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NEW MEDIA USE OF POLITICAL TRADITIONALISTS AND NON-
TRADITIONALISTS

by

Kristin Strickland Andris

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Major: Journalism

The University of Memphis

May 2014

Abstract

Andris, Kristin Strickland, M.A. The University of Memphis. May 2014. New Media Use Of Political Traditionalists And Non-Traditionalists. Major Professor: Erin Willis, Ph.D.

The psychological theory of selective exposure asserts that individuals choose to expose themselves to information that correlates with their pre-existing beliefs. With the development of the Internet, individuals now have access to more information and can thus be more selective in their exposure to information. The role of the Internet in selective exposure is possibly more exacerbated for those whose viewpoints are not typically reflected in traditional media outlets. In a political sense, these are likely to be “political non-traditionalists,” or those who do not identify with the Republican and Democratic parties. This study conducts a secondary data analysis of Annenberg Public Policy Center’s National Annenberg Election Survey 2008 Phone Edition survey data, in an effort to determine differences in how political non-traditionalists and political traditionalists, or Republicans and Democrats, use new and traditional media for political purposes. The study found that political non-traditionalists use all media, both traditional and new, less than political traditionalists.

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New Media Use of Political Traditionalists and Non-Traditionalists

American news consumption has changed dramatically in the last 100 years. In the early 1900s, options for news were limited to only a few newspapers (Manjoo, 2008). Even in the 1950s, most families gathered around the television every evening to watch one of three national broadcasting channels (Manjoo, 2008). There was no special channel for children, golfers, pet lovers, or country music enthusiasts. Most Americans digested a diet of information that closely resembled that of his or her neighbor.

Fast-forward to 2013, and there are blogs, websites, television channels, and radio stations to satisfy diverse audiences. Unlike the 1950s, Americans now have more choice in what information they consume. They decide what content to read or watch, and whether to view it on a laptop, tablet, television, or smart phone. While one neighbor might be reading about immigration reform on redstate.com, another is watching a documentary about the Affordable Care Act on MSNBC. There is no longer an “average” American news diet but instead a vast menu of options (Manjoo, 2008).

This new variety in American news options allows Americans to select the information that aligns with their pre-existing opinions. Even those opinions that are shared by only a small minority can be nourished by complimentary information online (Manjoo, 2008). Furthermore, social media enables Americans to unite with those from similar view points to create plans, raise funds, and take action. With new media resources, minority opinion holders have the opportunity to create groups, start movements, and change national conversations.

Facebook alone attracts an average of 128 million Americans per day (Goel, 2013). Comparing this figure to the estimated 126 million Americans who voted in the

2012 presidential election, one can see how new media would be a cost-effective method for spreading messages and ideas (Liptak, 2012). Unlike the 1950s, candidates can now theoretically communicate to the masses without investing in a single bumper sticker or yard sign. Political coordinators now have access to millions of potential voters, with which they can identify and unite supporters to vote, donate, and canvas (Agranoff & Tabin, 2011).

This study seeks to understand how political non-traditionalists, or those Americans not affiliated with a major political party, are using new media. For the purposes of this study, political traditionalist will refer to those Americans who associate with or lean towards either the Republican or Democratic parties. The following literature review observes recent trends in new media and explores the psychological concepts that make new media attractive to American audiences. Trends in American politics to observe “non-traditional” political movements that have the potential to change national conversation through new media are reviewed. Finally, a secondary analysis of data from the Annenberg Public Policy Center’s National Annenberg Election Survey 2008 Phone Edition is conducted to compare new media use of political non-traditionalists and traditionalists.

Literature Review

Defining New Media

Mass communication scholars have developed criterion that differentiates “traditional” from “new media.” Manovich (2001) suggested that the difference lies in the way new media is processed and created in numerical code, which enables it to be easily reproduced, manipulated, and transmitted. Similarly, Flew (2008) explained that

new media is “networked, interactive, enables two-way communication, and allows users to be both producers” and consumers of content (p. 1). Dovey (2009) characterized new media as being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, and interactive. Moore (2010) pointed out that new media provides the opportunity for on-demand, un-restricted access to information with the assistance of digital devices that allow for interactive user feedback, creative participation, and community formation. Overall, these scholars agree that new media provide audiences with a vast amount of information that can easily be shared, manipulated, and discussed. In other words, new media is dense in that it provides a vast amount of content (Reese & Lee, 2012). It is also interactive and enables users to produce real-time manipulation of data (Manovich, 2001).

When applying the concepts of interactivity and density to specific types of media, the Internet appears to be a great example of new media. The Internet is far more dense and interactive than any other medium. In fact, 90% of the world’s data was generated in the last two years, thanks to the Internet (Science Daily, 2013). Part of the reason for the Internet’s size is its capability of allowing any individual to create a blog or website at a minimum cost. In the past, only those with the financial resources could create a newspaper, television channel, or radio station. Now 14% of American Internet users choose to start a blog and are able to do so with minimal costs (Pew, 2013). As a result, more content is available from a wider variety of writers, offering more choices to audiences.

Social media is one form of new media. Social media enables audiences to share and discuss the vast amount of content available on the Internet (Agranoff & Tabin, 2011). It is important to note that social media is not synonymous with the Internet or

new media. Social media is a type of new media that is found on the Internet. To be exact, social media is defined as the “many online tools that allow people with similar interests to share information, learn from others, or network in an open process” (Wilson, 2010, p. 3). Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and MySpace.

Although social media is found on the Internet, the Internet is not always considered “social media.” For example, a website that does not allow users to interact with one another, but instead only provides information, would not be considered a social media site. New media, the Internet, and social media will all be discussed throughout this study. These terms will not be used interchangeably. Instead, this paper will review how various forms of new media are used by audiences to obtain campaign news.

Growth of American New Media Use

In less than 20 years, most American adults have gone from being offline to online. In 1995, only 14% of American adults used the Internet. By 2013, that percentage grew to 85% (Dewey, 2013). Studies show that those American adults who are not online tend to be financially disadvantaged, older, or located in rural areas (Dewey, 2013). However, some American adults also express a lack of interest in being online. When asked why they do not use the Internet, 34% said that they didn’t think it was relevant, interesting, or useful. Others said the Internet was difficult to use (32%), they didn’t want to pay for a computer or Internet connection (19%) or lacked the physical access to the Internet (7%) (Zickuhr, 2013).

American adults who are online tend to be younger, more educated, and wealthier than those who are not online (Dewey, 2013). Their day-to-day online activities range

greatly from playing online games to using dating websites. Some activities, however, are much more popular than others. For example, a Pew (2013) survey reported that 91% of American adult Internet users cited “using a search engine to find information” as an activity that they perform online. This activity was the most popular online activity, slightly leading activities like sending or receiving email (88%), looking for information on a hobby or interest (84%), and searching for a map or driving directions (84%).

Americans are also using the Internet for political news and information. A Pew study (2013) found that 78% of American adult Internet users get news online. Pew also found that 67% visit a local, state, or federal government website; 61% look online to get information about politics; and 32% post comments to an online news group, website, or blog. Another Pew study (2008) found the Internet to be the fastest growing source for campaign news between 2004 and 2008. In 2004, 10% of Americans said they get most of their campaign news from the Internet (Pew, 2008). By 2008, that percentage increased to 33% (Pew, 2008). The study also found that those who use the Internet for their news tend to skew younger and be college educated (Pew, 2008).

