political participation (Chong and Rogers 2007). However, Chong and Rogers pointed out that the same correlation between racial solidarity and political participation have been lacking in more recent studies. Chong and Rogers attributed this declining correlation to differences in definition of both group solidarity and political participation. They went on to find that there are two types of group solidarity within the black community: common fate and black autonomy. According to Chong and Rogers, those members of the “common fate” group tended to participate in a more traditional manner, where those members of the “black autonomy” group tended to favor more radical forms of political participation, such as protests and rallies. These findings had the potential to be applied to other ethnic groups, however Chong and Rogers warned against applying them without first doing further research. Considering that solidarity can change over time, Chong and Rogers reasoned that it can also change across racial and ethnic groups.

Candidate Evaluation Effects on Voters in Presidential Elections

Candidate Evaluation, or voter choice, effects refer specifically to those influences that impact who a voter chooses to vote for in a presidential election. McClurg and Holbrook (2009) stated that partisanship and presidential evaluation are fundamental influencers of voter choice. However, McClurg and Holbrook claimed that these influencers can “vary in importance across campaign contexts of differing intensity” (2009, pg. 495). They believe that those voters in states that are heavily exposed to campaign materials will have more easily predicted votes, whereas

those voters in states where campaign exposure is limited will be less predictable. While voters in battleground states were more likely to participate, and be heavily exposed to the candidates and messages, voters in non-battleground states receive much less information about the candidates. This ultimately made predicting the choice of voters in battleground states much easier than predicting the choice of voters in non-battleground states.

Gilens, Vavreck, and Cohen (2007) focused on whether or not a decline of available information about political candidates is correlated with a decline in voters' ability to make informed decisions. Focusing on the 1952-2000 time frame, Gilens et al. found that news consumption had fallen dramatically over the past 50 years. While some of this is attributed to new news sources being harder to track, Gilens et al. stated that this does not make up for the majority of the decline. With such a sharp decline in available information, a similarly sharp decline could be expected in the ability of voters to choose a candidate for president. However, Gilens et al. found that there was no reason to believe that voters had decreased information about candidates. In addition, Gilens et al. found that voters' likelihood of citing policy-based reasons for their vote choice has increased over time while the likelihood of citing character-based reasons has decreased.

The Cable Effect

Although individuals gained 24-hour access to media sources through cable news channels, Graber (1996) believed that this uptick in media availability would not contribute to an uptick in media consumption. Graber argued that new media allowed individuals to form their own opinions and draw their own conclusions from the media sources they utilized, making it almost impossible for newsmakers to frame stories how they saw fit. Although Graber

acknowledged the exponential increase of news available due to new media, she believed that the production far outpaced the consumption. Graber stated that “while available food for political thought has grown, despite much overlap and redundancy, the appetite for it and the capacity to consume it remain limited” (1996, pg. 34). Ultimately, Graber warned that as technology and new media continued to evolve, the information gap “between the information privileged and the information underclass is likely to grow” (1996, pg. 36). She said that the influence that the educated class currently holds over politics will only continue to grow as these media resources advanced.

While Presidents have relied on broadcast television to disseminate information to the American people, the rise of cable television has contributed to a smaller audience. Cable television provided citizens with the ability to simply change the channel—an ability that was not afforded when broadcast television was the primary medium. Baum and Kernell (1996) attempted to find whether this smaller audience could actually be attributed to cable's popularity or if it was more directly related to political disaffection. Essentially, they looked at whether viewers were less likely to watch the President because they were previously interested in something on cable, or if they were less likely to watch the President because they had an inherent dislike of politics, the political process, the current political climate or the current President.

What they found was that an increased availability and popularity of cable led to more and more Americans simply changing the channel when a President made a television appearance or announcement. In addition, with cable as competition, broadcast stations became less likely to give the President airtime. As a result of cable's dominance and influence, Baum

and Kernell cite the need for new strategies when it comes to presidential television. Most notably, they suggested that Presidents limit the number of television announcements to only those which were deemed most important. This would lead to an increase in viewers willing to watch these announcements.

