

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND THE SHIFTING PARADIGM FROM
TRADITIONAL TO SOCIAL MEDIA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

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Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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This study examines the effect of media on voting practices for the 2012 presidential election through analysis of individual activities within traditional media and social media platforms. Data were gathered using the published New Jersey Board of Elections data for registered voters, including whether they voted in the 2012 presidential election, and survey responses from a sample of registered voters within one county in a Northeastern State. Previous research predicted social media would replace traditional media as the venue for political information and participation activities. This study did not support those predictions. The study's theoretical implications were contrary to previous findings that the internet would mobilize citizens to new forms and patterns of political participation. Instead, the current frequency patterns and choice of media by the participants are better explained by Reinforcement Theory and the Uses and Gratification Theory as participants in the study engaged with traditional media and mimicked their traditional media patterns in social media sites. Additionally, this research used predictive modeling and logistic regression analysis. The results indicate that there is little difference between the various media models and their ability to predict voting.

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

An essential component of democracy is the public commons. In one of the earliest examples, the ancient Greeks gathered at the Agora or other public spaces to engage in political discourse. These spaces provided citizens access to civic education and discussion, and a forum for political participation in shaping public policy. The premise of the public commons is to offer an open, accessible route for all citizens to engage in public discourse (Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 2011). Today, the public commons exist in small town hall meetings during national election campaigns. Contemporary technological tools available in social media sites create opportunities for similar political discussion and deliberation to occur online.

Benedict Andersen's (1983) *Imagined Communities* addresses society's public commons, positing that the media act as catalysts for individuals to construct a social identity or community. Nations are described by Andersen as imagined political communities because citizens in even small nations will never know, meet or converse with each other, yet in the minds of each individual lives the image of political unity. This idea of nation or nationalism is an imagined political community, deliberately constructed via a public commons. The rise of the Internet and social media-based relationships challenges Andersen's notion of imagined community. Social media sites offer new asynchronous channels to discuss social and political issues in larger communities on the Web. Social media boast an awareness of other users that is not found in print media. For instance, Twitter followers see a live stream of messages intended primarily to promote users' ideas and activities (Naaman, Booase, & Lai, 2010). The online deliberations occurring on Twitter challenge Anderson's idea of the imagined community as users connect with their online profiles in real time (Grud, Wellman, & Takhteyev, 2011).

Contemporary communication in cyberspace offers opportunities to determine if Twitter, Facebook, and other social media sites promote the development of a political falsity or of genuineness emerging in the virtual communities of the twenty-first century. One could argue that these new communities have the potential to be more participatory, and thus more democratic, because the channel of imagining is malleable and open for invention on the part of members, unlike traditional media such as newspapers, television, and radio. Present-day online communities present opportunities for each user not simply to imagine, but to engage and participate directly in a virtual space.

Social media technologies and their convergence with traditional media are redefining contemporary political participation activities. A change is occurring, reducing the distinction in spaces online between the media producers and consumers. User-generated content is increasingly popular on the Web, with a growing number of individuals participating more in content creation and not just consumption. The campaign process is also undergoing a convergence, as individuals can extract and input information that transforms the conventional political process from passive media to interactive media. Online Internet participation becomes a collective action moving us towards the idea of collective intelligence (Levy, 1995). No one person knows everything. New alternative media dynamics form in cyberspace when individuals share their resources, opening up new options of receiving information. Crowdfunding and collective exchanges of information occurring in social media are bringing change to religion, education, law, politics, advertising and even [how] the military operate” (Levy, 1995, p. 4). Halpern and Gibbs (2013) argue that these new communication technologies are mechanisms for increasing the collaborative communication between politicians and the public.

The emphasis of internet research over the last decade was on Internet (Web 1.0) studies prior to Web 2.0. Researchers (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Mossberger, Tolbert, McNeal, 2008; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins & Della Carpini, 2006) examined such issues as accessibility, the digital divide, and online political participation prior to the introduction of Web 2.0 social media. A shift in Internet research directed towards asynchronous participatory behaviors of social media users found in Web 2.0 is evolving in the literature. Jenkins (2006) shared a broad definition of the study of participatory behaviors in Web 2.0 as a concentration on the cultural protocols and practices of social media in various facets of popular culture. A paradigm shift is occurring where media industries are no longer in full control of the content, access, and participation appearing on the Web. Audiences are moving away from the old patterns of being passive to patterns of empowerment, seeking out information and making connections to disperse media content through social interactions with others. The interactive nature of the Internet creates a new virtual public commons for political communication among citizens. A positive relationship between digital media and political participation does exist in the research (Raine, 2012; Wright, 2012b; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, & Bichard, 2009); however, this relationship is not consistent.

Numerous studies (Castells, 2000, 2004; Kim, 2006; Tian, 2006; Valtysson, 2010; Wright, 2012a) since the late 1990s examine the link between the Internet and political participation. It remains unclear if these new Internet commons will encourage new forms of participation in politics. Bimber and Copeland (2013) noted that many of these studies rely on single cross-sections and generalize the findings from one election cycle to other studies. The findings in previous studies are not clear concerning the impact of Web 2.0 or social networks on political participation in campaigns. Research is shifting towards new questions about

democracy as popular culture continues to embrace Web 2.0 in campaign messaging. Will Web 2.0 sites mobilize citizens to create new virtual public commons that encourage new definitions of communities? Will social media technology facilitate new forms of political participation and engagement between candidates and voters? Can candidates advance in their social media platforms an Internet public commons? If so, can online dialogues in social media sites generate votes for a candidate?

Statement of the Problem

Social media tools make it possible for candidates to communicate directly with their constituents, for citizens to interact with each other, and to a smaller degree for citizens to interact with the candidates. The use of the Internet in the 2004 presidential election campaign and its continued proliferation in social networking sites seen in the 2008 U.S. presidential election, 2010 midterm election, and 2012 presidential campaign suggests that candidates are betting that the Internet has the potential to mobilize voters and re-energize political participation. However, candidates and campaigns are still not clear on how or to what extent social media affect political participation and engagement. Minimal research exists on the role a candidate's social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) play in promoting new forms of online political engagement. The limited empirical research is weak and inconclusive on the impact of the Internet on voters' political views. Chadwick (2009) predicted a decrease in voter apathy and an increase in political participation among Internet users, as these online campaigns encourage social and political discourse. Gibson, Lusoli and Ward (2006) suggested that the Internet's ability to engage people should broaden the participation among its citizens. Hong and Nadler (2012) suggest that while social media expand the modes and methods of

election campaigning, such technologies only had minimal effects on the online public in the 2012 presidential election.

Social media remove the gatekeepers of traditional media, and function with different principles than the traditional broadcast and print media that have dominated past political communication. New media will cause changes to the principles of access, participation, and reciprocity, with more peer-to-peer rather than one-to-many communication. Despite these optimistic predictions, there is still no convincing empirical evidence suggesting the interest of individuals to exchange more traditional methods for public discourse in cyberspace, especially when it concerns casting a vote in a presidential election. Studies addressing whether online campaigns in general can increase political participation and engagement, especially voter turnout, are nonexistent. Literature focused on information effects (Baum & Groeling, 2008; Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon, 2006) suggests that relevant cues and information shortcuts in social and political environments can influence voters, especially in the direction of candidates whose names or political parties can be immediately available.