Social media use also is a growing source of new media. Of those American adults who are online, 72% use social networking sites, with Facebook being the most popular social media site at 67% (Brenner, 2013). LinkedIn (20%) and Twitter (18%) followed in popularity (Brenner, 2013). Just like Internet users, social media users tend to be more educated, younger, and more urban than those who do not use social media (Brenner, 2013). Motivations for using social media sites vary. Approximately 67% listed “staying in touch with current friends” and 64% listed “staying in touch with family members” as major reasons for social media use (Smith, 2011a).

While political activism might not be a main motivation to use social media, many social media users have used these outlets for political reasons. One study found that 66% of American adult social media users, or 39% of American adults said they took part in a political activity on a social networking site during the 2012 presidential campaign (Smith, 2013). Examples of online political activities include discussing politics and public affairs with others, “liking” or “following” a political candidate or group, “sharing” political information, posting a picture or video related to a political or social issue, or making a financial contribution to a political campaign (Pew, 2012b; Rainie & Smith, 2012; Rutledge, 2013; Smith, 2011b; Smith, 2013).

Other studies have found connections between social media use and “real world” political activism. For example, a Pew study (2010) found that Facebook users, in comparison to non-users, were almost six times more likely to attend a political rally or meeting; 2.79 times more likely to talk to someone about their vote; and 2.19 times more likely to report voting. Another study found that 30% of online users report to have been encouraged to vote via social media, 20% encouraged others to vote, and 22% posted announcing their voting decision via social media (Rutledge, 2013).

While the Internet and social media have become more popular, traditional media has experienced a decline in popularity. In 10 years, the percentage of Americans who report reading a print newspaper has fallen by 18 points (Pew, 2012e). In 2013, 31% of Americans reported that they have abandoned a traditional news outlet, because it no longer provides the news with which they have become accustomed (Pew, 2013b). With fewer viewers and advertisers, traditional news outlets face financial woes and steep cut backs on staff (Pew, 2013b). In 2012, the number of full-time professional newsroom

employees dropped below 40,000, which is a 30% cut from 2000 and the lowest level seen since 1978 (Pew, 2013b).

Not only have many Americans stopped using traditional media, they have also lost trust in it (Pew, 2012a). A Pew study (2012a) found that credibility of news organizations, particularly major news networks, has dropped between 2002 and 2012. The study asked Americans to rate various news organizations believability on a scale of one to four. Scores of one or two were considered negative, and scores of three or four were considered positive. In 2002, approximately 71% of Americans rated 13 news organizations on average at 3 or a 4. By 2012, that percentage dropped to 56% (Pew, 2012a). Negative scores rose from 30% in 2002 to 44% in 2012 (Pew, 2012a).

Psychological Concepts

Americans seem to be turning toward new media and away from traditional media. Next, this paper explores the psychological concept of selective exposure, which explains why audiences prefer the density and interactivity that new media has to offer.

Perception. Perception is the way people interpret the world, or “the complex process by which people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world” (Berelson & Steiner, 1964, p. 88).

Perception varies greatly from one person to the next, because perception is influenced by a variety of factors.

Influences on perception can be broken down into two categories: structural influences and functional influences. Structural influences are physical aspects of stimuli, such as static on a radio station, the glossiness of a brochure, or the font on a website (Severin & Tankard, 2000). Functional influences are psychological factors,

such as assumptions, cultural expectations, motivation, mood, and attitude (Severin & Tankard, 2000). Because humans all have different experiences, goals, ideas, and values, we each perceive information differently.

An example of the way assumptions and cultural expectations affect perception can be seen in a study on people's perceptions of a satirical cartoon. Cooper and Jahoda (1947) tested 160 white, non-Jewish, working class men's perception of an anti-prejudice cartoon called "Mr. Biggott." In one cartoon, Mr. Biggott was pictured lying in a hospital bed, proclaiming that he would only accept sixth-generation American blood if he were to need a blood transfusion. The cartoon was designed to show how ridiculous prejudices can be. However, 66% of respondents misinterpreted the cartoon. These respondents thought the cartoon supported prejudice thoughts. They rationalized that Mr. Biggott demonstrated how many people feel and that their beliefs were thus justified (Cooper & Jahoda, 1947).

Cooper and Jahoda's study also demonstrates how perception may be influenced by whether or not a message aligns with someone's pre-existing beliefs. Festinger (1957) labeled those messages that conflict with a person's pre-existing beliefs as dissonant messages. On the other hand, messages that align with one's pre-existing beliefs are called consonant messages (Festinger, 1957). People perceive consonant messages differently than dissonant messages. For example, people attempt to avoid exposure to dissonant messages and seek exposure to consonant messages (Severin & Tankard, 2000). This process is called selective exposure (Severin & Tankard, 2000).

A person's appeal for consonant messages and avoidance of dissonant messages is also influenced by the message's "ease-of-refutation," or how strong or weak that

message might be (Lowin, 1967). If a dissonant message is weak or easily refutable, the listener will be more receptive to consuming that message. The weak dissonant message does not challenge his or her beliefs as aggressively as a strong consonant message would, causing the message to be more “digestible.” A strong dissonant message, on the other hand, would more aggressively challenge the listener’s opinions. As a result, that person would be more likely to avoid it.

While people would rather hear a weak dissonant message over a strong dissonant message, they prefer strong consonant messages over weak consonant messages. The strong consonant message better reaffirms his or her viewpoint, while the weak consonant message might actually discredit the pre-existing opinion (Lowin, 1967). In short, selective exposure causes people to seek sound information that aligns with their viewpoints and avoid sound information that challenges their opinions. These reactions shape the way people choose their news sources, and help explain why more Americans are choosing new media over traditional media.

Selective exposure applied to new media. New media provides people with an avenue to more easily engage in selective exposure. As discussed earlier, the Internet is dense and interactive. With more information and better capabilities to choose information, people are using the Internet to find sources that most closely align with their viewpoints (Manjoo, 2008). In fact, one study found that 73% of Americans who read blogs only read blogs that share their personal political ideology (Veenstra, Sayre, & Thorson, 2008). Americans are also using new media to avoid information that challenges their viewpoints. One study found that 18% of American social media users have blocked or “unfriended” someone for posting something that contradicted their

beliefs (Rainie & Smith, 2012). This practice also demonstrates how Americans might use social media to selectively expose themselves to people who share their beliefs and options (Manjoo, 2008).

Tech companies understand that Americans are searching through the vast Internet universe to find information that most closely identifies with their own viewpoints. In response, companies like Facebook and Google have created methods and tools to connect people with the information they want to see (Pariser, 2011). In 2009, Google began personalizing its search results with 57 separate signals, including login location and previous search results (Pariser, 2011). As a result, each person's search results are different from the next person's. One person who searches "BP" might obtain information about BP's stocks, and another might receive information about the 2010 BP oil spill (Pariser, 2011). Search engines have become intuitive, predicting what people might click on next and making that "preferred content" more accessible.

