Social Networking Sites (SNS) and Electoral Outcomes: How the Tools/Functions Can be Used to Predict Electoral Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

POLITICAL SCIENCE

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SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS) AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES: HOW THE TOOLS/FUNCTIONS CAN BE USED TO PREDICT ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

Committee Chair: William Boone, Ph.D.

Dissertation dated December 2017

This behavioral study examines the users’ engagement on social networking sites (SNS) in electoral races for public office in relation to their act of voting. This study was based on the premise that when certain criteria are met then SNS can be used as a predictive tool. The initial technique used was observations of the tools/functions on SNSs such as the “Like” button, favorable comments, retweets, friends/followers. Another technique used was surveys administered to individuals at political rallies, political debates, and college campuses to further analyze if their online engagement in politics translates to their physical participation. A quantitative case study analysis approach was used to analyze data gathered. Results of the data collected suggest that there is a positive relationship between online engagement and physical participation. The conclusion drawn from the findings suggests that SNS can be used as a predictive tool when examining electoral races for public offices.
SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS) AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES: HOW THE TOOLS/FUNCTIONS ON SNS CAN BE USED TO PREDICT ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
ABDUL SHARIF

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
DECEMBER 2017
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to a PEW research study, there are a little over three hundred million people in the United States, and only 15 percent do not use the Internet for any reason.\(^1\) The same Pew research study found that 72 percent of adults 18 years and older use social networking sites (SNSs). Facebook takes a commanding lead with 67 percent of American users, and Twitter comes in second with 18 percent of American users\(^2\). A total of 84 percent of millennials are social media users; millennials also have the highest penetration of Internet usage, with 93 percent using the Internet.\(^3\) *Millennials* is a term coined by author William Strauss and historian/economist Neil Howe to describe the generation of individuals born between 1982 and 2004.\(^4\) However, the survey in this research will examine individuals age 18 and older in an attempt to observe the online behavior of individuals across a broader voting age range.

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\(^2\) Ibid.


Purpose of the Study

Most elected officials use some type of social network page to attract new and young constituents. The purpose of this research is in part to quantify social network users’ engagement in elections and/or the electoral process on SNSs and to correlate their engagement to their act of voting. Based on this study, the researcher proposes the thesis that the tools/functions of many social networks can be used to gain insight into the predictability of electoral outcomes.

The term tools/functions on social networks refers particularly to the “Like button” and to a certain extent “views” and favorable “retweets/comments.” The Like button, which was launched as a feature on Facebook in 2010, is now a function used on most social networks whereby followers, subscribers, or friends can display whether they enjoy or support certain content such as photos, status updates, comments, and shared content with friends. Social networks that use the Like tool/function also display the number of “likes.” An individual who likes a person or posted content can click the Like button only once for that particular person or content; however, if new content via post, comment/tweet, or retweet is displayed, an individual can click the Like button for it. The number of likes can indicate the amount of favorable support and following the person has. Likes can begin to grow rapidly after friends of friends are alerted to what the original friend has posted; strangers to the original friend then are alerted to the post or page, resulting in hundreds to thousands of SNS users who express themselves through

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6 Facebook Developers, retrieved August 24, 2013.
likes, comments, retweets, and inbox messages. As a result, the person or content with a large favorable following will begin to have advertisements attached to that content or page. Internet advertisers have seen an increase in sales in some cases by placing their product with that content or person who has a large group of engaged followers, friends, and/or subscribers. Some advertisers even create an ad page for themselves on certain social networks and try to obtain as many likes as possible by offering free or discounted products. By doing so, the friends of friends will see who is liking what and click on the ad page.

In this research, engagement is defined as the specific interest of SNS users who use tools/functions to actively express themselves to any person and/or content. In this study, the researcher examined the June 2013 mayoral race in Compton, California. In that race, Aja Brown, age 31, had the most effective use of the social network site Facebook compared to her major opponent, Omar Bradley. During the Compton mayoral race, Aja Brown’s Facebook campaign page had an overall 4,319 likes compared to the 137 likes on Omar Bradley’s page. Tracking the engagement of their Facebook friends from April 4, 2013, and June 4, 2013 (voting day), Aja Brown averaged 44 likes per posted content compared to an average of 10 likes per content on Omar Bradley’s campaign page (calculations were done by adding all the likes accumulated between April 4 and June 4 and dividing the amount by the number of content posts). On the day of the election, June 4, Aja Brown received 341 likes, an average of 48 likes per post on

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9 Ibid.
voting day compared to 40 likes and an average of 20 likes per post on Omar Bradley’s Facebook campaign page. The City of Compton general municipal election resulted in 7,513 votes: 2,707 for Omar Bradley and 4,724 for Aja Brown, and 82 blank ballots.\footnote{"The City of Compton General Municipal Election," http://www.comptoncity.org/index.php/City-Clerk/election-results-a-archives.htm.}

The same correlation can be found in the 2013 New York City mayoral election won by Bill de Blasio and the United States presidential race of 2012. According to a Pew research study (Figure 1), 22 percent of registered voters let others know how they voted on a SNS such as Facebook or Twitter, and 35 percent used social networking tools to encourage people to vote.\footnote{Pew Research Center, “Social Media and Voting,” 2012, accessed April 23, 2014, http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/11/06/social-media-and-voting/.} During the summer of 2012, the Pew Research Center conducted a nationally representative survey of 2,253 adults ages 18 and older that asked a series of questions about civic engagement through people’s use of SNS.\footnote{Pew Research Center, “Social Media and Political Engagement,” 2012, accessed April 23, 2014, http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/10/19/additional-analysis-2/.} A total of 38 percent of those who used SNSs used them to express their interest through the Like button or promoted material related to politics or social issues that others had posted.\footnote{Ibid} The users under the age of fifty and those who had at least some college experience were more likely than others to use social media this way.
Social media and voting

% of registered voters in different age groups who have used social media like Facebook or Twitter to receive/send voting messages or announce their presidential choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ages 18-29</th>
<th>ages 30-49</th>
<th>ages 50-64</th>
<th>ages 65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have been encouraged to vote by family, friends</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have announced your vote via social media</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have encouraged others to vote for a particular candidate</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 1. Social media and voting.

This evidence demonstrates that people who are actively engaged in political races via social networks are likely voters who use social networking tools to influence other users to support their candidate or issue.

Currently, many polling agencies gain insight on political outcomes in the form of phone calls (landlines, cellular), e-mails, and online surveys. The information gathered gives polling companies and think tanks quantitative data that allows them to produce an estimate of which political candidates are leading the race and the possible winner in a particular election. These methods can cause the Hawthorne effect, in which people who
know they are part of an experiment will alter the way they would normally act because of the attention they are receiving. There is agreement among research scholars that the best experimental method is a double-blind experiment, this is when neither the subject nor researcher knows pertinent details relating to the experiment thus protecting the experiment integrity from being undermine.\textsuperscript{14}

The thesis of this study proposes an alternative approach to collecting data on political races; that data can be collected by quantifying engagement on social networks. This can be accomplished by tabulating the number of likes and favorable tweets/comments about a political candidate and comparing that number to the opponent’s, which will provide insight on a race without the possibility of the Hawthorne effect from the subjects in the experiment because only the researcher will have knowledge of the study.

It is the opinion of the researcher that making phone calls to collect data will become obsolete in the near future due to limited use of landlines, unwillingness of cell phone users to answer unknown numbers, and cell phone users not having the time or patience to speak to someone they do not know unless their interest is peaked.\textsuperscript{15}

However, there have been some advances in polling to predict political outcomes. In 2012, Google used its online consumer survey website to poll Americans in that year’s presidential race and came in only .3 percentage points lower than the actual percentage

\textsuperscript{14} Ellen Grigsby, \textit{Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Political Science} (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 32.

won by President Barack Obama.\textsuperscript{16} Google’s method was asking voters several questions via survey and then displaying that survey questionnaire across a network of premium online news, reference, and entertainment sites where it became embedded directly into content as well as through their mobile app.\textsuperscript{17} On the web, people answered the survey questionnaire in exchange for access to the desired content. Google would then infer respondents’ gender, age, and geographic location based on their browsing history and IP address. On the mobile app, people answered questions in exchange for credits for books, music, and apps.\textsuperscript{18}

Google’s method can be seen as very effective; however, it is limited to national elections because Google is unable to pinpoint a surveyed person’s specific location. In addition, respondents know that they are being questioned; thus, the possibility of the Hawthorne effect applies, that is, answering questions in a manner they normally would not in order to get to the desired content.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the researcher chose to apply resource mobilization theory to explain what causes individuals to mobilize to support an event, issue, or person and how these individuals organize to display their support for it, him, or her. This theory assists the researcher in making the claim that SNSs provide the opportunity for an individual to organize and mobilize other individuals to carry out various functions. Resource mobilization theory stresses that successful mobilization consists of effective resource use and a space for political opportunities for the members it seeks to mobilize. In this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
study, space is defined as SNSs, and political opportunities refers to the ability for SNSs users to organize and express their political interest. According to the theory, members of successful social movements are rational and adaptive to the responses of the cost and rewards of different lines of actions.19

Among resource mobilization theorists, social movements are considered an “extension of institutionalized actions and have restricted their focus to movements of institutionalized actions to movements of intuitional change that attempt to alter elements of social structure and/or the reward distribution of society.”20 The above definition and description of resource mobilization create a guide to how mediums such as Facebook and other SNSs can create a space that can be effectively used to organize human capital. People can use spaces such as a Facebook profile page to organize support by simply publishing a post. From such posts, many likes, shares, and comments can be generated, which allow people to communicate their message to individuals who may have been outside their network of friends/followers. SNSs reduce the cost of mobilization when compared to the money and time required to meet at a specific location to plan a physical event such as a rally or protest.21 In the online sphere of SNSs, individuals can streamline activities while simultaneously attending to their personal matters, thus changing the way one would view mobilization of the past.

20 Ibid.
Theorists of resource mobilization suggest that the first task of successful mobilization is to convert nonadherents into constituents and maintain constituent involvement.\(^{22}\) According to sociologist Ralph Turner, the term *bystander* is used to describe those nonadherents who are not opponents of a social movement or organization but who merely witness social movement activity.\(^{23}\) This study attempts to investigate this concept of converting bystanders or nonadherents into constituents and maintaining their involvement, which gives the researcher empirical data needed to support the thesis of the study.

Much of the mobilization that is discussed in this study covers individuals who are organizing to support an idea, event, or candidate running for public office. Resource mobilization theory is essential because it highlights why people feel the need to mobilize for that idea, event, or candidate. In attempts to alter or bring change to such institutions, goals tend to arise out of interaction as well as centralized control tied to a charismatic leader or smaller groups of people who create a persuasive narrative to galvanize other individuals who may share the same sentiment.\(^{24}\) According to McCarthy and Zald, these charismatic leaders or smaller groups are called “movement entrepreneurs.”\(^{25}\) They usually receive support from deprived groups with few resources and minimal political experience. The ability to relate and convey a message that inspires individuals to

\(^{22}\) McCarthy and Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements.”, 1221.


\(^{24}\) McCarthy and Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements.”, 1222-1223.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.
become physical participants in the idea or cause is a key component for a movement entrepreneur to create a successful mobilization effort.26

In the sharing culture of most SNSs, movement entrepreneurs find themselves with plenty of tools to take advantage of their charismatic ability to influence as many of their followers/friends to share, like, retweet, repost, or comment about their platform or social cause. Once Momentum is established, an algorithm related to friends of friends and followers of followers, the number of increased views, and comments help create a viral sensation that turns bystanders or nonadherents into engaged constituents. Thus, human capital is created as a resource for the movement entrepreneur. Resource mobilization theorists have pointed out that the main theme of this mobilization model is the connection between collective interest and the pooling of interest.27 The application of this theory sets the framework for this researcher, allowing for the testing of the correlation of an SNS’s abilities as a medium for movement entrepreneurs to get individuals to physically participate. From this point, observations can be conducted about SNS users’ behavior and allow this study to test the thesis.

27 Ibid.
Research Questions

Research questions in this study are as follows:

1. Can the tools/functions on SNS be used to observe the behaviors of individual users?

2. If a person actively follows a candidate running for political office on an SNS and continually likes the candidate’s page and leaves a favorable comment/#hashtag or retweet, would this increase his or her likelihood to vote for said candidate?

3. Can SNSs predict electoral outcomes?

Limitations

The results of this study can be generalized only to the population of the study.

Additional limitations include the following:

1. Sampling consisted of mostly college-aged students.

2. Several questions in the survey needed further explanation for some respondents.

3. Study displayed that leaving a favorable comment, #hashtag, or retweet did not show signs of significance when tested in the regression analysis.

Background

The reach and potential of online SNSs saw some of its early stages in the 1990s when there was a growing number of people sending e-mails or engaging in political discussion. When compared to today, the use of the Internet to network with others pales in comparison. One form of engagement in the early nineties was through an e-mail base project call the Public Electronic Network (PEN) through which there was a strong
correlation with active participation. One example could be seen in 1989 when the city of Santa Monica used the PEN system to link residents to city hall, providing information and answering questions. This, in turn, allowed officials in Santa Monica to use the residents’ comments to help with the decision-making process when addressing issues in the city.

