Cleveland State University
EngagedScholarship@CSU

ETD Archive

2009

Young Voters and the Power of Political Internet Culture: An Exploration of Political Websites and Political Engagement

Amanda H. Zima
Cleveland State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive

Part of the Communication Commons

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

YOUNG VOTERS AND THE POWER OF POLITICAL INTERNET CULTURE: AN

EXPLORATION OF POLITICAL WEBSITES AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMNENT

AMANDA H. ZIMA

Bachelor of Arts in Communication

Bachelor of Arts in History

Cleveland State University

May, 2006

submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

MASTER OF APPLIED COMMUNICATION THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

at the

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2009

THESIS APPROVAL

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

This thesis has been approved for the

School of Communication

And the College of Graduate studies by:

Edward Horowitz
Thesis Committee Chairman
School of Communication

May 14th, 2009
(Date)

Cheryl Bracken
Committee Member
School of Communication

May 14th, 2009
(Date)

Eileen Berlin Ray
Committee Member
School of Communication

May 14th, 2009
(Date)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Edward Horowitz, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. His knowledge, patience, and valuable feedback have helped me grow as student and researcher. I thank him for helping me achieve one of the biggest accomplishments of my life, to this point.

Many thanks to my committee members who have generously offered me advice and wisdom, during the writing process of this thesis. I am grateful to Dr. Cheryl Bracken who shared her knowledge and familiarity with new media and technologies. I would like to thank Dr. Eileen Berlin Ray for her support and friendship during my time at CSU. Also, I cannot thank her enough for encouraging me "to float" during the stressful times! Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Gary Pettey for his insight on research methods and for helping with the statistical analysis portion of this thesis.

 To my close friends and fellow graduate students, Erika Gress, Sharon Apel, Anna Caruso, and Mike Buncher, together we counted down the days, hours and seconds until we were finished; now, I'm a little sorry that we are. Thank you for the many, many laughs and good times we shared during our time together at CSU.

Special thanks to my sister, Lauren Kyker, who has always been an inspiration to me, it is my pleasure to follow in her footsteps in the pursuit of higher education.   Lastly and most importantly, I would like to show my appreciation to my parents, Tony Zima and Beverly Zima, for believing in me when I did not believe in myself and for supporting and loving me unconditionally. I dedicate this thesis to them.

YOUNG VOTERS AND THE POWER OF POLITICAL INTERNET CULTURE: AN

EXPLORATION OF POLITICAL WEBSITES AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMNENT

AMANDA H. ZIMA

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how far the use of online political information like political

news websites, social networking sites, and online political humor websites relate to

young adults' intention to vote, political knowledge, political efficacy, and having

political discussions with parents and friends. To better understand these relationships

the O-S-O-R model (e.g., Cho, Shah, Mcleod, McLeod, Scholl, Gotlieb, 2009; McLeod,

Kosicki, and McLeod, 1994) will be used as the theoretical framework.

The survey data for this study was collected during the exciting and noteworthy

2008 Presidential Primary elections. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 years

of age were asked questions related to their attention to political news information and

the 2008 Primary Election. Measures include traditional media use, online political

information, political discussions with parents and friends, political efficacy, political

participation, political knowledge and political interest.

Results show that, social networking sites (SNS) did not prove to be an important

means for political information for young adults, during the 2008 Ohio Presidential

Primary Election, despite the overwhelming attention they received. Second, television

news remains a significant predictor of political efficacy, likelihood to vote and having

political discussions with parents and friends. Third, political interest continues to be a driving force in young adults' political engagement and interpersonal political communication. Additionally, participants between the ages of 18 and 24 years of age show frequent use of SNS (social networking sites) for political and campaign information more than those participants 25 to 29 years of age. Also, those 25 to 29 years of age are more likely to use news like websites for information more than "younger" young adults. Finally, results from this study support the O-S-O-R model in understanding young adults' intention to vote, political discussions with parents and friends, political efficacy, and political knowledge.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Politicians must get their message to the public directly and effectively, often with

the help of mediated sources. Prior to the Internet, political candidates focused much of

their efforts on trying to control their message and campaign through traditional

communication strategies such as television ads, direct mail, campaign rallies, and press

coverage. While these one-way communication methods are still important in political

communication, the Internet has improved the ability for candidates to inform citizens,

mobilize voters, and even raise money. The rapid use of two-way communication on the

Internet has changed the way politicians conduct their campaigns. Additionally, with

more individuals having access to the Internet and the increasing number of politicians

using it to reach voters, it is important to examine the influence the Internet has on young

voter's political efficacy and face-to-face political discussions.

Jurgen Habermas (1962), the originator of the concept of the public sphere,

describes it as a domain of social life where public opinion is articulated through rational

public discussion and debate, where agreement and wise decision-making are the

desirable outcomes. Moreover, the public sphere can be seen as an ideal method for civic

participation and interaction. According to Habermas, the public sphere develops out of the private sphere - with roots coming from the institution of the family - and together, the private people form the public sphere[1].

When the two coincide on the Internet, the result is a type of virtual public sphere (Erikson, 2008). The concept of the virtual public sphere might be considered as a way of reconceptualizing the public sphere. With the Internet, individuals have greater access to information, which can result in gaining more political information and two-way communication connections with political elite (Papacharissi, 2009). Overall, privately motivated individuals and online groups can protest the public agenda with the use of the Internet, and the blending of the spheres occur when there is overlap between that which is public and that which is considered private.

Over the years, there has been a rapid transformation in the use of the Internet by political candidates. Davis and his colleagues (2009) explain the initiation and popularization of the Internet in political campaigns. During their 1992 campaigns, George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton were the first presidential candidates to make use of the Internet. The Bush campaign had the White House Communications Office email approximately 200 Bush speeches to several commercial bulletin boards, while the Clinton campaign used the Internet to send speeches, position papers, and biographical information on a Clinton Listserv and several newsgroups. These electronic campaign efforts were limited, since few citizens were relying on the Internet for their political information at the time. In 1995, the candidates for president constructed websites. However these early campaign sites offered little interaction and resembled nothing more

---

[1] According to Jurgen Habermans's concept, public spheres are those that are related to public/community, education, government, and business interactions. The private sphere is associated with the individual.

than a "brochure", providing information about the candidate's issue positions and platforms. After the first presidential debate, in 1995, during Bob Dole's closing statement, he told viewers they could get involved by visiting the campaign website. Although there was a mishap in his announcement, saying "www.dolekemp96org" rather than "www.dolekemp96.org", the site still received more than two million visitors within 24 hours. During this same year, the Republican Party and Democratic Party registered the domain names RNC.org and DNC.org.

When the 2000 election arrived, candidate websites were no longer something new and original, and especially by the 2004 campaigns, an overwhelming majority of congressional and presidential candidates maintained websites. During these elections, campaign websites included more features. For example, the Gore-Lieberman site, in 2000, had an "Instant MessageNet" feature for online chatting, and in 2004, George W. Bush invited visitors to ask his campaign staff questions, in real time, on the site's "State of the Race" section. Also, in 2003 and 2004, blogs became a campaign tool to create mobilization and connect supporters with the politician. Howard Dean was most notable for the use of blogs in 2003 and 2004, with his main blog "Blog for America"[2]. Dean's blogs were updated daily with journal entries, photos, video and audio clips, which in turn stimulated thousands of comments by visitors to the blog. This activity launched Dean to be the presumed front-runner for the nomination by the end of 2004, and by the Iowa caucuses, the Dean campaign had the support of 600,000 online activists. In 2006, candidates discovered the political use of social networking sites (SNS) like MySpace,

---

[2] Other blogs Dean's campaign used: "Dean Nation" (dean2004.blogspot.com), "Change for America" (www.changeforamerica.com), and "Howard Dean 2004 Call to Action Weblog" (deancalltoaction.blogspot.com).

Facebook and YouTube, and all major presidential candidates for 2008 had created profiles (Davis et al., 2009).

As depicted by this brief history of the use of the Internet in politics, political candidates have been able to update supporters on issues and events through email and personal websites, and also raise money for their campaign through the medium of the World Wide Web[3]. Both politicians and political strategists have realized the potential of the Internet and social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook and YouTube, and how these tools can be useful in gauging interest, public opinion and encouraging political participation (Westling, 2007). Additionally, Barack Obama has introduced new ways for staying connected with the American public. His continued use of the Internet, even after the campaign, is yet another example of how political communication is changing in like of new media.

1.1 Purpose

While there is a growing interest in the impact of the Internet for political communication, there is very little empirical research to support the Internet's effects, especially in relation to social networking sites, and how these might affect young voters' political efficacy, political knowledge, political discussions and intention to vote.

While there have been studies examining young voters and their Internet use during political campaigns, the current study differs since it was conducted in the course of the exciting and noteworthy 2008 Presidential Primary elections. At the time, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were running in an incredibly close race and Ohio was a key battleground state for the two Democratic hopefuls. The data for this thesis was

---

[3] Barack Obama raised more than $650 million by the general election.
(www.nytimes.com/2008/10/20/us/politics/20donate.html?_r=1)

intentionally planned to coincide with the intense media coverage of the election, the

debate between the two candidates in Cleveland on February 26, 2008, and the Ohio

Presidential Primary election on March 4, 2008. There has been little research conducted

in the middle of a primary election which focuses on online political information and

social networking sites and whether it has an effect on young adults' political efficacy,

political knowledge, political discussions with family and friends and likelihood to vote.

Obama candidly inspired and captured younger voters' attention. Although we do

not know the exact nature of the influence that Internet and online social networking sites

(SNS) (e.g., Erikson, 2008; Jordan, 2008; Williams & Gulati, 2007) had on this outcome,

this thesis investigates SNS and the variables associated with political efficacy (e.g.,

Campbell et al.,1954; Lee 2006; Shah et al., 2005), participation and knowledge (e.g.,

Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; McLeod et al., 1996; Moy et al., 2005) and political

discussions (e.g., Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Kraut et al., 1998; Nie, 2001).

1.2 Rationale

It has been suggested that young adults have been disengaged from politics as

compared to older adults. Additionally, young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 are

the most "wired" of all age groups and practically live their lives online (Ward, 2007).

With the advances in technology and the use of the Internet by politicians, this study is

interested in looking at the impact that such sites have on young adults between the ages

of 18 and 29.

Political communication research generally examines political efficacy,

knowledge, intention to vote and political discussions together. Political efficacy is the

general feeling that individuals influence and make an impact on the political process

(Campbell et al., 1954). In later examinations, political efficacy was divided into internal

and external political efficacy. Internal efficacy represents the impact an individual may

have on the political process as a result of their own actions. External efficacy is the

political institution's responsiveness to citizens' actions in the political process (Lee,

2006). The avenues through which individuals gain political information about

candidates and the campaign have expanded over the years, including newspaper reading,

television news and online political information. Studies have shown that individuals

who know more about what is going on will be more likely to participate and go to the

polls on Election Day. These concepts are also related to political interest and political

discussions, as generally the more politically interested you are, the more political

knowledge you have, and the more likely it is that you will vote and have political

discussions with family and friends.

In addition to Internet use and political efficacy, some scholars have associated

negative characteristics with individuals' use of the Internet, claiming that the Internet

weakens social connections and fuels social withdrawal (Kraut et al., 1998; Nie &

Erbring, 2000). However, it should be noted that these studies have looked at *how much*

the Internet is used, rather than *how* individuals use it (Shah, Cho, Eveland, Kwak, 2005).

Contrary to these negative associations, research in political communication has

confirmed that both political discussions and Internet use play an important role in civic

participation (e.g., McLeod et al., 1996; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). Likewise, Shah

et al. (2005) explain that "information seeking and citizen expression online compliment

their offline counterparts, leading to civic participation in much the same way that

traditional forms of news consumption and interpersonal discussion have been found to

shape levels of engagement"(p. 532). Media has always had the potential to provide individuals with information about politicians and the governmental process. With the increasing attention being paid to the Internet, this study evaluates the use of online political websites and young adult's knowledge. In an attempt to build on the already existing literature concerning political communication and the Internet, this research hopes to better understand how young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 are using the Internet for online political information.

To better understand this process, the O-S-O-R model (e.g., Cho, Shah, Mcleod, McLeod, Scholl, Gotlieb, 2009; McLeod, Kosicki, and McLeod, 1994) will be used as the theoretical framework in this thesis. This study examines the impact of independent variables like race, gender, age, religiousness, political interest, attention to traditional media (television and newspaper), educational level of parents, the number of books in the household individuals grew up in, which political party individuals associate with, and their use of the Internet as a source of political information, and their effect on dependent variables like political efficacy, political knowledge, likelihood to vote, and political discussions with parents and friends.

Given the increasing popularity of the Internet and its availability of news and politically oriented content, this study attempts to provide more research in the areas of the Internet and political communication by examining what the effects are of using the Internet as a form of communication for political information, and how such sites like MySpace, Facebook and YouTube might effect young adults' political efficacy, political knowledge and political discussions, especially during a primary presidential election. The overarching question this thesis attempts to answer is the following: how far does the

use of online political information like political news websites on the Internet (including

SNS), relate to intention to vote, political knowledge, political efficacy and political

discussions with parents and friends?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Perspective: O-S-O-R Model

The O-S-O-R model is an overarching theoretical structure that will be used in this study. It combines insights from cognitive psychology, learning theories, and research on the human memory, to organize and understand the relationship from surveillance motivations of news sources to news processing, and eventually leading to knowledge and political participation (Cho, Shah, Mcleod, McLeod, Scholl, Gotlieb, 2009). The theory suggests that by placing variables in a sequential order it will give way to effects of news use and motivations, such as intention to vote and political discussions.

McLeod, Kosicki, and McLeod (1994) suggest that political communication research has moved beyond the simplistic stimulus-response (S-R) perspective of direct effects to what Markus and Zajonc formulated in 1985 as the O-S-O-R (orientation – stimulus – orientation – response) framework. It was inspired by the traditional cognitive approach formula S-O-R, where "S" represents the stimulus, "O" is the active organism and "R" stands for the response. It should be noted that eventually, the "O" began to

9

assume a more significant role in the formula, representing the mind and internal organization like schemas, scripts, and other associative networks (Markus & Zajonc, 1985). The basic O-S-O-R theoretical model suggests the first "O" represents the characteristics individuals bring to a situation that affect the impact of the message (i.e. structural, cultural, cognitive and motivational characteristics) and political interest. The second "O" suggests what is likely to happen between receiving the message and the response of the individual (Eveland, Shah & Kwak, 2003).

Today, the O-S-O-R is the accepted approach, which stresses that "the internal states not only mediate between the stimuli of the environment and the responses but that what stimuli are attended to and what stimuli are ignored is under the selective control of the organism as well" (Markus & Zajonc, 1985, p. 138). This basic theory has been used both in social psychology and communication to evaluate mass media effects and the communication process, as well as provides a foundation for the cognitive mediation model (Eveland et al., 2003) and the communication mediation model (Shah et al, 2007). Specifically, in previous research, both news attention and discussions have been treated as stimuli, focusing on how they play a role in the effects of such political behavior outcomes as political participation and knowledge (Shah, et al., 2005). The results from Shah et al's investigation find that the media's influences are strong, shaping political participation behaviors, like voting and having discussions about news.

It should also be noted that the cognitive mediation model centers on understanding the cognitive activity that takes place during and after media use. Thus, a clear shift has taken place and interest in the contribution of the stimulus that makes

changes in individual's response has been replaced with an overwhelming interest in the contributions of the cognizing individual, or organism (Markus & Zajonc, 1985).

According to the O-S-O-R model, the placement of variables in a sequential order will give way to effects of news use and motivations, such as political participation and attitudes about politics—or political efficacy. This model is particularly concerned with the activity that takes place before and after news consumption, in this case, both traditional news sources and Internet political news sources (Cho et al., 2009). The proposed theoretical model posits that political information consumption by both conventional news (newspaper and television) and online political resources has an effect on young adults' intention to vote, political efficacy, political discussions and political knowledge.