While the personalized search engine might help Americans find the consonant messages that they want it also helps Americans avoid the dissonant messages they don't want to acknowledge. Google's technology takes record of the links that a user clicks and moves those links higher in the search results of future searches. Meanwhile, the "less favorable" links sink lower in that user's search results until they are no longer seen. Ultimately, this leads to Americans' search results being populated with only the type of information they want to see. Pariser (2011) described this phenomenon as a "filter bubble," because the search "filter" creates a nice, cozy "bubble" of information that is supportive of each person's pre-existing beliefs. Since the "filter bubble" of new media

accommodates people's preference for consonant messages, it is little surprise that many Americans are turning toward the density and interactivity of new media.

American Political Groups

American politics are dominated by two parties: Republicans and Democrats. The dominance of the Republican and Democratic parties can be seen by the makeup of Congress. As of October 2013, the U.S. House of Representatives is composed of 232 Republicans, 200 Democrats, and no Independents. Three seats are vacant. The U.S. Senate is composed of 52 Democrats, 46 Republicans, and two Independents (Office of the Clerk, 2013).

The 113th Congress is composed of a Republican-majority House and Democrat-majority Senate. However, this has not always been the case. At times, such as between 2004 and 2006, the Republicans held the majority for both chambers (History, Art & Archives, 2013). At other times, such as between 2007 and 2010, the Democrats held the majority for both (History, Art & Archives, 2013).

Republicans. The Republican Party is also known as the GOP, an acronym for Grand Old Party. Republicans are more likely to be male, non-Hispanic white, Protestant, rural, and married compared to the general U.S. population (Newport, Jones, & Saad, 2011). They are also more likely to make more than \$90,000 a year and attend church once a week (Newport et al., 2011).

Fox News is the most common source of cable news for Republicans, with 52% claiming Fox as their main source of campaign news (Pew, 2008). Radio is another popular campaign news source for Republicans at 31% (Pew, 2008). MSNBC (11%) and

CNN (13%) are the least popular cable news channels for campaign news for Republicans (Pew, 2008).

Since the 1980s, the Republican Party has become associated with a conservative ideology (Nash, 2006). In 2012, 68% of Republicans reported that consider themselves to be a “conservative,” a much higher percentage than Democrats or Independents who identify as “conservative” (Pew, 2012c). On a left-right political spectrum, the conservative thought is referred to as being on the “right.” Both scholars and conservatives have made efforts to clarify the characteristics of a “right-leaning” or conservative ideology. However, defining conservatism has proven to be a challenge, since conservatism has developed throughout history and differs among conservatives themselves (Nash, 2006).

For the purposes of this paper, conservatism will refer to the present understanding of conservatism. Schneider (2009) characterized 21st Century conservatism as a “skepticism for government social policies; a muscular foreign policy combined with patriotic nationalism; a defense of traditional Christian religious values; and a support of the free market economic system” (p. xi). These characteristics can be seen in the 2012 Republican platform, which touts a return of American exceptionalism, fewer government regulations, and a renewal of American family values (GOP.com, 2013).

The connection between the Republican Party and conservative thought can also be seen through an ongoing Pew study from the 1980s, which has tracked Republicans and Democrats opinions on 48 political values. The study asked participants to agree or disagree with a series of statements that determined the respondent’s position on various

issues like environmental laws, government-supported safety nets for the poor, and labor unions. The 2012 study found that Republicans were much more likely to oppose safety nets for the poor than Democrats. When provided the statement, “the government should help more needy people, even if it meant further going into debt,” only 20% of Republicans agreed in comparison to 65% of Democrats and 39% of Independents. Republicans were also much more likely than Democrats to oppose stronger environmental laws, labor unions, and efforts to improve the position of minorities (Pew, 2012c).

While the study found ways that Republicans and Democrats disagree on various issues, it also found some areas where Republicans are split amongst themselves. One of the most notable divides in the Republican Party was found between those who classify themselves as “Tea Party Republicans” and those who do not classify themselves as being affiliated with the Tea Party. “Tea Party Republicans” tend to be more conservative than non-Tea Party Republicans (Pew, 2012c). When provided the statement, “Government regulation of business does more harm than good,” 87% of Tea Party Republicans agreed. In contrast, 65% of non-Tea Party Republicans agreed (Pew, 2012c). The study also provided the statement “Free market economy needs regulations to serve public interest.” This statement was even more divisive among the Republican Party, with only 29% of Tea Party Republicans agreeing, yet 62% of non-Tea Party Republicans agreed (Pew, 2012c).

The Tea Party has been a small, but active force within the Republican Party for the past few years. It began on February 19, 2009, when CNBC’s Rick Santelli gave a speech on the floor of the Chicago Stock Exchange (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). With

the Boston Tea Party as its inspiration, the self-proclaimed movement calls for “commonsense, conservative, constitutional self-governance” (teaparty.org, 2013). By 2011, 30% of Americans claimed to be supporters of the Tea Party, almost all of which were Republicans (Gallup, 2013). When asked how important it was for the Republican Party to consider the Tea Party’s objectives, 42% of Americans said “very important” (Gallup, 2013). Unfortunately for the Republican Party, “considering the Tea Party’s objectives” has been a tough balancing act. On one hand, the GOP needs the 30% of American Tea Party supporters to compete with the Democrat Party. On the other hand, the Tea Party has a way of isolating the Republican Party from less conservative, or more moderate, Americans.

The 2010 midterm elections serve as an example of the Tea Party’s role as a double-edge sword for the Republican Party. While the Tea Party helped the Republican Party gain the House in 2010, some believe the Tea Party cost the Republican Party a few key seats in the Senate (Elliot, 2010). During the 2010 Republican primaries, Tea Party activists rallied behind less experienced and self-proclaimed “radical” candidates such as Christine O’Donnell in Delaware, Sharron Angle in Nevada, and Ken Buck in Colorado. These candidates beat experienced, well established Republican candidates in the primaries. However, they went on to run controversial campaigns, which were at times mocked by American television shows like *Saturday Night Live* and the *Daily Show*. O’Donnell began her advertisements with the words, “I am not a witch.” Angle and Buck angered women voters with controversial statements about rape. All three candidates lost the general election to Democrats, ruining the Republican Party’s chance of having a near 50-50 split in the Senate (Elliot, 2010). Many believe that had the Tea Party candidates

not won the primaries, a more “electable” Republican could have won the general election (Elliot, 2010). A similar trend followed in 2012, with the campaign of Richard Mourdock in Indiana.

Former Senior Advisor for the Bush administration Karl Rove has recognized the Tea Party’s conflicted role to the Republican Party. In response, he created the Conservative Victory Project, a political action committee (PAC) designed to ensure “less-electable” Republicans don’t win the primaries (Zeleny, 2013). The “Tea Party” instantly recognized the new PAC as a threat and began using new media to rally their own cause. Emails circulated that depicted Karl Rove in a Nazi uniform. Tea Party activists called for supporters to make a contribution to the Tea Party Patriots’ PAC. The emails called for activists to stand up to Rove’s PAC, “Republican sell-outs in Washington,” and the Obama administration (Avlon, 2013). Through emails and social media, the Tea Party ultimately raised \$2 million in six months for their PAC (Schouten, 2013).