Trying to identify how to address homelessness in Santa Monica, officials looked to comments on PEN made by homeless persons. From those comments, city officials discovered that most homeless persons felt that they would have a better opportunity getting a job if they had access to morning showers, clean clothing, and storage space for their belongings. As a result, the city officials created a proposal for a project called SHWASHLOCK—an acronym for showers, washers, and lockers—and when presented to the Santa Monica city council, $150,000 was appropriated for a temporary facility. This use of PEN changed the dynamics of how citizens interacted with their local representatives. Civic participation increased to the point that citizens debated issues with city officials prior to any final decisions being made.

The city of Santa Monica saw a strong correlation between online discussions and their effects on local votes. First, there is an online comprehensive read-only database of city schedules, events, and the like. Second, there is a mailroom where private messages or e-mail may be exchanged. Third, there is a conferencing area where residents may participate in city-sponsored discussions of local issues or begin public discussions of

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29 Ibid.
their own. Much to the city’s surprise, the database accounted for only one-tenth of PEN usage, with the mailroom garnering twice that, or 20 percent. Almost 60 percent of activity on PEN occurred in the public conferences, where a distinctive set of online social norms has evolved. Note that homeless residents were part of this process from start to finish as well.

The PEN changed the nature of civic participation and also affected local politics. Via PEN, Santa Monicans can now debate issues before final decisions are made, and there is convincing evidence that online discussions have affected local votes. Months before the November 1990 election, ballot statements for all thirty local candidates were posted on PEN. Voters could discuss the hopefuls’ positions on the issues many weeks before the usual media profiles and ballot booklets were available. The debates were unique in that anyone could speak up at any time, a function of the atmosphere of equality on PEN.

A major issue in that same Santa Monica election was the proposed construction of a luxury hotel located on the beach—the first such hotel on the seaward side of the Pacific Coast Highway. The nature of PEN allowed individuals to voice their opinions on the hotel, which became a bellwether for development in general. The hotel proposal was defeated. Contrast this with the usual campaign, where only those few with access to mass media or money for campaign advertising get to be heard. Again, PEN changed a social norm.

A study conducted two weeks before the 2000 presidential election examined people’s reliance on the Internet for political information and how that reliance
influenced their political interest, campaign interest, political involvement, likelihood to vote, and actual voting behavior. This study was similar to a study conducted in the 1996 presidential election. Various political websites were used to survey individuals as a way to measure Internet usage. The study asked respondents to what degree they relied on the Internet as a source of political information, in addition to the hours spent seeking political information.

Results from the 2000 presidential study revealed that 71 percent of respondents were very interested in politics, and they believed they had the power to change the political status quo; 62 percent claimed that they had become more politically involved since they first started using the web. In 1996 and 2000, more than 90 percent of respondents indicated their intent to vote in the upcoming election, and 86 percent of those who completed the survey after the election stated that they voted. Respondents claimed they spent an average of 14.3 hours per week seeking political information online in 2000, which was a slight increase from the 1996 survey results. In the 2000 survey, the researchers found that when respondents relied on the Internet for political information, they reported a strong intention to vote. While the reliance on the Internet was shown as a predictor of voting intention, the researchers suggested time spent on the internet was due to the newness of the Internet.

Overall, the researchers understood that their respondents were already politically interested, and reaching a random sample of Internet users was difficult. They suggested

that future research should explore other avenues of the Internet for collecting information on political behaviors and attitudes. However, they stressed the reliability of collecting data via online surveys because of its ability to pinpoint and target subsets within larger populations through hyperlinks, announcements, and specialty mailings lists on key online sites.

Significance of Study

This study investigates how SNSs’ tools can be used to predict electoral outcomes when certain criteria are met. The study will also demonstrate the correlation of online engagement via SNSs to the act of voting. This study attempts to move away from past literature on SNSs and political participation that has produced insignificant results, and it adds new research to the theory that the best method to measure online engagement is by time spent on SNSs. This study uses the quantitative methodology approach, which allows this research to add and build on existing literature that demonstrates how SNSs can be used to impact the political process significantly. Some of the techniques used to demonstrate political engagement online were in the form of surveys in which the questions were asked of individuals, ages eighteen years and older. Data produced from the surveys allowed the study to run regressions to support the thesis of whether SNS tools/functions can be used as predictor tools.

Another technique used is the actual quantification of the results used by SNS tools/functions in a given election. For example, when referring to tools on social networks, the Like button conveys the user’s following is in favor of his or her ideas/post. The number of likes that a person receives can indicate the amount of support and

31 Ibid.
favorable following he or she has. Likes can grow rapidly after friends of friends are
alerted to what the original friend has posted; strangers to the original friend now find his
or her post or page receiving hundreds to thousands of engagers who express themselves
through likes and favorable retweets/comments. Counting favorable comments per post
and retweets helps track engagement in addition to overall page likes and views, thus
giving an idea of the overall foot traffic of the latter. The results from these findings can
then be used as a subsample of the voter turnout during a race. This study’s preliminary
research on the 2014 US midterm elections demonstrates positive findings when testing
the hypothesis. This study anticipates concluding that SNSs can be used as a reliable tool
to predict electoral outcomes.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In “The Autoregressive Influence of Social Network Political Knowledge on Voting Behaviour,” Sean Richey emphasizes the impact of social networks by stressing their powerful presence in voter turnout by examining the autoregressive nature of individuals in social networks. As the author puts it, “individuals with perceived political knowledge have the tendency to influence others to vote the way they do.” We see this occur in online social networks where individuals are trying to persuade others to adopt their political position or to vote for the candidate they are supporting. Another study produced by multiple scholars from the University of San Diego conducted a 61-million-person experiment on social influence and political mobilization using the social network Facebook. The 2010 study included individuals over the age of eighteen. There was a total of 60,055,176 participants, and 98 percent were exposed to the “social message” condition (see fig. 2). According to the study, Facebook users’ initial login was welcomed with their

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2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
News Feed, which includes informational content posted about or by themselves and the friends to whom they are connected. The abovementioned is considered the standard of the control condition or controlled group. The cumulative total number of Facebook users who had reported voting was shown in the upper-right corner. In the middle of the box, users could press a button that read “I Voted” to post a message on their profile that indicated they had voted. The two treatment conditions were differentiated based on the presence of information about voting behavior among the user’s social network on Facebook. In the social message condition, the bottom of the box displayed up to six small pictures of the user’s friends who had already reported voting. The names of two friends and the total number of the user’s friends who had reported voting were included with the pictures. Participants who had six or fewer friends who had voted saw the photos of all of their voting friends; participants who had more than six friends who had voted saw a randomly selected six friends who also voted.

Figure 2. Today is Election Day.5

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The insight gained in this study allowed the researchers to tabulate the number of people who voted in the US Congressional election of 2010. Further information could have been gathered from those respondents who did not make their page private, which exposed other information about them that might indicate the way they voted. For example, when setting up a Facebook page, you are asked to add your political ideology/party affiliation and gender, which most users tend to do. Users would have seen this in addition to seeing comments one might have posted regarding the election in which he or she just participated. This information can be categorized and used as a method to gain insight on the electoral outcome.

If one uses the Arab Spring as an example, we can see the significant role social networks played for the purpose of communication, organization, and coordination of protest. Democratic and authoritative regimes have impose barriers to Internet use because of the powerful threat it has to mobilize people to disrupt a government. A comparative study by several university professors in Germany focused on the use of Twitter to mobilize protest action by examining three protest movements: Occupy Wall Street, Indignados, and Aganaktismenoi. The Indignados represent a protest group in 2011–2012 in Spain (also referred to as the 15-M Movement), the Indignants Movement, and Take the Square #spanishrevolution, which were a series of ongoing demonstrations in Spain whose origin can be traced to social networks such as Democracia Real YA

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7 Ibid.
(Real Democracy NOW) and Juventud Sin Futuro (Youth Without a Future), among other civilian digital platforms and two hundred other small associations.\(^9\) The protests began on May 15, 2011, with an initial call in fifty-eight Spanish cities. The group wanted fundamental change in Spanish politics. Media outlets in Spain connected the protests to the overwhelming economic crisis the country was experiencing.\(^10\) The Occupy Wall Street protest was initiated in September 2011. The movement consisted of young adults claiming to represent the ninety-nine percent of Americans who were part of an unequal system of wealth distribution in the United States.\(^11\) Lastly, the Aganaktismenoi (which is Greek for indignant) represented a protest group in Greece, beginning their rally on May 5, 2010, to demonstrate displeasure with government plans to cut public spending and raise taxes as austerity measures in exchange for a €110-billion bailout aimed at solving the 2010–2011 Greek debt crisis.\(^12\)

The abovementioned movements were shown to have made a substantial use of social networks to inform people about their actions. According to the above study, the social network Twitter proved to be a facilitator in informing the masses of the protest agenda with many favorable hashtags in support of it. One of the many questions the research asked was, “To what extent was Twitter used for political conversation and information distribution? Were there differences in the three countries and in the issue

\(^9\) Ibid.


\(^12\) “Αγανακτισμένοι στο Σύνταγμα,” May 24, 2011, retrieved September 10, 2014, skai.gr.
communicated?" The study found that from a sample of two thousand tweets that had hashtags representing each movement followed by a comment, there were two kinds of information transmission recognized: immediately relevant “episodic” content and general “semantic” material. The research was able to disseminate protest information by placing particular emphasis on the links (which sent individuals to more in-depth information about the hashtag) included in the tweets, which helped gather contextual information for further elaboration. This allowed the researchers the ability to determine what the tweets referred to and understand the essence of the protest and the specific protest theme as seen in table 1.

Table 1. Purpose of sending a tweet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
<th>Citizen</th>
<th>News Agency</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>vague</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>article (not news)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>call for action</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>humor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unclear</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information about a future event</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information about the crisis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>live action protest reporting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moral support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>just hashtags</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organizational issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>political conversation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>political statement</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reference to sister movement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reporting movement news</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reporting movement causes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vague</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>article (not news)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


14 Ibid
call for action & 6 & 4 & 4 & 7  \\
humor & 7 & 4 & 3 & 6  \\
unclear & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0  \\
information about a future event & 1 & 0 & 1 & 1  \\
information about the crisis & 4 & 3 & 4 & 3  \\
live action protest reporting & 8 & 6 & 23 & 5  \\
moral support & 2 & 5 & 8 & 1  \\
just hashtags & 0 & 0 & 0 & 3  \\
organizational issues & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1  \\
political conversation & 35 & 22 & 8 & 15  \\
political statement & 1 & 29 & 15 & 2  \\
reference to sister movement & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1  \\
reporting movement news & 26 & 19 & 22 & 47  \\
reporting movement causes & 4 & 2 & 5 & 5  \\
vague & 3 & 5 & 11 & 8  \\
article (not news) & 16 & 6 & 11 & 8  \\
call for action & 0 & 3 & 0 & 5  \\
humor & 0 & 4 & 11 & 1  \\
unclear & 3 & 2 & 0 & 3  \\
information about a future event & 5 & 3 & 0 & 5  \\
information about the crisis & 0 & 1 & 0 & 2  \\
live action protest reporting & 5 & 8 & 11 & 12  \\
moral support & 3 & 7 & 0 & 9  \\
just hashtags & 0 & 1 & 0 & 1  \\
organizational issues & 0 & 2 & 0 & 0  \\
political conversation & 26 & 32 & 0 & 17  \\
political statement & 5 & 6 & 0 & 7  \\
reference to sister movement & 5 & 1 & 0 & 2  \\
reporting movement news & 24 & 13 & 44 & 11  \\
reporting movement causes & 5 & 4 & 11 & 9  \\


According to Table 1, tweets calling for action were few and mostly done by organizations rather than ordinary citizens, thus causing the researchers to suggest that there was little information about social networks’ influence on political mobilization. However, if one examines the categories of “political conversation,” “political statements,” and “reporting movement news,” there is substantial use of tweets by ordinary citizens and organizations; these categories easily led or caused others to
mobilize regardless of whether there was a direct call for action. For example, if there are political statements and political conversations about political mobilization examined in this research, one can speculate that the high volume of such tweets incited individuals to carry out the action of joining the movement, thus suggesting that there was no need to find a direct call of action but rather an awareness that an event was occurring. The study acknowledges that there was heavy use of social networks to discuss the many protests and occupations in these movements by citizens and political organizations in addition to playing a key role in informing the masses about the different movements such as sending tweets while events were unfolding. It can thus be suggested that although tweets calling for mobilization were few, there is no reason that political statements, conversation, and reporting of the movement did not have the same effect—that is, causing individuals to mobilize other individuals to carry out an action. In addition, the study mentions and supports the premise that social media is the main vessel of contemporary protesters for the diffusion of information about protest events.

Despite these positive findings, other studies suggest that social networks play a minor role in political participation. Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan Morris, professors of political science at East Carolina University, published a paper entitled “MyFaceTube Politics: Social Networking Web Sites and Engagement of Young Adults” that examined the use of social networks by young adults between eighteen and twenty-four years of age in the context of the early stages of the 2008 presidential primary season. The study illustrated that users of social networks are no more inclined to participate in politics than users of other types of media. When measuring political participation, the authors used
statistical data from surveys that they created. The survey presented to respondents a list of political activities and asked them to indicate whether they had engaged in each within the past twelve months. The results from a series of logistic regressions as shown in Table 2 in which participation in each of these activities is estimated as a function of their predictors. The activities were separated into two categories: Internet and Non-Internet activities. The former includes whether or not an individual posted a message on a blog, signed an e-mail or web petition, or forwarded a political e-mail or link to another person in the last twelve months. The results displayed that the majority of media factors are positively associated with the tendency of the individual to have engaged in each of these three activities.