Jenkins (2006) argues that a new digital democracy will emerge slowly. A changing democracy will emerge, followed by a greater sense of participation by citizens. Citizens in online communities will achieve greater levels of trust in collaborative problem solving, leading to less dependence on the expertise of government officials. The addition of social media messages to election campaigns by candidates and citizens in the 2008, 2010, and 2012 election cycles shows support for Jenkins' idea of a slowly emerging democracy in popular culture. A study conducted by Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla, and Williams (2010) leading up to the 2008 presidential primary period found that the Internet, especially the blogosphere, influenced campaigns and the results of elections. They found that the Internet promoted a new generation

of politicians who bypass traditional media and its big-money tactics in favor of grassroots campaigns. According to Jenkins, entrenched institutions will create new models that reinvent themselves, preparing for a new media era of convergence and collective intelligence. An appreciation for the Internet's ability to remove gatekeepers and level the playing field for candidates will appear in society. A citizen's role will shift to producing gains in power in the political process. Society will find new ways to mobilize towards a collective concept of intelligence in online discourse. Joe Trippi (2004), a political strategist and the Campaign Manager for Howard Dean's 2004 presidential bid, agreed with Jenkins, noting the paradigm shift in power that occurred in the 2004 presidential elections from institutions to a shared democratic distributed power with citizens. Hoctor (2007) suggests that the interactiveness and user-generated characteristics of social media present to candidates the potential of reaching millions of the nation's dispersed citizens, admitting them to the political public sphere and providing opportunities to reclaim some power in the decision-making on public issues. Hoctor put forth that the imagined, virtual, and real space of the Internet holds promise for increasing citizen engagement.

Rationale for the Study

The presidential campaigns of 2004, 2008, and 2012 experimented with these new social media tools. Studies show that the social media audience continues to grow with each campaign. TechPresident (2013) reported that President Obama had almost 32 million friends on Facebook on Election Day in November 2012, compared to approximately two and half million friends during the 2008 presidential election campaign. Additionally, the number of friends downloading President Obama's Facebook app was up 1 million from 2008 and the number of friends who shared information via that app numbered almost 600,000. While social media

audiences continue to grow in each election cycle, the research lags behind in evaluating the effectiveness and success of this online transformation.

The 2012 presidential election campaign was the first to hire full-time digital campaign managers to personalize their election messages over social media, emphasizing that digital media campaigns were high priorities in political messaging. The 2008 campaign introduced social media sites such as YouTube into the campaign messaging. The use of social media in the 2012 election took a strategic approach not seen in previous election cycles by organizing the free and available social media tools into full-blown platforms. These platforms strategically merged different social media sites around the candidates' official websites as a method of organizing campaign messages. Candidates merged the characteristics of various social networking sites to encourage citizen online participation and meet the needs of tech-savvy individuals seeking to discuss the national issues in an online environment. Campaigns communicated in real time with potential voters during campaign speeches and the presidential debates. The candidates' blogs and official websites strategically merged with Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to build social media platforms connecting with potential voters, specifically those not involved in the 2008 presidential election. Chang and Aaker (2010) attributed President Obama's 2008 victory to the campaign's use of social media technology. A main difference between the 2008 and the 2012 campaigns was the latter's strong emphasis on large quantities of data from thousands of online and offline sources. President Obama's Chief Strategist David Axelrod noted that the electronic strategies used in 2008 were primitive compared to 2012 campaign and that both parties used technology and social media in unique ways in the 2012 campaign (Bell, 2012).

The campaigns witnessed a direct convergence between television and the Internet. The 2012 election campaign experienced a shift from a focus on television and radio ads to an expanded old- and new-technology onslaught (Strong, 2012). Candidates now communicated directly with their citizens and vice versa through cellphones, tablets, and computers. The campaigns revamped digital media strategies to take full advantage of mobile technology. Reports estimated that 80 million voters in the United States participated in the campaign via their mobile phones.

Parker (2012) attributed President Obama's victory in 2012 to the campaign's knowledge of the changing media landscape. Obama's strategists understood the changing demographics and their ever-evolving media consumption. Obama's campaign also understood that voters who would make the difference were on Twitter and used smartphones. Hispanic-American, African-American, and Asian-American voters were the fastest adopters of social media, and made the difference in generating votes for President Obama. The Romney campaign allocated millions of dollars to television advertising to reach the older white male vote. The demographics are changing and growing with each election, making demographics and media consumption an even more serious consideration in campaign strategies.

There is little evidence that network access and mastery of technological skills enhance political participation. Pew surveys attempted to determine changes in political participation via Web 1.0 in the 2004 presidential campaigns and later, the inclusion of social networking sites in 2008 and 2012. An agreement by scholars to a contemporary definition of political participation is lacking in the research despite the growth of the number of campaigns deliberating with asynchronous electronic tools in social networking sites. Pew Research utilized a broad definition of political participation that did not account for social media activities.

Contemporary emerging definitions acknowledge that participation as an activity is intended to effect or influence government action or public policy. Additionally, the Pew surveys focused on the ways that social media sites are forums for political talk. Friending a candidate is not the same as political participation in a campaign. Studies have not yet shown that social media can convince someone to think or vote in a particular way, even though it brings individuals together in communities. There are no studies to date showing a correlation between liking a candidate on Facebook and voting behavior (Parker, 2012).

There is a lack of research to determine whether social media sites mobilize or reinforce citizens' political participations. Joe Trippi (2004), Campaign Manager for Howard Dean's 2004 presidential bid, suggests that evidence is needed to determine if we have reached the perfect storm. Have we reached the threshold of convergence between popular culture, citizens' digital proficiencies, and Internet access encouraging new forms of political participation in virtual public places (e.g., candidates' social media platforms)? Individuals have become increasingly comfortable with and reliant on social media in their personal and professional lives. The increasing adoption of smartphones makes social media portable for many users. In the 2004 campaign, Trippi made one of the early predictions of technology changing citizens' participations patterns, noting that the Internet held Web 1.0 characteristics and that understanding technology is confronting the social, cultural, and political protocols and defining how we use it.

If campaigns and citizens are increasing their involvement with social networks and online technology, new accompanying social media strategies are needed. While various sources indicate that the numbers of individuals using social networking sites are increasing with each election, it is still unclear if new forms of political participation are emerging. Despite the

massive number of individuals reportedly using social media during the 2012 campaign, no evidence exists that this translates to new political participation. Social networks have the capacity to shape new messages and reach a new audience with asynchronous technologies not experienced in traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television. Are citizens using social media to deliberate or simply mimicking the patterns of traditional and Web 1.0 technology? Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2011) present a pattern where new technologies initially resemble the older technologies and “in time replace them before their unique capacities are developed” (p. 133). An example provided by the researchers is to consider the introduction of visual images in campaign ads on television, where news reporters converse with wordy messages, which were more suitable for radio. In many ways, candidates moved from maintaining singular websites to establishing presences on Facebook. If citizens are moving to the Internet and a new political culture is taking shape, then candidates will need to develop specific strategies to maximize the power of their messages in social media sites.

Candidates can maximize the potential of the participatory aspect of social media to promote real communities, which is much different from mainstream media (radio, television, print) and their imagined communities. If these new electronic tools are facilitating and constructing new ways to communicate and think about community, then strategists must find new ways to adapt to social media’s capacity for citizens to converse with the candidates and other citizens on national issues. Campaigns are still operating on the optimistic assumptions of the power of technology to transform democracy and increase political participation and engagement. Researchers have yet to claim a movement of social networking sites and technology to mobilize citizens in electoral campaigns.