A large part of the Tea Party’s activism has been developed online. As of October 2013, the Tea Party has more than 1.8 million “likes” on Facebook, which is half a million more than the Republican National Committee. Well-financed and self-proclaimed conservative organizations like FreedomWorks and American Majority have provided local Tea Party groups with new media training and focus groups-tested political messaging (Hiar, 2010). In return, Tea Party activists have used such training to coordinate dozens of political rallies and get-out-the-vote operations. One example of the Tea Party’s social media-turned-real-world activism was an online boycott against Dawn. The dish soap company advertised during an MSNBC documentary that was unfavorable

to the Tea Party. In response, Tea Party leaders used social media to encourage others to stop buying the product (Hiar, 2010).

Democrats. The Democratic Party is much more racially diverse than the Republican Party. Whereas the Republican Party is 87% white, 2% black, and 6% Hispanic; the Democratic Party is 59% white, 21% black, and 13% Hispanic. The Democratic Party earns its diversity by being the preferred party for most black Americans, with 64% of blacks being Democrats (Newport, 2013). The Democratic Party has also recently become the preferred party for young voters. In 2008, 45% of 18-29 year olds identified as Democrats, while only 26% identified as Republicans (Pew, 2008b).

In addition to being more racially diverse than the Republican Party, the Democrats are also more diverse in their choice of news sources. When asked where they received their campaign news, 50% of Democrats said MSNBC and 45% said CNN (Pew, 2008). Newspapers were the third most popular source, preferred by 41% of Democrats (Pew, 2008). Network TV news (36%) and local TV news (38%) were also more popular among Democrats than Republicans (Pew, 2008). The only news source preferred by Republicans more than Democrats was Fox News. Only 17% of Democrats listed Fox as a main news source, in comparison to 52% of Republicans (Pew, 2008).

In 2012, 38% of Democrats claimed to be liberal, another 38% claimed to be moderate, and 20% claimed to be conservative (Pew, 2012c). Although Democrats are less likely to call themselves “liberal” than Republicans are to call themselves “conservative,” the term “liberal” has come to be associated with the Democratic Party

(Rossinow, 2008). On a left-right political spectrum, a liberal ideology is said to fall on the “left.”

Just as the word “conservative” varies by time period and location, so does the word “liberal.” Liberal in modern America, however, has come to mean those “who favor state action as the key to preserving freedom and democracy” (Rossinow, 2008, p. 15). When applied to the economy, liberal ideology suggests that the government should intervene through regulation on businesses and government assistance to protect the well-being of the poor and unemployed. Liberalism in modern America has also become associated with secularism, since Democrats are typically less religious than Republicans (Newport et al., 2011). Furthermore, many Democrat’s views on social issues are often contradictory to those traditionally held by churches. For example, Democrats are more likely to supports laws that permit same-sex marriage and abortion. The 2012 Democrat Party platform is reminiscent of these “liberal” positions. The platform lists protection of a woman’s right to choose and freedom to marry as Democratic values.

The opinions of Democrats or “liberals” can also be seen through the ongoing Pew study from the 1980s, which has tracked Republicans and Democrats opinions on 48 political values. When provided the statement “things run by the government are usually inefficient and wasteful,” 77% of Republicans agreed but only 41% of Democrats agreed. This poll demonstrates that Democrats generally have a more favorable view of government-run programs than Republicans. The poll also found that Democrats were far more likely than Republicans to support safety nets for the poor, tougher environmental laws, and efforts to improve the position of minorities (Pew, 2012c). When it comes to social issues, the poll found that Democrats were more likely to question the existence of

God and less likely to have “old fashioned views about family and marriage” (Pew, 2012c).

The Pew study (2012c) also revealed divides within the Democratic Party on certain issues. Democrats are divided between conservative or moderate Democrats and liberal Democrats. When asked if concerned about the government becoming too involved in healthcare, 52% of conservative and moderate Democrats said they were not concerned. Liberal Democrats, however, were overwhelmingly not concerned at 75% (Pew, 2012c).

Although some Democrats might be more liberal than others, the Democratic Party does not have a liberal equivalent of the Tea Party. There is, however, the Occupy Wall Street movement. The Occupy Wall Street movement began as a protest on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square in Manhattan (Preston, 2011). It quickly spread to over 100 cities in the United States and 1,500 cities world-wide. The movement does not associate itself with any particular party. Instead, it is defined as a movement to fight back against the banks, the wealthiest 1% of people, and Wall Street, which Occupy Wall Street activists believe to be the cause for the 2010 American recession. A quick glance at the occupywallst.org demonstrates that some of the demands of Occupy Wall Street protestors tend to be on the left side of the political spectrum. Raising minimum wage, better rights for gays and lesbians, and a “federal government bailout” for American citizens are just a few examples of “left-leaning” demands set on the website.

Not only are Occupy Wall Street policies more liberal, but Occupy Wall Street also tends to be supported more by Democrats than by Republicans. A Pew poll (2011) found that 52% of Democrats supported Occupy Wall Street, while only 19% of

Republicans support the movement. Independents were divided about Occupy Wall Street, with 43% supporting, 35% opposing, and 22% neither opposing nor supporting it (Pew, 2011). Although Occupy Wall Street may be supported by Democrats, the movement has had little effect on the Democrat Party. Some candidates have applauded the movement or even borrowed talking points from the movement. However, Occupy Wall Street has not single-handedly propelled a candidate to Washington in the same way that the Tea Party has done.

Although Occupy Wall Street has not made a significant impact on the Democrat Party, the movement did manage to spread a protest from the streets of New York to as far as Tokyo (Preston, 2011). Social media was a key resource for Occupy Wall Street's growth. Protestors used cell phones to take photos and videos and posted them to social media sites. During the height of the protests, Occupy's Facebook audience reached 1.2 million with "Occupy" pages for cities and countries throughout the world (Preston, 2011). At its peak, 47% of Twitter posts outside the United States were related to Occupy Wall Street. Twitter ultimately made the movement more organized. Occupy Wall Street followers could find rallies in their area by searching on Twitter. Information on Twitter was divided by city, with the help of different hashtags such as #OccupyLondon; #OccupySidney, and #OccupyTokyo (Preston, 2011).

Independents. In recent years, more Americans identify as Independents than either of the two major parties. In 2011, 40% of Americans identified themselves as Independents; compared to 31% as Democrats and 27% as Republicans (Jones, 2012). This percentage of American Independents is larger than it has ever been since 1988. Gallup (2012) has been tracking the percentage of Republicans, Democrats, and

Independents since 1988. The 2011 percentage of Independents was higher than it had ever been in any other Gallop poll since the studies began in 1988 (Jones, 2012). Pew (2012) also found that the percentage of Independents is growing. Between 2004 and 2012, the percentage of Independents in Pew polls rose from 30% to 38%, the highest percentage Pew has ever recorded in the last 70 years of American politics (Pew, 2012).