According to table 2, the authors found that the social network website factor is significantly and positively associated with Internet activity for each dependent variable. The authors noted that the impact of the social network variable rivals that of the other media factors; however, they hold that the traditional news variable is consistently stronger.

Table 2. Political participation by media exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Internet Activities</th>
<th>Non-Internet Activities</th>
<th>Media Exposure</th>
<th>Social networking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posted message on blog expressing political opinion</td>
<td>Signed online petition or web petition</td>
<td>Wrote or called a politician</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.39(.21)**</td>
<td>.15(.08)**</td>
<td>.26(.15)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed online petition or web petition</td>
<td>Forwarded political e-mail or link</td>
<td>Wrote letter to newspaper or called TV or radio show to express opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.03(.02)</td>
<td>.13(.07)</td>
<td>.06(.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forwarded political e-mail or link</td>
<td>Wrote letter to newspaper or called TV or radio show to express opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.03(.02)</td>
<td>.13(.07)</td>
<td>.06(.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote or called a politician</td>
<td>Wrote letter to newspaper or called TV or radio show to express opinion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>.03(.02)</td>
<td>.13(.07)</td>
<td>.06(.04)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote letter to newspaper or called TV or radio show to express opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.03(.02)</td>
<td>.13(.07)</td>
<td>.06(.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wore a written petition</td>
<td>Did not purchase a product to protest the maker(s) of it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.02(.01)</td>
<td>.06(.04)</td>
<td>.02(.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further examine the correlation with social networks and participation, the researcher looked at another study entitled, “Political Participation in an Unlikely Place: How Individuals Engage in Politics through Social Networking Sites in China,” conducted by Xinzhi Zhang and Wan-Ying Lin, both professors at City University in Hong Kong. In this study, the authors began with the initial question of how individuals engage in different modes of political participation via social network sites in China. Completion of a survey conducted at two of the largest universities in southern China discovered that information exchange via social networking sites and social-networking-based political activities were positively associated with the standard modes of political participation.

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participation such as contacting media, signing petitions, and joining demonstrations.\textsuperscript{17} The study also revealed that social-network-based political activities positively predicted political engagement via private contact, such as lobbying acquaintances of governmental officials and facilitating political actions initiated by the Chinese Communist Party.\textsuperscript{18} The study found that young people who use the Internet for political talk displayed a positive impact on community engagement such as joining petitions and demonstrations far greater than those who had engaged in face-to-face political dialogue.

\textbf{The Debate}

Many scholars have challenged the notion that SNSs have any significant impact on the political process.\textsuperscript{19} Their argument is mainly based on the notion that people who discuss politics online seldom follow up their concerns with the action of civic participation. In addition, those who are politically active online are already civil participants, and the use of the Internet to create or engage in political discussions does not demonstrate any significant impact.\textsuperscript{20}

However, as the Internet becomes more like a utility similar to electricity and water,\textsuperscript{21} and can be debated as more accessible, we can see that there is a strong correlation between online engagement and civic participation. In a study produced by several scholars, two research questions were investigated. First, “Can online

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Baumgartner and Morris, “MyFaceTube Politics.”
\item \textsuperscript{20} Baumgartner and Morris, “MyFaceTube Politics.”
\end{itemize}
participation be empirically identified as a distinctive type of political participation?"

Second, “Do the background characteristics of online activists differ significantly from the background characteristics of offline activists?” The findings suggest that political participation can be identified empirically and that online activists are just as impactful to the political process as other traditional groups such as offline activists. Online activists engage in as much offline activity as they do online. For the second research question, the study suggested that there is a higher concentration of young people who use the Internet to engage in politics than those who use other means to participate in offline political activities. Despite the fact that the use of the Internet to disseminate information is much faster and lower cost, the impact of conventional media seems to remain considerable among opponents of SNS. According to Professor Xinzhi Zhang of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, when emergency events occur, the impact of conventional media and pre-Internet-era adopted conditions are more important than the Internet. In addition, Zhang cites literature that suggests traditional media reaches a larger audience despite the interaction that takes place online. However, he suggests that the line between traditional media outlets and the Internet is blurred due to the fact that most news outlets have created online platforms to further their viewership base.

When scholars debate the relationship between Internet users and civic engagement, they tend to focus on the individual’s traits and try to determine whether

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24 Ibid.
that person’s understanding of the political information would produce a contingent effect for example does the person possess the education, economic, social traits of a typical voter. According to an article in *Journal of Communication* entitled “Campaign Ads, Online Messaging, and Participation: Extending the Communication Mediation Model,” news media has been shown to have a larger impact on those who were highly interested in politics than those who were less interested.\(^{25}\) In a communication model termed O-S-R-O-R (Orientations-Stimuli-Reasoning-Orientation-Responses), contextual background and individual response to campaign news were added between simple media stimulus and response or certain participation.\(^{26}\) Individuals are tracked through media messages, including interpersonal political discussion, both online and offline.

This model highlights how the impact of an individual’s characteristics was shown to determine his or her political participation, and follow-up studies supported the utility of this model. The authors discussed how communication research has found that news consumption and interpersonal political discussion simultaneously work to encourage participation.\(^{27}\) They further discuss how the use of news helps to stimulate increased political knowledge and awareness of civic opportunities and objectives, often incidentally through reflection about public affairs. News media, as suggested by the authors, provide an area for discussion and create a medium for viewpoints not available in one’s physical social network, encouraging political talk that might not otherwise occur. In turn, the authors stressed that “political discussion raises awareness about

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\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.
collective problems, and encourages engagement in public life.” Communication is the process by which messages are transferred from a source to one or more receivers with an intent for the content to change behavior. 

The Obama Effect

The “Obama effect” is a term exclusively used in this research to describe the impact of social networks used by an individual seeking to gain support and how that support translated to offline political participation, as witnessed in the 2008 US presidential election. One must understand that, prior to his bid for president, Barack Hussein Obama was little known to the masses despite being the fifth black senator in United States history. It is true, however, that individuals who were already engaged in politics were aware of his senatorial debut. One must also understand that prior to his presidential win, there were doubts about whether online engagement had any effect on the political process. In the initial race for the Democratic presidential nomination, it can be debated that there was little doubt about who was going to be the nominee. Hillary Clinton was a strong suitor to become the nominee with support by many black leaders and the Democratic Party establishment. Senator Clinton had a winning team on paper, with veteran strategists and top pollsters, along with the strong appeal of making history as the first female president, as suggested by Martin Walker author of the journal article

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28 Ibid.
titled “The Year of the Insurgents: The 2008 US Presidential Campaign.” Senator Clinton maintained the tradition of holding intimate dinners with big donors, working the media circuit, and capturing the status quo Democratic base in the fashion of her other leading Democratic nominee predecessors. Former policy advisor to President Bill Clinton, William A. Galston of the Brookings Institution, stated that, “Hillary ran the last and probably the best of the 20th-century primary campaigns; Obama won by fighting the first 21st-century campaign.”

Indeed, that may have been the case given candidates’ overwhelming use of the Internet since 2008. The Obama effect, as defined earlier, saw its beginnings in his senatorial race, where—after winning the race with seventy percent of the vote—Obama was considered the “hottest” senator in an online survey. Several years later in his bid for the White House, Obama made an attempt to translate his charm, charisma, and great oratory skills to the masses; but he did it in a manner that was considered fairly novel in national politics. In the four presidential elections prior to 2008, thirty-four of the fifty states voted the same way. His campaign team’s strategy was to target the young and African-American voters; they believed this strategy would result in a nontraditional high turnout among these demographics and would change the political landscape.

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32 Ibid., 1097.
According to a journal article published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs titled “The Year of Insurgents: The 2008 US Presidential Campaign,” Martin Walker breaks down how Senator Obama used SNSs to best his political opponents.\footnote{Ibid., 1097.} States such as Indiana, North Carolina, and Texas had more Democratic voter turnout than in the 2004 general election.\footnote{Ibid., 1099.} The article also mentions the unprecedented showing of thirty million Democrats compared to eighteen million Republicans who voted in the primaries.\footnote{Ibid., 1096.} The author suggests that Obama’s strategy focused on states that held caucuses rather than full-scale primaries due to the fact that it was too costly for someone such as Hillary Clinton to push for statewide elections. Clinton, to her advantage, won the traditionally Democratic states except for Illinois; however, because the primary rules are not same for the presidential election (winner takes all) in most states, Senator Obama was able to pick up delegates in an unconventional way. Using SNSs such as Facebook and Myspace, Obama’s campaign organized over 8,000 web-based affinity groups and 750,000 active volunteers, and it recruited over 1.6 million donors, turning his grassroots initiative into a powerhouse.\footnote{Ibid., 1098.} The article describes how the Obama campaign was able to use the Internet via social networks to convince engagers to donate without attending a single fund-raising event, resulting in $55 million in the month of February 2008. It helped Obama that one of Facebook’s founders, Chris Hughes, was on his campaign team. Hughes helped set up a website that offered ringtones for cellular devices (which
were very popular among millennials), a social network, and ways to organize fund-raising events, along with easy ways to share a new recruit’s computer address book with the campaign, which could go viral or allow the user to have his or her page become popular online instantaneously.

The strategy used by the Obama campaign changed the course of electoral politics. The method was so effective, it stunned the Clinton campaign with a defeat in the 2008 primaries. In Andrew Sullivan’s *The Sunday Times* article, “Barack Obama Is Master of the New Facebook Politics,” he cites a quote by Peter Leyden which states, “What’s amazing is that Hilary built the best campaign that has ever been done in Democratic politics on the old model—she raised more money than anyone before her, she locked down all party stalwarts, she assembled an all-star team of consultants, and she really mastered the top-down command-and-control type of outfit. And yet, she’s getting beaten by this political start-up that is essentially a totally different model of new politics.”

Upon beating his primary opponent, Obama had to now focus on his Republican counterpart, John McCain; Obama stepped his campaigning into high gear via social networks.

An article written by Professor Soumitra Dutta and senior research fellow, Matthew Fraser, viewed the 2008 presidential election in a statistical framework. On

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Facebook, Obama’s page displayed the support of over 2 million supporters while McCain had a little over 600,000.\textsuperscript{42} The article suggests that Obama was far ahead in the presidential race via online social networks. Not only did Obama top McCain on Facebook, which is the leading social network in members and influence, but he also surpassed him on Twitter, the second-largest social network, with more than 112,000 supporters tweeting election support compared to McCain’s 4,600 followers.\textsuperscript{43} As for YouTube, Obama saw more than 1,800 videos uploaded to his Barackobama.com channel by his campaign team, which had about 115,000 subscribers. The Obama YouTube channel had over 97 million views during some 18 million channel visits. McCain had only 330 videos uploaded to his channel with a little over 28,000 subscribers and only 2 million visits and 25 million video views. These statistical findings strongly suggested the Obama victory prior to the ballot vote in the 2008 general election. Not only did the Obama camp utilize Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, but also network sites such as Myspace, Flick, Digg, Black Planet, LinkedIn, AsianAve, MiGente, Glee, and many others.\textsuperscript{44}

The Dutta and Fraser article also cited a Pew survey that found that 46 percent of Americans used the web, e-mail, or text messaging for news about the 2008 presidential election.\textsuperscript{45} In addition, 35 percent of Americans said they watched online political videos—three times more than during the 2004 presidential election—and about 10

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Dutta and Fraser, “Barack Obama and the Facebook Election”.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Dutta and Fraser, “Barack Obama and the Facebook Election”.

percent said they had logged into SNSs to engage in election news/information.46

According to the authors, the use of the Internet has morphed drastically, going from being used mainly as a fund-raising method to a get-out-the-vote tool. They suggest that voters have now shifted their engagement from physical participation, stating that online users are now more comfortable purchasing products online and using online media as the commonplace to connect with people.47 This confidence in online interaction has led more than five hundred American politicians to create a Facebook page of their own and suggests that many more will do so in the future.48

The Obama effect was a lasting one. Fast-forward four years from 2008 and Obama still commanded the same if not a greater presence in the online world. In 2012, the Pew Research Center conducted a study on digital campaigning by the presidential candidates.49 The researchers wanted to get a detailed analysis of the daily content posted on the two presidential candidates’ social media accounts and examined the candidates’ social media account design and the content that was offered. The study approached the presidential candidates’ accounts by having a team of coders examine each of the respective social network platforms and code them to thirty-nine variables. The coders were trained to identify variables such as the content/nature of tweet, the number of likes, and the personal traits of the candidates. The information gathered displayed that on the

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
eve of the conventions, Obama had a substantial lead over Mitt Romney in the digital world, as can be seen in the figures 3–5.50

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50 Ibid.
According to the researchers of this study, political campaigns have changed the way in which way politicians engage with the masses.\textsuperscript{51} They can now use social networks to bypass the filter of traditional media and talk to potential voters directly. Again, Obama led with nine-plus separate social networking platforms compared to Romney’s five. President Obama’s reach was overwhelming; his campaign posting was nearly four times as much content as Romney’s: 614 to 168 timeline postings. The gap in activity was seen on their Twitter accounts, where Romney averaged one tweet per day compared to Obama’s twenty-nine daily tweets (daily posting can be seen in figure 5).\textsuperscript{52}

![How Much Candidates Post Online Daily](image)

Figure 5. How much candidates post online daily

One expansion by the Obama campaign was the customization of information by state, which allowed citizens of each state to feel uniquely focused upon. Every state had

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. 2.
a page dedicated to its state concerns and issues. Users were able to sign up to join local groups and receive information addressing the issues in their community. Obama’s website was also compartmentalized into eighteen different constituency groups. Users could join groups with similar concerns and come together in their local community. The Obama team always seemed to push the envelope of using social networks, gaining an edge on its opponents. The way Obama was able to connect to people has become commonplace outside of electoral politics for other groups seeking to take political action. One example can be seen in the wake of the many protests against police brutality in America over the past few years. When an incident occurs, it spreads like wildfire on many social networking outlets with few to no filters, causing instant outrage among online engagers and translating into physical street protests. A New York Times report found evidence that the uprising of youth in Baltimore, Maryland, following the Freddie Gray funeral (the twenty-five-year-old black male who died in police custody) was initiated by a mass text on a social network site, displaying a very coordinated line of events with precise times and locations to carry out civil protest actions.53

For further evidence that social networks engage and influence individuals to participate in offline activity, one may want to examine the strategic efforts of groups such as ISIS or Al-Shabaab. Many governments are now monitoring users of various SNSs who are engaging in online activity that is considered to be a threat to national security. An example can be found in Kenya, where authorities have discovered that SNSs have been used to recruit youth to join the Somali militant group Al-Shabaab and

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other terrorist groups. Sites such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook were shut down by the directorate of the criminal investigation department and national intelligence service.