The O-S-O-R model is based on a chronological framework that moves from stimulus to processing to response. This study's use of the O-S-O-R model differs from previous political communication investigations, since the added variable into the equation is online political information. Therefore, O-S-O-R will be used in the following way. The first "O" represents participant characteristics that are existent before the stimulus takes place. Therefore, participant demographic variables and political interest encapsulate the first orientation in the model. The S-O portion of the model includes news consumption represented by frequent use of the newspapers and television, as a way of gaining political information, thinking, and the attitudes and cognitions that are a result of this process (S). The second "O" is represented by the variables that explain individuals' use of the Internet as a way of getting political information. And finally, the response (R) is represented by the variables that measure

political knowledge, voting and political efficacy and talking about politics. Figure 1

below depicts how the O-S-O-R model is specifically being used in the present study.

Figure 1

The O-S-O-R Model with Online Political Information
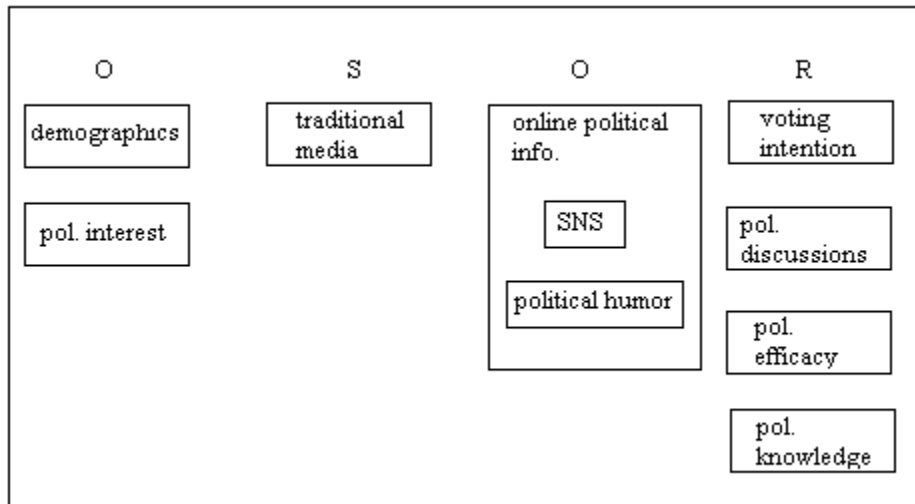
2.2 Youth and Civic Participation

Early socialization is crucial to the formation of one's political worldview.

Research has shown that the early teen years to the early twenties are extremely

important to the development of civic habits (e.g., Horowitz & Wanstrom, 2006;

McLeod, 2000), and the interaction with parents, teachers, and friends, and how the

media affect the process of political socialization (McLeod, 2000). Additionally, since

the 1970s numerous studies have demonstrated that mass media have played an important

role in how young people learn about politics (Chaffee, Ward, & Tipton, 1970).

There have been various periods of history that have had an effect on young

adults. In 1971, with the ratification of the 26th amendment to the U.S. constitution, 18-

20 year olds were given the right to vote. The passage of this amendment was a difficult

process, but the foundation was firmly laid out in the youth's resentment that they were

old enough to fight in Vietnam, but still unable to vote. The frustration of this reality

sparked grassroots efforts to fight for the youth's right to vote. Not surprisingly,

organizers used music to engage young people; Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary

sang at many registration rallies and the Beach Boys had special registration booths at

their concerts (Dreger, 1999). Today, this tradition has continued with hip-hop and rock

stars contributing in attracting young people to participate in politics. Additionally, MTV

has played a prominent role in recent elections. In 1990, Patrick Lippert founded Rock

The Vote, an organization that used hip-hop culture and music to engage voters. In 1992,

the organization used the slogan "Your Vote is Your Voice" to show youth their voices

mattered in elections and it was important for them to vote.

The 2004 presidential campaign reflected how both political parties made

considerable efforts to raise young people's awareness about the importance of voting.

With the use of celebrities such as P. Diddy and Lil' Kim and their "Vote or Die!"

slogan, voting participation was marketed to youth as the "cool" thing to do (McKinney

& Banwart, 2005). Other forms of attracting youth varied from speeches by George W.

Bush's twin daughters and the daughters of John Kerry, to campaigns such as MTV's

"Rock the Vote" and "Choose or Lose", to PSAs with celebrity spokespersons.

Specifically, on November 4, 2003, just one year before the 2004 presidential election,

CNN and "Rock the Vote" hosted "America Rocks the Vote" in Boston, where Anderson

Cooper was the moderator. It was a 90-minute debate in a town hall setting, where

college students had an opportunity to question the eight Democratic presidential

candidates. In addition to the questions being asked by college students and recent

graduates in the audience, young citizens were encouraged to email or text message in

their questions for the candidates. Finally, each candidate had an opportunity to star in

their own 30-second video, as a last attempt to appeal and reach out to young voters. The

videos, complete with hip-hop and trendy music video-like imaging, were shown

throughout the 90-minute debate. This unusual marriage between traditional journalism

like CNN programming and the entertainment element of MTV made for an interesting

event (McKinney & Banwart, 2005).

The aforementioned instances depict the progression of how young voters have

been targeted as an important demographic to politicians in the past couple of elections.

From these examples it is evident that the gap, which has previously taken place in youth

civic participation, is being combated with a global media message marketed specifically

to young voters ages 18-29.   Additionally, research in this area now has shown that the

Internet has proven to be an effective mobilization tool and can increase political interest

and participation.

Delli Carpini (2000) states that young adults are significantly less likely than

older individuals to think that their civic participation makes a difference and 45% feel

their vote does not matter. As news media and other traditional media sources are

targeted to an older audience, the younger generations of Americans have grown up in a

fast paced, mass-mediated, global environment. Further, young adults' disconnection to

political issues and government processes leads to lack of information, thus resulting in

the lack of political knowledge and civic participations.

While each generation is different, there are similarities in that each age group

shares a set of social and political experiences, which lead to the development of that

generation's "civic style" (Delli Carpini, 2000). These deep-rooted attitudes and

practices may change over time, but issues and events tend to be viewed through the

generational lenses. For individuals 30 years and younger, the current social and political environment is all they know.

2.3 Political Efficacy

Political efficacy is the belief that people have the ability to effectively participate in, and understand politics whether it is at the national or local level. In the book, *The Voter Decides* (1954), Campbell, Gurin and Miller originally describe the theoretical concept of political efficacy as the feeling that individual participation and action have an impact on the political process. The original operationalization of political self-efficacy included the following items: (1) People like me don't have any say about what the government does, (2) Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on, (3) I don't think public officials care much what people like me think, (4) Voting is the only way people like me can have any say about how the government runs things. In a 1969 analysis, however, the fourth item did not adequately measure with the other three: "efficacious respondents could disagree, arguing that voting was not the only way they could be effective, but at the same time inefficacious respondents could also disagree, arguing that not even by voting could they be effective" (Madsen, 1987).

In the following years, further alterations of the political efficacy scale took place. Most notably, the concept of political efficacy was divided into two distinctive parts: internal and external political efficacy. Internal efficacy represents the beliefs about the impact an individual may have on the political process as a result of his/her own skills and actions. External efficacy is the political intuitions' responsiveness to citizens' actions in the political process (Lee, 2006). The Internet has begun to narrow the

15

apparent gap between government officials and the public. To be politically efficacious, a communicative relationship should exist between oneself and the institutions that govern society (Coleman, Morrison, & Svennevig, 2008). Similar to Coleman et al's. investigation, a related 2005 Oxford Internet Survey suggested that the Internet represents a voice for people who may not think the government is as responsive to the concerns of citizens and that "perhaps they think that the Internet will help their chances of being heard and have an impact on the political process" (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006, p. 310). Thus, the use of the Internet may increase an individual's political efficacy.

Lee (2006) examined the relationship between Internet use and political efficacy among college students as a way of understanding the technological advances in political communication. In the study, Internet use was divided into three types of use: political information related use (i.e. similar to newspaper reading), interactive contact with public sector agencies (e.g. visiting public sites or corresponding e-mails with public officials), and finally entertainment oriented Internet use (e.g. shopping, searching for product information or browsing for fun). Results showed that online news websites are becoming the primary news source for U.S. college students. Also confirmed was the assumption that online news sites and interactive contact with public agencies increase internal political efficacy. Interestingly, this study found no relationship between entertainment-oriented Internet use and internal or external political efficacy.

Using the previous study as an example, it would be interesting to see if entertainment oriented websites (e.g. shopping, searching for product information or browsing for fun) could be substituted for entertainment political news on the Internet, similar to that of "soft news" or "infotainment" content, like The Daily Show, The Onion

16

or JibJab.com. The term infotainment refers to the mixture of serious topics and

entertainment programs (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001). Media scholars have noted

the blending of "hard news", or informational programming and entertainment content in

recent years (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005).

2.4 Political Participation and Political Knowledge

Additionally, research in the area of political efficacy generally incorporates

political participation and knowledge (Shah et al, 2005). Academics have found positive

relationships between political efficacy and media use for political information and news

(e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; McLeod et al., 1996; Moy et al., 2005). Political

efficacy has consistently proven to be a predictor of political participation (e.g., Campbell

et al, 1954; Madsen, 1987) and for young people, the most important measure of political

participation is one's intention to vote on Election Day (Lee, 2006). Scholars have found

that under most circumstances, political participation increases with age; additionally,

Alvarez and Hall (2004) suggest that after the age of 45 political interest and activity is

more visible.

In the realm of political knowledge, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) define it as

the extent of factual political information that one has stored in memory. Research in this

area shows that political knowledge can be attained through a variety of ways including:

formal education, interpersonal discussion, and traditional news consumption (e.g.

Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Scheufele & Nisbet,

2002). Additionally, research has suggested that getting news online has a greater effect

on young voters' political knowledge (Mossberger, 2007). Thus, if there has been an

increase in the presence of young adults using the Internet for political information

(Mossberger, 2009), that is, if these trends continue to uphold, then there should be an increase in political knowledge and participation in young people.

Therefore H_1 states:

H_1: Individuals who use more political news websites will have more political knowledge.

2.5 Online Political Information

The new communication environment is largely driven by the introduction of the Internet. It has rapidly changed the economic and social landscape of the day, but it has especially affected the political arena. While all age groups are affected, it is the young Americans (18-29 years old) who have gravitated and embraced the new technology. According to Delli Carpini (2000), survey results confirmed that 70% of 18 to 25 year olds viewed the Internet as a useful source for political and issue information, compared to 48% of individuals over 25 years old. The results confirm that this particular age group viewed the Internet as the most useful source of political information, suggesting that online political information outshined radio, newspapers, magazines, television news, personal conversations, and direct mail (Delli Carpini, 2000). Additionally, a study in 2004 suggests that 44% of 18 to 29 year olds reported having learned something about the presidential campaign from the Internet and 28% claimed they got most of their election information from the Internet (Baumgartner, 2007).

The Internet is different from other traditional forms of media and has the potential for changing and even increasing political efficacy, political participation and political knowledge. First, the new media environment allows individuals to access a wide variety of sources and gather information at a quicker speed. Second, the Internet

provides flexibility of interaction with others (one to one, one to many, many to one, and many to many) and the distinction between a variety of media becomes blurred, where print, audio and visual can operate as one. Finally, the Internet has become the medium that challenges traditional definitions of gatekeepers and other authoritative influences.

H_2a: Individuals who visit online political news and ads websites will have more political discussions with parents.

H_2b: Individuals who visit online political news and ads websites will have more political discussions with friends.

RQ_1: How do young voters use the Internet to help them gain political information about the campaign and candidates?

2.5.1 Online Political Humor

A variety of research has explored how political humor has influenced various aspects of the political process in America, and while we have some evidence on the effects of televised (e.g., Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Young, 2004) and printed (e.g., Brinkman, 1968; Carl, 1968) political humor, there is very little evidence to explain effects of Internet political humor. Research in the areas of television has revealed that there are varying opinions on the exposure of political humor and its effects on attitudes. For example, this type of humor can lead to negative evaluations of governmental institutions and presidential candidates (Baumgartner, 2007; Baumgartner & Morris, 2008). On the other hand, research by Baum (2005) shows that presidential candidates who appear on such humor based television shows influence viewers in a positive way, as candidates can increase their likeability and portray more character traits (Brewer & Cao, 2006; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2006; Baumgartner & Morris, 2008). While most people do

19

not visit such sites frequently, research in this area is important because political humor and parodies spread virally.

As previously mentioned, there is little research on the effects that this type of political humor has on those individuals who are exposed to it. In the past several years, the number of websites that contain well-known political spoofs and parodies have increased. Such websites include JibJab.com, The Daily Show, The Onion, ScrappleFace, and Radioactive Liberty. Specifically, JibJab.com set off a spark during the summer of 2004 with the release of the 2-minute video clip "This Land" featuring caricatures of John Kerry and George W. Bush. A study by Baumgartner (2007) looked at the influence of online political humor on the attitudes of college students, ages 18 to 24. Results found that young adults who view online humor had decreased levels of trust in the government. Additionally, individuals who viewed this type of humor always had a more negative evaluation of President George W. Bush than non-viewers. The second part of this study showed the results of an experiment, which included an animated movie clip from JibJab.com and young people (18-24 years old). Results found that individuals in the experimental group who viewed the parody were more likely to report lower levels of trust in political institutions than those not exposed to the video clip. Interestingly, the experimental group also reported more positive candidate evaluations than those in the control group.

In light of the above research mentioned above, the following research question was asked:

RQ$_2$: What is the relationship between political entertainment oriented websites and political efficacy?

2.5.2 Social Networking Sites (SNS)

Since their debut, social networking sites (SNS) have attracted millions of users. Many individuals use SNS to maintain preexisting social connections and relationships, whereas other individuals may use SNS to help them connect with strangers who have similar interests, political views, or activities (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Fewer people are engaging in traditional civic associations. However, the new social network online is mobilizing citizens for political action and participation. According to Wellman (1997), the definition of a social network is one where sets of people, organizations or other social entities are connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships. Thus, a computer network connecting people is, in fact, a social network.

Social networking websites are a relatively new addition to the study of political communication and the research is very limited[4]. Unlike television viewers, who in the past have been accused of being passive, suggesting that passive audiences to a mass medium are influenced in some way by a message, rather than active individuals who make intentional selections based on individual choices (Heath & Bryant, 2000), the construction of social networking sites make participants more active (Erikson, 2008). The Internet has increased the opportunities for individuals to become organized and participate in the political process. For example, discussion forums, email, MySpace, Facebook and YouTube provide individuals with more participation than traditional forms of media (Jordan, 2001). On these websites and networks, individuals can communicate and organize with other like-minded individuals and more recently, even

---

[4] Previous studies have used exiting literature on social network theory (e.g., Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Milgram, 1967, 1977; Watts, 2003) as a way to better understand online versions of social networks.

post messages/comments and email political elites, through social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook.

Political elites (office holders, candidates, nonprofits and the media) can use the Internet to create new networks and reach out to new audiences. Additionally, this form of communication allows politicians to tailor their message and target particular groups of individuals – specifically the younger generations. Traditional forms of media are sometimes tailored to older adults, and the Internet has been found to increase the ability of political elites to reach out to younger votes (Delli Carpini, 2000).

In conjunction with using the Internet, political candidates have discovered that social networking sites are an inexpensive and free way to reach a wide spectrum of voters from many different demographics in a short period of time (Jordan, 2008). Additionally, the *Washington Post* reported that YouTube and other social networking sites help level the playing field in elections, allowing lesser known politicians to reach the same audience, on the same stage as the more well known candidates (Cornfield, 2006). Thus, politicians can use SNS to advance their agenda to the public in a more accelerated way than traditional media sources.

In recent research, scholars have identified, but are not consistent about, the benefits of online and offline communities (Bennet, 2003; Nip, 2004). For instance, Bennet (2003) suggests that online communities are loosely structured, difficult to control, consist of weak identities and have difficulty making decisions. Conversely, the Internet is perceived to be adequate in including a large number of all types of individuals, who may not have known each other previously. The Internet has the potential for initiating connections that are not confined temporally or spatially, thus

connections reach across national boarders as well as times zones. Furthermore, social networking sites put a "face" on the supporters of candidates, which stimulates more of a connection between individuals (Williams & Gulati, 2007). As suggested by Erikson (2008), social networking sites allow new locations and methods for individuals "to 'do' politics that comes from the discourse of popular culture rather than that of politics" (p. 5). This means that SNS are places where individuals can organize, gather together and discuss politics, outside of traditional political institutions. Additionally, these websites provide a new interactive way for citizens to participate that was not possible with older media like newspapers, television, or even candidate websites.