Although more Americans identify themselves as Independents than the two major political parties, Independents have always held very few or no seats in Congress. One possible reason for Independents' disadvantage in gaining Congressional seats could be the lack of unity between Independents. In fact, the term Independent, as referred to in the polls, is not an actual party. They are instead a group of voters who choose not to align with one of the major parties (Independent Voters of America, 2013). The term "Independent" is to some-degree a product of American political poll reporting (Keith et al., 1992). Polls traditionally refer to voters as Republicans, Democrats, or Independents.

In some cases, Independent voters are actually registered Republicans or Democrats. They may typically vote for one party over the other, but for whatever reason, choose not to label themselves to just one party. Some consider these people to be "closet Republicans" or "closet Democrats," because they are not being open about their true political identity (Keith et al., 1992). Polls tend to refer to these people as "Republican-leaning Independents" or "Democrat-leaning Independents." Most Independents have one of these two "leans." In fact, it is estimated that only 11% of Americans identify as no-lean Independents (Jones, 2012).

While some Independents are actually Republican or Democratic leaning Independents, other Independents belong to a third party. Third parties vary greatly from

one another. Some, such as the Tea Party, are more conservative than the Republican Party. Others, such as the Socialist Workers Party, are more liberal than the Democrat Party. And others, such as the Libertarian Party, hold some views from the Republican Party and share other views with the Democrat Party.

Because Independents have a variety of reasons for not identifying with the two major parties, there is no Independent voter's platform or key position statement (Independent Voters of America, 2013). Independents range from extremely conservative to extremely liberal to everything in between. In fact, the left-right political scale is somewhat inappropriate to measure Independent American's views (Keith et al., 1992). On some issues, such as the economy, an Independent may align with the Republicans. While on others, such as social issues, that same Independent may align with the Democrats.

With so many different types of Independents, Pew has identified three key groups of Independents: post-moderns, disaffecteds, and libertarians (Guzman, 2011). Post-moderns are a new group of Independents, who comprise about 14% of voters. These people tend to be liberal on social issues including immigration and the environment. However, they are more conservative on issues related to the government safety net and business. Demographically, post-moderns tend to be under the age of 50, well educated, and financially well-off (Guzman, 2011). Disaffecteds, however, are those who have been most negatively impacted by the 2010 recession. Unlike the post-moderns, disaffecteds support the idea of a government safety net. Aside from government safety nets, disaffecteds, however, generally support the less-government ideology of the Republican Party in regards to business regulations (Guzman, 2011).

Finally, the libertarians are those who align more with the Republicans on economic issues and more with the Democrats on social issues (Guzman, 2011). These libertarians are overwhelmingly college educated (71%; Guzman, 2011). While disaffecteds and post-moderns don't actually have a political party per se, libertarians do. Much like Pew's description of libertarians, the Libertarian Party holds a position of "minimum government, maximum freedom" (Libertarian Party, 2013).

Considering that Independents are so divided in their political positions, it is no wonder that Independents are overshadowed by Republicans and Democrats in Congressional elections. Studies indicate that Independents are similarly divided on their news sources (Pew, 2012c). Whereas Republicans overwhelmingly preferred Fox News and Democrats preferred CNN and MSNBC, Independents are more equally split with 30% preferring Fox, 36% preferring MSNBC, and 38% preferring CNN (Pew, 2008). Independents do, however, share some similarities. In general, they tend to be less religious and younger than Republicans and Democrats (Pew, 2012c). They also tend to be either white or Hispanic (Pew, 2012c). Also, studies have found that slightly more men are Independents, compared to women (Pew, 2012c).

As demonstrated above, most polls classify Americans as Republicans, Democrats, or Independents. These polls typically receive a high number of Independents, who are split between Republican-leaning Independents, Democrat-leaning Independents, and no-lean Independents (Keith et al., 1992). Furthermore, the "Republican-Democrat-Independent" classification system fails to capture whether or not a person is actually a Republican or Democratic leaning Independent (Keith et al., 1992). To discourage Republican-leaning Independents and Democrat-leaning Independents

from being grouped away from their preferred party, this study will instead group participants as either “political traditionalists,” or Republicans and Democrats, and “political non-traditionalists, “ or those who do not identify with either of the two major parties. Furthermore, the term “Independent” is different from the term “political non-traditionalist,” in that “political non-traditionalists” have indicated that they do not identify with either of the parties. Independents, on the other hand, may lean towards one of the two parties.

Political Affiliation and New Media Use

New media use of Republicans and Democrats has been measured by various Pew Research Center studies (Pew, 2008, 2011, 2012g). These studies indicate that Democrats and Independents caught on to new media first, but Republicans are now catching up with them. This trend holds true for both Internet use and social media use.

In 2008, Pew asked Americans where they get most of their campaign news. Independents were most friendly to the Internet, with 38% getting their news from the Internet, compared to 34% of Democrats and 24% of Republicans (Pew, 2008). By 2012, Republicans had surpassed Democrats, with 38% of Republicans getting campaign news from the Internet, compared to 38% of Independents, and 36% of Democrats (Pew, 2012g).

Social media has also become popular with Republicans in recent years. In 2008, only 29% of Republicans were active on social networking sites, compared to 44% of Democrats (Quintanilla, 2011). By the 2010 midterm election, Republicans and Democrats used social media equally (Pew, 2011). In fact, 40% of Republican voters, compared to 38% of Democrat voters used social media to become politically involved

(Pew, 2011). Some studies even indicate that Republican social media use has surpassed Democrat's use. Edelman Digital (2012) found that Republican members of Congress averaged twice as many Twitter mentions, replies and re-tweets as Democrat members of Congress.

Researchers believe that the rise in Republican new media use is partially caused by a recent increase in social media use for people over the age of 50 (Smith, 2011b). With the Republican Party being the preferred party for older Americans, an increase in older Americans' new media use also means an increase in Republican new media use. Another potential reason for the increase in Republican new media use is the Tea Party. Studies show that the Tea Party's social media use was significantly higher than all other groups (Smith, 2011b). For example, 23% of those identified as Tea Party supporters used social media to get candidate or campaign information, compared to 19% of Republicans and 15% of Democrats (Smith, 2011b).

Overall, the Pew studies provide some clarification on Republican and Democrat use of social media and the Internet. These studies, however, fail to evaluate data on the new media use of those who do not belong to these major political parties. This study seeks to provide more information on the new media use of "political non-traditionalists", or those who do not identify with a major party. Analyzing these American's new media habits is important to further understand how these individuals might use new media to expand political minority movements and change national conversations.

Hypotheses

Based on the theory of selective exposure, this study formed the assumption that political non-traditionalists would be more attracted to new media and less attracted to

traditional media than their Republican and Democrat peers. This assumption is based on the idea that political non-traditionalists would need new media, with its interactivity and density, to connect with people and information that share their less popular ideas, which are often not represented in traditional media.

For the purposes of this study, Republicans and Democrats are labeled as “political traditionalists,” and people who do not identify with either party are “political non-traditionalists.” New media includes all Internet resources, including blogs, email, Internet news, Facebook, Twitter, or other social media websites. Also, traditional media will refer to all non-internet sources, including newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. Online political activity will refer to online political activities such as discussing politics online, reading or commenting on a political blog, forwarding online campaign information, viewing an online campaign video, or visiting a campaign website (Pew, 2012b; Rainie & Smith, 2012; Rutledge, 2013; Smith, 2011b; Smith, 2013).