As the speed of the Internet has increased, so too will communication and social interaction among people across the world. The big bang of the Obama effect has yet to reach its potential, and only history will tell.

**Social Networking Sites’ Tools/Functions**

The key to understanding the dynamics of SNSs is to understand the tools/functions that help users navigate their content. One should first examine the heavy use of the social network Facebook. The concept of becoming someone’s *friend* on Facebook, or *friending*, is the action of sending a friend request to another user. Upon receiving this request, the user has the option of accepting or declining that request. It is also possible for a friend of a user to be removed from his or her friend’s list or be *unfriended*. The *Wall* was a space created as part of a user’s Facebook profile that allowed users to post text messages on their own profile or friends’ Walls. The messages posted on a Wall were seen by the user and his or her friends. Facebook soon allowed users to post attachments in any form and allowed users’ friends to post content on their Walls if the user’s consent was granted. In 2006, a feature called *News Feed* was added to the Facebook page layout, which provided an alternative homepage to the customizable

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55 Ibid.

profile page users previously had.\textsuperscript{57} The News Feed page layout offers users constant live updates that list their friends’ activities as they are posting them online. The News Feed highlights upcoming events such as birthdays, anniversaries, profile changes, and conversations taking place on users’ Walls.

In 2011, Facebook updated the News Feed feature so users had the option to control what they wanted to be shown as their top story and to show top stories and recent stories in one’s feed. In 2011, \textit{Timeline} was introduced, which organizes activities posted on the user’s page. The Timeline includes photos, videos, and postings by the user’s friends, which runs center of the user’s profile. This feature became part of the permanent layout for users in 2011. Facebook defines \textit{likes} as a way to give positive feedback and connect with things users care about. To “like” content, users can simply click the famous thumbs-up icon \[
\text{👍}
\] or the word itself under any content such as comments, photos, status updates, and links posted by friends, pages, groups, and advertisements.\textsuperscript{58} The iconic symbol has grown to be so recognizable that it is now displayed on other forms of social networks and websites. The iconic symbol has been placed as a feature option on other online platforms so that users can click the symbol from that platform and the content appears in the user’s Facebook News Feed with a link back to the original content. The \textit{notification tab} allows users to be alerted when something new has been added to their page. Users can see this notification in the form of a message shared on their wall or a reply on a posting that was previously commented.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
Messages in the inbox, which can be considered one of Facebook’s best functions, allows users to have private conversations with anyone. This particular function does not require that message senders be users’ friends. However, the user sending that message will not be able to receive a message back until the desired party responds. This has allowed users from across the world to make contact with other users without having any other previous contact, just visible content that may have engaged that user to make him or her want to initiate contact. Complete strangers may become friends based on sharing the same ideals and interests, even though they would have never met prior to this type of communication.

Coming in second after Facebook is Twitter, which is an SNS that allows its users to send updates/messages to other users on the site but only with 140 characters and a hashtag. The messages on this particular site are labeled tweets, which are becoming a common way to send messages instantly and in real time. This method has become so effective that news networks have created Twitter pages in order to transmit live and breaking news as it unfolds. CBS News set up an algorithm so that the tweets the station receives are transformed into must-know information in real time. Instead of people trying to filter through millions of tweets to find a breaking story, the algorithm pinpoints only legitimate stories. With these types of alerts, CBS News is able to find real-time leads to follow up on and help to determine which stories are newsworthy. CBS News also uses Twitter to keep its viewers engaged with developing stories. It allows the

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59 Ibid.
station to connect with people who can provide footage of or information on an emerging story, giving the station an edge over other news media. Nancy Lane, senior executive producer at CBS News, describes the impact of social networks: “Knowing quickly what’s going on can make a huge difference in getting someplace and getting the information. We get the tip, but then we have a leg up and can go deeper and get more information.”62

The essential tools/functions on Twitter have been so effective that they have actually saved lives. In an article discussing the September 2013 attacks on the Westgate Mall in Kenya, which led to a four-day siege with 67 fatalities and 175 wounded,63 the authors suggest that the SNS Twitter became a critical tool for communicating with the Kenyan government, emergency responders, and aid workers. Through an in-depth study, the authors provide data-driven information suggesting that, had it not been for the use of Twitter, the efforts to rescue victims of the attack could have been much less effective. The study’s findings demonstrated that Twitter served as a key tool for emergency management in the Westgate attack by quantifying the number of hashtags using the algorithm program TwitterMate. The hashtag #Westgate was used as an identifier. The study used content analysis and Excel formulas to extract any hashtag from each tweet.64 Observing tweets that mentioned Westgate during the height of the event allowed emergency responders to locate individual victims and the attackers. The study suggests that the high engagement of Twitter users throughout the crisis can be explained by the

62 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
“approachable” nature and positive language in messages. The authors mention how SNS users expressing compassion and empathy in their language enhanced their credibility in the eyes of the public. The authors concluded that social networks offer an accessible means for a bidirectional flow of information between the public and the authorities in charge of public safety.65

The reach of social networks is nothing without its tools/functions, according to a Frontline documentary titled Generation Like, which discusses the power of social networks by interviewing individuals and how they use SNSs. In one example, Darius’s friends liked his profile picture, and Facebook sees whom he interacts with the most. When Daisy likes dozens of brands on Facebook, those brands can learn potential information that would be valuable to them. When Ceili and her friends retweet news about The Hunger Games, the movie studio is able to track them in real time. When Tyler goes on YouTube in search of the things he likes, YouTube tracks his every move. The documentary suggests that this is how likes turn into actual currency. Companies figure out how to turn this data into money. Individuals are freely handing over data with the mere action of clicking the Like button or telling all their friends to like their content, which in turn becomes very valuable to any entity seeking to gain their engagement. Engagement is key to success if one seeks to have that engager carry out a specific function. The documentary also suggests that the selfie (a picture taken by oneself of oneself and others) movement has propelled social networks further to have a greater impact. It has been estimated that the likes of some selfies that posters took and posted on

65 Ibid.
social networking sites such as Instagram have helped companies sell products for millions of dollars.66

The money that is being grossed by these companies is based on the volume of likes that are generated. This is the reason the documentary suggests that companies need to have individuals stay online, clicking and liking and tweeting.67 *Trending 10*, a video music program on the Fuse network decides what content to feature by monitoring social network feeds.68 The marketing team searches networks such as Twitter to see what conversations around music are spiking and then creates a show in the morning based on what is actually being talked about on SNSs. They create different segments of content throughout the day that is distributed on Twitter. Creating real-time video content around the discussions that are actually happening and putting these discussion topics back into the discussion in this fluid ecosystem between TV and Twitter has never been done before according to the documentary *Generation Like*. In essence, individuals are coming up with the content, then helping to promote it back to themselves in an endless feedback loop between broadcast and social media.

In a *Business Week* article, Jeff John Roberts, a writer for the Gigaom Network, mentions how the use of social networking sites such as Instagram have helped political candidates spread their platform instantly.69 Instagram is an application that can be downloaded onto a mobile device by which one can share pictures in real-time with

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
friends. Roberts mentions how in the days before the 2012 general election, NBC News made election-grams (political images) and posted them to Instagram. NBC used geotags to display the images on a state-by-state basis and posted photos uploaded with terms such as #obama2012, #Romney, and #vote. The significance of election-grams for NBC, according to Roberts, is that they give the network another news tool for election night and represent a new phase in citizen reporting. Roberts suggests that media outlets have long drawn on the voice of their viewers through Twitter or tools such as CNN’s iReport. With election-grams, networks such as NBC and others can easily tap into photo-based reporting on an unprecedented scale.

In her second attempt at the White House, Hillary Clinton made sure she utilized much in the way of social networking platforms. In her race for the White House in 2016, Clinton found herself on many SNSs. In an attempt to get with the times, she posted her first Instagram picture of a clothing rack with red, white, and blue options that all came in the iconic Clinton trademark: the pantsuit. Clinton poked a bit of fun at herself as the caption sarcastically read, “Hard Choices,” which is the name of her most recent book. Many Instagram users were amused, posting comments such as “YAAS QUEEN,” “ICONIC,” “You’re hilarious, I love you,” and “my girl can joke.” Within an hour of that post, Clinton gained almost ten thousand new followers and over one thousand likes. It

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72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
would seem clear that Mrs. Clinton’s campaign team understood the numbers when it came to SNSs. An article written by Deena Zaru, a digital producer for CNN and writer for the breaking news team, cites a Harvard University Institute of Politics poll that suggested that 83 percent of 18–29-year-olds are on Facebook, 44 percent are on Instagram, and 39 percent are on Twitter. This data makes Instagram the second most popular social media tool for millennials after Facebook. Zaru mentions how Clinton was following trends and becoming successful and cites the same Harvard poll that also suggests that 55 percent of all young adults ages 18 to 29 would rather have seen a Democrat in the White House in 2016. Zaru then concludes her piece by stating that “there are 300 million Instagram users who share over 70 million photos and videos daily and the 2016 election will be the most visual election to date.” SNS has much data to offer as Zaru points out, but it is the task of social scientists to interpret this data into a useful resource as this study attempts to accomplish.

One key element in the tools/functions area of social networks is the power to post a comment whether it is in the form of a tweet, repost, or hashtag. In his journal article, “The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication,” Peter Dahlgren mentions that—despite online comments between individuals about certain topics that do not follow the high ideals of deliberative democracy—communication via comments is essential and necessary to pay attention to, as it can set a tone and direction of how people think.

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75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
In an attempt to assess citizen participation in the Brazilian presidential campaign (September–November 2010), postdoctoral researcher Marisa Torres da Silva of the New University of Lisbon analyzed readers’ comments on online news sites. Torres da Silva narrowed her focus to six articles that received the most comments, totaling 303 readers’ comments. To disseminate the comments, she used a quantitative and qualitative data analysis software called Nvivo by which the unit for coding was the paragraph divided into categories and subcategories.

To understand the importance of her findings in online comments, Torres da Silva used a sophisticated set of variables inspired by theorist Jürgen Habermas to interpret online discussions, as follows:

1. **Rationality of augmentation**, which requires participants to provide justified and valid reasons for claims made.
2. **Non-rationality of argumentation**, which allows the researcher to identify persons who use insults or attacks to convey a message, which can indicate a nonrational level of argumentation legitimacy.
3. **Rational-critical opinion**, in which a participant is willing to consider possible challenges to his or her position.
4. **Degree of rational legitimacy**, which is used to verify if participants are adding value to discussions by making comments in a critical and rational way.
5. **Utterance position**, which the researcher makes clear she divided to incorporate the several elements in the assessment of reciprocity, first to start a

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79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.
discussion, then to search for information, to complement the positions made by other readers with further information ideals, and to reply to another comment. (6) **Degree of solidarity**, whether it is for an ideology, position, or person. (7) **Elements of plurality**, which are based on communicative perspectives entailing the use of storytelling, rhetoric, and greeting—elements in a communicative democracy that take into account multiple discursive styles of communication. Lastly, (8) **free nodes**, which examine comments that tend to be off topic and have a heavy use of irony”. When these variables are met, Habermas says that communicative action has taken place. Habermas defines “**communicative action** as occurring when individuals seeking to establish relations reach an understanding about a situation, and they plan in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement”. 81 From this interaction, one can see the development of social capitalism, 82 which can easily manifest itself to participation of any sort, thus the thesis of online political engagement via comments or tools of communication correlating to the act of voting. As Habermas states, “Language is a medium of communication that serves understanding, whereas actors, in coming to an understanding with one another so as to coordinate their action, pursue particular aims.” 83

However, in her findings, Torres da Silva realized that using Habermas’s rational-critical criteria to understand communicative action limited the scope of the multifaceted ways individuals communicate online. She highlights Peter Dahlgren when he suggested

83 Ibid.
that the “rationalist bias” disregards the many forms of communication that are important in a democracy.84 The lack of civil behavior and the low level of agreement in Torres da Silva’s findings, as well as the required precondition of tolerance and cohesiveness that is a recipe for action, caused her case study to fall short of the communication that may result in action. However, she mentions how Zizi Papacharissi, professor of communication and department head at the University of Illinois-Chicago, argues that although SNSs such as YouTube may not be considered formal discussion platforms, they do provide spaces where people can engage in democratic practices including staying abreast of politicians and expressing and circulating political opinions.85 As one can see, communication via comments online, regardless of agreement, can shape the opinions of others, possibly affecting their actions.