Need for the Study

The dearth of peer-reviewed research investigating political engagement and participation directs the need for research in the area of political communication and social media. The research emerging over the last decade has focused on using Web 1.0 for democratic engagement (Boulianne, 2009; Brundidge & Rice, 2009; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010). Research is lacking on user-generated content of Web 2.0 on politicians' social media sites and the political engagement behavior of their users. Recent research has investigated the potential of the Internet to stimulate political participation, especially among younger citizens (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Bennett, 2008; Dahlgreen, 2011). There is contradictory information concerning Web 2.0's influence in creating new political participation in social media activities. Debate still exists as to whether social media platforms are mobilizing or reinforcing political participation due to these sites' relative newness in campaigns. It is unclear if the increase in the utilization of social media is translating to mobilizing citizens to vote. Additionally, it is unclear if specific social media sites are more effective or if certain activities within these sites contain more potential than others to connect with citizens and mobilize them to vote.

Academic research is lacking as to how increased access to and use of Web 2.0 will translate to voting. Web 1.0 brought a similarly optimistic outlook on revitalizing political participation. There is some indication from previous Web 1.0 and early Web 2.0 usage that the Internet holds promise for mobilizing political participation. An examination of 38 studies (Boulianne, 2009) found that the Internet had a small positive effect on political participation. The conclusion saw an increase in political participation when there was an increase in individuals using digital media. The same study suggests that political interest and political discussion facilitated this correlation (Cho Shah, McLeod, McLeod, Scholl & Gotlieb, 2009;

Shah, Cho, Eveland, Kwak et al., 2005; Shah, Cho, Nah, Gotlieb, Hwang, Lee & McLeod, 2007; Xenos & Moy, 2007). Overall, many Web 1.0 studies found it was primarily citizens already active in politics transferring their media use from radio, newspaper, and television to the Internet. Web 1.0 mimicked the communication behaviors of print and television as citizens went online to read a newspaper or watch a YouTube clip.

The shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and the asynchronous qualities of the latter led to a reappearance of the argument that the Internet was mobilizing political participation. Fueling this mobilization argument was the increase in the technological skills of citizens in the 2012 election compared to the 2008 election. Many citizens have social media profiles, increased technology skills, and use the Internet in other areas of their lives. While reports from social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter and data from Pew Surveys reveal a massive increase in citizen use, the impact of social media is still unclear. Do the increased numbers of users and their frequencies of use mobilize citizens' political participation in campaigns? The current debate concerning the impact of Web 2.0 lacks academic research. Studies lack a focus on whether the increases in the number of online users and the frequencies of Internet use in Web 2.0 campaign messaging translate into citizens' political participation, especially voting. This research contributes academic support to Web 2.0 practice in campaigns to reinforce or mobilize citizens' online political participation.

These new media tools are changing the landscape of political communication in campaigns, where citizens are encouraged to participate in new forms of political engagements with candidates. Zhang and Chia (2006) suggested that the Internet can be a catalyst for building civic communities and a tool for civic participation, but the Internet's overall effect is contingent upon how an individual uses it.

While the Internet in the 2004 election was successful in mobilizing citizens, especially youth, it still struggled to create a tipping point away from televised campaign information to create a communication model to utilize new media in politics (Jenkins, 2006). The 2008 presidential election expanded on the 2004 election messages when it introduced user-generated content. It began to answer some of the questions posed in the 2004 election, as American citizens began to find new ways of participation to take action and self-organize. The 2008 presidential election gave rise to debate whether social media sites could mobilize citizens to new forms of political engagement. Empirical studies on the forms of communication occurring on social media sites and the impact on political participation have only recently emerged in the literature (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Davis, 2010; Gil de Zuniga, Puig-I-Abril & Rojas, 2009; Leung, 2009; Nielsen, 2011; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Schlozman et al., 2010; Woodly, 2008; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer & Bichard, 2010) and do not provide a clear indication if the use of social networking sites has any effect on political behavior in general, nor on voting specifically. This dissertation contributes to the growing body of Web 2.0 studies of campaigns, especially in light of citizens' growing use and campaigns' strategic adaption in 2012 of popular social media sites.

Purpose of the Study

We are in the midst of a changing political landscape that continues to increase in intensity, as does our reliance on communication technology and digital information. Bimber (2000) suggests that as electronic tools continue to evolve over time, the trend for the near future will be finding lower marginal costs for delivery of information and communication. The broad purpose of studying information technology and political participation is to understand the eventual effects that result from the new information environment. This study will investigate

whether a candidate's presence in social media in the 2012 campaign increased citizens' political engagement, especially voting. It is still unclear if social media drive political participation or merely offer an alternative channel to receive campaign messages.

Framework of the Current Study

The current study involves participants from Ocean County, New Jersey. Ocean County is diverse in its makeup, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. The population is ethnically diverse as well, which made Ocean County an ideal location for this study. The sample is a proportionate random sample stratified by political party. Party affiliation, past voting information, and other demographic changes came from an official database purchased from the New Jersey Board of Elections. This data is public information and available to anyone for a minimum cost.

The second method of data collection was a mail survey of voters in the target county. The survey collected data concerning the voters' use of traditional media, Web 1.0 media and Web 2.0 media during the 2012 Presidential Election and their involvement in political engagement activities. Using a mail survey, the study used a sample of registered voters in Ocean County New Jersey, in October of 2010. The survey instrument (appendix a) contains questions concerning the use of traditional media, Web 1.0 media, and Web 2.0 media and the various types of political activities, which citizens can engage in, during the election cycle.

Finally, the New Jersey Board of Elections data for the 2012 presidential election was purchased to determine the voting behavior of the sample in the target election. The researcher matched voting behavior of the sample by voter ID #. Once all data were collected and recorded identifying information was removed from the final dataset.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers frame their studies on the impact of the amount of use and reach of the Internet on political participation in a debate between Mobilization Theory and Reinforcement Theory. Emerging within the mobilization-reinforcement debate are Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Online Deliberation Theory, and Social Network Theory.

These theories are not mutually exclusive. Accessibility of the Internet may motivate individuals to mobilize in new participatory political actions, such as organizing protests, as well as maintaining or strengthening their existing political positions and engagements. Mobilization scholars contend that individuals previously disenfranchised and marginalized in politics will renew their political involvement in the election process with the Internet. The Internet will increase the motivation to participate and the likelihood of participation in politics (Winneg, 2009). Norris (1999) summarized the position of Mobilization Theory and the Internet, suggesting it will level the playing field as it facilitates different types of civic and political participation worldwide. Potentially, the Internet can serve as an agent of change and a mobilizing force for participation in politics (Weber, Loumakis & Bergman, 2003). Klein (1999) suggested that the Internet enables interactions for organizations, face-to-face communication, and many-to-many communication, enlarging the discussion in online deliberations.

Reinforcement scholars maintain that the Internet will strengthen existing political participation patterns and most likely widen the gap between affluent and non-affluent individuals and between active Internet users and non-active users (Bosnjak, Galesic, & Klicek, 2007). Reinforcement scholars claim that the Internet will not stimulate new online users to participate politically in election campaigns, even with increasing amounts of online information and easier access for more individuals. Instead, reinforcement scholars argue it will continue to

benefit only certain users, mostly the elites, who have greater access to the technology and who are already politically involved (Bimber & David, 2003; Norris, 2001; Weare, 2002). The argument is that the media primarily affect and reinforce the status quo, leading to an underestimation of the total impact of mass communication in the political process (Klapper, 1960; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011).