H1: Political non-traditionalists will use the Internet more often than political traditionalists.

H2: Political non-traditionalists will use traditional media less often than political non-traditionalists.

H3: Political non-traditionalists will rate traditional news outlets as having a lower believability score than political traditionalists.

H4: Political non-traditionalists will be more likely than political traditionalists to participate in an online political activity in the past week.

H5: Age will also be a predictor for frequency of new and traditional media use, as well as rated believability of traditional media.

Method

This study tested the hypotheses by using SPSS to conduct a secondary analysis of survey data from the Annenberg Public Policy Center's National Annenberg Election Survey 2008 Phone Edition. A secondary analysis allows the researcher to analyze data without need for the vast amount of time, money, and personnel typically needed to collect data from large, nationally-represented samples (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). Unfortunately, a secondary data analysis can also present problems with the survey questions not being worded in an ideal manner for the researcher (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). An analysis of survey results provides information on respondents' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), such as their use of new media, political affiliation, and whether or not they believe information from traditional media.

The National Annenberg Election Survey polled 57,967 randomly selected American adults by telephone to determine their beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior relevant to the 2008 presidential campaign. The 30-minute telephone interviews were conducted daily from December 2007 to November 3, 2008. During peak periods, up to 300 interviews were completed daily. The Annenberg Public Policy Center estimated a response rate of between 19% and 23%.

Annenberg survey questions used for this study are listed in Appendix A. Note that all skipped questions or "I don't know" responses were programmed to show as missing data in SPSS. To classify political traditionalists from political non-traditionalists, the researcher used question MA03, which asked if survey respondents think of themselves as being closer to a Republican, Democrat, or neither. Two new variables were created with question MA03: the political traditionalist and political non-

traditionalist variables. Those who answered Republican or Democrat in question MA03 received a 1 in the political traditionalist variable and a 0 in the non-traditionalist variable. Those who answered “Neither” received a 0 in the political traditionalist variable and a 1 in the non-traditionalist variable.

In measuring respondents’ frequency of new media use, the researcher used question EE02, which asks how often the respondent saw campaign information online in the past week. In measuring respondents’ frequency of traditional media use, the researcher attempted to create a scale variable with the average score from questions EBO1, EC01, and ED01. These questions asked how often the respondent used talk radio, television news, and print media in the past week. To determine if the scale was reliable, the research tested the variables by Chronbach’s (1951) alpha, which measures how related variables are to one another. When tested by Chronbach’s (1951) alpha, the scale was found not to be reliable (.155). As a result, use of radio, television, and print media were tested separately for H2.

In measuring respondents’ tendency to believe traditional media, the researcher created a scale variable with the average score from questions EF01 through EF06. These questions asked respondents to rate various news organizations on a 4-point Likert-type scale. When tested by Chronbach’s (1951) alpha, the scale was found to be reliable (.798).

In measuring respondents’ participation in online political activities, the researcher created a scale variable with the average score from questions KG01-KG22, which asked respondents to answer yes or no to questions regarding their participation in various online activities. The reliability of this scale was slightly below Chronbach’s

(1951) alpha at .64. Questions used for the participation scale were transformed to a 0 (no) and 1 (yes) input.

With scales created, the researcher ran linear regression tests to test each hypothesis. The political non-traditionalist variable was listed as the independent variable so that traditionalists would be left as the constant. Use of new media, radio, television, and print were used as the dependent variables to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. The believability scale score was used as the dependent variable for Hypothesis 3. The participation scale score was used as the dependent variable for Hypothesis 4. Finally, a step analysis was also performed with age as an independent variable to compare the predictor strength of age and political affiliation.

Results

When tested for skewness and kurtosis, all data were normal with the exception of some of the online participation activity variables. Despite the abnormality of these variables, the large number of responses allowed for parametric testing since the data is robust.

The average age of the respondents was 53, with ages ranging from 18 to 97. Republicans and Democrats were represented by 29.8% and 36.5% respectively, while 30.7% claimed to be Independents and 3% answered "Other." When Independents were asked if they thought of themselves as being closer to the Democratic or Republican party, 34.2% said Republican, 39.5% said Democratic, and 26.3% said Neither. These percentages are comparable to other survey results (Pew, 2008, 2012c, 2012f; Gallup, 2013).

The normality and size of the data allowed for the researcher to conduct linear regression tests for all hypotheses. Below are results for each hypothesis:

H1: Political non-traditionalists will use the Internet more often than political traditionalists for political purposes.

Given the theory of selective exposure (Festinger, 1957), the researcher assumed that political non-traditionalists would use the Internet more frequently for political purposes since the Internet's interactivity and density allows users to more easily find consonant information for less commonly held ideas. The results were contrary to the hypothesis, however. They indicated that political non-traditionalists are actually *less likely* to use the Internet for political purposes.

To reach these results, the researcher ran a linear regression test, using political non-traditionalism as the independent variable and Internet use as the dependent variable. The analysis found that political non-traditionalists used the Internet less than political traditionalists for political purposes. The standardized beta was $-.055$, and political non-traditionalism was a significant predictor for the amount of time one spent using the Internet for political purposes.

H2: Political non-traditionalists will use traditional media less often than political traditionalists.

Given the theory of selective exposure, the researcher assumed that political non-traditionalists would use traditional media less frequently for political purposes. Results supported this hypothesis, demonstrating that political non-traditionalists use traditional media less frequently than political traditionalists.

To reach these results, the researcher ran three linear regression tests. Political non-traditionalism was used as the independent variable in each test. Television use, talk radio use, and print use were each used as the dependent variables separately in the three tests to analyze each form of traditional media. The analysis found that political non-traditionalists used all forms of traditional media less often than political traditionalists. The standardized betas for television use was $-.02$, talk radio use was $-.06$, and print use was $-.06$. Political non-traditionalism was a significant predictor for the amount of time one spent using all three sources of traditional media.

H3: Political non-traditionalists will rate traditional news outlets as having a lower believability score than the rating given by political traditionalists.

Given the theory of selective exposure, the researcher assumed that political non-traditionalists would rate traditional media as having a lower believability score than the rating given by political traditionalists. Results supported this hypothesis, demonstrating that political non-traditionalists are less likely to believe traditional news outlets than political traditionalists.

To reach these results, the researcher ran a linear regression test, using political non-traditionalism as the independent variable and the average believability score of traditional media outlets as the dependent variable. The analysis found that political non-traditionalists rated traditional news outlets on average with a lower believability than the rating given by political traditionalists. The standardized beta was $-.06$, and political non-traditionalism was a significant predictor for the average rating one gave to traditional media outlets.

H4: Political non-traditionalists will be more likely than political traditionalists to participate in an online political activity in the past week.

Given the theory of selective exposure, the researcher assumed that political non-traditionalists would be more likely than political traditionalists to participate in online political activities, since the Internet's interactivity and density allows users to more easily connect with other individuals who share political non-traditionalists' less commonly held viewpoints. Results did not support this hypothesis, demonstrating that political non-traditionalists are actually less likely to participate in online political activities than political traditionalists.