Too Many Social Networking Sites: How Do I Choose?

When seeking a social network, politicians must not limit themselves to just one network. As we saw in the 2007–2008 presidential run for the White House, the Obama camp was on as many social networks as any one person could have at the time, thus extending the candidate’s reach web-wide. However, a politician must take into account that just having a platform on a social network does not guarantee followers and potential voters. The key to gaining followers, likes, and favorable comments/retweets is engagement and inspiring followers to transform engagement into physical activity (in this case, voting). As mentioned earlier in this research, engagement is defined as the specific interest of social network users who use social networking tools/functions in

84 Torres da Silva, “Online Forums, Audience Participation and Modes of Political Discussion.”
85 Ibid.
actively expressing themselves about any person and/or content. Most persons running
for a branch of office have the benefit of their name and photo circulating through news
media outlets, whether on conventional television or online news media. The list of
tactics that then-senator Obama utilized to get individuals to become interested in his
platform via online is endless, but it was not video chats, slogans, or music videos that
separated him from his rivals. It was an old and proven characteristic that he was able to
translate through the medium of online social networks—charisma. According to Max
Weber, those who possess this trait will gain the trust of the people, thus attaining the
legitimacy to rule them.\textsuperscript{86} Understandably, U.S. presidents do not rule. However,
Obama’s ability in 2007–2008 to orate in a way that made individuals gravitate toward
supporting him is equivalent to how Steve Jobs was able to convince consumers that the
iPhone is the best phone to have despite being one of the more expensive devices and
even though it carries out the same functions as its competitors. In addition to being the
best phone, Apple convinces its consumers to purchase an updated version every year
because of the company’s ability to translate to consumers that their device is like no
other.

Certainly, when defining \textit{charisma}, Weber limits it only to a person’s personality
trait by which he or she is considered extraordinary and treated as “endowed with
supernatural qualities.”\textsuperscript{87} Weber goes on to mention that charisma is not accessible to
everyone, and that pure charisma is innate, which can be produced for good or bad (e.g.,

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
Hitler and Gandhi were both charismatic leaders in his opinion. Charisma, as Weber put it, is anti-structure; it breaks all traditional and rational norms. However, he suggests that it is not stable and is eventually rationalized or traditionalized. This ability to captivate people so that they follow and support an individual is essential when attempting to connect to people via social networks. Social networks via the web are a relatively new medium whereby Obama was able to translate his charisma through them, using a very accessible method in an innovative way, as did his presidential predecessors. For example, Thomas Jefferson used the newspaper in a fashion never before seen to gain support from citizens. Franklin D. Roosevelt used the radio to give his passionate speeches through his fireside chats, and John F. Kennedy used television to appeal to the masses. Each of these individuals possessed the charismatic virtue that Weber discusses. However, a candidate needs to naturally possess charismatic virtue to gain his or her followers’ engagement. With advancements in digital technology, speech coaches and writers suggest that anyone with the right resources can reproduce this same virtue; however, if that person is competing against an individual who naturally possesses charismatic virtue, as Weber defines it, he or she will not prevail.

Another idea in Weber’s charisma theory is the supernatural ability to capture a person’s interest and keep him or her engaged. In terms of social networking language, going viral can be seen as such. Going viral on social networks can be defined as the

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91 Ibid.
phenomenon of users instantaneously sharing specific information at a very high volume in the form of posts via social networking.  

Political Participation

It is imperative to identify what denotes political participation in this research, because it can cover a broad swath. Political participation occurs when the combined interests, desires, and demands of individuals are articulated and made known to elected officials and the government at all levels. It is carried out via “legal activities by individual citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of the government personnel and/or the decisions that they make,” in addition to “implementation of public policies.” This research examines online engagement translating to political participation; however, prior research has found that there are positive relationships between political participation and Internet use. A journal article titled “Non-Recursive Models of Internet Use and Community Engagement” claims positive correlations regarding Internet use and political participation but fails to acknowledge some preexisting factors such as persons who were active in civic life and already utilizing the Internet to organize individuals to participate in political matters such as starting Facebook page for individuals who support certain issues. However, the authors suggest that the way to make clear that reciprocal effects are not taking place is to

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94 Sidney Verba and N. H. Nie, Participation in America (Chicago: Chicago University Press).


develop nonrecursive models using hours spent on the Internet and the frequency of social interaction as endogenous variables (which is determined by the states of other variables in the system). This gives insight into the strength and relationship between the frequency of Internet use and civic participation. In their study, the authors used a series of two-stage least squares (2SLS) regressions to investigate the reliability and direction of the relationship between community engagement and Internet use.

To begin their testing of the models, a fixed standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression needed to occur to predict each of the four endogenous variables. From the regressions, the researchers were able to produce trimmed models featuring only significant predictors of each of the four key variables. The trimmed models were then used as instruments in the final 2SLS models testing linkages between the endogenous variables. In the authors’ table 3 below is the first set of OLS regressions—both original and trimmed models—with time spent on the Internet as the criterion variable. Age, sex (gender), income, the presence of children, and time pressures are significant negative predictors, while education, technology ownership, and time spent with magazines and newspapers are all significantly and positively related to Internet time in the original model. As displayed in table 3, time spent with radio and television seems to have no effect on time spent with the Internet, signifying little cross-media time displacement. As a result, the positive relationship with time spent with newspapers and magazines suggests that people use the Internet to satisfy the same motives served by reading newspapers and magazines—information acquisition and social surveillance. In the trimmed model, all relationships remain significant after removing nonsignificant
predictors. Dhavan Shah and Michael Schmierbach authors of the study suggested that

“These variables account for 19.4% of the variance in time spent with the Internet.”

Table 3. OLS regression predicting time spent on internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.473 (.064)</td>
<td>-.134***</td>
<td>-.479 (.063)</td>
<td>-.135***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (Female)</td>
<td>-4.686 (1.792)</td>
<td>-.041**</td>
<td>-4.700 (1.789)</td>
<td>-.041**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.490 (.791)</td>
<td>.054**</td>
<td>2.482 (.779)</td>
<td>.054**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-653 (.253)</td>
<td>-.047*</td>
<td>-635 (.250)</td>
<td>-.045*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Non-white)</td>
<td>-.264 (2.236)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Home</td>
<td>-4.057 (8.91)</td>
<td>-.077***</td>
<td>-4.104 (.887)</td>
<td>-.078***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Pressure</td>
<td>-.674 (.320)</td>
<td>-.036*</td>
<td>-.646 (.317)</td>
<td>-.034*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Ownership</td>
<td>19.374 (.820)</td>
<td>.406***</td>
<td>19.380 (.816)</td>
<td>.406***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/Radio</td>
<td>.007 (.009)</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/TV</td>
<td>-.003 (.010)</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/Magazine</td>
<td>.076 (.022)</td>
<td>.059**</td>
<td>.077 (.022)</td>
<td>.060**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/NP</td>
<td>.078 (.027)</td>
<td>.052**</td>
<td>.078 (.027)</td>
<td>.051**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R²</td>
<td></td>
<td>.194***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.194***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses to the right of the unstandardized coefficients. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001


In their second set of OLS regressions, civic participation is the criterion variable.

In these analyses, age, education, being a homemaker, hard news use, soft news use, personality strength, post materialism, political interest, and church attendance all

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positively predict civic participation in both original and trimmed models, while employment is a negative predictor. These models were then used to conduct the full 2SLS analyses. The researchers suggest that the analysis provides a complete understanding of the factors predicting hours of Internet use and the three forms of community engagement, as well as the strength and direction of the ties between engagement and Internet use.

The data from their table 4 demonstrates the relationship between time online and civic participation, suggesting that time spent on the Internet contributes to increased levels of participation, but that civic participation is not a significant predictor of time spent online.  

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Table 4. Structural model of time spent on Internet and civic participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coeff. (Std. Coeff.)</th>
<th>Coeff. (Std. Coeff.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/ Internet</td>
<td>.037 (.018)</td>
<td>.083*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.212 (.029)</td>
<td>.136***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.270 (.357)</td>
<td>.114***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>-2.870 (.958)</td>
<td>-.054***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>7.543 (1.430)</td>
<td>.089***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard News</td>
<td>1.467 (.677)</td>
<td>.038*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft News</td>
<td>1.790 (.514)</td>
<td>.058***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Strength</td>
<td>.614 (.094)</td>
<td>.110***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmaterialism</td>
<td>1.137 (.339)</td>
<td>.054***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.605 (.274)</td>
<td>.038*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
<td>.243 (.018)</td>
<td>.222***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R²</td>
<td></td>
<td>.151***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coeff. (Std. Coeff.)</th>
<th>Coeff. (Std. Coeff.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Participation</td>
<td>-.180 (.129)</td>
<td>-.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.426 (.074)</td>
<td>-.120***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (Female)</td>
<td>-.3.806 (.180)</td>
<td>-.034*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.064 (.894)</td>
<td>.067***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.635 (.251)</td>
<td>-.045*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Home</td>
<td>4.031 (.894)</td>
<td>-.077***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Pressure</td>
<td>-.638 (.319)</td>
<td>-.034*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Ownership</td>
<td>19.943 (.829)</td>
<td>.409***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/Magazines</td>
<td>.077 (.022)</td>
<td>.060***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/Newspaper</td>
<td>.084 (.027)</td>
<td>.056**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R²</td>
<td></td>
<td>.193***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses to the right of the unstandardized coefficients. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001


Table 5 shows findings presented in the 2SLS model for public attendance, which is positively predicted by time spent on the Internet. The results indicate that time spent on the Internet contributes weakly to higher levels of public attendance.
Table 5. Structural model of time spent on Internet and public attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Coeff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time w/ Internet</td>
<td>.013 (.006)</td>
<td>.089*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.572 (.128)</td>
<td>.883***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>.303 (.131)</td>
<td>.039*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft News Use</td>
<td>.816 (.182)</td>
<td>.077***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Withdrawal</td>
<td>-.181 (.062)</td>
<td>.052**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurousness</td>
<td>.239 (.053)</td>
<td>.083***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.346 (.094)</td>
<td>.064***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R²</td>
<td>.049***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Coeff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Attendance</td>
<td>.643 (.372)</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.452 (.069)</td>
<td>-.128***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (Female)</td>
<td>-.4.760 (.1.796)</td>
<td>-.042**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.010 (.924)</td>
<td>.044*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.693 (.258)</td>
<td>-.049**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Home</td>
<td>-.3.852 (.954)</td>
<td>-.073***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Pressure</td>
<td>-.623 (.319)</td>
<td>-.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Ownership</td>
<td>19.360 (.820)</td>
<td>.406***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/Magazines</td>
<td>.067 (.025)</td>
<td>.052**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time w/Newspaper</td>
<td>.072 (.028)</td>
<td>.047*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R²</td>
<td>.193***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized and standard regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses to the right of the unstandardized coefficients. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001


To further expand on the definition of political participation, Professor Zhang Xinzhi discusses in his dissertation that much literature on politics and the Internet has mostly focused on modes of participation and has neglected the characteristics of that participation.\(^99\) Citing various authors, he breaks down the six characteristics of

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participation, which he believes will capture the nature of political participation. The six characteristics are as follows:

**The potential outcome**, i.e., whether the participation contributes to the public good—for example, being beneficial to the whole society, the community, or the collective interest. Some types of participation, however, may only benefit particular individuals. This characteristic can be referred to as the collective-particular.

**The level of conflict**, i.e., whether the benefit gained by some participants is at the expense of other participants, that is, the extent to which individuals are opposed by counter-participants. The level of conflict further distinguished political participation between the position-taking and non-position-taking types on account of potential conflicts generated by each type of participation.

According to Lee, position-taking participatory actions, such as demonstrating, petitioning, and voting, would generate potential conflict between the participants and the counter-participants, as compared with non-position-taking participation.

**The level of cooperativeness**, i.e., whether the participants act as individuals or act collectively with others to achieve the goal.