Uses and Gratification theorists view media users as active and able to examine and evaluate different types of media to accomplish their individual communication goals (Wang, Fink, & Cal, 2008). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevirch (1974) devised a systematic and comprehensive theory to articulate the audience members' role in the mass communication process with traditional media. The premise of the theory is that people will actively seek out specific media and specific content to achieve specific gratifications (West & Turner, 2010). UGT is also emerging as a theoretical framework in Internet studies in current research (Coleman, Lieber, Mendelsen, & Kurpius, 2008; Park et al., 2009; Tian, 2006).

History shows that how candidates utilize media can influence an election outcome. Are social media platforms successful because they extend Andersen's premise of the imagined community, or is there a paradigm shift occurring away from political engagements with traditional media to political engagements with new social media platforms? The evidence suggests that while Web 1.0 has some mobilizing characteristics, it generally reinforces the existing political patterns found in traditional media because of its synchronous channel. Studies are lacking as to whether this reinforcing pattern exists in Web 2.0 or if social networking sites are mobilizing citizens to deliberate online. It is still unclear which media group (traditional, Web 1.0, or Web 2.0) is the primary choice for citizens to obtain information about candidates. It is unknown whether citizens prefer social media to seek out information, similar to traditional

media such as television or newspapers, or to utilize social media to engage in an online dialogue in the election process. This study contributes to the discussion of the impact of Web 2.0 usage on the mobilization-reinforcement debate on political participation. The study uses four media models to predict political participation in the form of voting: traditional, Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and a combination of all three (Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and traditional media). A discussion of the models occurs in Chapter 3. All models examine the media's impact as a whole and then highlight a breakdown of the different activities and characteristics used by the survey participants.

A traditional media model breaks down the traditional political activities found in newspapers, radio, and television to determine if citizens prefer certain traditional media or specific activities available in traditional media. A strong preference for traditional media activities might indicate that Web 1.0 and/or Web 2.0 are not mobilizing individuals towards political participation in elections. A traditional model or a Web 1.0 model might provide support that a reinforcement political framework in media is still occurring. Support for a Web 2.1 model might suggest that social media are mobilizing citizens to new and increased forms of political participation. Additionally, the models might support the emergence of a media convergence occurring between traditional and new media regarding political engagement. A gap exists in the research in identifying how online users are using the social media sites. This study investigates citizens' preferences for social media sites and, in particular, which activities are used with greater frequency to engage in online political participation. Web 2.0 studies are minimal and lack a clear understanding of whether social media platforms collectively or separately foster a sense of community and discourse because of their asynchronous nature. Society has consistently seen new media adapting content from the previously dominant

technology in use at the time to access public information (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). This study explores the theoretical link(s) between political participation in voting and the Web 2.0 characteristics of the Internet.

Research Questions

The grand research question for this study is “Are the Presidential candidates’ social media platforms mobilizing citizens towards voting?” This gives rise to two further research questions: RQ 1: Is there a correlation between media platforms and voting in the presidential election of 2012? This research question examines whether a paradigm shift in political participation is occurring from traditional media to social media technologies.

RQ 2: Does the media platform used by citizens’ increase their likelihood of voting? This question examines if new social media networking sites motivate citizens to vote based on their user-driven characteristics. Alternatively, are citizens utilizing these social media sites in ways that are reminiscent of the early Internet days of Web 1.0? Or is society witnessing a convergence between traditional media (e.g., radio, television, print) and social media technologies (e.g., campaign websites, Twitter, YouTube)?

The 2008 candidates used the Internet to build their voting bases, but they still needed television to bring out the voters. Campaign messages were delivered with a push and pull between the messages that went out to the public via traditional media and those transmitted online (Jenkins, 2006). The 2012 presidential election introduced for the first time in an election campaign full-blown social media platforms or contemporary popular social media sites organized around the candidates’ official websites (blogs). An increased amount of time, energy, and money went into developing digital campaigns using electronic media in comparison to the 2008 election, which delivered online messages in MySpace, on YouTube, and by e-mail. Yet,

campaigns utilized traditional media, especially television, in their campaign strategies and traditional media like newspapers and television political talk shows also incorporated Facebook, blogs, and Twitter. Is it a better explanation that the 2012 presidential election saw a shift towards social media technologies in a society based on television entertainment's current trend to include material from social media in its programming?

Significance to the Field

Research needs to consider whether social media are replacing or supplementing traditional media. Political strategists need communication models to devise effective campaign strategies moving forward (Wattal et al., 2010). Further, we still need evidence as to whether citizens' participation in social media platforms reinforces and/or mobilizes voters. Developing social media communication models can assist candidates in improving the outreach of their messages to the public. Candidates seem to be reacting to the supposition that the Internet has the potential to influence voters; however, no academic evidence exists that citizens' online participation in these sites produces votes. Political campaigns continue to pump billions of dollars into Web 2.0 outreach without concrete evidence that citizens participating in campaigns will cast a vote because of social media engagement. While numerous reports, including the Pew Survey, illustrate increasing numbers of Web 2.0 users, it is not clear if new political participations are occurring. Additionally, campaigns will need to understand how technological participation works, specifically what sites and activities within these sites can guide candidates to effective messages geared towards mobilizing their bases and, in turn, garner votes.

Understanding the citizen use of these sites also supports other campaign activities like recruiting volunteers, fundraising, and fostering of communication messages in an individual's social networks on behalf of the candidate. The growing use of data aggregation such as data mining to

determine demographics might be a contributing factor to Obama's victory in 2012. However, political strategists will need academia to understand citizens' communication patterns of political usage in media, specifically, what media and what aspects of the media are present in online political involvement.

Political strategists are modeling future elections based on Obama's use of social media. Traditionally, the error is that predicting the efficacy of a successful campaign is based on the winner's strategies. Other factors such as the media commentary on television or even the public's dislike of Romney could have influenced Obama's win. Understanding whether social media indeed had a significant impact on the election will need investigation from an academic perspective. Campaigns tend to analyze data based on victory or defeat. In other words, campaigns tend to believe that their successes resulted from their strategies. Scholarly research attempts to identify reality in an unbiased way, free from the shackles of political influence.

The mobilization-reinforcement paradigm debate is the theoretical foundation of this study. However, an application of UGT will contribute to and may add clarity to the debate. Shanahan and Morgan (1999) stated that the previous dominant media are the basis for the adoption of new media forms. Individuals are continually becoming more perceptive with the user-driven (Web 2.0) social media networking sites and increasing their online citizen participation in candidates' social media campaigns. Howard and Park (2012) suggested that research needs to move past examining the details of sites, but rather examine the first associations with applications such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. The social content found in these sites differs from the content found in news media. The users' choices of design and infrastructure both shape and influence the social activities that transcends the traditional

media categories found in UGT. Howard and Park (2012) took into consideration three parts when defining social media:

- (a) the information infrastructure and tools used to create and distribute content;
- (b) the material that takes the digital form of personal messages, news, ideas, and cultural products;
- and (c) the people, organizations, and industries that produce and consume digital content. (p. 4)

Kaye and Johnson (2004) suggested that while the Web activity satisfies individuals' needs for entertainment, escapism, and other social interactions it might also satisfy their political participation needs.

UGT highlights the role of the audience in seeking out media to fulfill personal gratification. The communication messages and participation in election campaigns need investigation that examines social media sites both separately and collectively. Social media may suggest that certain aspects of each site are the reasons for the popularity in use of that site and are mobilizing new political participation. Alternatively, citizens may selectively expose themselves to social media activity or information that agrees with their views, which could support the reinforcing patterns of Web 2.0 in political participation. Examining the audience's role in media choice and its frequency of media use in presidential campaign messages may provide evidence to support reinforcing or mobilizing participation patterns by citizens in social media.