To reach these results, the researcher ran a linear regression test, using political non-traditionalism as the independent variable and a calculated "online political activity score" as the dependent variable. The analysis found that political non-traditionalists were less likely to participate in online political activities in the last week than political traditionalists. The standardized beta was -0.1 , and political non-traditionalism was a significant predictor of online political activity.

H5: Age will also be a predictor for frequency of new and traditional media use, as well as participation in online activities.

The analysis found that age was a significant predictor for frequency of new and traditional media use, as well as rated believability of traditional media and participation in online activities. Age was found to be a stronger predictor than political non-traditionalism in new media use, believability of traditional media, and use of television and print. However, political non-traditionalism was found to be a stronger predictor than age in regard to talk radio use and participation in online political activities.

The results demonstrated that younger people tend to listen to talk radio more than older people, with a standardized beta of $-.03$. Since this standardized beta is less than that of political non-traditionalism ($-.05$), political non-traditionalism is a stronger predictor of talk radio use than age.

The results also demonstrated that younger people tend to participate in online political activities more than older people, with a standardized beta of $-.09$. Since this standardized beta is less than that of political non-traditionalism ($-.1$), political non-traditionalism is a stronger predictor of participation in online political activities than age.

Results for this portion of the study were retrieved with a step analysis. A linear regression test was first run for all hypotheses, with political non-traditionalism used as the sole independent variable. After all results were recorded, linear regression tests were run again with both age and political-non-traditionalism listed as independent variables.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the correlation between political non-traditionalism and use of traditional and new media. H2 and H3 sought to determine if political traditionalists use and believe traditional media more than political non-traditionalists. H1 and H4 sought to determine if political non-traditionalists use new media more than political traditionalists. Finally, in H5, the researcher considered age as a possible intervening variable behind the possible correlation of new media use and political non-traditionalism.

The hypotheses were developed with the concept of selective exposure, assuming that political non-traditionalists would prefer new media over traditional media. The researcher hypothesized that new media, with its interactivity and growth, would be the

more attractive source of information for political non-traditionalists, whose views are held by fewer Americans. Contrary to the hypotheses, the study found that political non-traditionalists reported to use all media, both traditional and non-traditional, less frequently than political traditionalists.

Political Non-Traditionalism and Traditional Media

The secondary analysis supported H2 and H3 in regard to traditional media use. Results demonstrated that political non-traditionalists use traditional media for political information less frequently than political traditionalists. Results also showed that political non-traditionalists rated traditional media as having a lower believability score than political traditionalists. Together these findings support the concept of selective exposure (Festinger, 1957), suggesting that those who don't believe a news source are less likely to use that news source.

Little data exists on political non-traditionalists' use of traditional media, but data has been recorded on Independents' use of traditional media. This data shows that Independents are less likely than Republicans and Democrats to use television; more likely than Republicans, but less likely than Democrats to use newspaper; and more likely than Democrats, but less likely than Republicans to use talk radio (Pew, 2012g). In regard to the believability of news outlets, Independents were more likely than Republicans but less likely than Democrats to rate most news outlets with a high believability score (Pew, 2012a).

Independents' "middle" ranking on traditional media usage and believability is likely due to the large percentage of "Republican-lean" and "Democratic-lean" Independents. It is estimated that only 11% of Americans identify as no-lean

Independents (Jones, 2012). As a result, “Republican-lean” Independents are likely behaving like Republicans and “Democratic-lean” Independents are likely behaving as Democrats in regard to traditional media use and believability.

Unlike past research, this study sought to compare political non-traditionalists’ use and believability score for traditional media outlets to that of political traditionalists. Future studies are needed to further determine if and why “no-lean” Independents, or political non-traditionalists, are less likely to use and believe traditional media outlets. Investigating this matter further could benefit media organizations and political campaigns in their efforts to attract audiences from the political non-traditionalist population.

Political Non-Traditionalism and New Media

While the analysis supported the hypotheses regarding traditional media use, it did not support H1 and H4 regarding new media use. Contrary to the hypotheses, the study found that political non-traditionalists use new media less than political traditionalists for obtaining political information. Overall, political non-traditionalists use all sources of media—both traditional and new—less frequently than political traditionalists.

Little data exists on political non-traditionalists’ use of new media, but data has been recorded on Independents’ use of new media. This data suggests that Independents were the first political demographic to catch on to new media, but Republicans and Democrats later began using at almost the same percentage. In 2008, Independents were most friendly to the Internet, with 38% getting their news from the Internet, compared to 34% of Democrats and 24% of Republicans (Pew, 2008). By 2012, Republicans had

surpassed Democrats, with 38% of Republicans getting campaign news from the Internet, compared to 38% of Independents, and 36% of Democrats (Pew, 2012g).

If assuming Independents are the closest equivalent to political non-traditionalists, past research does not support the current study's finding that political non-traditionalists use new media less than political traditionalists. However, Independents are not political non-traditionalists. The presence of "Republican-lean" and "Democratic-lean" Independents potentially alters the results, since "Republican-leans" are likely to behave like Republicans and "Democrat-leans" like Democrats. As a result, more studies are needed to investigate the new media use for true "no-leans," or political non-traditionalists. Understanding new media behavior for this demographic could enable political campaigns and media organizations to better reach this unique audience.

Age as a Predictor

Past studies indicate that older Americans are less likely to use new media than younger Americans (Dewey, 2013). Studies also show that younger Americans are more likely to be Independents than older Americans (Pew, 2012c). As a result, the researcher acknowledged age as a possible predictor for new media use.

Results indicated that age was a significant predictor for frequency of new and traditional media use, as well as participation in online activities. Age was a stronger predictor than political non-traditionalism in new media use and use of television and print media. However, political non-traditionalism was a stronger predictor than age for radio use and participation in online political activities.

Limitations and Future Research

Secondary analyses of pre-existing survey data present several limitations. One being that the researcher is confined by the questions that were asked on the original survey. Because the survey has already been conducted, the researcher cannot change the wording of the questions. As a result, wording is not always ideal for the researcher's intent of study.

The questions in the 2008 Phone Edition of the National Annenberg Election Survey were specific to the 2008 presidential campaign. Instead of asking about participants' use of various media sources to obtain general information about politics, the survey asked about media use to obtain information about the 2008 presidential campaign. If the questions would have asked about media use for general political information, political non-traditionalists might have reported to having a higher frequency of use. In other words, confining the question to the 2008 presidential campaign could have discouraged political non-traditionalists from recording their full usage of media for political purposes. This is due to the fact that many political non-traditionalists may not have had a preferable candidate in the presidential campaign. Therefore, given the theory of selective exposure (Festinger, 1957), political non-traditionalists may have been less likely to seek any information about the campaign, regardless of whether a source is new or traditional.

Considering the wording of 2008 Phone Edition of the National Annenberg Election Survey, there is a possibility that political non-traditionalists were discouraged from recording the full extent of their new media use for obtaining political information. Future studies could examine whether political non-traditionalists do indeed use new

media less than political traditionalists. If future research is conducted, the survey should ask similar questions about new and traditional media use. However, the researcher should ensure that wording of questions are not specific to a particular campaign; instead, questions should be more general, asking participants about their use of various media for political information.