**The degree of initiative**, i.e., the difficulty for one to participate.

**The level of risk**, i.e., whether the participation is subject to the suppression by the state or the authorities.
The event agenda, i.e., whether the participation agenda is decided by the individuals or the government/ruling party.\textsuperscript{100}

These characteristics help one to understand the complexity of political participation. The late emeritus professor Robert Salisbury of Washington University in Saint Louis suggested that political participation comprised three functions.\textsuperscript{101} Initially, political participation is displayed as an action whereby citizens deem their government to be legitimate, thus giving elected and government officials consent to implement and formulate policies through voting and other means.\textsuperscript{102} Next, according to Salisbury, political participation is a key element in attaining political power due to the essential reduction of losses and the enhancement of gains for oneself or a social sector. Lastly, Salisbury suggested that “political participation is a solvent of social conflicts and a learning process through which citizens reach a common comprehension of the general good and how resources should be allocated to attain that general good”.

Political participation results from an individual’s ability to make an informed decision from the information to which he or she has been exposed. Cognitive engagement theory suggests that the cost of obtaining information about politics has decreased while, simultaneously, the public’s ability to process political information has increased.\textsuperscript{103} Under cognitive mobilization, citizens have more access to resources and skills, thus allowing them to deal with the complexities of politics and to understand how


\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

decisions are made in a democratic society. Theories of cognitive mobilization suggest that an individual’s exposure to information about current affairs and politics mixes with his or her ability and willingness to respond to the information received, which will affect his or her level of engagement.104 As education levels rise and the cost of access to information declines, we will see more people become active citizens. Social networks are a prime example of this premise. Due to SNS growth, they have reached small villages to big industrial cities through applications such as WhatsApp. Media consumption plays a significant role in the increase of political knowledge and interest, which in turn enhances political participation.105 In addition, when citizens become more informed and knowledgeable about how the political system functions, they also become more critical of the system.106

However, some scholars have challenged this notion, suggesting that it is unclear why individuals with higher levels of education would be willing to act on media information despite being knowledgeable about the political process.107 They have suggested that better education may represent better cognitive ability, but it cannot directly translate into automatic interest in politics.108 The authors of a paper titled “Citizenship and Civic Engagement: Attitudes and Behavior” presented at the Political Studies Association annual conference at the University of Aberdeen. They observed

104 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
that, despite Americans becoming more educated in terms of graduating high school and college, voter turnout has fallen.\textsuperscript{109} According to the authors Seyd and Pattie, if one applies the socio-economic model, one can get a significant amount of participation. They propose that if the cost of participation outweighs the likely advantages, no rational individual will act. On the other hand, the authors suggest that if the cost of activism or involvement is low and the benefits of successful action are high, one will see higher participation at all levels of the economic scale.\textsuperscript{110}

From the same article, one can make the argument that the Internet via social networks minimizes the cost of political engagement and citizen participation in the sense that individuals do not have to physically attend an event to pose a question to a candidate; they simply tweet their question and may get a direct response.\textsuperscript{111} People can live-tweet/post comments about a public debate, and from their comments others can like the post or tweet, indicating whether they did or did not like what a particular candidate said or how he or she behaved. This social network activity, in turn, captures the attention of the campaign coordinators and may influence them to alter or suggest changes to the candidate’s tone or approach at the next public debate.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
This study seeks to provide insight into individuals who actively follow a particular candidate via SNSs and to determine if the individuals’ support translates into voting for said candidate. In order to do so, this study utilizes a quantitative case study approach to examine the correlation of online political engagement to the act of voting. In this study, much literature is outlined to lay out the association between online engagement and the physical act of participation. This chapter details the case study methodology, data collection, and analysis.

In order to suggest that a correlation exists, the researcher utilizes the quantitative case study approach. As Robert Yin suggests, case studies can be particularly useful for studying a process, program, or, “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context.”

Yin defines case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates the case or cases conforming to the abovementioned definition by addressing the how or why questions concerning the phenomenon of interest.

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This study is particularly suitable for a case study design because it seeks to use numerical analysis to support the theory of resource mobilization. A case study can focus on a variety of factors. The researcher decided on a case study design due to its “detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information-rich in context.”

According to Yin, a researcher would use the case study method when he or she deliberately wants to cover contextual conditions, believing that the conditions may be highly pertinent to the phenomenon of study. Thus, in choosing to use the case study approach for this research, the researcher has allowed for the possibility of gaining significant insight into the connection between online engagement and offline participation.

Types of Case Studies

_Intrinsic case studies_ are unique because they are insightful in their own right. Researchers who utilize intrinsic case studies want to know about the specifics of the case rather than a more general problem or phenomenon.

Data from _collective case studies/multiple case studies_ are analyzed for insights both within each case and across cases and suggest that multiple cases may be utilized to replicate insights found within individual cases or to represent contrasting situations.

_Instrumental case studies_ deal with more general phenomena. This type of case study is utilized to provide the researcher with an opportunity to study the phenomenon of a

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4 Ibid.
specific interest. Within an instrumental case study, the research question recognizes a phenomenon, and “the cases are selected in order to explore how the phenomenon exists within a particular case”. In this design, individuals who are experiencing the phenomenon under investigation are all suitable cases for analysis.

This study utilizes the instrumental case study approach to provide insight on whether there is a correlation between online and offline political activities. SNSs assist the researcher in this study to quantify the previously mentioned activities but particularly the act of voting by the use of the tools/functions on social networks, thus predicting the outcome of a given public office race.

Robert K. Yin, Sharan Merriam, and Robert E. Stake are well-known methodologists whose opinions have justified researchers’ use of the case study method. Yin deviates from Merriam and Stake by contending that the qualitative and quantitative should be utilized in combination as evidentiary sources. Despite Stake and Merriam’s exclusive use of qualitative sources, all three agree that the researcher must obtain data from various sources to capture the case under study in its complexity and entirety. In this study, the researcher uses existing literature, observation, and surveys as sources to provide evidence for the study’s thesis.

Yin suggests that the researcher should not be held to a routinized data collection; however, he does point out that the researcher should make a critically careful decision when selecting the case and should conduct a pilot study. Following Yin’s method, this

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7 Ibid.
researcher’s first steps for this study compared the official campaign Facebook pages of the 2012 US presidential nominees and discovered that the one with the most favorable comments, likes, and shares became the winner of the popular vote. Yin defines analysis as consisting of “examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study,”9 which the reader will encounter examples of in the present study.

The utilization of the Yin method allows this study to exhaust multiple sources to support the thesis. The observations of individuals’ behavior on SNSs detailed in this study were later tested by the results of the field surveys that were conducted. This activity reflects the flexibility that Yin suggests allows the researcher to explore and control his or her criteria through a “well-defined and well-structured data analysis procedure.”10

Some of the main characteristics of a case study involve a descriptive approach, in where the objective of the study is to establish an association between variables and a sample size ranging in the hundreds or thousands to help validate that a comprehensive relationship between variables occurred.11 The characteristic of narrowly focusing on a single aspect provides clarity and conciseness for the reader.12 Another characteristic suggests that the combination of objective and subjective data allows the researcher two

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valid data sets and allows the study to achieve an in-depth comprehension of behavior and experiences. Lastly, the process-oriented characteristic allows the researcher to recall the nature of the data and experimental process that may have developed over time. This characteristic is in contrast with the experimental method, which is said to be a static description of the process. The abovementioned characteristics granted the researcher flexibility in approaching the study in order to help achieve the goal of associating online followers of a political candidate and the act of their conversion into supporters. Overall, the case study method and all of its components are the best fit for this study.

**Techniques**

- **Study of population and sampling:** The data were collected from individuals who attended political events such as the 2016 presidential primary debates, political rallies, also students from college campuses in Atlanta, Georgia, and North and South Florida. Initial data were also collected via Facebook, which laid the groundwork for the survey questions created. The sample population for this study provided insight on how online political habits have translated into offline participation. Data analysis software was used to interpret the respondents’ activity. The total number of respondents in this study was 299.

- **Data collection:** The initial data were observed from Facebook and tabulated to produce numerical data. Much of the later data were collected in the form of paper surveys. The surveys were physically passed out to various individuals at political events and college campuses. Using several clipboards, a ziplock bag full of blue and black pens, and a soft-sided three-zipper briefcase, the researcher

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13 Ibid.
approached individuals. Most of these individuals welcomed the idea of completing a nonpartisan survey about politics and social networks. Many conversations took place that allowed the researcher to gain greater insight into genuine feelings and feedback about the study and the survey questions.

The researcher chose to administer in-person surveys (as opposed to online) because it allowed space for dialogue and candid responses from the respondents. The researcher interacted with over 400 individuals, some of whom glanced at the survey or began completing the first page and then stopped. Those who completed the survey totaled 299. Most of the surveys were conducted in cities in the southeastern United States.

- **Data analysis:** The research target sample size goal was 300 respondents. Despite not reaching the target sample size, the researcher was able to satisfy a testable sample size. With the completed surveys, the next step was to quantify the respondents’ answers to the various questions. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. To begin the analysis process, one has to assign unique identifiers to each question and answer to ensure that person A said “this” about “that.” Once all the unique identifiers are inputted, a series of analyses occurs that produces descriptive data, helping the researcher quantitatively support his or her thesis.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Preliminary Results Prior to Study

Prior to the start of writing this dissertation, the researcher had to ensure that there was enough consistency in the method used to support the premise that tools/functions could be used as a predictor tool for electoral outcomes. The researcher constructed a somewhat simplistic method to see if there was any correlation among individuals who were active via social networks during an ongoing election. Facebook was the only social network that was used for this experiment due to the Pew research study that suggested that Facebook leads the pack with the most online users compared to other social networks.1 The first election examined was the 2012 US presidential election, in which the researcher compared the election results (Obama winning the popular vote with a little over three million votes)2 to the number of likes per post and overall likes per page. Comparing the two candidates’ Facebook campaign pages reveals that Mitt Romney trailed Barack Obama by a large margin in both categories stated earlier; however, it is worth mentioning that this data collection was done after the election took place, so it is possible some likes per post could have been added because a person can

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like a post much later and there is no date or time stamp on that like. This experience made the researcher wonder—if this same method were to be applied to a smaller or less publicized election, would it be as conclusive? And if proven conclusive, could this be a new reliable method of obtaining insight on electoral outcomes?

The researcher started small with the mayoral race for the city of Compton, California. Mayoral candidate Aja Brown, age thirty-one, was up against established public official and former mayor of Compton Omar Bradley. The researcher followed both candidates on their Facebook campaign pages for two months up until election night. Upon examining both candidates’ pages, the researcher determined that Aja Brown was more consistent with her Facebook postings, adding pictures of community events, speaking engagements, and her platform for community change. Omar Bradley’s page consisted of what appeared to be a platform flyer reposted on his Wall. During the Compton mayoral runoff race, Aja Brown’s official Facebook campaign page accumulated 4,319 likes compared to 137 likes on Omar Bradley’s campaign page. The researcher tracked the engagement of the candidates’ Facebook friends and page visitors between April 4, 2013, and June 4, 2013 (voting day), and Aja Brown averaged 44 likes per posted content compared to an average of 10 likes per content on Omar Bradley’s campaign page (calculations were done by adding all the likes accumulated between April 4 and June 4, and dividing that by the number of posted contents). On the day of the election, June 4, Aja Brown received 341 likes, an average of 48 likes per posting, compared to the 40 likes, an average of 20 likes per posting, for Omar Bradley’s Facebook campaign page. The City of Compton general municipal election resulted in
7,513 votes: 2,707 for Omar Bradley; 4,724 for Aja Brown; and 82 blank and over voted ballots.³

The same correlation can be found in the 2013 New York City mayoral election won by Bill de Blasio and the United States presidential race of 2012. However, despite examining both races, the researcher did not collect data due to not covering the race as it was taking place; this was to ensure that likes were not added afterwards, although it is safe to suggest there was a correlation with the number of people who expressed support on SNSs to the large turnout on Election Day to vote for those candidates. Although this method allowed one to predict the winner, the researcher was not quite convinced due to the negative local media coverage on Omar Bradley highlighting a 2004 conviction on charges of misusing city funds while serving in office, which was later overturned by an appeals court.⁴ However, one understands these are not unusual claims made against an established candidate. Aja Brown caught her own flak. Some citizens were concerned about her lack of experience and her not being native to the area. Nevertheless, it seems there was a division in the city: older Compton residents in favor of Bradley versus younger residents in favor of Brown. As a *Los Angeles Times* article put it, “Brown rallied younger voters who wanted someone new and fresh.”⁵ As mentioned earlier in the introduction, a Pew research study suggests that millennials comprise the highest percentage of online users. Keeping that in mind, Aja Brown’s ability to communicate

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⁵ Ibid.
her charisma through social networks proved to be a winnable formula against a status quo opponent, as articulated by Weber.

To ensure that this method was valid, the researcher examined several other political races. The next race was the highly publicized 2014 senatorial race in the state of Georgia; Democrat Michelle Nunn was running against Republican David Perdue for the US Senate seat. The year 2014 was considered to be a strong one for Republicans and their quest to take control of the Senate, but polls suggested that Michelle Nunn had a good chance of not making that happen, especially since polls leading up to election night suggested she only had a 3 percent lead over David Perdue. That three-point margin fell “within the poll’s sampling error of plus or minus four percentage points, meaning the two candidates [were] statistically tied less than two weeks before Election Day.”