H_3: Individuals who frequently use of SNS for political information will have higher levels of political efficacy.

H_4: The use of SNS will be positively correlated with intention to vote.

2.5.3 *SNS versus Candidate Websites*

Candidate social networking websites are different than candidate websites. For example, while candidates have the ability to control the content of both sites, on social networking websites users can initiate contact with other users, contribute and sometimes even control the material on the website (Williams & Gulati, 2007). At times, this may interfere with the message that the candidate is trying to communicate to his/her supporters. In fact, the content may even be different when compared to traditional websites or other sources of communication. For example, YouTube had "mistakenly removed" a video of Senator McCain that was controversial (Williams & Gulati, 2007)[5]. Similarly, results from the study done by Erikson (2008) suggest that the objectives of

---

[5] Senator McCain started to sing "bomb Iran" to the tune of the Beach Boys song "Barbara Ann". The video was deleted by YouTube, saying it was "mistakenly removed".

23

Hillary Clinton's personal candidate website and MySpace page "were two different mediums within the Internet". A content analysis was conducted in June 2007 on Clinton's official website and her MySpace page. Erikson (2008) suggests that Clinton's website prioritized information in the following way: 1) contributions, 2) support, 3) campaigning, and 4) policy positions. On her MySpace page, the content priorities were different with the following: 1) friendship, 2) endorsement, 3) personal information, and 4) policy positions. It is clear that her objectives on MySpace and the official website were different.

Like many MySpace pages, Clinton's website lists her favorite interests, television shows, etc., as a way to be relatable to young voters, thus appealing to affect rather than reason. This suggests that visitors' to a candidate's MySpace or Facebook pages could be influenced by the personal connection and likeability factors of the candidate - based on their favorite television shows, movies, books or activities - rather than the vital information - that should be used for making political voting decisions, like political platforms and voting records. Based on Erikson's study, Clinton's MySpace page provided little to no actual information about the issues. Instead, a link was provided to take visitors from her MySpace page to her candidate web page where they would find the vital information pertaining to her issue positions and platforms.

2.5.4 MySpace.com

The power of new technologies and interactive websites have given users an unlimited access to a variety of candidate information and political news. MySpace launched at the end of 2003, as an international site that offers email, a forum, communities, videos and weblog space. Such websites have also proven to increase

political participation. For instance, in the 2006 election, MySpace promoted voter

registration among and began running ads to encourage voter registration. Individuals

were even provided an 'I Registered To Vote on MySpace' badge for them to display on

their personal profile pages (Gueorguieva, 2007). Additionally, Erikson (2008) posits

that MySpace has given more power to the public, allowing them to control, alter and

influence the politician's image. To show this, he states that not only can users on

MySpace post comments that could alter the candidate's image, but more importantly, he

explains an incident where Hillary Clinton used a poll on MySpace which allowed her

"friends" to vote on what her campaign song should be.[6] Although both instances

encourage citizens to participate in politics, one is more civic minded than the other,

which shows the varying uses for politicians to use social networking websites.

As previously mentioned, researchers have inquired about the blurring line

between hard and soft news. Erikson (2008) performed a content analysis on Hillary

Clinton's MySpace webpage and he recognized that there are benefits and consequences

to social networking websites. First, he suggests that fandom is a new way to engage

people in politics. In other words, the digital technology allows us to revive political

conversation in the country and have the potential for increasing political participation.

On the flip side however, he also argues that it can be problematic since websites like

MySpace may direct people away from the political issues of the day and increase the

idea of "fandom", as he refers to it. Additionally, Erikson suggests that the idea of

---

[6] Clinton encouraged supporters to choose her campaign song, mobilizing her "friends" and support network on MySpace by posting a blog and sending out bulletins with the link. In round one, Hillary listed 10 songs and left space for individuals to write in their own selection. It was eventually narrowed down to the top five songs that were listed by Hillary and the top five write-ins. The winning song was "You and I" by Celine Dion, which was a write-in selection, was announced on June 20, 2007.

political fandom provides an alternative way in which individuals make political decisions " based on affect rather than reason".

2.5.5 Facebook.com

Facebook is a social networking website that began in 2004. It started solely as a community for college students to connect with friends who work, study or live around each other, to share photos, links and videos. Later, membership was available to anyone with an email address who could associate themselves with one of the various communities or networks. To date, no other online community has been capable of effectively connecting members of real-life communities, whether it is geographically or ideologically.

Some of the main features of Facebook include: newsfeeds that appear on each individual's unique homepage, giving updates on friends; "walls" for posting comments, the ability to create and join "groups", where members can create a theme of their own and invite friends to join the group, here like-minded members are able to post on message boards, add pictures and post news and links; finally, individual users can share a news link or video, the potential of this feature enables news to virtually travel around a network of people. After looking at the core features of Facebook, it is clear that there are several ways it can be used as an organizing and mobilizing tool for supporters.

Evidence from the 2006 Midterm Elections show that Facebook played an important role, proving that social networking sites have the ability of affecting the political process (Williams & Gulati, 2007). In the 2006 Midterm elections, while MySpace and YouTube received much of the media attention, it was actually Facebook that attracted most of the political candidates because Facebook had a complimentary

section in the main site called Election Pulse[7] (Williams & Gulati, 2007). Facebook sent

candidates an email that provided them with their log-in information and passwords, thus

making them responsible for managing their profiles through the rest of the campaign

(Williams & Gulati, 2007). This research also states that Democratic candidates in the

2006 election were more popular with Facebook members and were more likely than

Republicans to embrace the Facebook community. Statistics show that 61% of

Democratic candidates for the Senate in 2006 updated their Facebook profile, compared

to 39% of Republican candidates. Based on these results, it would be interesting to

discover if frequent users of SNS are associated with one political party.

H_5: Individuals associated with the Democratic Party will use SNS more than any

other political party affiliations.

2.5.6 YouTube.com

YouTube debuted in February 2005 and it is an online archive of uploaded

videos; its slogan reads "Broadcast Yourself." The website allows anyone with access to

a computer to post a video that millions of people could view within several minutes.

Recently, YouTube has had a hand in adding extra excitement to the political campaign

with videos such as "Obama girl"[8], "Yes We Can"[9] and the incident when Virginia

Senator George Allen called an audience member (who was an aide for Jim Webb,

Allen's opponent) "macaca", a racial slur.[10] These videos show how YouTube plays a

role in the political campaigns and how the spread of these videos get increased attention

- often times more attention than clips on television.

---

[7] Facebook realized the potential of the candidates and voters interacting on the Internet. This section of the site connected candidates and supporters, enriching the democratic process (Williams & Gulati, 2007).

[8] "Obama Girl" video can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKsoXHYICqU.

[9] "Yes We Can" video can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjXyqcx-mYY

[10] Video of this incident can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9G7gq7GQ71c

YouTube has influenced campaigns and in 2006 candidates started using "trackers" or individuals that would follow opposing candidates around and make notes on what they say and do. Prior to YouTube, the trackers would record videos of the candidate they were following and submit it to the mainstream media with hopes that it would get aired. With the advent of YouTube, trackers have a new source to get their videos out to the public. With this new technology, it is important for candidates to always be ready and on point. In fact, they are now forced to stay on the message and are held accountable, since technology allows videos and speeches to be replayed as a way of "checking" the candidate's truthfulness (Jordan, 2008).

YouTube played an important role in the Democratic debate in South Carolina on July 23, 2007, which allowed YouTube users to submit questions to the candidates. Some have referred to the event as "the most democratic Presidential Debate ever"[11]. This is another example of how political campaigns and politicians are exploring every new media tool to reach out to voters and be more interactive with them.

Taking into consideration the previous literature review, it is clear that the Internet is changing political campaigns. Additionally, the Internet has become a new civic arena; however, not all citizens are equally participating. In this new technological age, the young and educated seem to be paying attention to politics on the Internet (Mossberger, 2009). Some studies have stated that men are more likely to be more active and interested in politics online. Consistent with this research in gender differences, Bimber's (2000) results show women do not use the Internet as much as men. Fuller (2009) suggests that the gender influence is related more to the type of politically

---

[11] Some thought it was very interactive, but many were more interested in the questions asked rather than the answers.

28

oriented websites rather than political interest. It should also be noted that socioeconomic influences are more powerful than gender when predicting online political engagement.

Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) suggest that more women engage in the use of social networking sites because they have a need to connect with other. While both men and women use social networking sites in large numbers, men will prove to be more engaging in receiving their political information from social networking sties.

H_6: Men will frequently use SNS for political information more than women.

2.6 Interpersonal Political Discussion and the Internet

Since the emergence of the Internet, some have assumed that frequent use of the new technology erodes personal relationships and weakens connections to the real world (Nie 2001), while others have suggested that frequent computer use strengthens social relationships (Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Wellman & Hampton, 1999). For example, Nie (2001) argues that the Internet causes people to lose touch with their social environment, since more time is being spent online rather than participating in activities outside the virtual world. Additionally, Kraut et al. (1998) found that the Internet caused participants to have decreased communication with friends and family. Their longitudinal study conveyed that the use of the Internet is coupled with increasing loneliness and anxiety. They argue, "like watching television, using a home computer and the Internet generally implies physical inactivity and limited face-to-face social interaction" (p. 1019). Consequently, although the Internet may motivate communication, the authors posit that social interactions on the Internet are significantly different from conventional interpersonal relationships. It should be noted too that many

of these analyses were examining how often individuals used a medium (i.e. heavy vs. light viewers), rather than what they are using it for.

Contrary to the discussion of the previous literature, the Internet has potential for increasing knowledge on an array of topics, as well as aiding individuals in creating and stimulating interpersonal interactions. Evidence has supported this perspective suggesting that electronic media accommodates a variety of audiences with different motivations (Shah et al., 2001) and even has potential to strengthen relationships (e.g. Hampton & Wellman, 2003).

Based on the available research, social networking sites support pre-existing social relations. In fact, Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) argue that Facebook is used to maintain and solidify offline friendships. Take for example, adding a friend who you shared a class with, while the connection may be a weak one, there is still a common offline activity between the individuals.

Social networking websites like Myspace, Facebook and YouTube allow individuals to interact with one another, as well as attain information about politicians and other news issues. Therefore, Internet use may not have a negative effect after all; rather, using websites such as these may be a natural continuation of every day communication and as well as an extension of political discussion (Boase and Wellman, 2006).

H$_7$a: Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions. with parents.

H$_7$b: Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions. with friends

CHAPTER III

METHODS

3.1 Procedure

The present study surveyed undergraduate students enrolled in Communication

courses at Cleveland State University. Students were awarded extra credit upon

completion of the survey. Surveys were administered and distributed one week before

the Ohio Presidential Primary election on March 4, 2008. Participants were asked to read

and sign an informed consent form before receiving the survey. After signing the consent

form, participants were asked to complete the survey, which comprised of scales and

questions that measure traditional media use, Internet use for political information,

political efficacy and cynicism, political knowledge, candidate images, and the frequency

of political discussions with parents and friends (see Appendix). Of these various areas

explored in the survey, this study is particularly interested in young adults ages 18-29 and

their media viewing habits with both traditional and online resources, political efficacy,

political discussions, and political knowledge and participation.

3.2 Participants

The sample is made up of 362 participants 18 to 29 years of age ($N = 362$, $M =$

21.30, $SD = 2.55$). Of those 362 participants, 52.5% ($N = 190$) were male and 47.5% ($N = 172$) were female; over 67.3% were White/Caucasian ($N = 224$), 23.1% Black or African-American ($N = 77$), 5.4% Hispanic American ($N = 18$), 3.9% Asian or Pacific Islander ($N = 13$), and 0.3% American Indian or Alaskan Native ($N = 1$).

3.3 Measurement of Variables

3.3.1 Media Use

The survey included items concerning media use. The variables in relation to traditional news sources like television and newspaper attention were included, along with online political information as a way of gaining campaign and candidate knowledge. In previous research, political communication scholars have used these items as predictors of political knowledge, political efficacy and political interest.

3.3.2 Newspaper Reading

Individuals were asked about their attention to particular kinds of stories in the newspaper, where 1 means "little attention" and 10 means "very close attention". An additive scale was created to measure "Newspaper Attention" and includes the following 3 items: attention to "international and world news", "national government and politics", and "news about political candidates and the 2008 presidential election". The newspaper attention scale reached a Cronbach's Alpha of .81 (see Table 1).

3.3.3 TV News

In addition to measures of newspaper reading, the survey included questions that asked participants how much attention they paid to programs on TV; on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "little attention", and 10 means "very close attention". For this study, an additive scale measuring "Television News Attention" was created which included

32

attention paid to the following 5 items: "national and network news in the evening", "national and cable news in the evening", "local Cleveland news at 6:00pm", "local Cleveland news at 11:00pm", and "morning news programs". The Cronbach's Alpha for this measure was .73 (see Table 2).

3.3.4 Online Political Information

The measures used to gauge familiarity and use of the Internet in gathering information about the 2008 presidential candidates, included 10 questions. The questions were on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "not very often" and 10 means "very often". The items included how often do you: watch candidate advertisements on personal candidate websites, watch candidate advertisements on news websites, watch candidate advertisements on social networking sites, watch candidate videos like "Yes We Can", watch video parodies like "Obama's Girl", read news online (e.g., example on msnbc.com), read news on satire websites (e.g., The Onion or The Daily Show), visit candidate websites, and visit candidate's MySpace or Facebook page.

An additive scale measuring the use of the Internet for political knowledge was called "Online Political News and Ads", which consisted of the following 4 items: "watching candidate advertisements on a candidate's website", "visiting a candidate's website", "reading political news online at sites like msnbc.com or yahoonews.com", and "watching candidate advertisements on news websites like msnbc.com or yahoonews.com". The reliability analysis for this scale is $\alpha = .77$ (see Table 3).

There were two items that were used to measure the use of SNS (social networking sites) for gathering political information, "watching candidate advertisements on a social networking website like MySpace or Facebook" and "getting campaign or

candidate information from social networking sites like MySpace or Facebook" ($r = .74$, $p<.01$).

Finally, the items used to measure entertainment oriented political information, consist of the following 2 items, "reading news satire websites like The Onion or The Daily Show" and "watching candidate video parodies such as Obama's Girl or JibJab" ($r = .32$, $p<.01$).

3.3.5 Political Discussions

This measure included six questions asking the participants how often they have political discussions with parents and friends. The scale specifically associated with having discussions with parents isolated the following three items, discussions about "national issues and politics", "international issues and politics", and "the 2008 presidential election". For this additive scale for having political discussions with parents, $\alpha = .87$ (see Table 4).

Similarly, the additive scale measuring the amount of political discussions with friends included similar questions. The Cronbach's Alpha for political discussions with friends scale was .85 (see Table 5).

3.3.6 Political Efficacy

First developed by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954), political efficacy is the idea that people have the ability to effectively participate and understand politics, whether it is at the national or local level. In this study, political efficacy was used to measure how young adults feel and understand politics, specifically in the 2008 primary elections. There were a total of 11 items that related to political efficacy and cynicism in the survey (see Appendix). To measure political efficacy, an additive "Political Efficacy"

scale was created from the following four items "every citizen has a duty to vote", "politicians try to do what is best for most of the people", "every single vote makes a difference in an election", and "in a democracy, every citizen should take part in political activities" (see Table 6). Survey responses range from 1, "strongly disagree" to 10, "strongly agree". Reliability for the political efficacy scale is $\alpha = .63$.

3.3.7 Political Participation

One item was used to measure the political participation of young adults. As with most research in the area of political communication, the intention to vote is a respectable measure of this variable. This survey asked on a 10-point scale, where 1 means "very unlikely" and 10 means "very likely", "how likely is it that you will vote in the Ohio Presidential Primary"? ($N = 255$, $M = 8.43$, $SD = 2.70$).