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature. Chapter 3 contains the methodology used to perform the study, including sampling strategies, definitions of variables, models to predict voting, descriptive statistics on independent and dependent variables, research questions, and hypotheses to be tested in Chapter

4. Chapter 4 contains the data analysis, highlighting correlations between traditional media, Web 1.0, and Web 2.0 activities and voting. These statistics are to determine which, if any, of the characteristics in the various traditional and social media correlate with voting. Additionally, is the inclusion of a traditional media index of political participation correlated with voting? A second statistical analysis includes the use of logistic regression models to determine the increase in the likelihood of voting. The study includes four models, namely a traditional model, a Web 1.0 model, a Web 2.0 model, and a combined model of all media. Chapter 5 contains the results and a discussion of the findings from Chapter 4. Chapter 5 also proposes recommendations regarding voting and the use of social media platforms in future elections. What distinguishes this research study from other studies is that the collection of data occurred during the presidential campaign and the election outcome did not influence the responses shared by the participants, as is the case in many previous studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Messner and Garrison (2008) suggest that studying the impact of Internet communication should be the first priority of the current communication research agenda, with an emphasis on empirical Internet research. Minimal research exists addressing the effects of social networks and political participation shifts in such areas as mobilization, civic participation, social capital, online deliberation, and the public sphere. The impact that presidential candidates' Web 2.0 platforms have on citizens' political participation patterns, especially voting, is missing from empirical studies. Studies are slowly appearing in the literature from the 2008 presidential election data, expanding the main theoretical foundations found in traditional media research. Scholars have debated whether traditional media and the early days of the Internet in Web 1.0 reinforced or mobilized citizens to increased patterns of mobilization. Computer mediated communication studies that are attracting growing interest include social network theory, online democratic deliberation theory, and uses and gratification theory (UGT). These studies examine the characteristics and motivations of Internet users. Wright (2012b) advanced the study of online deliberation and UGT, recommending that more research needs to address the design of e-communication tools. Electronic communication tools should focus more specifically on the area of interface design and find ways to appeal to users about the underlying principles of online deliberation.

The majority of the existing research focuses on the Internet prior to technologies used in Web 2.0. Research in the area of political participation and social networking sites is slowly appearing in the literature with only minimal attention to the impact of these sites on voting behavior. Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, and Bichard (2010) concluded that social networking sites

such as YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace positively correlated to civic participation but not to political participation, as these sites highlight the fostering of relationships with friends rather than political discussion. Seltzer and Zhang (2011) and Zhang and Seltzer (2010) propose that public discourse can influence political behavior, but not a user's political attitudes. These studies preceded the evolution of Web 2.0 and the increasing sophistication of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and candidates' websites merging into social media platforms, as witnessed in the 2012 campaign.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey conducted on Election Day 2012 found that social media contributed to political participation. Twenty-two percent of voters discussed how they intended to vote in the 2012 presidential election on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Social media platforms became prominent places where individuals attempted to convince their friends to cast a vote. The Pew Internet Survey reported that 30% of respondents voted for either Barack Obama or Mitt Romney based on online discussions by their relatives or friends on Facebook or Twitter posts (Raine, 2012). Twenty percent of those individuals reported that they convinced others to vote using the same social media sites. Digital or social media platforms are contributing an additional discursive approach to political campaigning.

Political Platforms

Political campaigns are capitalizing on the channels of connectivity and sociality present in social media platforms to build online communities with their constituents. Latour (2005) emphasized that human and non-human features of social media intertwine on the platforms that offer the interactive processes. He opined that social media are more than intermediaries that transport information; they also act as mediators translating meaning and elements to create a

social capital through connectivity. Understanding the changing communication patterns in a candidate's social media campaign platforms may encourage citizens into new forms of online political participation.

Definition of Digital Media Platforms

Internet advocates maintain the capacity of cyberspace to mobilize citizens and the democratic process by creating virtual communities in network platforms. Platforms present opportunities for users to share collaboratively in locations that enable an increased flow of information and diversity of opinions. According to the Pew Research Center's Annual Report on American Journalism (2013), the growing pattern of individuals in society accessing digital platforms in Web 2.0 instead of traditional media can be directly correlated to the rapid adoption of the Internet and mobile devices. Media audiences are finding new uses of the word platform in cyberspace, which complicates creating a new definition when viewed within the framework of the Internet

An understanding of the various categories of definitions of platform in the modern vernacular offers an explanation of the contemporary adoption of the term "platform," which includes user-generated content, streaming media, blogging, and social computing.

This research study applies the definition of platform currently used in politics on the web. Here, platform refers to the political agenda of candidates or parties. The original meaning of this term, based in traditional media in a political context, has progressed from meaning a place open and visible to all citizens to the political stances of candidates. Gillespie (2010) noted how the existing understanding of platform has merged the four categories: "Platforms' are 'platforms' because they offer the opportunity to meet, interact or sell" (p. 35). Gillespie extended platforms beyond the categories of computational and architectural to include the

social, political, and cultural. Gillespie put forward a definition that Web 2.0 platforms such as YouTube and Facebook serve as meeting places and performative states. For example, YouTube can be a video-sharing community or a place to display your products. Facebook's interface offers the wall, where a person can make small talk, share self-made information, or make friends with unknown individuals. Hendricks and Kaid (2010) highlighted the idea that social media platforms are strong and flexible because they offer the shared characteristics of both content and delivery. A digitized media platform offers real-time and/or delayed delivery of audio, video, and data to various networks such as cable, satellite, digital broadcasting, and broadband. A variety of devices such as mobile phones, PDAs, computers, and cable set-top boxes can deliver media data according to the Interactive TV Dictionary and Business Index (2013).

Platforms in Politics

Since its popularization in the 1990s, the Internet has presented a new way to participate in society and politics. Over the last 15 years a shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 or user-generated content has become increasingly prevalent. Simultaneously, a migration in election communication messages from traditional places to virtual spaces continues to be the trend in politics to reach out strategically to the voting public. Traditional campaigning and handshaking events are declining, as politicians have an increasingly sophisticated presence in the virtual arena. The virtual spaces of e-politics focus on combining social media sites to communicate candidates' messages in blogs, YouTube, Twitter, and official websites.

The 2012 presidential election saw a collaboration of these social media sites as candidates created platforms synchronizing Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter around their official websites to manage their social media presence and to promote and control the public

discussions in their online campaign messages. A report by the Pew Research Center in October 2012 (two weeks before the presidential election) stated that the number of individuals regularly turning to social media platforms for campaign messages had doubled since January of that year. Despite this growth, the number of individuals using social media remains small when compared to traditional media (Mitchell & Rosentiel, 2012). The numbers of individuals using the Internet to read political news rose to 36% of those surveyed in the Pew Report (Mitchell & Rosentiel, 2012), which may indicate that social media platforms hold a promising approach for campaign messages as the proliferation of digital devices continues.

Web 2.0 Platforms and Connectivity

Connectivity is an essential aspect of Web 2.0 Platforms offering active mediators between users, technologies, and content (Dijick, 2012). Dijick (2012) defined connectivity as the material and metaphorical wiring of one's culture, which in turn shapes economics, legal frames, users, and content, thus shaping society. As he puts it,

The emergence of social media platforms is at the heart of a shifting dynamic, where agents of varying nature (human and non-human, material and immaterial) and varied size groups (individuals, collectives, societies) are building a connective space for communication and information. (Dijick, 2012, p. 142)

Web 2.0 does increase online visibility and interactivity for candidates and political parties (Vergeer, 2012). The asynchronous quality of the Internet presents a view that the messages of the public and, ideally allows candidates to quickly inform voters. Research (Dijick, 2012; Polat, 2005; Shirky, 2009, 2011) demonstrates that platforms are a powerful transformative force in the 21st century. The Internet's transformative state holds especially encouraging potential for young adult voters. Baumgartner and Morris (2008) predicted that increased interconnectivity

will increase public participation and promote greater levels of political knowledge and understanding among young adults.