New Media Effect

The influence of new media on candidate evaluation has become an increasingly important issue as the Internet becomes a more widely available medium. Tolbert and McNeil (2003) suggested that as the Internet became more widely utilized as a source of information about political candidates, voters would be more likely to be well-informed and participate in the political process. Tolbert and McNeil concluded that the Internet could help to fill a void that is left by broadcast and cable news. The void that has occurred with broadcast and cable news is an increasing amount of distrust among citizens. While the Internet allows for peer to peer interaction, cable and broadcast news is riddled with gatekeepers and newsmakers with biases. While they stated that increased use of the Internet in political campaigns should increase political participation, Tolbert and McNeil also believed that increased Internet use could have a negative effect on political participation. At the time that this article was written, Internet use was most frequently afforded to those who were already predisposed to political participations: upper-middle class, college educated citizens. Tolbert and McNeil reasoned that if political information was more heavily distributed on the Internet, groups without access to these resources may find themselves with a lack of information—leading to a lack of motivation to participate politically. Tolbert and McNeil concluded that new media, specifically the Internet, provided a solid opportunity to disseminate information and influence candidate evaluation in

limited quantities.

Morris (2002) attempted to see if new media sources dramatized news more so than traditional media sources, and if so, if this would ultimately negatively affect perceptions of political leaders. Morris ultimately found that Internet sources tended to dramatize stories more so than their broadcast and cable counterparts. He found that “aside from blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, dramatic portrayals of government and politics also breed a contemptuous public with regard to support for institutions, leaders, and the system as a whole” (Morris, 2002, pg. 37). Morris concluded that presenting dramatic news had no negative effect on the news outlets specifically as dramatized news attracted more viewers than straight facts—however, there was an inherent ethical dilemma with slating the views of your audience in order to gain a profit.

After completing his content analysis, Morris conducted an experiment in which one group of participants was exposed to what they thought was real news. The news presented to the first group was actually falsified, overly-dramatized news, while a second group was exposed to undramatic news. Through this experiment, Morris came to the conclusion that in reality overly-dramatic news did have a negative influence on perceptions of political leaders. Morris also found that those participants who were exposed to overly-dramatic news were much more hostile toward media sources than those who were exposed to undramatic news.

While the dramatization of new media news sources has been a cause for concern, the concept of new media encouraging ideological and partisan extremism has been discussed. Baum and Groeling (2008) looked at three distinct online news sources in an effort to distinguish the newsworthiness of their headlines in comparison to wire service headlines. They focused on DailyKos.com, FreeRepublic.com, and FoxNews.com, because “one clear manner in which the

Internet appears to differ from other mass media is the degree of niche targeting of political information-oriented Web sites” (Baum and Groeling, 2008, pg. 347). Baum and Groeling acknowledged that one of the principle difficulties in establishing a media bias is deciding what a bias inherently is. To avoid this problem, they compared the headlines from the aforementioned partisan outlets to those that are least likely to show bias—namely the wire services Reuters and the Associated Press. Baum and Groeling accomplished this by completing a content analysis of the partisan news outlets and the wire services. In doing so, Baum and Groeling assumed that non-partisan news outlets, whether traditional or new media, did not select news stories because they would be advantageous to a certain political party. However, they did believe that this would be a driving factor behind partisan news outlets.

Ultimately, Baum and Groeling found that DailyKos.com, FreeRepublic.com, and FoxNews.com all showed an inherent bias in news story selection. They found that each of these news sources was more likely to choose stories based on their implied ability to benefit the political party most closely associated with their ideologies. Although they admitted that the Associated Press showed a slight slant at times, overall wire services were markedly less biased in their story choice. Baum and Groeling cited a 2006 survey by the PEW Center on Media Consumption that found that while fewer people tend to follow partisan news sources, those who do follow partisan news source are “more likely than typical individuals to discuss politics with others and, in doing so, to disseminate their views to the broader public” (2008, pg. 360). This ultimately suggested that an increase of new media use for partisan means would have a large impact on the amount of partisan ideas disseminated.

Social Media Effect

During the 2008 Presidential Election, social media took off as a viable way for candidates to disseminate information. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) attempted to determine whether social media usage actually had an impact on political self-efficacy and involvement. Kushin and Yamamoto recognized the drastic rise in use of social media by political candidates during the 2008 Election, and the rise in those who utilized social media resources: “27% of adults younger than 30 reported obtaining campaign information from social network sites compared to 4% of adults age 30 to 39 and only 1% older than 40” (2010, pg. 613).