3.3.8 Political Knowledge

Nine multiple choice questions were asked in order to measure candidate knowledge. Since this study took place during the 2008 primary elections, the choices to each question consisted of the following presidential candidates Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John McCain, Mike Huckabee, and there was a final option for "I Don't Know". Three questions were for Hillary Clinton, and those included "which candidate is proposing a health care plan that would cover all Americans (universal health care)", "which candidate for president is a senator from New York", and "which candidate has said "I'm ready to be commander-in-chief on day one". There were also three questions for Barack Obama which included "which candidate for president uses the slogan "Yes We Can", "which candidate is motivated to fix America's health care system after seeing their mother die of cancer", and "which candidate's health care plan says it will save

American families approximately $2,500". John McCain was the correct answer for the following two questions "which candidate for president has said that it may be necessary to leave U.S. troops in Iraq for the next 50-100 years" and "which candidate is a U.S. Senator from Arizona". Finally, the following question had the correct answer of Mike Huckabee, "which candidate for president is an ordained minister". These questions were dummy coded for correct and incorrect answers, the percentages for answered correct can be found in Table 7. An additive scale measuring "Political Knowledge" was created to from these 9 items.

3.3.9 Political Interest

Another additive scale was created to measure "Political Interest". As with previous political communication studies, a strong predictor of political participation is political interest, and the three items used in this additive scale were "interest in national issues and politics", "international issues and politics" and "interest the 2008 presidential election". These questions were asked on a 10-point scale, where 1 means "not very interested" and 10 means, "very interested". The Cronbach's Alpha for this political interest scale was $\alpha = .831$.

The reliability coefficient of these scales meet Hair et al.'s (2006) cutoff of .70 for a Cronbach's Alpha, or .60 for exploratory research. The scale reliabilities can be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Hypothesis and Research Question Testing

 4.1.1 Hypothesis 1. Individuals who use more political news websites will have more political knowledge.

 A Pearson's *r* zero-order correlation was used to test the first hypothesis that measured political knowledge and online political information. The relationship was not significant. Political knowledge and the "online news and ads" scale shared a weak correlation ($r = .01$, n.s.), political knowledge and visiting a candidates MySpace or Facebook page also had a weak negative correlation ($r = -.00$, n.s.). Finally, political knowledge and watching ads on social networking sites also had a weak negative correlation ($r = -.01$, n.s.). Therefore, the first hypothesis was not supported.

 4.1.2 Hypothesis 2a. Individuals who visit online political news and ads websites will have more political discussions with parents.

 Hypothesis 2b: Individuals who visit online political news and as websites will have more politics discussions with friends.

The second hypothesis has two parts and both predict that young adults who visit online political websites will have more political discussions with parents and friends. Again, a Pearson's r zero-order correlation was used in this analysis. Having political discussions with parents and visiting "online news and ads" websites was statistically significant with a moderate correlation ($r = .34$, $p < .01$).

The second part of this hypothesis examined the same "online news and ads" scale, but was tested with how frequently young adults have political discussions with friends. The variables were moderately correlated and significant ($r = .38$, $p < .01$).

As a result, this hypothesis was supported. Figure 2 shows that the relationship between these variables was significant and moderately correlated.

Figure 2

Correlations between Discussions with Parents and Friends and Visiting Online News and Ads Websites

	1. Online News and Ads	2. Discussions With Parents	3. Discussions With Friends
1. Online News and Ads	---		
2. Discussions with Parents	.391**	---	
3. Discussions with Friends	.384**	.631**	---

4.1.3 Research Question 1. How do young voters use the Internet to help them gain political knowledge?

The second research question asks how young voters use the Internet to help them gain political information about candidates and the campaign. A multiple regression

analysis was used to predict political knowledge with a variety of independent variables:

demographics, home influence, political interest, traditional media attention, political

discussions, and online political information (see Table 9). The model accounts for

10.9% of the variance, with no significant predictors. However, in block 4 attention to

traditional media, specifically television news viewing is approaching significance (β =

.209, $p<.10$). Figure 3 reports the means and standard deviations, to understand how

young adults are using the Internet.

Figure 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Online Political Information

Variable	M	SD
1. Online Pol. News and Ads scale		
Item 1: Ads on can. web	3.01	2.75
Item 2: Info from candidate web	2.94	2.72
Item 3: News websites	3.99	3.02
Item 4: Ads on news sites	4.09	3.16
2. Ads on Myspace	3.48	3.00
3. Political Satire Websites	3.61	3.00
4. Candidate MySpace	2.90	2.71
5. Obama's Girl/JibJab	2.50	2.37

Scale items for news-like websites on the Internet (1-10 scale, 1 = not very often, 10 = very often)

1. Scale created from the following 4 items: ads on a candidate's own website, visiting a candidate's personal website, news from msnbc.com or yahoonews.com, ads on msnbc.com or yahoonews.com
2. How often do you watch candidate ads on a social networking site like MySpace or Facebook?
3. How often do you read news satire websites like The Onion or The Daily Show?
4. How often do you get campaign or candidate information from social networking sites like MySpace or Facebook?
5. How often have you watched video parodies of the candidates, such as "Obama's Girl" or JibJab?

4.1.4 Research Question 2. What is the relationship between entertainment oriented political websites and political efficacy?

The first research question asked what the relationship is between political entertainment oriented websites (i.e., satirical websites like The Onion and The Daily Show and candidate parodies like "Obama's Girl" or JibJab) and political efficacy. A Pearson's *r* zero-order correlation was used in this analysis. Results show that there is no significant relationship between these variables for political efficacy and satirical websites (i.e., The Onion or The Daily Show) ($r = .05$, n.s.). Similarly, video parodies like "Obama's Girl" and political efficacy ($r = .06$, n.s) did not share a significant relationship. Therefore, this research question was not supported.

4.1.5 Hypothesis 3. Individuals who frequently use SNS for political information will have higher levels of political efficacy.

To assess the relationship between the political efficacy of individuals who frequently use SNS for online political information, a bivariate correlation was conducted. Results in Figure 4 show that there is a positive relationship between these variables. Political efficacy and watching candidate advertisements on a social networking site (SNS) like MySpace share a very weak correlation ($r = .19$, $p<.01$) and political efficacy and visiting a candidate's social networking site also have a moderate positive correlation ($r = .21$, $p<.01$). Therefore, this hypothesis was supported.

Figure 4

Correlations between Political Efficacy and Use of SNS

	1. Political Efficacy	2. Ads MySpace	3. Candidate MySpace
1. Political Efficacy	---		
2. Ads Myspace	.188**	---	
3. Candidate MySpace	.206**	.797**	---

4.1.6 Hypothesis 4. The use of SNS will be positively correlated with intention to vote.

The fourth hypothesis uses a Pearson's *r* zero-order correlation to predict that the use of SNS (social networking sties) is positively correlated with intention to vote. There were no significant relationships between the variables. Visiting a candidate's MySpace page and likelihood to vote ($r = .01$, n.s.), and the likelihood to vote and watching advertisements on a candidate's MySpace page ($r = .04$, n.s) were not significant. Results show no significant relationship was reported in this analysis, therefore this hypothesis was not supported.

4.1.7 Hypothesis 5. Individuals associated with the Democratic Party will use SNS more than any other political party affiliations.

The fifth hypothesis examined if individuals associated with the Democratic Party were more likely to use SNS for political and candidate information. A one-way between-S ANOVA was done to compare the mean scores on individuals use of SNS (social networking sites) and the political party that young adults feel closest to, where Group 1 = Republican, Group 2 = Democrat, Group 3 = Independent and Group 4 = No Party. Prior to the analysis, the Levene test for homogeneity of variance was used to

examine whether there were serious violations of the assumption of homogeneity of variance across groups. A significant violation was found for both outcome variables: watching advertisements on a candidate's MySpace page ($p = .055$) and using a candidate's MySpace page ($p = .000$).

The overall *F* for the One-way ANOVA was statistically significant for going to a candidate's MySpace website, $F = 3.69$ ($p<.05$), implying there was at least one significant contrast between group means. The means and standard deviations for the 4 groups are shown in Figure 5 below. It should be noted that the overall F for watching advertisements on a candidate's MySpace page was not statistically significant ($F = 2.30$, $p = .08$). Figure 5 below represents the results.

Figure 5

Mean Scores of Visiting a Candidate's MySpace Website Across Political Party Affiliation

Political Party	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Republican	*Democrat*	*Independent*	*No Party*
M	2.55	3.26	2.59	2.07
SD	2.46	2.89	2.39	2.04
N	44	196	49	60

In addition, Tukey HSD was used to make all possible pairwise comparisons between group means, and Scheffe Test compared not only pairs of means, but all other combinations as well. These follow-up tests report that there is a significant difference for visiting a candidate's MySpace website between individuals who feel closest to the Democratic Party and those who reported being in no political party. Thus, individuals who have no political party affiliation ($M = 2.07$) visit candidate MySpace websites significantly less than individuals in the Democratic Party ($M = 3.26$). No other group differences were reported as significant, and it should be noted that unequal variances

might attribute to the final results in this analysis.

4.1.8 Hypothesis 6. Men will frequently use SNS for political information more than women.

In order to test the basic prediction that men will use social networking sites (SNS) to receive political information more than women, an Independent Samples *t*-test was used. While equal variances were assumed, the results illustrate that this hypothesis was not supported and that there are no significant differences between visiting a candidate's MySpace webpage and gender ($t = .83$, $p = .41$); nor were there significant gender differences in watching candidate advertisements on social networking sites (SNS) like MySpace ($t = 1.29$, $p = .19$). Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

4.1.9 Hypothesis 7a. Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions with parents.

> *Hypothesis 7b. Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions with friends.*

This two part hypothesis predicted that young adults who use SNS will have more political discussions with parents and friends. A Pearson's *r* zero-order correlation was used to test this assumption. Results suggest that the relationship is statistically significant. The correlation for having political discussions with parents and visiting a candidate's MySpace page had a moderate correlation ($r = .27$, $p<.01$). Additionally, watching advertisements on a candidate's MySpace page and having political discussions with parents shared a weak correlation ($r = .18$, $p<.01$).

The second part of this hypothesis examined the same SNS variables, but they were tested with how frequently young adults have political discussions with friends.

The results reported in Figure 6 depict that watching candidate advertisements on a

candidate's MySpace page and having political discussions with friends were moderately

correlated ($r = .30$, $p<.01$). Likewise, visiting a candidate's MySpace page and having

political discussions with friends were also moderately correlated ($r = .27$, $p<.01$).

Overall, this hypothesis was supported.

Figure 6

Correlations between Discussions with Parents and Friends and Using SNS

	1. Ads on SNS	2. Candidate MySpace	3. Discussions With Parents	3. Discussions With Friends
1. Ads on MySpace	---			
2. Candidate MySpace	.346**	---		
3. Discussions with Parents	.183**	.271**	---	
4. Discussions with Friends	.294**	.273**	.631**	---

4.2 Additional Analyses

Multiple supplementary analyses were performed in order to better understand

how the independent variables predict political discussions, likelihood to vote and

political efficacy. Since a number of hypotheses related to these concepts show

significant relationships, the use of additional analysis was needed to better understand

how they are related to a number of the dependent variables. It should be noted that

because there were no significant correlations with political knowledge (Hypothesis 1),

this variable was not used in the auxiliary analysis. Additionally, it is worthwhile to

examine if there were unique differences between "younger" young adults (18-20 years of age) and "older" young adults (21-29 years of age).

4.2.1 Political Discussions with Parents and Friends

A multiple regression analysis revealed that the model significantly predicted having political discussions with parents and friends (see Table B10). This model accounts for 50.4% of the variance of having political discussions with parents. Additionally, the model explains 57.2% of the variance of having political discussions with friends. Table B10 displays results and the standardized beta coefficients for each block entered into each model. Here, block 3, having political interest, is a significant predictor of having political discussions with both parents ($\beta = .647$, $p<.01$) and friends ($\beta = .678$, $p<.01$). Additionally, block 4, traditional media attention, specifically television news attention, is a significant predictor of having political discussions with parents ($\beta = .220$, $p<.05$) and in block 5, visiting a candidate's MySpace page is approaching significance ($\beta = .190$, $p<.10$). Similarly, television news attention, is a significant predictor of having political discussions with friends ($\beta = .281$, $p<.01$).

4.2.2 Intention to Vote and Political Efficacy

A separate multiple regression used the same variables as above, but this time predicting intention to vote and political efficacy (see Table B11). Results show that for likelihood to vote, political interest proved again to be a significant contributor ($\beta = .384$, $p<.01$). Overall, the model accounts for 27.2% of the variance of a young adult's intention to vote.

The last multiple regression predicted political efficacy, using the same independent variables (see Table B11). Overall, this model accounts for 41.3% of the

variance of young adult's political efficacy. Unlike the other analyses, the first block

shows that gender (female = 1, male = 0) (β = -.194, $p<.05$) and an individuals

religiousness (β = .216, $p<.05$) proved to be significant predictors. Similar to earlier

analyses, political interest in block 3 was significant (β =.489 $p<.01$). There were no

other variables in the final blocks were significant or approaching significance.

In additional to help explain the proposed theoretical O-S-O-R model, these

additional analyses give a clearer answer to the relationship between the independent

variables and how they contribute to the dependent variables. This will be explained

further in the Discussion chapter.

4.2.3 Age Differences

While this research explores how young adults get their campaign and candidate

information from the Internet, it was worthwhile to look for any differences between

"younger" young adults (18-24 years, n = 312) and "older" young adults (25-29 years, n

= 50). An Independent Samples t-test was used to look for significant differences

between the two groups. Results show there are differences for the following types of

online political information: watching candidate advertisements on a candidate's

website, visiting online news websites (e.g., yahoonews.com and msnbc.com), visiting a

candidate's personal website, and visiting a candidate's MySpace page. "Younger"

young adults are more likely than "older" young adults to use a candidate's MySpace

page ($t(362)$ = 1.80, $p<.10$). However, "older" young adults (25-29) are more likely than

"younger" young adults to: watch candidate advertisements on a candidate's personal

websites, ($t(360)$ = -2.24, $p<.05$), visit online news websites ($t(361)$ = -2.17, $p<.05$), and

go to a candidate's personal website ($t(362) = -1.69$, $p<.10$). Figure 7 below reports the

means and standard deviations to further examine group differences.

Figure 7

T-test results for Age Differences in Use of Online Political Information

Two Groups	Item	M	SD	t	p
Young-young (18-24)	Ads on Can.	2.88	2.68	-2.24	.03*
Old-young (25-29)	Website	3.82	2.07		
Young-young (18-24)	Online News	3.85	2.94	-2.17	.03*
Old-young (25-29)	Websites	4.84	3.38		
Young-young (18-24)	Candidate	2.84	2.69	-1.69	.09[#]
Old-young (25-29)	Website	3.54	2.81		
Young-young (18-24)	Candidate	3.00	2.80	1.80	.07[#]
Old-young (25-29)	MySpace	2.26	1.99		

$** = < .01$ $* = < .05$ $\# = < .10$

47

Figure 8

Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypothesis 1	Individuals who use more political news websites will have more political knowledge.	Not Supported
Hypothesis 2a	Individuals who visit online political news and ads sites will have more political discussions with parents.	Supported
Hypothesis 2b	Individuals who visit online political news and ads sites will have more political discussions with friends.	Supported
Research Question 1	How do young voters use the Internet to help them gain political information about the campaign and candidates?	Answered
Research Question 2	What is the relationship between entertainment oriented political websites and political efficacy?	Answered
Hypothesis 3	Individuals who frequently use SNS for political information will have higher levels of political efficacy.	Supported
Hypothesis 4	The use of SNS will be positively correlated with intention to vote.	Not Supported
Hypothesis 5	Individuals associated with the Democratic Party will use SNS more than any other political party affiliations.	Supported
Hypothesis 6	Men will frequently use SNS for political information more than women.	Not Supported
Hypothesis 7a	Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions with parents.	Supported
Hypothesis 7b	Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions with friends.	Supported

Figure 9

Summary of Additional Analysis

---

1. Having political interest is a significant contribution to having political discussions with parents and friends, as well as the intention to vote and higher levels of political efficacy (see Tables 10 and 11).

2. Attention to television news is a significant predictor for political discussions with parents and friends (see Table 10).

3. Visiting a candidate's MySpace page to receive campaign and candidate information is a variable that is approaching significance, in predicting having political discussions with parents (see Table 10).

4. The religion variable, in addition to gender, is a significant predictor of political efficacy for young adults, during the 2008 Primary Presidential election (see Table 10).

5. Visiting a candidate's MySpace page was approaching significance, for contributing to having political discussions with parents (see Table 10).