Research aimed at examining the process of connectivity in social media platforms is lacking in the literature. Beers (2009) referred to the hidden role of technology as the technological unconscious. Dijick (2010) pointed out that social media platforms rely on protocols predicted by the social practices of their users. Human choices and interests guide online behavior in platforms, while behavioral metadata helps to reconfigure the algorithms steering the site. Langlois (2005) puts forth that we need to study not only the visual interface, but also the informational and dissemination practices that play a key role in defining the modalities of existence in social networks.

The introduction of social media platforms (collections of social networking sites) occurred in the congressional election campaign of 2008. Presidential campaigns continued this strategy by linking different social networking sites around their official websites. Candidates' social media platforms attempted to build online communities as a way to encourage political participation and voting in the 2012 election. Dijick (2010) envisioned Web 2.0 platforms as facilitators of both offline and virtual communities. Polat (2005) suggests that online grassroots platforms encourage debates about parties and their leaders. These grassroots platforms did not compete with the candidate's platforms; rather they were popular venues for online deliberation during pre- and post-election periods. The technological aspects of the Internet do not change or expand political participation, but they do increase the appearance that the Internet is a communication channel for people to discuss politics and form a community.

Web 1.0 – Political Participation

The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed campaigns' first attempts at moving past using traditional media such as the newspaper, radio, and television. Political campaign strategists held optimistic assumptions about the influence of Web 1.0 to mobilize new patterns of political engagement and participation for voters. Instead, pioneering candidates beginning with the 2000 election cycle saw the Internet reproducing patterns of campaigns seen in traditional media. For instance, individuals accessed the Internet in “read only” behaviors similar reading a newspaper or seeking out campaign information similar to flyers. The majority of the first Internet (Web 1.0) campaigns appeared as top-down conversations and offered little opportunity for interaction (Foot, Schneider, & Dougherty, 2007; Schweitzer, 2008). Web 1.0 campaigns were one-sided, with information transmitted from the politicians and political parties to potential voters. This information used standard HTML and replicated its offline (traditional) media onto the candidate's website (Vergeer, Hermans, & Sams, 2011). The candidates' Web 1.0 sites tended only to be active during the election season and eventually went unused or deleted from the Web (Lev-on, 2011; Margolis & Resnick, 2000). The first Internet campaigns often saw candidates not wanting to take risks with online activities for fear of losing control of their campaigns with input from users of their sites (Gueorguieva, 2008). By the early 2000s however, campaign strategists realized the potential of the Internet in the early 2000s and had to adapt messages to different demographic constituencies.

A study examining the adoption of Facebook by candidates in the 2006 and 2008 congressional elections by Williams and Gulati (2009) indicated that those politicians who adopted Web 1.0 technology were more often the first adopters of Web 2.0. An adoption of

technology by candidates leads to a pattern of reproduction of adoption by other candidates (referred to as contagion).

Web 2.0 – Social Media – Political Participation

The 2012 presidential campaigns' inclusion of new media tools to present the candidates' stances on election issues supported the increase use of digital devices in society. The role of the campaign volunteer has shifted from knocking on neighborhood doors to canvassing the electronic neighborhoods of social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube (Wattal et al., 2010). Social networking sites provided highly visible locations where candidates built platforms and connected with voters online in new ways. Researchers (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Jenkins, 2006) predicted that political strategists and academic advocates could convert social networking participation into democratic participation. They believed that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs offered innovative ways for citizens to consider the opinions of other citizens and candidates in online deliberations.

The presidential campaign of 2012 built social media platforms based on the social networking sites used in the 2008 and 2010 congressional election campaigns. The congressional campaigns of 2008 and 2010 made significant strides in incorporating the Internet using Web 2.0 or social media into politicians' campaign messages. For example, the 2008 and 2010 congressional election campaigns witnessed for the first time that 55% or over half of the voting public accessed some space on the Internet to participate in the political process. These numbers represent a recurring pattern of growth among voters who are turning to the Internet for political information. Candidates during the 2012 Presidential debates built upon this momentum, merging traditional media (print, radio, and television) with social media. Constituents connected with candidates in real time to contribute personalized messages in

authentic ways not available via print, radio, and television, strengthening the participation of offline and online audiences. During debates, citizens were able to share their concerns with the candidates in real time. While candidates filtered many of the questions occurring in debates, many voters perceived that citizen voices using social networks were being included in the debates. Sixty-six percent of these social media users or 39% of adults reported having engaged in at least one of eight civic or political activities with social media.

The current research improves upon previous studies and although there is information about the overall use of Web 2.0 technologies and their correlations to political participation/voting, little research exists as to whether individual components of Web 2.0 are important distinguishers of political participation. Further, are the unique characteristics of each component predictive of turning Web use into political participation/voting? The following sections describe each component of Web 2.0 technology and the current state of knowledge concerning political participation/voting.

Facebook

Facebook offers a variety of opportunities to exchange information in ways unavailable on other social networking sites. These opportunities have been evaluated collectively during congressional elections, but have not been examined in presidential elections. This study attempts to remedy this shortcoming and to determine the correlation between individual Facebook components and voting. A discussion of these components follows to enlighten the reader about the characteristics of Facebook that will be used in the current study.

Individuals can privately e-mail or post to a public wall. They create a network through invitations or friend requests to connect with another profile page. A Facebook user can also follow a profile page created by politicians by becoming a "fan." Upon accessing the candidate's

Facebook page, individuals find links to campaign-related pages such as party organizations, candidates' spouse pages, vice president candidates' pages, and other citizens following the candidates.

Facebook by default offers several ways to engage in political participation. Active political participation can occur on a user's profile site, on a friend's site, and/or on the candidate's site. Users can write, share, post comments, upload video or photos, "like" or "dislike" comments, sign petitions, post to a friend's and/or candidate's wall, subscribe to other related sites, purchase items (t-shirts, signs, bumper stickers), and participate in activities sponsored by the candidates. For example, Republican nominee Mitt Romney challenged his supporters to create t-shirts to support his candidacy on his Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/mittromney>). Facebook users can also become fans or group members. This action publicly lists the member or follower and allows for aggregation and reporting of users of political candidates or groups. The Facebook interface creates networks around common interests and can assist users to connect to a page, group, or event. Group discussion patterns occurring on Facebook highlight the participatory aspects of social media. In a Pew Internet Life Project survey, Dugan (2012) reported that 38% of Facebook users promoted political content that other users had posted with a "like." Users affiliated as liberals were more likely than Republicans to "like" something 52% to 42%.

Facebook reported in October 2012 that it had reached the 1 billion mark in subscribers, equaling 1 out of 7 people on the planet using the service (Zuckerberg, 2012). This is a massive increase of subscribers over earlier campaign cycles. There is no information readily available to determine the number of Facebook users who use the site specifically for political purposes. However, William and Gulati (2013) highlight increased Facebook usage by politicians. In

2006, only 16% of the candidates campaigning for the House personalized their Facebook profiles. In 2008, 72% (519 out of 816) of candidates had a politician's profile site in Facebook.