According to one of Georgia’s prominent newspapers, an article entitled “David Perdue Outraises Michelle Nunn, Puts More of His Own Money In,” suggested that both political parties spent nearly 41.5 million dollars combined on their candidates, including super political action Committees, with Michelle Nunn ending up with the most cash on hand in the final stretch of the race. Also, late in the race, a 2005 deposition of David Perdue admitting to outsourcing jobs was leaked. The news article suggested that news was the cause of his falling behind in the polls. Although no media outlet or polling agency wanted to make a precise prediction of who they thought the winner would be,

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one could have leaned toward Nunn as polls echoed the position articulated by a CNN article—that Nunn had an advantage over Perdue among likely women voters, 56 percent to 38 percent, and among likely voters who lived in the all-important suburbs that dominate much of the state’s political scene. In addition, the article suggested that, in a hypothetical runoff, Nunn would hold a small margin over Perdue—51 percent to 47 percent. Using this method, coined the “Facelection” (a combination of Facebook and the word election), one could again make a prediction of the winner of this highly publicized senatorial race.

Once again, the researcher tabulated all the likes per post and overall likes of the Facebook campaign pages. The tabulation process began on October 7, 2014, and concluded on Election Day, November 3, 2014. Michelle Nunn’s likes on her campaign page totaled 33,450. The number of total likes per post averaged out to 37 among 852 postings, with overall likes per posting totaling 31,524. In comparison, David Perdue’s total number of likes on his Facebook campaign page was 68,960, and the average number of likes totaled 40 among 956 postings, which totaled to 38,259.

Examining the number of likes of both candidates’ Facebook campaign pages, one can see that David Perdue outranked Michelle Nunn in the combination of likes per post and likes per campaign page. From the beginning of formulating the Facelection method, one can understand that only focusing on the likes on a person’s Facebook page may not be enough to make the statement that social networks can be used as a predictive

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tool for electoral outcomes; therefore, more variables were added, which helped legitimize a prediction made by this method. More variables complementing each other supports the suggestion that one candidate has a solid lead over the other. Therefore, tabulating the number of likes per post a month or two prior to election night can help form an opinion as to whether or not observing that person close to voting day is worthwhile. By tracking likes per post, one is able to constantly track support for a candidate in the final leg of a race. One might be inclined to believe that if a person consistently follows a candidate throughout an election, he or she would be more inclined to vote for that candidate. Using Facebook followers of political candidates as a subsample of potential voters, one can suggest that the candidate with the most likes per page and postings is more likely to win.

If one used the data collected from the Facelection method of the Georgia senatorial race between David Perdue and Michelle Nunn, the prediction that Perdue would be the winner would not have been far-fetched. However, to give a statistical understanding to the data, one can look at the average of likes per posting, which gave Perdue a three-point lead, but it was the combination of the campaign page variable that allowed one to predict Perdue as the winner due to his substantial lead in likes. As the election results came in, the researcher was a bit nervous not knowing if the Facelection method would be successful but, lo and behold, David Perdue won by 52.89 percent while Michelle Nunn earned 45.21 percent of the vote.9

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Although this method has proven successful in the several political races mentioned earlier, the researcher wanted to ensure the study was not overlooking other possible variables. One added variable was favorable comments, defined as comments that suggest the person will vote for the candidate he or she is following. Tabulated for this study were comments such as “I’m voting for you,” “you got my vote,” “I’m with you all the way,” and anything suggesting a strong inclination that the commenter was going to vote.

In addition, to ensure a commenter was not counted twice, names were flagged as already expressing support in the researcher’s Excel spreadsheet. This was the most cumbersome task to complete for the researcher because not only did he have to tabulate likes per posting, but he had to read through each posted comment per posting that suggested support and insinuated likelihood to vote for the candidate. As daunting as the task was, the researcher was able to complete it and predict winners from two gubernatorial races.

The Facelection method with the newly added variable was applied to the highly contested Florida gubernatorial race between former governor Charlie Crist and incumbent governor Rick Scott. Many media outlets suggested it was a tight race. One polling agency suggested that both Scott and Crist were deadlocked at 44 percent each, with Libertarian candidate Adrian Wyllie polling at 6 percent. The polling agency indicated that they usually did not release poll results to the decimal but made exceptions when there was a tie. Crist was at 44.0 percent to 43.8 percent for Scott; in terms of raw
numbers of poll respondents, it was 526 for Crist and 524 for Scott. When respondents were asked how well they favored each candidate, Scott (41/48 approval rating) and Crist (40/47 favorability rating) were almost identically unpopular according to the polling agency, suggesting that the candidates had gone in very different directions over the course of this election cycle from being seen more favorably. Scott’s net approval rating improved by 17 points a few months leading up to election night from the 24-point spread at 33/57 in January 2013. Crist’s net favorability rating declined by 18 points leading up to election night from the 11-point spread at 49/38 that he began with at the start of 2013.

Finally, the polling agency suggested that Crist would win based on their numbers; however, the agency admitted that the race ended up being much more competitive than it had looked at the beginning of the cycle.

Most polling agencies that covered the race predicted Crist as either winner or a tie, with Crist leading but tied with the margin of error factored in. According to Facelection, with the newly added variable of favorable comments, in-depth reactions of potential voters could be obtained. Not only were commenters passionate about the candidate they were following, but they were just as passionate about disliking his opponent and surprisingly disenchanted about the overall political process. Rick Scott

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11 Ibid.

received the most likes on his campaign page, totaling 117,267, compared to Charlie Crist’s 95,949. Regarding the number of likes per post, Scott averaged more, totaling 119 to Crist’s 47. It is worth mentioning that Crist had more postings on his timeline than Scott but still fell short of the total likes received once the likes per post were added together—85,081 compared to Scott’s 87,019.

Finally, Rick Scott led with the most favorable comments (which, as mentioned earlier, give unfiltered insight into how voters feel and their potential actions), totaling 842 compared to Charlie Crist’s 701, which is imperative to understanding the dynamics of respondents. This researcher was able to find organic responses, unlike many polling agencies that sometimes ask leading questions\textsuperscript{13} or interview those who are on the call list every election cycle. With all three variables lining up, it was safe to predict Rick Scott as the winner of the gubernatorial race in Florida.

Now the question can be raised about the margin of error when the numbers are so close that it may not be safe to say that the candidate who is leading modestly will be the winner for sure. In such cases, polling agencies generally acknowledge the situation and, in most cases, suggest a tie. What makes this method worthy of acknowledgement is that it has evolved the way traditional polling agencies collect data to predict political races.

Phone calls may still be the most reliable source for polling today, but as the generations of tomorrow come so will new methods. The Facelection method, for

\textsuperscript{13} Ellen Grigsby, \textit{Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Political Science}, 6\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005) 24-26.
example, has been to a degree effective when predicting electoral outcomes. However, one political race put the Facelection method to the test. Incumbent governor Nathan Deal of the state of Georgia sought to protect his seat from challenger Jason Carter in the 2014 gubernatorial race. Early polls suggested that Jason Carter, the grandson of former US President Jimmy Carter, had a heavy lead over Deal.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, a CNN poll a month before election night suggested that Carter had a slight advantage.\textsuperscript{15} From June 2014 through November 2014, most polls suggested a tight race; however, a good majority of the polls did suggest that Deal had a slight edge without considering the margin of error, while other polls suggested a tie or Carter having the advantage.

According to the Facelection, Nathan Deal led in two categories. The number of likes for Deal’s campaign page was 165,321 compared to Jason Carter’s 60,334. In favorable comments, Deal led with 1,266; Carter was not too far behind with 1,187. However, Carter did take the lead in number of likes per post. Despite Deal having more total likes per posting—totaling 72,695—the total number of postings—1,425—gave him an average of 51 likes per post compared to Carter’s 63 average with 46,495 total likes per Carter’s 957 postings. This is where it can get confusing because Deal actually had more likes per posting, but the advantage went to Carter due to a higher average. Despite that one technical advantage of Carter, Deal held a modest lead in this method due to his overall likes count and his lead in the favorable comments category, where he led by 79 (totaling 1266) compared to Carter’s 1,187. But it was not safe to call the race for Deal.


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
When the numbers are close, most polling agencies will disclose which candidate is leading but emphasize by a slim margin. In this case, it was Nathan Deal who came out the predicted winner with many of the top polling agencies that most political experts use to discuss the competitiveness of Georgia’s gubernatorial race. Needless to say, on election night when the votes were tallied, Nathan Deal kept his seat as governor of the state of Georgia with 52.8 percent of the vote.16

The researcher gained much insight using this method of collecting data from the social network Facebook to predict electoral outcomes. It is the researcher’s hope that this method (which has room for improvement) can be considered a viable predictor of election outcomes. With the massive growth in the number of Internet users and the many who own some form of social network account, this would be considered a method that has caught up with today’s era—a time when presidential State of the Union addresses are live-streamed on the Internet, encouraging live tweets or comments that can be used to get a sense of how the public feels about their elected official’s speech.17

**Participants in the Sample**

This chapter is dedicated to displaying the results of the administered surveys. Multiple statistical tests were run using the SPSS package to determine whether there was strong significance when testing the hypothesis of the study. The main question of the study sought to answer whether the tools/functions on SNSs can used to predict electoral outcomes. The study also sought to answer the question of the future of online voting,

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and tables displaying the respondents’ results are presented. The data in this chapter reflects a sample size of 299 respondents, most of whom were located in cities and counties of the Southeastern United States, specifically Atlanta, Georgia; Tallahassee, Florida; West Palm Beach, Florida; Broward County, Florida; and Miami-Dade County, Florida. Surveys were administered at the 2016 presidential primary debates in Miami, Florida; political rallies; and college campuses in the mentioned areas.

**Data Analysis of Results**

In table 6, one will see that the initial independent variables of the Like button tool and the ability for an individual to follow/friend a candidate on an SNS is tested against the dependent variable of his or her likelihood to vote for that candidate as compared to figure 1 in the literature review, which displayed the number of individuals who voted on election day. The connection between figure 1 and table 6. R.1 is imperative, because we see the use of a tool/function on Facebook to help researchers of the study observe individuals’ voting behavior.\(^{18}\)

Table 6. R.1. Variables entered/removed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variables Entered</th>
<th>Variables Removed</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HAVE YOU EVER LIKED THIS CANDIDATE’S POST?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Forward (Criterion: Probability-of-F-to-enter &lt;= .050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>HAVE YOU EVER FOLLOWED THIS CANDIDATE ONLINE?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Forward (Criterion: Probability-of-F-to-enter &lt;= .050)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent variable: HOW LIKELY ARE/WERE YOU TO VOTE FOR THIS CANDIDATE?

According to table 7, one will notice the display of the two best predictors of how likely an individual will be to vote for a candidate running for office. The Pearson R tells us how well the predictors match the model’s goodness of fit. While the R Squared explains the percentage in change of the dependent variable explained by the independent variables, the Adjusted R Square allows for further accuracy by articulating the percentage of variation, explained by only the independent variables that actually affect the dependent variable. The Std. Error of the estimate measures the accuracy of predictions made with a regression line as seen in the below graph. As for the Durbin-Watson test for autocorrelation (a relationship between values separated from each other by a given time lag) in the residuals (prediction errors) from a regression analysis.
Table 7. R.2. Model summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
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<td>.209</td>
<td>.65633</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>.64826</td>
<td>1.837</td>
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</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant) HAVE YOU EVER LIKED HIS OR HER POST?
b. Predictors: (Constant) HAVE YOU EVER LIKED HIS OR HER POST?; HAVE YOU EVER FOLLOWED THIS CANDIDATE ONLINE?  
c. Dependent variable: HOW LIKELY ARE/WERE YOU TO VOTE FOR THIS CANDIDATE?

Table 8 conveys that the model can predict Y using X. The significance is .000, so we can reject the null hypothesis that the model has no predictive value.

Table 8. R.3. ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>26.954</td>
<td>62.573</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>99.939</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126.893</td>
<td>233</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>29.817</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.909</td>
<td>35.476</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
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<td>231</td>
<td>.420</td>
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</table>

<sup>a</sup> Predictors: (Constant) HAVE YOU EVER LIKED HIS OR HER POST?

<sup>b</sup> Predictors: (Constant) HAVE YOU EVER LIKED HIS OR HER POST?; HAVE YOU EVER FOLLOWED THIS CANDIDATE ONLINE?

<sup>c</sup> Dependent variable: HOW LIKELY ARE/WERE YOU TO VOTE FOR THIS CANDIDATE?

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**a. Regression, Residual, Total:** Looking at the breakdown of variance in the outcome variable, the total variance is partitioned into the variance that can be explained by the independent variables (Model) and the variance that is not explained by the independent variables (Error).

**b. Sum of Squares:** These are the Sum of Squares associated with the three sources of variance, Total, Model, and Residual. The Total variance is partitioned into the variance, which can be explained by the independent variables (Regression) and the variance that is not explained by the independent variables (Residual).
c. *df:* These are the degrees of freedom associated with the sources of variance. The total variance has N-1 degrees of freedom. The Regression degrees of freedom correspond to the number of coefficients estimated minus 1.

d. *Mean Square:* These are the Mean Squares, the Sum of Squares divided by their respective df.

e. *F and Sig.:* This is the F-statistic and the p-value associated with it. The F-statistic is the Mean Square (Regression) divided by the Mean Square (Residual). The p-value is compared to some alpha level in testing the null hypothesis (that all of the model coefficients are 0).