Future studies could also be beneficial in providing a better overall understanding of political non-traditionalists and their views and opinions which shape their use of new and traditional media. Political apathy, feelings of political hopelessness, and distrust for all forms of media are possible causes for political non-traditionalists' lack of new and traditional media use. These are concepts that were not explored in this study, but could be relevant to future studies. Scholars might consider questions that explore political non-traditionalists' level of interest in politics and also seek to determine if political non-traditionalists associate with a third party. Finally, the researcher might compose questions to determine if political non-traditionalists believe that their views are represented in traditional and new media. All of these questions could provide a better understanding on the views of political non-traditionalists and help explain why they do not use media for political purposes as frequently as their peers

Conclusion

This study began with an assumption that, given the theory of selective exposure (Festinger, 1957), political non-traditionalists would use new media more than political traditionalists. To the contrary, it found that political non-traditionalists use all media, including new media, less than political traditionalists. Even new media, with its inclusive atmosphere for diverse opinions, is possibly underused by political non-

traditionalists. As a result, this study suggests that political non-traditionalists are not selectively exposing themselves toward new media. Instead, political non-traditionalists are—for an unknown reason—less likely to use all media for political information.

Although the motive behind political non-traditionalists' lack of media use is unknown, the endeavor to understand it is a pursuit worth following. Between a demonstrated distrust in traditional media, lack of use for all media, and refusal to identify with a major political party, it could be argued that political non-traditionalists are more “disconnected” from both politics and media.

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APPENDIX A:

EBO1. Hours watched TV last night

Last night, how many hours, if any, did you watch television between 6 and 11 pm?

	0
None	1
Less than one hour	2
One hour but less than two	3
Two hours but less than three	4
Three hours but less than four	5
Four hours but less than five	6
Five hours	998
Don't know	999
No answer	

ECO1. Days listened to talk radio for campaign information in past week.

Thinking about the past week, how many days did you hear information about the 2008 presidential campaign on radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues, or politics?

This includes hearing the shows on the radio, or on the Internet, your cell phone, iPod, or PDA.

	Number:
0 – 7	998
Don't know	999
No answer	

EDO1. Days read newspaper for campaign information in past week

Thinking about the past week, how many days did you read a newspaper for information about the 2008 presidential campaign?

This includes reading a paper copy of the newspaper, an online copy, or a newspaper item downloaded on your cell phone, iPod, or PDA.

	Number:
0 – 7	998
Don't know	999
No answer	

EE02. Days saw online information about campaign in past week.

How many days in the past week did you see or hear information about the 2008 presidential campaign on the Internet?

This may include accessing the Internet through your cell phone, iPod, or PDA.

	Number:
0 – 7	998
Don't know	999
No answer	

EFO1. Believability of New York Times

Please rate how much you think you can believe the following organization I name on a scale of four to one. On this four-point scale, four means you can believe all or most of what the organization says, and one means you believe almost nothing of what they say. Of course, you may use any number between four and one.

How much would you rate the believability of The New York Times on this scale of four to one?

	Number:
1 – 4	
1 = believe almost nothing of what organization says	
4 = believe all or most of what organization says	5
Haven't heard of organization	998
Don't know	999

No answer

EF02. Believability of Wall Street Journal

Please rate how much you think you can believe the following organization I name on a scale of four to one. On this four-point scale, four means you can believe all or most of what the organization says, and one means you believe almost nothing of what they say. Of course, you may use any number between four and one.

How much would you rate the believability of Wall Street Journal on this scale of four to one?

	Number:
1 – 4	
1 = believe almost nothing of what organization says	
4 = believe all or most of what organization says	
	5
Haven't heard of organization	
	998
Don't know	
	999
No answer	

EF03. Believability of Fox News

Please rate how much you think you can believe the following organization I name on a scale of four to one. On this four-point scale, four means you can believe all or most of what the organization says, and one means you believe almost nothing of what they say. Of course, you may use any number between four and one.

How much would you rate the believability of Fox News on this scale of four to one?

	Number:
1 – 4	
1 = believe almost nothing of what organization says	
4 = believe all or most of what organization says	
	5
Haven't heard of organization	
	998
Don't know	

No answer

EF04. Believability of CNN

Please rate how much you think you can believe the following organization I name on a scale of four to one. On this four-point scale, four means you can believe all or most of what the organization says, and one means you believe almost nothing of what they say. Of course, you may use any number between four and one.

How much would you rate the believability of CNN on this scale of four to one?

	Number:
1 – 4	
1 = believe almost nothing of what organization says	
4 = believe all or most of what organization says	
	5
Haven't heard of organization	998
Don't know	999
No answer	999

EF05. Believability of MSNBC

Please rate how much you think you can believe the following organization I name on a scale of four to one. On this four-point scale, four means you can believe all or most of what the organization says, and one means you believe almost nothing of what they say. Of course, you may use any number between four and one.

How much would you rate the believability of MSNBC on this scale of four to one?

	Number:
1 – 4	
1 = believe almost nothing of what organization says	
4 = believe all or most of what organization says	
	5
Haven't heard of organization	998
Don't know	998

No answer

EF06. Believability of broadcast TV news

Please rate how much you think you can believe the following organization I name on a scale of four to one. On this four-point scale, four means you can believe all or most of what the organization says, and one means you believe almost nothing of what they say. Of course, you may use any number between four and one.

How much would you rate the believability of broadcast TV news on this scale of four to one?

	Number:
1 – 4	
1 = believe almost nothing of what organization says	
4 = believe all or most of what organization says	
	5
Haven't heard of organization	998
Don't know	999
No answer	

KG01. Visited campaign website in past week (1)

Please tell me if this is something you have done in the past week: Have you visited a website of a presidential campaign or political party?

Yes	1
	2
No	998
Don't know	999
No answer	

KG08. Viewed online campaign video in past week (1)

Please tell me if this is something you have done in the past week: Have you viewed video on sites like YouTube about the presidential candidates or campaign?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	998
No answer	999

KG12. Forwarded online campaign information in past week (1)

Please tell me if this is something you have done in the past week: Have you forwarded any emails, audio or video about presidential candidates or campaigns to friends, families, co-workers or other people you know?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	998
No answer	999

KG16. Frequency of forwarding online campaign information during primary

How often did you forward any emails, audio, or video about presidential candidates or campaigns to friends, families, co-workers, or other people you know during the presidential primary campaign?

Once	1
Two or three times	2
Four or five times	3
Six or seven times	4
	5

More than seven times	998
Don't know	999
No answer	

KG18. Discussed politics online in past week (1)

Please tell me if this is something you have done in the past week: Did you discuss politics online with people over email, in chat rooms, using message boards, forums or instant messaging services?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	998
No answer	999

KG22. Read or commented on political blog in past week (1)

Please tell me if this is something you have done in the past week: Have you read or posted a comment on a blog having to do with politics or a campaign?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	998
No answer	999

MA03. Party Lean

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?

Republican	1
Democratic	2
Neither	3

Don't know	998
No answer	999

WA02. Age

What is your age?

18 – 97
97 = 97 or older

Number:

Don't know

998

No answer

999