Kushin and Yamamoto used a survey that was completed two weeks prior to the 2008 Presidential Election at a large Northwestern University. The survey focused on three major factors of political involvement on the Internet: “attention to social media for campaign information, online expression about the campaign, and attention to traditional Internet sources for campaign information” (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010, pg. 616). It was expected that attention to social media during the 2008 Election would be positively connected to political self-efficacy and involvement—however, the survey found no significant positive connection between the two. Kushin and Yamamoto reasoned that at this point, social media platforms may simply be too new to have any significant impact on political self-efficacy and involvement. They suggested that further studies continue to explore the possibility that social media has an effect on political beliefs and involvement in the political process.

In terms of social media, Facebook has come out as a frontrunner in terms of peer-to-peer interaction. In a political campaign, social media resources, like Facebook, have allowed voters to become more politically engaged with candidates. Johnson and Perlmutter (2010) stated that while previous elections gave candidates the ability to control their image and message, social

media translated to “a new era where the candidates no longer have complete control over the message” (pg. 555). This idea lent itself to a new type of political campaign: one that still focused on traditional campaign techniques, but also incorporated and embraced the digital revolution of social media.

Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) also discussed the concept of candidates losing control of their message. They reasoned that on social media, an idea could go from a Tweet, to a blog post, to a national story in a matter of hours with almost no gatekeepers. This lack of gatekeepers, however, also pointed to a lack of fact-checkers and moderators: this ultimately meant that some of the information presented through social media was false. But, the nature of social media means that once information is put on the Internet it can never be retracted, regardless of whether it is true or false. Metzgar and Maruggi concluded that while social media can be detrimental to political candidates, if candidates accepted social media for what it is instead of fighting it, the benefits of reaching networks upon networks on untapped populations far outweighs any negative effects.

Summary and Hypotheses

The evolution of new media and social media has caused differing opinions on the impact it has during political elections. As these types of technology evolve and change, their use by young voters evolves and changes. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult to quantify the impact that these sources have on young voters. Prior research is quickly outdated and, in some cases, attempts to look at social media sources that are simply too new. These problems all contribute to the lack of agreement surrounding whether or not social media is an effective tool for targeting young voters during presidential elections.

In the earliest cases, such as Howard Dean's run for the Democratic nomination in 2004, social media was relied upon too heavily—to the point where those not engaged with these technologies fell out of the loop when it came to new information on the candidate. However, the reliance placed on social media during the 2008 Election been hailed as both revolutionary and non-impactful. Some claim that the sources used during the 2008 Election were simply too new to be able to accurately measure their impact.

Moving forward, how will social media sources influence the outcome of presidential campaigns? Will social media have any influence? Specifically: What effect do social media have on political participation? And what effect do social media have on candidate evaluation? I hypothesize, based upon past research, that:

H₁: The presence of social media in a presidential campaign will positively affect participation among voters aged 18-24.

H₂: The presence of social media in a presidential campaign will positively affect support of that candidate among voters aged 18-24.

Research Design and Methodology

In order to test my hypotheses, I designed a quasi-experimental study where a fictitious candidate's use of social media and the candidate's partisanship will be manipulated. The experimental manipulation will be embedded within a survey questionnaire (see Appendix A for the general survey, and Appendixes B-D for the experimental manipulations) measuring general political attitudes and behavior. Participants will read a candidate brochure where the candidate is either a republican or a democrat who either uses or does not use social media. The research design is a classic 2 x 2 (candidate partisanship x social media usage) factorial design.

Participants

The questionnaire will be distributed to undergraduates at a regional liberal arts university in the northeast enrolled in general education classes. Participants will not be told the purpose of the study prior to taking the survey, but they will be debriefed on its purpose following completion. Respondents will first be asked standard SRC/NES questions to measure their political participation, partisan and ideological self-identification, weekly political information gathering habits, and candidate information gathering methods. Participants are then asked to read a candidate brochure that includes background information, political experience, policy views, and social media use. Following the candidate brochure respondents are asked to evaluate their likelihood of voting for, their reasons for choosing to support or not support the candidate, and their likelihood of participating in the election. Finally, respondents are asked standard demographic characteristics.