Facebook's participation in e-politics in the 2012 presidential election grew from the 2008 election. For instance, Facebook offered a widget where beginning with the first debate airing on NBC on January 8, 2013, citizens could post questions. The Facebook widget was not only a venue for individuals to take a poll, but also offered asynchronous communication for citizens to communicate with each other and their candidates. The Facebook widget featured an in-depth discussion as visitors posted over 2,000 comments in the months preceding the debate. Users were not simply posting comments, but also deliberating online with replies and revisiting the site to meet and answer other users' posts. Online deliberation in Facebook demonstrated that online interpersonal interactions and discussions on political issues were growing as key aspects in campaigns for potential voters. During the 2008 presidential election campaign, Facebook streamed the debates resembling Web 1.0, lacking the technological qualities of today's Internet. The widgets used in the presidential debates of 2012 illustrate Facebook's growth over the 2008 election campaign by producing a social dialogue in politics (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Following the 2012 presidential election, a report released by TechPresident.com reported that Barack Obama had 32,313,965 friends on Facebook on Election Day in November 2012, compared to a mere 2,397,253 in the 2008 presidential election campaign. Additionally, during the 2012 Presidential campaign, the number of Facebook friends downloading Obama's Facebook app was 1 million and the number of friends who shared information via that app was almost 600,000. Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate, had a much smaller number of

individuals following him on Facebook. Totals for Romney on Election Night 2012 were 12,135,972 with only approximately 30,000 users downloading Romney's app (Sifry, 2012).

Facebook offers an online environment that is well suited to increasing political participation among voters. The rate of participation among citizens in social networks such as Facebook holds promise to campaigns looking to social networking strategies to attract voters. Researchers (Gil de Zuniga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Vitak et al., 2011; Williams & Gulati, 2013) concluded that the greater levels of participation by Facebook users' can be linked to increases in their levels of political knowledge, political interest, and political self-efficacy, which leads to greater participation.

Citizens are becoming reliant on social networking sites to locate news and participate in campaigns. Vitak et al. (2009) discovered a direct relationship between Facebook use and political participation in campaigns. As users' involvement in political activities on Facebook increased, so did their political participation in other venues, including action-oriented forms of political participation. Williams and Gulati (2013) affirmed that a well-maintained site could encourage active participation, as candidates seem more accessible and authentic. Facebook offers the capacity to customize the candidates' interpersonal communications with their supporters and followers with visual pictures and video. Followers can put a face to individuals with whom they interact in the site's political activities and discussion. Additionally, 34% reportedly used Facebook to write their own political comments.

In methodological analysis, one should treat online social networks such as Facebook as platforms. Langlois, Elmer, McKelvey, and Devereaux (2009) suggested that studies of Facebook need to attend to the shaping of participatory politics occurring through groups, as there is a movement to bring together individual profiles, merging them into publicized groups.

The framing of Facebook and political studies as a platform allows for different “me-centricity and publicity” (Langlois, Elmer, McKelvey, and Devereaux, 2009, p. 419) forms of political activities. Langlois, McKelvey, Elmer, and Werbin (2008) hypothesized that any methodology of online actions occurring in Facebook and similar social networks sites needs to move towards a platform approach, as there is a convergence of activities taking place. Facebook is an online social network allowing users to connect to other users in different and more effective ways through a convergence of a variety of technological systems, protocols, and networks.

Twitter

Twitter is a popular communication tool used by congressional and presidential candidates over the last few campaign cycles. Created by Jack Dorsey in 2006, Twitter is a social networking site for messages limited to 140 characters. It was Dorsey’s goal to create a social networking site specific to mobile messaging. Hargittai and Litt (2011) explained that Twitter users create a username and a brief profile that can include their name, photograph, location, a short note, and a web address. A profile display of the user’s posts, called tweets, appears in chronological order with the most recent post on top. Users have the option to make the content of their tweets either public or private. Users can link photos (e.g., Twitpics) and track certain words appearing in tweets (e.g., TweetBeep). Twitter relies on a vertical interface and the belief that friends and other contacts will actively repost or retweet a post back to the top of this interface (Elmer, 2012). One hundred and forty characters still leaves the sender 20 characters for the inclusion of a username (Mediabistro, 2011).

Citizen-to-citizen communication and citizen-to-campaign communication with Twitter was introduced late in the 2008 presidential election and saw an increased focus in the 2010 Congressional elections. The 2012 presidential election saw strategists and media reporters

analyze the content and count the number of tweets to make early predictions of a winner. Despite the heavy focus of Twitter messages by the news media, it is still unclear if it is a valuable tool for securing votes.

A review of Twitter by Geere (2010) highlighted an interesting point for politicians who use Twitter to promote themselves and their online communities. Greene (2010) remarked on the reality of the Twitter interface by stating, “92 percent of retweets occur within the first hour. Less than one in 200 messages retweet after an hour has gone by when multiplying those probabilities together. Essentially, once that hour’s up, your message is ancient history” (p. 1).

Twitter grew to be an essential part of most politicians’ digital platforms. 500 million Twitter users had accounts with 260 million active users during the election period (eight months before the presidential election). GlobalWebIndex reported that the number of active Twitter users grew by 40% in the last six months of 2012, which is equivalent to 288 million active users contributing to Twitter. These current statistics translate to a growth rate of 714% since July 2009 (McCue, 2013).

The explosion of active Twitter users continues to play an increasingly significant role in the political campaigns of congressional, senate, and presidential candidates. The 2012 presidential campaigns had a substantial presence on Twitter, utilized in the primaries, debates, and on Election Day. One hundred and seventy-five million tweets were sent each day during the 2012 campaign year (Stadd, 2012). On Election Day, Twitter reported that 31 million people posted tweets. The greatest number of tweets (327,452 tweets per hour) occurred just after the major networks declared Barack Obama the winner. Political strategists connect the public’s reliance on Twitter with Obama’s success in the 2008 campaign, where he integrated Twitter with the social networking sites of MySpace and YouTube (Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sandner, &

Welppe, 2011). The 2012 presidential election saw a sophisticated use of Twitter by the candidates when compared to previous elections. Twitter was a way in which candidates disseminated information, solicited donations, and updated the public on their travel plans and daily campaign news (Wortham, 2012). Candidates on Twitter employed a systematic strategy that differed in value from all previous campaign cycles as tweets and hashtags generated and reinforced campaign slogans (Lotan, 2012). Yet, with all the data on the number of Twitter users there is a dearth of research regarding Twitters' efficacy in getting citizens to vote.

Twitter continues to grow as an avenue for politicians to connect with voters in real time. The momentum that began in the congressional elections of 2010 continued into the 2012 presidential election. The first 2012 presidential debate set the record for the most tweeted event in history with 10 million tweets (Kahn, 2012). This reliance on Twitter illustrates the increasing desire of constituents and voters to communicate with their candidates via the exchange of user generated messages. However, only a limited number of studies focus on the direct use of Twitter in political campaigns.

Studies directed towards the ways online communities form are appearing in the literature (Choi & Park, 2013; Gruz, Wellman, & Takhteyev, 2011). These studies provide information to campaigners seeking new understanding of how to attract voters in political campaigns. Twitter studies present a challenge to scholars who use information that is time-compressed. Researchers are improving their ability to explore social media content with more reliable methods due to recent improvements in quantitative text analysis and sentiment analysis (Ceron, Iacus, & Porro, 2013). Elmer (2012) examined how live broadcast debates include the use of Twitter to reconnect the audience with political communication messages such as images, blog posts, and passages from speeches during a live broadcast debate. Evaluating messaging is an

interesting addition to the political participation discourse; however, there is no evidence that such content translates to votes. Despite the continued adoption of Twitter by both the public and politicians, it is still unclear if candidates can effectively communicate using Twitter to promote political action and collaboration with voters.