The correlation coefficient (r) and the coefficient of determination (r²) found in the Model Summary indicate the strength of the linear trend between the variables. The significance value in the ANOVA table, when compared to a predetermined α, indicates whether changes in dependent-variable scores that accompany changes in independent variable scores are significant. Finally, table 9 provides the y-intercept and the slope for the regression equation.
Table 9. R.4. Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>(Constant)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.675</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.246</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVE YOU EVER</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>7.910</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIKED THIS</td>
<td>CANDIDATE’S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.593</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.481</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVE YOU EVER</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>4.988</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIKED THIS</td>
<td>CANDIDATE’S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLLOWED THIS</td>
<td>CANDIDATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONLINE?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent variable: HOW LIKELY ARE/WERE YOU TO VOTE FOR THIS CANDIDATE?
Figure 6 displays a normal probability-probability (P-P) plot based on the standardized residuals. On the X-axis is the observed cumulative probability based on the percentiles in the frequency distribution of the residuals. The Y axis is based on taking the Standardized Residual (Z-score) and computing the cumulative density (Percentile; Probability of that Value or below) from the normal distribution.

![Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual](image)

Figure 6. Normal P-P plot of regression standardized residual

The results in tables 7-9 are the key components to suggesting that the hypothesis of the study demonstrates positive findings. The above mentioned tables also support the initial methods used by the researcher to investigate whether the study was worth
pursuing, thus proving that the method of observing behavior online via SNS tools/functions can display predictable behavior.

In table 10, when asked whether respondents voted for a candidate that they followed, liked their post, or left a favorable comment, 46.8 percent said yes while 32 percent said no; however, 7.2 percent of the 32 percent indicated that they were under the required age to vote.

Table 10. R.5. Did you vote for this candidate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid NO</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO (BECAUSE I WAS UNDER THE REQUIRED AGE TO VOTE AT THE TIME)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>99.00</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When discussing the ability for individuals to influence others to behave in a certain manner,19 we see examples of individuals being influenced by online activity in

---

table 1. When compared to the results shown in table 11 and table 12, we see the similarities in the respondents’ answers. However, it is worth mentioning that this study helps to understand that a call for action is not needed to get individuals to participate; liking a posting liked by others can demonstrate participation.

Table 11. R.6. How likely to attend event liked by friends/followers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>LESS LIKELY 66</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIKELY</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MORE</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MORE LIKELY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>99.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. R.7. Online event encouraged to physically participate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESS LIKELY</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIKELY</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE LIKELY</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>99.00</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 13, when the question of whether voting online impacted their participation in the voting process, 70 percent of the respondents indicated that online voting would increase while 7.4 percent said it would decrease, and 14.7 percent stated it would not change.
Table 13. R.8. Would this increase or decrease your voting participation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCREASE</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECREASE</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 14, when the question was asked whether respondents would like to cast their vote online, 33.8 percent said no while 61.2 percent indicated they would.

Table 14. R.9. Would you like to cast your vote online?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The results of this study have shown that the tools/functions on SNSs can be used as a viable method of predicting electoral outcomes. Much of the literature review in this study suggests that there is a connection between SNSs and political participation. However, the case studies mentioned in the literature review carefully debated the idea that observations from SNSs cannot concretely measure political participation. The researcher of this study has picked up the argument at that point and has suggested that SNSs can positively connect online engagement to political activity, thus allowing the researcher to reject the null hypothesis.

For example, when regressions were run to test whether individual users on SNSs who continuously followed a candidate and liked his or her posts were more likely to vote for said candidate, the results displayed a significance of 0.00. The significance of 0.00 suggests that the independent variables (an individual continuously following a candidate and liking his or her posts) can predict the dependent variable (their likelihood to vote for said candidate). The results also support the hypothesis of the study that the tools on SNS can be used to predict electoral outcomes.

As mentioned earlier, resource mobilization theory was applied to the study to support the hypothesis that when a space is given for political opportunities and resources, successful mobilization can occur. Movement entrepreneurs are the agents who are able to organize individuals to participate and maintain their participation to meet the agent’s objectives.20 In that provided space, movement entrepreneurs can use

their charisma\textsuperscript{21} to get people to follow/friend and like, retweet, share, or comment about their platform. If we take a look at table 8, which reflects question 5a of the administered surveys when asked, “How likely are you to attend an event that was liked by many of your friends/followers?” A total of 22 percent of the respondents stated they were less likely to attend, 48 percent said they were likely to attend, and 28 percent stated they were more likely to attend. Thus, the likelihood of attending that event displays higher probability.

To further suggest the connection of online engagement to physical participation, question 5b (table 9) asked, “If this was a trending political event streaming online that encouraged physical participation, how likely are you to participate?” Twenty-five percent of the respondents were less likely to attend, 47 percent were likely, and 24 percent were more likely, thus suggesting that 71 percent of the respondents’ likelihood to attend the event were higher. Movement entrepreneurs’ ability to get individuals to follow and like their posts is essential to getting these individuals to physically participate in the activity that the movement entrepreneur is promoting. Once we can establish that online behavior via SNS tools/functions can be observed, we can suggest that these behaviors can be observed and analyzed to predict behaviors.

A later part of the survey also examined the future of online voting to suggest that when SNSs become normalized as a more effective campaign method than traditional methods, the next step would be to enhance voting practices. The researcher has suggested that the American political system has already begun introducing what will be

\begin{footnote}{21} Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” 731–56\end{footnote}
the inevitable practice of online voting. If we look at the results chapter of this study, we notice that 70 percent of the respondents stated that if they had the ability to vote online, it would increase their political participation, while 7 percent said it would decrease their participation, and 14 percent said it would not change. When the same respondents were asked if they would like to cast their vote online, 61 percent said yes while 33 percent said no. As of June 2016, 31 states had adopted a form of the online system, whether it be online voting in primaries in Arizona or online voter registration in Colorado. The combination of constituents’ interest in voting online and state governments’ increasing use of online systems suggests that online voting would be a legitimate option as a voting method in all public office elections throughout the United States in the near future.  

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This research has investigated how online behaviors can be observed to predict participation in offline activities. Focusing on online political campaigning by candidates running for public office and electoral outcomes, this study was able to gain in-depth data about what is still considered to be a non-traditional approach when predicting political outcomes. The results of observing online behaviors and collecting data via in-person surveys strengthen the researcher’s results in that empirical data was produced to display the significance of the role of SNSs in predicting electoral outcomes.

The study’s use of resource mobilization theory as a framework helped the researcher tackle the phenomenon of why people become engaged in an idea or person and then mobilize to support or carry out his or her agenda. This is essential to future research that seeks to further investigate the impact that social networking sites has on the electoral process.

Conclusion from Findings

As stated earlier, the findings suggest that there is a positive correlation between online political engagement to the act of voting in electoral races for public office. The researcher in this study attempts to move past literature that stopped short of suggesting that online political behavior can be observed to predict offline behavior.
However, the researcher is aware of the limitations to this study such as the sample population size, which was limited to 299 respondents in one region of the United States of America. Additional limitations included the age of the sample population, which was dominated by individuals between 18–35 years old; and when tested in regression analysis leaving favorable comments, #hashtags, and retweets did not display a sign of significance. Another recognizable point to consider is that the researcher’s results did not allow for demographics to be a factor when examining the behavior of the individuals on SNS; this action moves away from traditional approaches when sampling populations.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

It is concluded by the researcher that the research adds to the field of political science in that it explains the impact of SNS on electoral politics and how SNS changed traditional practices of political candidates, public officials, and government agencies. It is the opinion of the researcher that political science course books would need to be developed where SNS are infused into the content that is discussed. It is the researcher’s recommendation for future study that a larger population is tested and demographics are also stressed in results as a way to compare the difference of impact when demographics are used. In addition, as mentioned in the results/discussion section of this study, an attempt was made to investigate the future method of voting. As tables 13–14 suggest, there is an overwhelming display of agreement that online voting would be a method that would increase voter turnout.
APPENDIX

A Survey on Social Networks and Electoral Outcomes

Welcome to the best survey ever!

My name is Abdul Sharif, and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at Clark Atlanta University Department of Political Science. I am researching how “likes, comments, reposts/retweets” can be used to predict electoral behavior.

Please answer all the survey questions so that this exciting research comes to life! It will take less than ten minutes to complete the survey. It is my hope that this research adds to the field of political science and provides the public with another method of obtaining insight into electoral outcomes.

All personal information will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed.

For further questions, contact:
Abdul Sharif, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science
Clark Atlanta University
Abdul.Sharif@students.cau.edu
(786) 301-9477

Dissertation Committee Chairperson
William Boone, Ph.D.
Clark Atlanta University
WBoone@cau.edu
(404) 880-8719

Thank you!
Survey Questionnaire Begins!

Please put a check mark in one box per question.

1. How often do you use the Internet during the week?
   - □ 1–2 days
   - □ 3–4 days
   - □ Almost every day of the week

2. How many hours would you say you spend on Social Network Sites throughout the day (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Vine, YouTube, World-Star, Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc.)?
   - □ 5 or more hours
   - □ 3–5 hours
   - □ None

3. How many friends/followers do you have on your social networking accounts?
   - □ Fewer than 100
   - □ 100–200
   - □ 201–300
   - □ 301–400
   - □ 401–500
   - □ 501–600
   - □ more than 600

4. a. Have you ever wanted to purchase a product that was “liked” by many people and had many favorable comments on any social network?
   If “No” skip to question 5.
   - □ Yes
   - □ No

   b. How likely did this “like” make you want to purchase this product?
   - □ Less Likely
   - □ Likely
   - □ More Likely

   c. Did you purchase this product?
   - □ Yes
   - □ No
5. a. How likely are you to attend an event that was “liked” by many of your friends/followers?
   - Less Likely
   - Likely
   - More Likely

   b. If this was a trending political event being streamed online that encouraged you to physically participate, how likely are you to go out in person and participate?
   - Less Likely
   - Likely
   - More Likely

6. If you are watching a television show that you enjoy and it encourages you to vote online or participate in any form online, would you go online to do so?
   - Yes
   - No

7. How interested are you in politics?
   - Very Much
   - Somewhat
   - A Little
   - None

8. Are you following or have you ever followed, visited, or viewed a social network of any political candidate running for public office (e.g., president, governor, mayor, Senator etc.)?
   - Yes
   - No

9. Have you ever used the “Like” button to like the candidate’s page?
   If “No” skip to question 15.
   - Yes
   - No

10. Have you ever used the “Like” button to like the candidate’s posts?
    - Yes
    - No

11. Have you ever left the candidate a favorable comment, #hashtag, or retweet?
    - Yes
    - No

12. a. How likely were you to vote for this candidate?
b. Did you vote for this candidate?
   - Yes
   - No
   - No (because I was under the required age to vote at the time)

13. How likely are you to vote for the candidate whether or not you liked his or her page or left a favorable comment, #hashtag, or retweet?
   - Less Likely
   - Likely
   - More Likely

14. If you were following a candidate running for public office on any social network and were able to securely vote online for the candidate without having to go to the polls to stand in line, would this increase or decrease your voting participation?
   - Increase
   - Decrease

15. Would you like to see public office elections held online (cast your vote online)?
   - Yes
   - No

16. Have you ever used social network sites to express discontent about a political issue?
   - Yes
   - No

Below is a list of Social Network Site functions. Specify your frequency of use:

17. Writing blogs or comments about government or politics
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Always

18. Reposting or sharing text, music, or videos
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Always

19. Uploading pictures or videos of yourself (selfies)
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Always

20. Joining a discussion via social network sites
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Always

21. Uploading pictures or videos of events as they are occurring
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Always

22. Seeking to add new friends
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Always

23. Liking friends’ posts
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Always

Demographical Data

Please put a check mark in one box per question.

Are you between the ages of:
(18–24)
(25–32)
(33–49)
(50–older)
To which racial group do you most identify?

- African-American (non-Hispanic)
- Asian/Pacific Islanders
- Caucasian (non-Hispanic)
- Latino or Hispanic
- Native American or Aleut
- Other (_____________)

Would you describe yourself as:

- American Indian/Native American
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- White/Caucasian
- Pacific Islander
- Other (_____________)

Gender

- Female
- Male

What is the highest degree you have completed?

(If you are currently enrolled, mark the degree that is being sought)

- No school
- Some high school
- High school graduate (Diploma/GED)
- Trade school
- Some college, 1 year or less
- 1 or more years of college, no degree
- Associate degree (e.g., AA, AS)
- Bachelor’s degree (e.g., BA, AB, BS)
- Master’s degree (e.g., MA, MS, MSW, MBA)
- Professional degree (e.g., JD, MD, DDS)
- Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., EdD)
What would you say is your total household income?

- Less than $10,000
- $10,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $29,999
- $30,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $59,999
- $60,000 to $69,999
- $70,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $89,999
- $90,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more

Thank You for completing this survey!


—. 2014 Georgia Governor Deal vs. Carter. 2014.


Torres da Silva, Marisa. "Online Forums, Audience Participation and Modes of Political Discussion: Readers’ Comments on the Brazilian Presidential Election as a Case Study/Foros En Línea, Participación Del Público y Modos De La Discusión Política." Comunicacion y Sociedad 26, 2013: 93–175.


Αγανακτισμένοι στο Σύνταγμα. May 24, 2011.