6. Younger-young adults (18-24 years of age) are more likely to visit a candidate's MySpace page, while older-young adults (25-29 years of age) are more likely to use a candidate's website and online news websites like yahoonews.com and msnbc.com for political and candidate information (see Figure 7).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

5.1 General Discussion of Hypotheses and Research Questions

This thesis examined how far the use of online political information, like political news websites on the Internet (including SNS), is related to intention to vote, political knowledge, political efficacy and having political discussions with parents and friends. The broader implications of the results above are threefold. First, social networking sites did not prove to be an important means for information in the 2008 Ohio Presidential Primary Election, despite the overwhelming attention they received. Second, television news use remains a significant predictor of political efficacy, likelihood to vote and having political discussions with parents and friends. Third, political interest continues to be a driving force in young adults' political engagement and interpersonal political communication.

5.1.1 Hypothesis 1. Individuals who use more political news websites will have more political knowledge.

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between the use of political news websites like msnbc.com and yahoonews.com, watching ads on these sites, and political

50

knowledge, as well as the relationship between SNS and political knowledge. Research

in the area of political knowledge has concluded that media effects are not identical, but

rather specific to the medium being used and the specific content (Sotirovic & McLeod,

2004). Thus, this general investigation questioned the rapid use of the Internet and its

effect on young adult's political knowledge. These relationships were not significantly

correlated. Therefore, it can be concluded "online news and ads" (i.e., yahoonews.com,

msnbc.com, candidate's own website, and watching ads on these websites) do not

correlate with political knowledge. Additionally, the variables for political knowledge

and use of SNS had a non-significant weak, negative relationship. Thus, young adults

visiting a candidate's MySpace page or watching candidate advertisements on a social

networking site have less political knowledge. It could be suggested that the more

individuals that use news-like websites (e.g. msnbc.com or yahoonews.com) the more

political knowledge they have, and the more young adults use SNS the less political

information knowledge they have. Finally, this study was restricted to the time before the

2008 Ohio Presidential Primary election, therefore there is no evidence to say how this

may or may not have been different during the 2008 General Election.

5.1.2 Hypothesis 2a. Individuals who visit online political news and ads websites
will have more political discussions with parents.

Hypothesis 2b. Individuals who visit online political news and ads websites
will have more political discussions with friends.

The second hypothesis suggested that individuals using political news websites

for political and campaign information will have more political discussions. The

variables used in this examination were moderately correlated. This significant

relationship supports the assumption that "online news and ads" (i. e., websites like a candidate's website, yahoonews.com, msnbc.com and watching candidate advertisements on these sites) is closely tied to having political discussions with parents and friends. Similar to Shah et al. (2001) these results suggest that use of the Internet for political informational purposes maintain meaningful political discussions with parents and friends. This result is not surprising when considering the social and interpersonal networks which young adults 18 to 29 year olds have and how discussion of issues can often times overlap with every day communication with friends and family.

5.1.3 Research Question 1: How do young voters use the Internet to help them gain political information about the campaign and candidates?

In an attempt to further examine how the Internet is being used by young adults for political and campaign information, results from the multiple regression show that when controlling for demographic characteristics, home influence, political interest, traditional media use, political discussions, and online political information, there were no significant predictors. In fact, television news attention reported to be approaching significance, indicating that it is not so much the Internet that is aiding young people in their knowledge about candidates and the election, but traditional news sources are still important, even during the Internet age and social networking sites.

5.1.4 Research Question 2. What is the relationship between entertainment oriented political websites and political efficacy?

This research question inquired if "infotainment" and satirical political content on the Internet like The Daily Show, The Onion, or candidate parodies like JibJab.com and "Obama's Girl" would effect political efficacy. While this investigation was different,

these non-significant findings bring us back to Lee's (2006) study. Recall that he examined entertainment websites (e.g. shopping, searching for product information or browsing for fun), whereas this study looked at Internet political humor. Additionally, some studies have found that negative and cynical portrayals of politicians can decrease levels of efficacy. While The Daily Show and The Onion, along with parodies like JibJab.com and "Obama's Girl" are not necessarily cynical, the use of humor dilutes the notion of positive coverage as compared to some other websites and videos about the candidates. Nevertheless, there was no significant relationship between political efficacy and what is proposed here as "political entertainment websites".

5.1.5 Hypothesis 3: Individuals who frequently use SNS for political information will have higher levels of political efficacy.

The results for this hypothesis were significant; however, the variables were weakly correlated. Madsen (1987) suggests that when feelings of efficacy are positive, the expected response is political participation, such as voting, having political discussions and more political knowledge. Also, academics have found positive relationships between political efficacy and media use for political information and news (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; McLeod et al., 1996; Moy et al., 2005).

Taking this into consideration, the assumption here is that use of a candidate's MySpace or Facebook page, along with watching advertisements on a candidate's MySpace website, can in some way increase feelings of political efficacy. Thus, the current phenomena of candidate's having a MySpace or Facebook page can prove to be a powerful tool. Can these websites single handedly be a central element to political involvement and creating social reform? I would answer no, but would add that use of

such sites by young adults assist and apparently—to some extent—affect positive

feelings about politicians and the government. It could be suggested that these feelings

may occur due to the fact that individuals feel as though the politician is their "friend",

similar to Erikson's "Hillary is my Friend" article (2008) or the idea that the candidates

are listening and reading the comments made by individuals on MySpace or Facebook.

Additionally, Facebook and MySpace have been considered the new town square—"great

for any candidate who can figure out the online equivalent of a handshake" (Teeter &

Chappell, 2008, p. 76). These new "connections" with the candidate may contribute and

increase already existing positive feelings about politics. More importantly, although the

relationship was weak, these results provide support that such sites do not have a negative

effect on political efficacy. Therefore, MySpace and Facebook may help young people

feel more involved rather than alienated by politicians and the governmental process.

   5.1.6 Hypothesis 4. The use of SNS will be positively correlated with intention to

vote.

   There were no significant relationships between a young person's likelihood to

vote and the use of a candidate's social networking site. Political efficacy has

consistently proven to be a predictor of political participation (e.g., Campbell et al, 1954;

Madsen, 1987). In the case of this study, the results show that SNS has a slight positive

effect on political efficacy, but not on likelihood to vote. Research on political

participation states that intention to vote increases with age and that politically interested

individuals are more likely to vote in elections. Additionally, as political information

increases so does the intention to vote (Prior, 2005). With that being said, the results

from this hypothesis confirm that the use of SNS by young adults is not providing them

with adequate political information, and as a result they are not voting on Election Day. This conclusion is plausible, since as stated in the first hypothesis, the use of SNS was negatively correlated, although not significant, with political knowledge.

5.1.7 Hypothesis 5. Individuals associated with the Democratic Party will use SNS more than any other political party affiliations.

This hypothesis was formed on the foundation that research has suggested that Democratic candidates were more popular with Facebook members and were more likely than Republicans to embrace the Facebook community. Results from the one-way ANOVA revealed that there were group differences in visiting social networking sites between young adults who feel closest to the Democratic Party and young adults who have no political party affiliation. In fact, individuals who have no political party affiliation visit a candidate's MySpace page significantly less than individuals in the Democratic Party. However, the 4 groups for this study were unequal in size. Therefore, while there was a significant difference between Democrats and individuals with no party affiliation, it is hard to validate that the results are accurate based on unequal participant size across the 4 groups. Although, this can suggest that young Democrats use a candidate's MySpace page more, similar to candidate statistics suggesting that Democratic candidates use SNS more than Republicans.

5.1.8 Hypothesis 6: Men will frequently use SNS for political information more than women.

While research implies that more women use social networking websites than men, due to their need to feel connected with others (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007) results from this study do not support that assumption. In fact, these results are similar to

what Wesier (2000) found, suggesting that although the Internet is described as being male-dominant, the gender gap in Internet use is quickly diminishing. Interestingly, while men have always been associated with being more politically engaged than women, when it comes to SNS use for political information, men do not use these sites more than women, and there are no significant differences.

5.1.9 Hypothesis 7a. Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions more political discussions with parents.

Hypothesis 7b. Frequent use of SNS will be positively correlated with more political discussions more political discussions with friends.

This basic assumption states that there is a positive relationship between political discussions and using social networking sites for political information. Similar to Hypothesis 2, which was specified "online news and ads" (e.g. msnbc.com and yahoonews.com), the hypothesis was supported. This result implies that young adults, who use SNS for candidate and political information, have more political discussions with family and friends. Additionally, unlike what some research has discovered about the negative use of Internet (e.g. Kraut et al. 1998, who suggested that using the Internet decreases interaction with family and friends), this study is similar to Shah et al. (2001), suggesting that the Internet does not hinder face-to-face communication but aids in connecting with other individuals. As with other examinations in this study, it's likely to assume that the more information one has, the more knowledge they retain, and the more likely they are to discuss this with individuals in their communication networks.

5.2 Additional Analyses

The above examination looked at relationships without controls such as

background, political interest and traditional media consumption. However, since these background variables may also affect political activity outcomes, an analysis was needed to discover if the relationships between the use of political Internet sites and political efficacy, participation and political discussions with parents and friends continue even after controlling for background and traditional media use variables.

5.2.1 *Political Discussions with Parents and Friends*

In an effort to further examine the area of political discussions with parents and friends, the results show that when controlling for demographic characteristics, home influence, political interest, traditional media use and online political information, only political interest and traditional media use had a significant effect on discussions with parents and friends. Also, the use of a candidate's MySpace page for political information proved to be a variable that was reaching significance for having political discussions with parents.

While it is not surprising that political interest remains an important factor in whether or not young adults are having political discussions, results from this study verify that the younger generations are still turning towards traditional media, such as television news, for political information. It appears as though newspaper reading is not nearly as important of a source for these young voters, as television appears to be.

Additionally, in recent elections, the Internet has been receiving an overwhelming amount of attention by the media and news reports. In the present study, the Internet, more specifically—visiting a candidate's MySpace page—is proving to have a positive effect on these young voters and how they are get their political information. While these results show that social networking sites are not as significant predictors for having

political discussions, like political interest and television news attention, these results are important for future analysis when understanding the role of the Internet in elections.

5.2.2 Intention to Vote and Political Efficacy

To better understand young adults' likelihood to vote and political efficacy, results show that when controlling for demographic characteristics, home influence, political interest, traditional media use, political discussions, and online political information, only political interest had a significant effect on one's intention to vote. As with other studies, these results are similar and the model suggests that the only significant factor in understanding a young person's intention to vote is whether they are interested in politics.

In an attempt to further examine young adults' political efficacy, the same model was used and while political interest still remains a significant predictor, gender and religiousness have significant contributions. These results state that men more than women are likely to feel efficacious. Lower levels of political efficacy by women may be attributed to the idea that men have more confidence in understanding politics, thus leading to more political knowledge and political participation. While this may be the case during the 2008 Primary Presidential election, it should be noted that these results may have been different if data were collected at another time during the election.

Additionally, the present study suggests that the religion variable was a significant predictor of political efficacy. This may be attributed to the belief that a sense of religion is associated with positive feelings of political trust, rather than cynicism. Coupled with that, religion may provide hope that one's participation will make a difference and that the political system will respond to this participation.

58

5.2.3 Age differences

This study did find that there were a handful of age differences when examining the use of political information online. Recall that the "younger" young adults were between the ages of 18 and 24, while the "older" young adults consisted of the young adults between the ages of 25 and 29. Interestingly, "younger" young adults were more likely than "older" young adults to visit a candidate's MySpace page, while "older" young adults were more likely to visit the following sites more: watching candidate advertisements on a candidate's website, visit more news like websites (e.g., yahoonews.com and msnbc.com), and finally visit a candidate's personal website for political and candidate information.

Looking at these differences, it is can be assumed that the younger folks are more attracted to what SNS for political information. Additionally, if individuals are visiting a candidate's MySpace or Facebook page for information, they are more likely to watch the video advertisements on the website. Looking at this, it is possible to see a new trend of Internet use by these 18 to 24 year olds during the 2008 Primary Presidential election. The results also describe the types of websites used by "older" young adults, which consist of more "news like" information websites like a candidate's website, yahoonews.com and msnbc.com.

Generation Y, or the Milennials, have been associated with individuals born between 1977 and 1994 (spanning the ages of 32 and 15). According to The Pew Research Center, a new generation has emerged shaped by the revolution in technology; this generation is referred to as Generation Next – those young adults who have grown up with personal computers, cell phones, and the Internet. However, they have quickly

accumulated a number of new nicknames for themselves, for example the iGeneration, Generation Text, and The MySpace Generation (Connery, 2008). This generation of young adults are present on social networking sites which allow them to track each other's moves on a minute-to-minute basis therefore, it is not surprising to see that these "younger" young adults are more likely than "older" young adults to use social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace for political purposes. Additionally, it is not surprising that presidential candidates have started to use the Internet as a tool to reach out to young voters on the web, since this group of young adults is mostly living their life online. Statistics show that 90% of Milennials use Email, 70% use the internet on a daily basis, and over half are on social networking sites like MySpace or Facebook (Putnam, 2000).

While these sites are being used more often by "younger" young adults than "older" young adults, these sources are not providing anymore political knowledge for young adults, as was discovered in Research Question 1 (see Table 9). In fact, when it comes to understanding politics and having political knowledge, the results suggest that traditional media sources like television news are significant predictors. Are these websites more entertaining and therefore more attractive to young adults? Perhaps, but it could be assumed that these political entertainment-oriented websites inform individuals not of where a candidate stands on issues, but rather individuals are more likely to learn about candidates'characteristics and biographical information (Cao, 2008).

5.3 Theoretical Framework: O-S-O-R Model

This study's theoretical framework is the O-S-O-R model (Markus & Zajonc, 1983) and was used to help advance our understanding of how media and online political

60

information engage young voters in politics. Recall, participant demographic variables

and political interest encapsulate the first orientation, (O) in the model. Following that,

the stimulus (S) will be represented by frequent use of the newspapers and television as a

way of gaining political information. The second "O" is represented by the variables that

explain individual's use of the Internet as a way of attaining political information. And

finally, the response (R) is the represented by the variable that measure political

knowledge, participation, political efficacy, and having political discussions with parents

and friends. Figure 10 below explains how this study incorporated the use of online

political information into the O-S-O-R model to help explain how media engage young

voters.

Figure 10

The O-S-O-R Model with Online Political Information
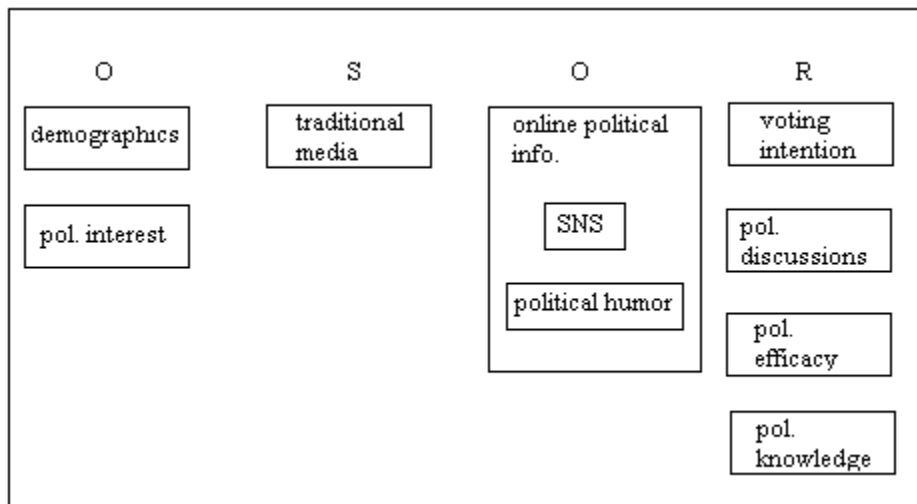
Results from the current study show that political interest was the driving stimulus

in predicting the response (political participation, political discussions, political efficacy

and political knowledge). Also, traditional news use, specifically watching television

news, proved to be an important influence for having political discussions with parents

and friends, and political knowledge. These results are similar to the findings by Shah et

al, (2005) stating that traditional media use is a strong influence on political behaviors and outcomes. The sequential orders of the variables (see Figure 10) as used in this study explain the chronological flow and aides in making predictions about young adults' political engagement. If young adults are politically interested and are then exposed to a variety of political information, both television and online information, then they are more likely to have political discussions, vote in elections, have more political knowledge and have higher levels of political efficacy. Since this study included political interest in the first orientation, something that is preexisting before exposure the stimuli, individuals who are politically interested are already attentive during the third stage. As a result, they are more motivated and more politically engaged. Overall, this study supports the orientation-stimulus-orientation-response model, and helps to explain how online political information can be incorporated into the framework to better understand political participation, political knowledge, political discussions, and political efficacy. Similarly, this study has contributed to the O-S-O-R theoretical framework and can be used in future research.