Measures

The independent variables in this study are candidate partisanship and social media use. Candidate partisanship is experimentally manipulated as either Democrat or Republican in an attempt to whether the political party of the candidate makes a difference in respondent evaluations of the candidate. Social media use is manipulated by reference in the candidate brochure with the candidate either being very active on social media or completely inactive. This will allow for analysis of the role that social media plays in candidate evaluation and political participation.

Two dependent variables are of primary interest, with both being measured on a five point scale. The first dependent variable is the likelihood that the participant would vote in the upcoming election where the candidate that (s)he read about in the candidate brochure was on

the ballot. Intention to vote is measured by the following question:

How likely are you to vote in the upcoming election where candidate Smith is on the ballot? (response categories range from very likely to very unlikely)

The second dependent variable is the respondent's evaluation of the candidate and is measured by the question:

Having read John Smith's campaign brochure, how would you rate John Smith? (response categories range from strongly positive to strongly negative)

Analysis and Expected Results

The hypotheses will be tested using an analysis of variance statistical analysis. I wish analyze whether either of the experimentally manipulated factors (focusing mainly on presence or absence social media) has a statistically significant effect on either voter participation or candidate evaluation. Given the limited sample size, conclusions will be drawn with caution.

I expect that the presence of social media will cause a significant increase on both voter participation and positive candidate evaluation. However, prior to analyzing my data it is important to recognize that candidate party could play a role in lowering the significance of my results. For example, a respondent may not have a positive candidate evaluation because they do not agree with the ideology or issue positions of a particular candidate regardless of their social media use.

Discussion and Conclusion

Future extensions of this study would need to consider both sample and survey design in order to appropriately expand upon my findings. A more representative sample, broadening the age range of 18-24 year olds to 18-98 year olds is in order. A sample of college students aged 18-

24 is problematic in that this age group is younger and therefore lacks experience in the political realm. In addition, the characteristics of this sample group may tend to bias the results.

When expanding on this study, it would be helpful to include a two-candidate presentation. This will provide an opportunity for participants to directly compare two candidates—this would be more realistic of actual elections. A two candidate race could either be inter-party (i.e. one republican and one democrat), or intra-party (a primary setting with either two republicans or two democrats). In each setting one candidate would utilize social media, while the other would not use social media. For the primary campaign design, this would allow the participant to directly evaluate candidates with similar beliefs, with the only experimental manipulation being social media use.

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Appendix A

Introduction: The following survey is being conducted in conjunction with an undergraduate research project at Roger Williams University. Participation in this survey is voluntary and can be stopped at any time. All responses will remain anonymous and results from the survey will be used in an academic research project and will be presented at an academic conference.

As a thank-you for participating, a raffle will be held after all survey sessions have been completed. The prizes for the raffle will be (10) \$10 Dunkin' Donuts gift cards. In order to be entered in to the raffle, a respondent must fill out the appropriate entry form (which includes an email address and cell phone number). This entry form will not be linked with your survey, and any information given will not be used for any purpose other than the raffle.

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong responses. Please be sure to clearly mark your responses to each question with a darkened mark in the appropriate circle. For questions which ask for an explanation, please answer in the space provided.

Section One

The questions in section one are intended to gain more information about your political behavior.

1. Were you eligible to vote in the 2008 Presidential Election?

- Yes
- No

(If yes, please proceed to Question 2. If no, please proceed to Question 3.)

2. Who did you vote for in the 2008 Presidential Election?

- Barack Obama
- John McCain
- Ralph Nader
- Other (please specify): _____

3. On a scale of 1-5, where 1= very inactive and 5=very active, how active would you say you are in the political process? Do you want active in the political process, or do you want to know how attentive the respondent was to the 2008 Presidential Election?

Very Inactive	Inactive	Neutral	Active	Very Active
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a republican, a democrat, an independent or what?

If you do not consider yourself a republican, a democrat, or an independent, please indicate your partisanship in the space provided below.