5.4 Limitations

As previously stated, this study took place a week before the 2008 Ohio Primary Presidential election. A similar study at a different span of time during the election might lend different results. It is unknown how participants may have used the Internet for political information later in the campaign and if frequency of such sites may have increased, as the General Election drew nearer. Also, the present investigation was interested in online news gathering by young adults. However, there were a limited amount of measures that specifically asked about SNS, making it hard to conceptualize

Facebook and MySpace usage. Having more variables to measure attention and frequency of both MySpace and Facebook individually, might give way to different results.

Another limitation of the current study is the wording of some of the items in the survey, especially for the question regarding online political humor. The question asks, "how often do you read political news satire websites like The Onion or The Daily Show?" This may cause for some confusion, because while both websites have reading content, The Daily Show highlights more videos, whereas The Onion has more readable content. Having both websites listed together in the same question can lead to a misunderstanding of online political information and how participants are using the websites to get campaign and candidate information.

Finally, the O-S-O-R model was a strong contribution to understanding the results from this study, previous research has used structural equation modeling to test relationships and causality. Analysis of the current data by structural equation modeling or with other statistical tools may reveal relationships among the variables that are not found in this thesis, including causal relationships that cannot be tested using multiple regression analysis.

5.5 Future Research

Future research should consider increasing the amount of measures of online political information. In addition to more variables measuring SNS like MySpace and Facebook, it should also include YouTube and Twitter. It is hard to say if any of these additions would provide different results; however, the Internet craze has not let up. In fact, minute-to-minute updates by political elites, not just presidential candidates are of

the norm for subscribers of Twitter, MySpace and Facebook. In addition to adding these variables into future research, it would be interesting if research was not restricted to just presidential candidates, but extended to other political figures like congressmen and senators.

Finally, newspaper questions need to be worded more carefully in future studies examining how young adults are getting their political information online so there is no confusion about how individuals are accessing their information. Asking young adults if they read newspapers online (e.g., nytimes.com, washingtonpost.com) and asking about their news reading habits online can be difficult since some online news they read may be accessed through another portal (e.g., Yahoo or Google), but are originally from the newspapers' own website. Are these young adults reading a New York Times article through Yahoo News thinking that they are reading an online newspaper, or are they thinking they are simply reading online news on Yahoo? This is complicated and future investigations into online newspaper reading habits need to be done with great care.

5.6 Conclusion

Madsen (1987) states that when feelings of efficacy are positive, the expected response is more political participation, such as voting, having political discussions, and having more political knowledge. The results from this study show that young adults who visit online news websites and also frequently use social networking site (SNS) for political information have more political discussions with parents and friends. Previous research has found a positive relationship between political efficacy and media use for political information and news (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; McLeod et al., 1996; Moy et al., 2005). Similarly, this study is consistent with other investigations of media

use and political efficacy, as results from this thesis show that use of social networking

sites (SNS) is positively correlated with internal political efficacy.

Although there has been extraordinary amount of attention paid to the political

uses of the Internet, the overall findings of the present study suggest: First, social

networking sites did not prove to be an important source for political news gathering in

the 2008 Ohio Presidential Primary Election, despite the overwhelming attention they

received. While it appeared that the use of MySpace and Facebook by politicians was

everywhere, to the point that it was cliché, results from this study show that social

networking sites (SNS) were only slightly influential in having political discussions with

parents, from the proposed O-S-O-R model (see Figure 7). Granted, the use of these new

websites help politicians in attracting young voters and expanding the notion of the

"virtual public sphere" - where individuals have greater access to information and two-

way communication connections with political elite. Additionally, results from the

current study are similar to what Erikson (2008) refers to as political "fandom". This

term implies that SNS (social networking sites) do not provide individuals with adequate

knowledge about political issues, but instead offer an alternative way for individuals to

make political decisions – decisions based on candidate likeability.

Second, watching news on television is a significant predictor of political

efficacy, likelihood to vote and having political discussions with parents and friends. As

already stated, although more attention is being paid to the Internet and the social groups

taking place online, this study gives insight into the realization that traditional sources of

media, specifically television news, have a stronger influence on political engagement as

online political information. Finally, not surprisingly and consistent with previous

political communication studies, political interest continues to be a driving force in young

adult's political participation and knowledge, and interpersonal political communication.

REFERENCES

Alvarez R. M. & Hall, T. E. (2004). *Point, click and vote: The future of Internet voting*.

Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Baum, M. (2005). Talking the vote: Why presidential candidates hit the talk show

circuit. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, 213-234.

Baumgartner, J. C. (2007). Humor and the next frontier: Youth, online political humor,

and the JibJab effect. *Social Science Computer Review*, 25, 319-338.

Baumgartner, J. C. & Morris, J. S. (2008). One "Nation," under Stephen? The effects of

The Colbert Report on American youth. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic

Media*, 622-643.

Bennet, W. L. (2003). Communicating Global Activism: Strengths and Vulnerabilities of

Networked Politics, *Information, Communication & Society*, 6(2), 143-168.

Blumler, J. & Katz, E. (1974). *The Uses of Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks,

CA: Sage.

Bimber, B. (1998). The internet and political mobilization: Research note on the 1996

election season. *Social Science Computer Review*, 16, 391-401.

Bimber, B. (2000). Measuring the gender gap on the Internet. Social Science Quarterly,

81, 855-867.

Bimber, B., & Davis, R. (2003). *Campaigning online: The internet in U.S. elections*.

New York: Oxford University Press.

Boase, J., & Wellman, B. (2006). Personal relationships: On and off the Internet. In D.

Perlman & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of personal

relationships* (pp. 709-723). Cambridge University Press.

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social network sites: Definition, history, and

scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13, 210–230.

Brewer, P. R., & Cao, X. X. (2006). Candidate appearances on soft news shows and public knowledge about primary campaigns. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 50, 18–35.

Brinkman, D. (1968). Do editorial cartoons and editorials change public opinion? *Journalism Quarterly,* 45, 724-726.

Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & Miller, W. E. (1954). *The voter decides*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.

Cao, X. (2008). Soft news and young voters: Why they tune into it and what they get out of it. In T. Kelso & B. Cogan (Eds.), *Mosh the polls: Youth voters, popular culture, and democratic engagement* (pp. 165-183). Maryland: Lexington Books.

Carl, L. (1968). Editorial cartoons fail to reach many viewers. *Journalism Quarterly, 45*, 533-535.

Cho, J., Shah, D. V., McLeod, J. M., McLeod, D. M., Scholl, R. M., Gotlieb, M. R. (2009). Campaigns, reflection, and deliberation: Advancing an O-S-R-O-R model of communication effects. *Communication Theory*, 19, 66-88.

Chaffee, S. H., Zhao, X., & Leshner, G. (1994). Political knowledge and the campaign media of 1992. *Communication Research*, 21, 305-324.

Coleman, S., Morrison, D. E., & Svennevig, M. (2008). New media and political efficacy. *International Journal of Communication*, 2, 771-791.

Cornfield, M. (2006). YouTube and You. *Campaigns & Elections*, 43.

Connery, M. (2008). *Youth to power: How today's young voters are building tomorrow's progressive majority*. New York: Ig Publishing.

Davis, R., Baumgartner, J. C., Francia, P. L., & Morris, J. S. (2009). The Internet in U.S. election campaigns. In A. Chadwick & P. N. Howard (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics* (pp. 173-185). New York: Routledge.

Delli Carpini, M. X. (2000). Gen.com: Youth, civic engagement, and the new information environment. *Political Communication*, 17, 341-349.

Delli Carpini, M.X., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Delli Carpini, M. X., & Williams, B. A. (2001). Let us infotain you: Politics in the new media environment. In W. L. Bennett and R. M. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy* (pp. 160-181). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Di Gennaro, C., & Dutton, W. (2006). The internet and the public: Online and offline political participation in the United Kingdom. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59, 299-313.

Dreger, A. E. (1999). *The youth vote: The registration and voting patters of youth since the passage of the 26th Amendment in 1971*. Ohio: League of Women Voters of Cleveland Educational Fund.

Ellison, N., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Face book "friends": Exploring the relationship between college students' use of online social networks and social capital. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12, 1143-1168.

Erikson, E. (2008). "Hillary is my friend": MySpace and political fandom. *Rocky Mountain Communication Review*, 4, 3-16.

Eveland, W. P. Jr., Shah, D. V., & Kwak, N. (2003). Assessing causality in the cognitive mediation model: A panel study of motivations, information, processing, and learning during campaign 2000. *Communication Research*, 30, 359-386.

Fuller, J. E. (2004). Equality in cyber democracy? Gauging gender gaps in online civic participation. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85, 938-57.

Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology, 78,* 1360-1380.

Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory, 1,* 201-233.

Gueorguieva, V. (2008). Voters, MySpace, and YouTube: The impact of alternative communication channels on the 2006 election cycle and beyond. *Social Science Computer Review*, 26, 288-300.

Habermas, J. (1962). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2006). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. (6th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Hampton, K., & Wellman, B. (2003). Neighboring in Netville: How the Internet supports community and social capital in a wired suburb. *City & Community*, 2, 277-311.

Heath, R. L. & Bryant, J. (2000). *Human communication theory and research: Concepts, contexts, and challenges* (Lea's Communication Series) (2nd edition). Philadelphia: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Horowitz, E. M. & Wantsrom, J. (2006). Patriotism and political socialization: Young
 adults' perspectives on the first anniversary of 9/11. In Denton, R. E. Jr. (Ed).
 Language, Symbols, and the Media: Communication in the aftermath of the
 World Trade Center attack. (pp. 129-154). Piscataway, NJ: Transaction
 Publishers

Jordan, L. A., (2008). Broadcasting yourself (and others): How YouTube and blogging
 have changed the rules of the campaign. *Hinckley Journal of Politics*, 75-84.

Jordan, T. (2001). Hactivism: Direct action on the electronic flows of information
 societies. In: K. M. Dowding, J. Hughes & H Margetts (eds.), *Challenges to*
 democracy: Ideas, involvement and institutions. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Kenski, K. & Stroud, N. J. (2006). Connections between Internet use and political
 efficacy, knowledge, and participation. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic
 Media, 50, 173-192.

Kraut, R., Patterson, M., Lundmark, V., Kiesler, S., Mukopadhyay, T., & Scherlis, W.
 (1998). Internet paradox: A social technology that reduces social involvement
 and psychological well-being? *American Psychologist*, 53, 1017-1031.

Lee, K. M. (2006). Effects of internet use on college students' political efficacy.
 CyberPsychology & Behavior, 9, 415-422.

Lupia, A. and Philpot, T. S. (2005). Viewers from inside the net: How websites affect
 young adults' political interest. *The Journal of Politics*, 67, 1122-142.

Madsen, D. (1987). Political Self-Efficacy Tested. *The American Political Science*
 Review, 82, 571-581.

Markus, H., & Zajonc, R. B. (1985). The cognitive perspective in social psychology. In

    G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 137-229).

    3rd Edition, New York: Random House.

McKinney, M. S. & Banwart, M. C. (2005). Rocking the youth vote through debate:

    Examining the effects of citizen versus journalist controlled debate on civic

    engagement. *Journalism Studies*, 6, 153-163.

McLeod, J. M. (2000). Media and civic socialization. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 27,

    45-51.

McLeod, J. M., Daily, K., Guo, Z., Eveland, W. P., Jr., Bayer, J., Yang, S., et al. (1996).

    Community integration, local media use and democratic processes.

    Communication Research, 23, 179-209.

McLeod, J. M., Kosicki, G. M., & McLeod, D. M. (1994). The expanding boundaries of

    political communication effects. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), *Media effects:*

    Advances in theory and research (pp. 123–162). New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Milgram, S. (1967). The small world problem. *Psychology Today, 6,* 62-67.

Milgram, S. (1977). The familiar stranger: An aspect of urban anonymity. In S. Milgram,

    J. Sabini, & M. Silver (Eds.), *The individual in a social world: Essays and*

    experiments (pp. 51-53). Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

Mossberger, K., Kaplan, D. & McNeil, R. (2007). *Digital citizenship: The Internet,*

    society and participation. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Mossberger, K. (2009). Toward digital citizenship: Addressing inequality in the

    information age. In A. Chadwick & P. N. Howard (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of*

    Internet Politics (pp. 173-185). New York: Routledge.

Moy, P., Xenos, M. A., & Hess, V. K. (2005). Communication and citizenship: Mapping the political effects of infotainment. *Mass Communication & Society*, 8, 111-131.

Moy, P., Xenos, M. A., & Hess, V. K. (2006). Priming effects of late-night comedy. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 18, 198-210.

Nie, N. (2001). Sociability, interpersonal relations, and the Internet: Reconciling conflicting findings. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, 420-435.

Nip, J. Y. M. (2004). The Relationship between Online and Offline Communities: The Case of the Queer Sisters, *Media, Culture & Society*, 26(3), 409-428.

Norris, P., & Jones, P. (1998). Virtual democracy. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 3, 1-4.

Papacharissi, Z. (2009). The virtual sphere 2.0: The Internet, the public sphere, and beyond. In A. Chadwick & P. N. Howard (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics* (pp. 173-185). New York: Routledge.

Papacharissi, Z. & Rubin, A. M. (2000). Predictors of Internet use. Journal of *Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 44, 175-196.

Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, 577-592.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuseter.

Scheufele, D. A., & Nisbet, M. C. (2002). Being a citizen online: New opportunities and dead ends. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 73, 55-75.

Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Eveland, W. P., & Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling internet effects on civic participation. *Communication Research*, 32, 531-565.

Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Nah, S., Gotlieb, M. R., Hyunseo, H., et al. (2007). Campaign ads, online messaging, and participation: Extending the communication mediation model. *Journal of Communication*, 57, 676-703.

Shah, D. V., Kwak, N., & Holbert, R. L. (2001). "Connecting" and "disconnecting" with civic life: Patterns of internet use and production of social capital. *Political Communication*, 18, 141-162.

Sotirovic, M. & McLeod, J. M. (2004). Knowledge as understanding: The information processing approach to political learning. In Kaid, L. L. (Ed.), *Handbook of political communication research* (pp. 357-394). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Teeter, A. & Chappell, B. (2008). Rock the vote: An insider's account of the 2004 campaign strategy. In T. Kelso & B. Cogan (Eds.), *Mosh the polls: Youth voters, popular culture, and democratic engagement* (pp. 63-78). Maryland: Lexington Books.

The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (n. d.). *Youth Demographics: Young people in the numbers*. Retrieved January 7, 2009, http://www.civicyouth.org/?page_id=238.

The Pew Research Center for People and the Press (2008, August 17). *Key news audiences now blend online and traditional sources*. Retrieved January 6, 2009, from http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=1353.

The Pew Research Center for People and the Press (2007, January 9). *A portrait of*

   "generation next": How young people view their lives, futures and politics.

   Retrieved May 3, 2009 from http://people-press.org/report/300/a-portrait-of-

   generation-next.

Ward, J. (2007). Addressing young people online: The 2004 European Parliament

   election campaign and political youth websites. In K. A. Foot & S. M. Schneider

   (Eds.), *The Internet and national elections: A comparative stuedy of web*

   campaigning (pp.136-149). New York: Routledge.

Watts, D. (2003). *Six degrees: The science of a connected age*. New York: Norton

Weiser, E. B. (2000). Gender Differences in Internet use patterns and Internet

   application preferences: A two-sample comparison. *CyberPsychology &*

   Behavior, 3, 167-178.

Wellman, B. (1997). An electronic group is virtually a social network. In S. Kiesler,

   (Ed.), *Culture of the Internet* (pp. 179-205). NJ:Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wellman, B., & Hampton, K. (1999). Living networked on and offline. *Contemporary*

   Sociology, 28, 648-654.

Wellman, B., Haas, A. Q., Witte, J. & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the internet increase,

   decrease, or supplement social capital? Social networks, participation, and

   community commitment. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, 436-455.

Westling, M. (2007). Expanding the Public Sphere: The Impact of Facebook on Political

   Communication. *The New Vernacular*. "www.thenewvernacular.com/projects

   /facebook_and_political_communicaiton".

Williams, C. B., & Gulati, G. J. (2007, September). *Social networks in political campaigns: Facebook and the 2006 midterm elections*. Symposium conducted at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago Illinois.

Young, D. G. (2004). Late-night comedy in election 2000: Its influence on candidate trait ratings and the moderating effects of political knowledge and partisanship. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *48*, 1-22.

TABLES

Table 1

<u>*Newspaper Attention Scale*</u>

Variable	Number of items in scale	M	SD	(α)
1. International news	1	4.83	2.50	
2. Gov. and politics	1	5.17	2.47	
3. 2008 election	1	6.12	2.64	
Total Newspaper Attention	3	16.48	6.40	.81

Scale items for newspaper attention (1-10 scale, 1 = little attention, 10 = very close attention)

When you come across the following kinds of stories in the newspaper, how much attention do you pay to them?
1. International and world news?
2. National government and politics?
3. News about political candidates and the 2008 presidential election?

Table 2

Television News Attention Scale

	Number of items			
Variable	in scale	M	SD	(α)
1. Nat'l network evening	1	4.38	2.69	
2. Nat'l cable evening	1	5.14	2.75	
3. Local at 6pm	1	4.93	2.66	
4. Local at 11pm	1	5.12	2.87	
5. Morning News	1	3.97	2.91	
Total TV News Attention	5	23.96	9.74	.73

Scale items for television attention (1-10 scale, 1 = little attention, 10 = very close attention)

When you come across the following types of programs on TV, how much attention do you pay to them?
1. National network news in the evening (e.g., Peter Jennings or Dan Rather)?
2. National cable news in the evening (e.g., CNN, FOX, or MSNBC)?
3. Local Cleveland news at 6:00pm?
4. Local Cleveland news at 11:00pm?
5. Morning news programs (e.g., Today or Good Morning America)?

Table 3

<u>*Online Political News and Ads Scale*</u>

	Number of items			
Variable	in scale	M	SD	(α)
1. Ads on can. web	1	3.01	2.75	
2. Info from candidate web	1	2.94	2.72	
3. News websites	1	3.99	3.02	
4. Ads on news sites	1	4.09	3.16	
Total Online Pol. News & Ads	4			.77

Scale items for news-like websites on the Internet (1-10 scale, 1 = not very often, 10 = very often)

1. How often do you watch candidate ads on candidate's own website?
2. How often do you get campaign or candidate information from the candidate's own websites?
3. How often do you read political news online, such as at websites like msnbc.com or yahoonews.com?
4. How often do you watch candidate ads on news sites like msnbc.com or yahoonews.com?

Table 4

Political Discussions with Parents Scale

Variable	Number of items in scale	M	SD	(α)
1. Nat'l issues and politics	1	5.48	2.59	
2. International issues	1	4.93	2.61	
3. 2008 election	1	6.62	2.68	
Total Discussions with Parents	3	17.26	6.94	.87

Scale items for political discussions with parents (1-10 scale, 1 = not very often, 10 = very often)

How often do you have discussions with your parents about:
1. National issues and politics?
2. International issues and politics?
3. The 2008 presidential election?

Table 5

Political Discussions with Friends Scale

Variable	Number of items in scale	M	SD	(α)
1. Nat'l issues and politics	1	5.11	2.66	
2. International issues	1	4.59	2.65	
3. 2008 election	1	6.55	2.66	
Total Discussions with Friends	3	16.44	6.94	.85

Scale items for political discussions with friends (1-10 scale, 1 = not very often, 10 = very often)

How often do you have discussions with your friends about:
1. National issues and politics?
2. International issues and politics?
3. The 2008 presidential election?

Table 6

Political Efficacy Scale

	Number of items			
Variable	in scale	M	SD	(α)
1. Duty	1	7.88	2.47	
2. Try best	1	5.84	2.11	
3. Vote makes	1	6.83	2.90	
4. Take part	1	6.56	2.52	
Total Political Efficacy	4	27.02	6.96	.63

Scale items for political efficacy (1-10 scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

1. Duty: Every citizen has a duty to vote.
2. Try best: Politicians try to do what is best for most of the people.
3. Vote makes: Every single vote makes a difference in an election.
4. Take part: In a democracy, every citizen should take part in political activities.

Table 7

Political Knowledge Questions

Question	Correct Answer	% Right	% Wrong
1. Universal Health Care	Clinton	47.0	49.7
2. Iraq for 50-100 years	McCain	53.6	45.6
3. "Yes we can" slogan	Obama	79.6	19.6
4. Ordained minister	Huckabee	43.6	55.5
5. Senator from New York	Clinton	69.3	30.7
6. Mom dying from cancer	Obama	40.3	59.1
7. Senator from Arizona	McCain	35.1	64.9
8. Save Families $2,500	Obama	32.3	66.9
9. Commander-in-chief day one	Clinton	21.5	77.1

Scale items for political knowledge (5 multiple choice answers where 1 = Hillary Clinton, 2 = John McCain, 3 = Mike Huckabee, 4 = Barack Obama, and 5 = Don't Know)

1. Which candidate is proposing a health care plan that would cover all Americans (universal health care)?
2. Which candidate for president said that it may be necessary to leave U.S. troops in Iraq for the next 50-100 years?
3. Which candidate for president has the slogan "Yes We Can"?
4. Which candidate for president is an ordained minister?
5. Which candidate for president is a senator from New York?
6. Which candidate is motivated to fix America's health care system after seeing their mother die of cancer?
7. Which candidate is a U.S. Senator from Arizona?
8. Which candidate's health care plan says it will save American families approximately $2,500?
9. Which candidate has said, "I am ready to be commander-in-chief on day one"?

N = 362

Table 8

Political Interest Scale

Variable	Number of items in scale	M	SD	(α)
1. Nat'l issues and politics	1	6.22	2.58	
2. International issues	1	5.69	2.60	
3. 2008 election	1	7.30	2.54	
Total Political Interest	3	19.22	6.66	.83

Scale items for political interest (1-10 scale, 1 = not very interested, 10 = very interested)

Which number between 1 and 10 would best represent how interested you are in:
1. National issues and politics?
2. International issues and politics?
3. The 2008 presidential election?

Table 9 (RQ1)

*Results of Multiple Regression for Young Adult's Use of the Internet
for Political Knowledge*

	Political Knowledge
Demographics	
Age	-.11
Gender	.06
Race	-.04
Religiousness	.06
Incremental R^2	2.0%
Home Influence	
Parents Education	-.03
Books Growing-up	.09
Incremental R^2	0.7%
Political Interest	
Political Interest	.07
Incremental R^2	0.5%
Traditional Media	
NP News Attention	.06
TV News Attention	.21[#]
Incremental R^2	3.4%
Political Discussions	
Discussions with Parents	.06
Discussions with Friends	-.07
Incremental R	0.3%
Online Political Information	
News and Ads Online[12]	.11
Candidate MySpace	.03
Ads on Myspace	-.12
Obama's Girl	.18
Political Satire	-.11
Incremental R^2	4.1%
Final R^2	**10.9%**

** = p<.01   * = p<.05   # = p<.10

---

[12] "Online News and Ads" scale consisting of 4 items: watching candidate ads on a candidate's personal webpage, visiting a candidate's personal web page, news sites like msnbc.com and yahoonews.com and ads on msnbc.com and yahoonews.com.

Table 10

Results of Multiple Regression to predict Political Discussions with Parents and Friends

	Political Discussions With Parents	Political Discussions With Friends
Demographics		
Age	.07	.01
Gender	-.01	.08
Race	.05	.08
Religiousness	.08	.01
Incremental R^2	1.4%	1.1%
Home Influence		
Parents Education	.06	.07
Books Growing-up	.16	.15
Incremental R^2	3.4%	3.2%
Political Interest		
Political Interest	.65**	.68**
Incremental R^2	39.98%	44.6%
Traditional Media		
NP News Attention	.05	-.06
TV News Attention	.22*	.28**
Incremental R^2	3.6%	5.4%
Online Political Info.		
News and Ads Online[13]	.07	.13
Candidate MySpace	.19#	.05
Ads on Myspace	-.17	.09
Obama's Girl	-.03	-.07
Political Satire	.06	-.01
Incremental R^2	2.1%	3.0%
Final R^2	**50.4%**	**57.2%**

** = p<.01   * = p<.05   # = p<.10

---

[13] "Online News and Ads" scale consisting of 4 items: watching candidate ads on a candidate's personal webpage, visiting a candidate's personal web page, news sites like msnbc.com and yahoonews.com and ads on msnbc.com and yahoonews.com.

Table 11

Results of Multiple Regression to predict Political Discussions with Parents and Friends

	Intention to Vote	Political Efficacy
Demographics		
Age	.01	-.00
Gender	-.01	-.19*
Race	.04	.13
Religiousness	.08	.22*
Incremental R^2	0.9%	11.9%
Home Influence		
Parents Education	-.16	.09
Books Growing-up	.01	-.04
Incremental R^2	2.5%	0.8%
Political Interest		
Political Interest	.38**	.49**
Incremental R^2	14.1%	23.0%
Traditional Media		
NP News Attention	-.11	.15
TV News Attention	.19	.10
Incremental R^2	2.7%	1.8%
Political Discussions		
Discussions with Parents	.13	-.07
Discussions with Friends	.20	.16
Incremental R	3.9%	1.0%
Online Political Information		
News and Ads Online[14]	.12	.01
Candidate MySpace	.02	.11
Ads on Myspace	-.15	.01
Obama's Girl	.06	-.09
Political Satire	.16	.13
Incremental R^2	3.3%	2.7%
Final R^2	**27.2%**	**41.3%**

** = p<.01   * = p<.05   # = p<.10

---

[14] "Online News and Ads" scale 4 items: watching candidate ads on a candidate's personal webpage, visiting a candidate's personal web page, news sites like msnbc.com and yahoonews.com and ads on msnbc.com and yahoonews.com.

Table 12

Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables

		Age	Likely to Vote	Pol. Party	Gender	Religiousness	Books
Age	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	---					
	N	362					
Likely to Vote	Pearson Correlation	.006	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.920	---				
	N	255	255				
Pol. Party	Pearson Correlation	.026	-.017	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.626	.787	---			
	N	358	252	358			
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.098[#]	-.095	.095[#]	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.062	.130	.074	---		
	N	362	255	358	362		
Religiousness	Pearson Correlation	-.074	.028	-.099[#]	-.034	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.167	.660	.066	.532	---	
	N	349	248	345	349	349	
Books	Pearson Correlation	.025	.057	-.043	-.001	-.046	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.638	.371	.423	.990	.397	---
	N	355	252	351	355	345	355

$** = < .01$ $* = < .05$ $\# = < .10$

Table 12 (continued)

<u>*Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables*</u>

		Age	Likely to Vote	Pol. Party	Gender	Religiousness	Books
Race	Pearson Correlation	-.002	.031	.043	.011	.035	-.035
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.972	.630	.428	.847	.533	.522
	N	337	238	334	337	324	330
Online	Pearson Correlation	.094#	.255**	-.045	.017	.016	.062
News & Ads	Sig. (2-tailed)	.075	.000	.398	.743	.764	.243
	N	360	253	356	360	347	353
Pol. Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.034	.348**	-.213**	-.114*	-.165**	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.528	.000	.000	.032	.002	.296
	N	353	248	349	353	340	346
Pol. Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.011	.017	-.062	-.022	.010	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.841	.792	.242	.672	.847	.288
	N	362	255	358	363	349	355
Parents Edu	Pearson Correlation	-.012	-.088	.000	.063	-.065	.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.825	.164	.994	.232	.229	.000
	N	358	252	354	358	348	354
TV Attention	Pearson Correlation	.005	.291**	-.070	-.079	.128	.149#
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.948	.001	.373	.305	.104	.054
	N	169	130	166	169	163	167

** = < .01   * = < .05   # = < .10

Table 12 (continued)

Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables

		Age	Likely to Vote	Pol. Party	Gender	Religiousness	Books
NP Attention	Pearson Correlation	.104	.291**	-.038	-.079	-.060	.131*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.105	.000	.557	.217	.354	.041
	N	246	175	244	246	239	244
Pol. Interest	Pearson Correlation	.106*	.315*	-.105*	.015	.090[#]	.164**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.000	.047	.781	.093	.002
	N	361	255	357	361	348	354
Candidate MySpace	Pearson Correlation	-.162**	.066	-.129*	-.044	.116*	-.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.291	.015	.406	.031	.859
	N	362	255	358	362	349	355
Satire/The Onion	Pearson Correlation	-.069	.081	.005	.153**	-.020	.085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.190	.197	.922	.004	.711	.112
	N	361	254	357	361	348	354
Obama's Girl	Pearson Correlation	-.121*	-.001	-.055	.072	.128*	.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.989	.299	.172	.017	.856
	N	361	254	357	361	348	354

** = < .01   * = < .05   # = < .10

Table 12 (continued)

<u>*Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables*</u>

		Age	Likely to Vote	Pol. Party	Gender	Religiousness	Books
Discussion with Friends	Pearson Correlation	.017	.303**	.000	.070	.058	.213**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.767	.000	.998	.218	.311	.000
	N	313	228	309	313	302	311
Discussion with Parents	Pearson Correlation	.047	.303**	-.076	.042	.106$^{\#}$	.133*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.403	.000	.183	.463	.066	.019
	N	314	227	311	314	304	311

** = < .01   * = < .05   # = < .10

Table 12 (continued)

Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables

		Race	Online News &Ads	Pol. Efficacy	Pol. Knowledge	Parents Edu
Race	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	---				
	N	337				
Online News & Ads	Pearson Correlation	-.026	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.636	---			
	N	335	360			
Political Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.059	.247**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.285	.000	---		
	N	328	351	53		
Political Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	-.035	.013	-.044	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.522	.804	.407	---	
	N	337	360	353	362	
Parents EDU	Pearson Correlation	.047	.047	.009	-.016	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.393	.377	.869	.769	---
	N	333	356	349	358	358

$** = < .01$ $* = < .05$ $\# = < .10$

Table 12 (continued)

<u>*Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables*</u>

		Race	News & Ads Sites	Efficacy	Knowledge	Parents Edu
TV Attention	Pearson Correlation	.014	.364**	.316**	.140[#]	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.859	.000	.000	.068	.828
	N	163	169	163	169	166
NP Attention	Pearson Correlation	-.059	.451**	.294**	.042	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.370	.000	.000	.515	.515
	N	229	245	237	246	245
Pol. Interest	Pearson Correlation	-.084	.445**	.340**	.050	.118*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.000	.000	.342	.025
	N	336	359	352	361	357
Candidate MySpace	Pearson Correlation	-.013	.449**	.206**	-.004	.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.810	.000	.000	.939	.450
	N	337	360	353	362	358
Satire/The Onion	Pearson Correlation	-.045	.268**	.054	.039	.123*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.412	.000	.316	.461	.021
	N	336	360	352	361	357

$** = < .01$ $* = < .05$ $\# = < .10$

Table 12 (continued)

Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables

		Race	News & Ads Sites	Efficacy	Knowledge	Parents Edu
Obama's Girl	Pearson Correlation	-.003	.290**	.060	.123*	.061
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.961	.000	.264	.020	.253
	N	336	360	352	361	357
Discussion with Friends	Pearson Correlation	-.023	.384**	.211**	.051	.118*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.692	.000	.000	.368	.038
	N	292	311	305	312	310
Discussion with Parents	Pearson Correlation	-.030	.391**	.245**	.098[#]	.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.613	.000	.000	.082	.411
	N	293	312	306	314	311

** = < .01   * = < .05   # = < .10

Table 12 (continued)

Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables

		TV Attetenion	NP Attention	Pol. Interest	Candidate Mypace	Satire/The Onion
TV Attention	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	---				
	N	169				
NP Attention	Pearson Correlation	.430**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	---			
	N	139	246			
Pol. Interest	Pearson Correlation	.514**	.714**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	---		
	N	168	245	361		
Candidate Myspace	Pearson Correlation	.329**	.252**	.309**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	---	
	N	139	246	361	362	
Satire/The Onion	Pearson Correlation	.206**	.245**	.272**	.266**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.000	.000	.000	---
	N	169	245	360	361	361