Strong Democrat	Moderate Democrat	Independent	Moderate Republican	Strong Republican
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify): _____

5. From the scale below, please choose the term that best describes your political ideology.

Liberal	Moderately Liberal	Moderate	Moderately Conservative	Conservative
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. On a scale of 1-5 with 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree, how much do you agree with the following statement: I plan on voting in the 2012 Presidential Election.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section Three

The questions in section three are designed to gain information on your use of media in regards to political candidates. Please respond to the following questions using the provided scale with 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
I listen to news stories about political candidates before voting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a political candidate does not have a web page, I will be less likely to vote for him/her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When researching a political candidate on the Internet, availability of information on their beliefs is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow political candidates on Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Internet is a reliable source for information on political candidates.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information presented on cable news about political candidates is generally true.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take the advice of parents before voting for a political candidate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a political candidate does not use Facebook, I will be less likely to vote for him/her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy researching political candidates on the Internet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cable news is a reliable source for information on political candidates.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow political candidates on Twitter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
I take the advice of friends before voting for a political candidate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look at political candidate's web pages.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a candidate wants to appeal to me, he/she should use social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I read political blogs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information presented on the Internet about political candidates is generally true.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would follow a candidate of a different political party than myself on social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section Four

In the following section you will be presented with a candidate. Please read over the provided information on the candidate and respond to the questions on the following page.

Please note: The term “social media” below refers to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs.

John Smith Democrat for President 2012	
Background	<p>Born in 1960 B.A. in Political Science MBA in Economics Ph.D. Economics</p> <p>Captain in the United States Army</p> <p>Married with three children</p>
Political Experience	<p>1994-2000: State House of Representatives 2000-2004: United States House of Representatives 2004-2010: United States Senate 2010-2012: Governor</p>
Issue Stances	<p>Pro-choice Against a federal ban on gay marriage In favor of investing in alternative energy sources Pro-health coverage for all In favor of a path to citizenship for all immigrants In favor of middle class tax cuts</p>
Social Media Usage	No social media use

For the following question, please use the provided scale (with 1=Very Unlikely and 5=Very Likely) to answer.

1. If the election were held today, I would vote for John Smith.

Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the following questions, please use the information about John Smith to choose the most appropriate answer.

2. Which factor was the most influential in how likely you were to vote for John Smith?
- Political Party
 - Background Information
 - Political Experience
 - Issue Stances
 - Social Media Usage

Can you please explain why this factor had the most influence on your decision to vote for John Smith?

Section Five

In this last section we would like to know a few things about you.

1. What is your sex:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other

2. What is your age?
 - Under 18
 - 18
 - 19
 - 20
 - 21
 - 22
 - Over 22

3. What is your academic class?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior

Appendix B

John Smith Democrat for President 2012	
Background	<p>Born in 1960 B.A. in Political Science MBA in Economics Ph.D. Economics</p> <p>Captain in the United States Army</p> <p>Married with three children</p>
Political Experience	<p>1994-2000: State House of Representatives 2000-2004: United States House of Representatives 2004-2010: United States Senate 2010-2012: Governor</p>
Issue Stances	<p>Pro-choice Against a federal ban on gay marriage In favor of investing in alternative energy sources Pro-health coverage for all In favor of a path to citizenship for all immigrants In favor of middle class tax cuts</p>
Social Media Usage	<p>Utilizes YouTube Active on Facebook Active on Twitter Sends out daily email updates Frequently written about on blogs</p>

Appendix C

John Smith Republican for President 2012	
Background	<p>Born in 1960 B.A. in Political Science MBA in Economics Ph.D. Economics</p> <p>Captain in the United States Army</p> <p>Married with three children</p>
Political Experience	<p>1994-2000: State House of Representatives 2000-2004: United States House of Representatives 2004-2010: United States Senate 2010-2012: Governor</p>
Issue Stances	<p>Pro-life Gay marriage is a State by State issue In favor of off-shore drilling Against government run health care In favor of border security In favor of tax cuts to stimulate the economy</p>
Social Media Usage	No social media use

Appendix D

John Smith Republican for President 2012	
Background	<p>Born in 1960 B.A. in Political Science MBA in Economics Ph.D. Economics</p> <p>Captain in the United States Army</p> <p>Married with three children</p>
Political Experience	<p>1994-2000: State House of Representatives 2000-2004: United States House of Representatives 2004-2010: United States Senate 2010-2012: Governor</p>
Issue Stances	<p>Pro-life Gay marriage is a State by State issue In favor of off-shore drilling Against government run health care In favor of border security In favor of tax cuts to stimulate the economy</p>
Social Media Usage	<p>Utilizes YouTube Active on Facebook Active on Twitter Sends out daily email updates Frequently written about on blogs</p>