** = < .01   * = < .05   # = < .10

Table 12 (continued)

Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables

		TV Attetenion	NP Attention	Pol. Interest	Candidate Mypace	Satire/The Onion
Obama's Girl	Pearson Correlation	.178*	.246**	.206**	.372**	.317**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	169	245	360	361	361
Discussion with Friends	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.443**	.652**	.337**	.196**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	159	225	312	313	312
Discussion with Parents	Pearson Correlation	.424**	.495**	.633**	.266**	.226**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	158	225	313	314	313

$** = < .01$ $* = < .05$ $\# = < .10$

Table 12 (continued)

Correlation Table for Independent and Dependent Variables

		Obama's Girl	Discussion with Friends	Discussion with Parents
Obama's Girl	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	---		
	N	361		
Discussion with Friends	Pearson Correlation	.128*	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	---	
	N	312	313	
Discussion with Parents	Pearson Correlation	.200**	.631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	---
	N	313	291	314

** = < .01   * = < .05   # = < .10

APPENDIX

SURVEY

COMMUNICATION AND THE MARCH 4 OHIO PRIMARY

*Thank you for participating. When answering the questions, please **circle** or **mark** the number that best represents your answer. Although answering every question is preferable, you have the right to skip any question that you do not want to answer. Please read all instructions carefully and answer each question as accurately as possible.*

The time you start: _____   Today's date: _____ ___

1. How many days a week do you read a newspaper?
(Please circle the appropriate number.)

       7 or everyday   6   5   4   3   2   1

    ☐ I never read the newspaper → PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 3 (ON PAGE 2)

2. When you come across the following kinds of stories in the newspaper, how much **ATTENTION** do you pay to them? Here, **ONE** means **LITTLE ATTENTION**, and **TEN** means **VERY CLOSE ATTENTION**. How much **ATTENTION** do you pay to:

Please circle one answer for each category		**LITTLE ATTENTION**	**VERY CLOSE ATTENTION**
a. International and world news?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
b. National government and politics?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
c. News about political candidates and the 2008 presidential election?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
d. News about politics, the economy, and social issues <u>in Cleveland</u>?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
e. News about politics, the economy, and social issues <u>in the city where you live</u>?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
f. Editorials and opinion columns?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
g. Human interest stories and features about ordinary people?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
h. News about entertainment and the arts?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
i. Comics and crossword puzzles?	□ never read	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

→**ALL RESPONDENTS CONTINUE HERE:**

3. Below is a list of words that are sometimes associated with presidential candidates. Please rate your feelings toward **HILLARY CLINTON** for each pair of words.

                                                    Neutral
Experienced   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Inexperienced

Trustworthy   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Untrustworthy

Qualified   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Unqualified

Trustworthy   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Untrustworthy

Known   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Unknown

Devious   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Straightforward

Unlikable   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Likeable

Not Genuine   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Genuine

Unpopular   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Popular

Strong   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Weak

Sincere   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Insincere

Attractive   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____   Unattractive

4. On an average <u>weekday</u> evening, how many hours of television do you watch <u>after 5 PM</u>?
_____ hours _____ minutes

5. When you come across the following types of programs on TV, how much **ATTENTION** do you pay to them? Here, **ONE** means **LITTLE ATTENTION**, and **TEN** means **VERY CLOSE ATTENTION**. How much **ATTENTION** do you pay to:

Please circle one answer for each category		**LITTLE ATTENTION**		**VERY CLOSE ATTENTION**
a. National <u>network news</u> in the evening (e.g., Peter Jennings or Dan Rather)?	□ never watch		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
b. National <u>cable news</u> in the evening (e.g., CNN, FOX, or MSNBC)?	□ never watch		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
c. Local Cleveland news at 6:00 pm?	□ never watch		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
d. Local Cleveland news at 11:00 pm?	□ never watch		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
e. Morning news programs (e.g., Today or Good Morning America)?	□ never watch		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

f. Comedies (e.g., Two and a Half Men, Family Guy)?

□ never watch   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

g. Dramas (e.g., Grey's Anatomy, Lost)   □ never watch   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

h. Reality shows (e.g., American Idol, Dancing with the Stars)?

□ never watch   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

i. Crime shows (e.g., CSI, Law and Order)?   □ never watch   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

6. People have different amounts of INTEREST in government and politics. Using a ten point scale where **ONE** means **NOT VERY INTERESTED**, and **TEN** means **VERY INTERESTED**. Which number between one and ten would best represent how INTERESTED you are in:

Please circle one answer   **NOT VERY**   **VERY**
for each category   **INTERESTED**   **INTERESTED**
a. National issues and politics?   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
b. International issues and politics?   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
c. The 2008 presidential election?   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

7. A person can also have different amounts of <u>DISCSUSSIONS</u> about politics with different people. On a scale of one to ten, where **ONE** means **NOT VERY OFTEN**, and **TEN** means **VERY OFTEN**, how often do you have DISCUSSIONS with your **PARENTS** about:

Please circle one answer   **NOT VERY**   **VERY**
for each category   **OFTEN**   **OFTEN**
a. National issues and politics?   □ never   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
b. International issues and politics?   □ never   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
c. The 2008 presidential election?   □ never   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

8. What about <u>DISCUSSIONS</u> with your **FRIENDS?** On a scale of one to ten, where **ONE** means **NOT VERY OFTEN**, and **TEN** means **VERY OFTEN**, how often do you have discussions with your **FRIENDS** about:

Please circle one answer   **NOT VERY**   **VERY**
for each category   **OFTEN**   **OFTEN**
a. National issues and politics?   □ never   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
b. International issues and politics?   □ never   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
c. The 2008 presidential election?   □ never   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

9. Below is a list of words that are sometimes associated with presidential candidates. This time, please rate your feelings toward **BARACK OBAMA** for each pair of words.

Neutral

Experienced	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Inexperienced
Trustworthy	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Untrustworthy
Qualified	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Unqualified
Trustworthy	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Untrustworthy
Known	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Unknown
Devious	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Straightforward
Unlikable	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Likeable
Not Genuine	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Genuine
Unpopular	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Popular
Strong	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Weak
Sincere	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Insincere
Attractive	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	Unattractive

10. Here are some statements that people have made about government and politics. Using a ten point scale, where **ONE** means **STRONGLY DISAGREE** and **TEN** means **STRONGLY AGREE**, please circle the number that best indicates how much **YOU** agree or disagree with the following statements:

Please circle one answer for each category	**STRONGLY DISAGREE**		**STRONGLY AGREE**
a. Every citizen has a duty to vote.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
b. Politicians will say anything to get elected.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
c. Politicians try to do what is best for most of the people.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
e. Voting is just too much of a hassle.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
f. Politicians never keep their campaign promises.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
g. In a democracy, groups with different interests must be willing to compromise.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
h. Every single vote makes a difference in an election.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
i. The government wastes too much of the taxpayers' money.		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Please circle one answer	**STRONGLY**		**STRONGLY**

for each category	DISAGREE	AGREE
j. In a democracy, every citizen should take part in political activities.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
k. Politicians don't care what people like me think.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
l. It's hard to understand what's going on in politics and government.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

11. People have different feelings and vote for candidates for many different reasons. How much do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements about candidates and voting:

a) I feel that it is important to vote for a candidate of my GENDER.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

b) I feel that it is important that a candidate is an advocate for issues related to my GENDER.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

c) I feel that it is important that I feel more a part of this country because a person of my GENDER is elected president.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

d) I would feel more a part of this country if a person of my GENDER were elected president

	STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

12. Using a ten point scale, where **ONE** means **STRONGLY DISAGREE** and **TEN** means **STRONGLY AGREE**, please indicate how much **YOU** agree or disagree with the following statements:

Please circle one answer for each category	STRONGLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
a. I usually read most of the stories in the newspaper, even when I don't like what they're about.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
b. After reading an article in the newspaper or seeing a story on the TV news, I think about how it relates to what I already know.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
c. When reading a newspaper, I flip through and only read stories when a headline or photo catches my eye.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Please circle one answer	**STRONGLY**	**STRONGLY**
for each category	**DISAGREE**	**AGREE**
d. I tend to bring up what I've learned from news stories in my conversations with people.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
e. When I am using the news media, I always try to figure out what the story is.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
f. The news media give me too much useless information.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
g. Often when I've learned something in the news, I'll recall it later and think about it.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
h. Often, if I come across something interesting in the news, I follow it up in more detail later.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
i. When watching the news on TV, I only pay attention if there are certain words or pictures that catch my interest.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

13. Now we would like to know a little more about the places in which you might see candidate ads, videos, or generally get information about the candidates and their campaign on TV and beyond On a scale of ONE to TEN, where ONE means NOT VERY OFTEN and TEN means VERY OFTEN, please tell us. . .

	NOT VERY OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
How often do you watch candidate ads		
a) on TV	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
b) on candidate websites?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
c) on news websites like msnbc.com or yahoonews.com?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
d) on a social networking site like MySpace or Facebook?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

e) How often have you watched extended video of candidates, such as Obama's "Yes We Can" video?

NOT VERY OFTEN   VERY OFTEN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

f) How often have you watched video parodies of the candidates, such as "Obama's Girl" or JibJab?

NOT VERY OFTEN   VERY OFTEN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

g) How often do you read political blogs, such a Huffington Post, Daily Kos, or Instapundit?

NOT VERY OFTEN   VERY OFTEN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

h) How often do you read political news online, such as at websites like msnbc.com or yahoonews.com

NOT VERY OFTEN   VERY OFTEN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

i) How often do you read news satire websites like The Onion or The Daily Show?

Ho NOT VERY OFTEN   VERY OFTEN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

j) How often do you get campaign or candidate information from the candidates own websites?

NOT VERY OFTEN   VERY OFTEN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

k) How often do you get campaign or candidate information from social networking sites like MySpace or Facebook?

NOT VERY OFTEN   VERY OFTEN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. How old are you?   _____

15. Are you registered to vote in the March 4 Ohio Presidential Primary?

☐ (0) No (Continue with **Q. 16**)   ☐ (1) Yes (Continue with **Q. 15a** directly below)

15a. Now, using a 10-point scale, where, 1 means **VERY UNLIKELY** and 10 means **VERY LIKELY**, how likely is it that you will vote in the Ohio Presidential Primary?

VERY UNLIKELY   **VERY LIKELY**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. Once again, people have different feelings and vote for candidates for many different reasons. How much do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements about candidates and voting. (Please note: These questions <u>are</u> different than the questions you answered earlier.)

d) I feel that it is important to vote for a candidate of my RACE.

STRONGLY   **STRONGLY**
DISAGREE   **AGREE**
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

e) I feel that it is important that a candidate is an advocate for issues related to my RACE.

STRONGLY   **STRONGLY**
DISAGREE   **AGREE**
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

f) I feel that it is important that I feel more a part of this country because a person of my RACE is elected president.

STRONGLY   **STRONGLY**
DISAGREE   **AGREE**
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

d) I would feel more a part of this country if a person of my RACE were elected president

STRONGLY   **STRONGLY**
DISAGREE   **AGREE**
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

17. Which <u>political party</u>, if any, do you feel <u>closest</u> to?

□ 1 Republican   □ 2 Democrat   □ 3 Independent   □ 4 Other: _____   □ 5 No Party

18. Using a 10-point scale where 1 means **VERY FAR AWAY** and 10 means **VERY CLOSE**, how close are you to what <u>that political party</u> stands for?

VERY FAR AWAY   VERY CLOSE
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. The terms "liberal" and "conservative" may mean different things to people, depending on the kind of issue one is considering. In terms of <u>political</u> issues, would you say you are:

□ Very Liberal   □ Liberal   □ Moderate   □ Conservative   □ Very Conservative

□ I Don't Know

Now, please tell us a little about some of the activities and classes you have taken both in high school and here at CSU.

20. What class at CSU are you in?
□ 1   Freshman
□ 2   Sophomore
□ 3   Junior
□ 4   Senior
□ 5   Other: _____

21. Now please think about the following people. Use a scale from 0-100 to measure your **OVERALL** feelings toward these different people. On this scale, **ZERO** means **VERY UNFAVORABLE**, and **100** means **VERY FAVORABLE**. If you don't have either favorable of unfavorable feelings toward a person or group, you can give this person a score of 50. You can choose any number between 0 and 100 to indicate your feelings. What's the number that best describes your feelings toward:

	I don't know enough about this candidate to say	(0 – 100)
Candidates for the Democratic Presidential Nominee:		
a. Hillary Clinton	□	_____
b. Barack Obama	□	_____
Candidates for the Republican Presidential Nominee:		
c. Mike Huckabee	□	_____
d. John McCain	□	_____

Now we would like you tell us what you know about the candidates running for president.

22 Which candidate is proposing a health care plan that would cover all Amercians (universal health care)?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

23. Which candidate for president has said that it may be necessary to leave U.S. troops in Iraq for the next 50-100 years?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

24. Which candidate for president uses the slogan, "Yes We Can"?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

25. Which candidate for president is an ordained minister?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

26. Which candidate for president is a senator from New York?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

27. Which candidate is motivated to fix America's health care system after seeing their mother die of cancer?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

28. Which candidate is a U.S. Senator from Arizona?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

29 Which candidate's health care plan says it will save American families approximately $2,500?
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know

30. *Which candidate has said, " I am ready to be commander-in-chief on day one"?*
☐ (1) Hillary Clinton   ☐ (2) John McCain   ☐ (3) Mike Huckabee   ☐ (4) Barack Obama
☐ (5) Don't Know
Finally, tell us about yourself and your parents.

31. On what date were you born?
Write in the month, day, and year: ____month ____day _____year

32. Are you MALE or FEMALE?   ☐ (1) MALE   ☐ (2) FEMALE

33. Which of the following do you consider yourself to be:
- ☐ (1) American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ (2) Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ (3) Black or African-American--not of Hispanic Origin
- ☐ (4) Hispanic
- ☐ (5) White--not of Hispanic Origin
- ☐ (6) Other: _____

34. On a scale from ONE to TEN where ONE means NOT VERY RELIGIOUS and TEN means VERY RELIGIOUS, how religious would you say you are?

NOT VERY									**VERY**
RELIGIOUS									**RELIGIOUS**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

35. How often do you attend religious services?
- ☐ 7   every day
- ☐ 6   more than twice a week
- ☐ 5   twice a week
- ☐ 4   once a week
- ☐ 3   almost every week
- ☐ 2   once or twice a month
- ☐ 1   a few times a year
- ☐ 0   never

36. Can you please tell us how far in school did your mother and father go?
Mark only one box in each column.

	Mother	Father
Did not finish elementary school	(1) ☐	(1) ☐
Finished elementary school	(2) ☐	(2) ☐
Finished some high school	(3) ☐	(3) ☐
Finished high school	(4) ☐	(4) ☐
Some vo-tech education after high school	(5) ☐	(5) ☐
Some community college, college, or university courses	(6) ☐	(6) ☐
Completed a bachelor's degree at a college or university	(7) ☐	(7) ☐
Completed a Master's degree or higher (e.g., law degree, medical degree (MD), or Ph.D.	(8) ☐	(8) ☐
I don't know	(0) ☐	(0) ☐

37. Please think for a moment about your parents' home. About how many books are in your parents' home? *Do not count newspapers or magazines.*

☐ None	☐ 51-100 books
☐ 1-10 books	☐ 101-200 books
☐ 11-50 books	☐ More than 200 books

38 Please answer one last question about politics. How much do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

a) Men are more emotionally suited for politics.

STRONGLY									**STRONGLY**
DISAGREE									**AGREE**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

b) Men are better able to handle foreign affairs than women.

STRONGLY									**STRONGLY**
DISAGREE									**AGREE**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

c) Men are better suited to lead in times of war.

STRONGLY									**STRONGLY**
DISAGREE									**AGREE**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

FINALLY, THE LAST SET OF QUESTIONS:
39. Did you watch the "Debate at Cleveland State" on Tuesday night between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton?

☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (0)

40. How much attention did you pay to that debate on Tuesday night?

VERY LITTLE									**A LOT OF**
ATTENTION									**ATTENTION**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

THAT COMPLETES OUR SURVEY.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

If you would like to know the results of our research please leave your name and email with us before you leave. (Please do not write that information on the survey.)