Wu, Mason, Hofman, and Watts (2011) examined Twitter in the framework of Lazarsfeld's two-step flow theory on how information disseminates to the audience. Lazarsfeld argued that the media had only an indirect influence on public opinion. Further, information passed through two steps or an intermediary level occupied by an opinion leader perceived as a media expert. Wu et al. (2011) found support for the two-step flow of information among Twitter users. Approximately half of the information on Twitter originated from the media and was disseminated to the public indirectly through an intermediate level of opinion leaders. Himelboim, McCreery, and Smith (2013) offered similar research findings on how users engaged in political discussions on Twitter. The researchers concluded that while political discourse on Twitter is restricted to political accounts, users converse socially on a variety of interests outside of political ideologies. The frequency and intensity of Twitter use is a major concern for the current study to test Twitter's relevance to voting behavior in election campaigns.

During the 2012 presidential election campaign Mitchell and Hitlin (2013) found the following: (a) the general tone of most tweets was negative; (b) the largest number of negative comments related to Mitt Romney; (c) the overall tone of conversations flipped back and forth between pro-liberal and pro-conservative based on the campaign event; and (d) there were demographic differences between users who got their news on Twitter and those who tweeted an opinion (Mitchell & Hitlin, 2013). Although the Twitter audience was younger than the average voting public and tended to be Democratic, this may not be the salient point. The authors found

it was less demographics and more the type of event that drove participation on Twitter.

Although Twitter was the preferred method of communication among youthful citizens, online communities form due to events, not demographic similarity. However, since the authors did not look into the relationship of demographics with voting, the current study's multi-variate analysis will add to the understanding of the importance of demographics, Twitter usage, and voting.

YouTube

The video-sharing site YouTube continues to grow and remains a popular social networking site for campaign platforms. Political campaigns, government organizations, and politically minded citizens continue to expand upon its value since its rapid induction during the 2006 midterm campaigns (English, Sweetser, & An, 2011). YouTube offers an unparalleled online site for campaigns due to its delivery capability of presenting video messages in high quality. Users of YouTube watched almost 4 billion political videos during the 2008 U.S. presidential election (English et al., 2011). The number of YouTube users visiting YouTube's Election Hub site (<http://www.youtube.com/user/politics/elections2012>) for political information grew in the 2012 presidential election to 114,746 subscribers and approximately six million video views. The site remains the third most popular social networking site globally (Alexa Sites, 2012).

Scholars studying YouTube consider the dominant Web 2.0 characteristics of the user-generated content and active audience. Winograd and Hais (2008) highlighted the nature and impact of collective intelligence occurring in YouTube, stating, "the user-generated content suddenly became in 2006 a far more compelling campaign weapon than the glossy ads created by media consultants" (p. 133). Klotz (2010) summarized the distinguishing concept of Web 2.0 occurring in YouTube in the 2008 campaign as the collective intelligence of a network of

creators, where amateurs use simple tools to deliver information products. The underlying factors of an active audience and user-generated content can provide a platform for candidates' video messages and advertisements similar to traditional television in an asynchronous web environment.

Obama's 2012 re-election campaign on YouTube merged with other media such as ABC News, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and Univision. Collaborating with established media outlets created live and on-demand content, enhancing the appearance of the 2008 presidential campaign site. YouTube created a 2012 Election Hub and described itself as "the one-stop channel for key political moments" (Alvarez, 2012). The campaign messaging on YouTube capitalized on the growing popularity of Web 2.0 and the asynchronous nature of the Internet. Kim (2012) concluded that YouTube and other online video services are yielding new ways of accessing television programming. Television has influenced YouTube. We are witnessing new media users accessing YouTube in similar ways to traditional media of television.. The study examines if the public is making this transition and if voting results.

YouTube offers media companies a strategy for fast delivery of web content, in addition to expanding user-generated content. YouTube strategies used by media companies are now shaping today's interactive environment for political campaigns, as they have demonstrated that user participation helps promote strong and loyal audiences (Kim, 2012). Wasko and Erickson (2009) called attention to the power of YouTube representing both old and new media systems. They argued that YouTube's influence is more than a one-way distribution of video sharing. Rather, it can serve as an agent of delivery both for promotional tools and for creating new avenues of promotional revenue. The current study explores whether political campaigns on YouTube resulted in campaign contributions. The lack of research evidence makes the study's

findings an important contribution to the political discourse. The dissertation asks, did participants using YouTube donate to political campaigns either through social media sites or in the traditional manner?

There are both benefits and challenges for campaigns strategizing their marketing campaigns via YouTube. Most notable is how YouTube contributes to campaigns' significant and exclusive benefits not achieved in traditional media. Madden (2009), Gueorguieva (2008), Gulati and Williams (2010), and Klotz (2010) described the advantages as follows: (a) untold amounts of video material can be uploaded at no cost; (b) YouTube videos upload quickly and in real time; (c) the site has already established popularity and offers the candidates increased exposure to sought-after demographics, especially young voters; and (d) the purchase of YouTube by Google in 2008 meant that videos would interface well in the results of Google's search engine. Despite these advantages, there are drawbacks for campaigns using a YouTube channel: (a) the site's collaborative nature means that anyone can upload materials, comment on videos, or sabotage a candidate's platform and (b) the utilization of YouTube means that campaign staff need more workers to upload materials at precise times, monitor users' comments and reactions, and respond promptly to prevent the election communication from backfiring (Gueorguieva, 2008).

The number of studies in the literature examining YouTube in political campaigns is small but growing. The site continues to reinvent itself with each election cycle. Scholars are gaining insight into the importance of online videos in campaign platforms and studies are surfacing in the literature addressing campaigns' continued reliance on social networks, including YouTube. Empirical research on the aspects of viral videos infiltrating online campaigns and influencing online and offline political discourse is lacking, despite the potential

of YouTube to alter election campaigns. This study adds to an evolving debate on YouTube's predictive efficacy concerning voting.

Dylko, Beam, Landreville, and Geidner (2012) evaluated the contribution of Web 2.0, specifically YouTube, to democratizing the Internet and reversing the impact of gatekeepers by encouraging community dialogue. Their findings indicated that traditional media still had a strong presence on what messages the masses consumed, despite YouTube's accessibility. These researchers found that the elite or mainstream media still dominated the majority of video content creators and acted as gatekeepers. However, democratization and expansion of the gatekeeping concept is occurring in YouTube among the users considered non-elite. One third of the most popular videos sampled contained no traditional media content. Dylko et al. (2012) concluded that citizens could create political news and bypass the gatekeepers of traditional mass media to distribute information to a substantial audience.

English, Sweetser, and An (2011) studied the reliability and effects of political video messages produced by both citizens and candidates on YouTube. Researchers examined the perceptions of political messages by citizens using Aristotle's available means of persuasion. Citizens who referred to themselves as liberals rated messages framed through *logos* and *pathos* more highly than conservatives. English et al. recognized that the differences in participants' reactions were due to the perceived political affiliation of the video. In addition, examining the gender of the participant revealed that female respondents found appeals framed in *logos* more convincing than males. Gender may explain some of the appeal of YouTube, but different studies argue that other factors are also important.

William and Gulati (2009, 2010) argued that political party affiliation was a significant predictor in utilizing YouTube. A later study by Williams and Gulati (2011) found that

incumbent candidates, as well as candidates running in districts with a high percentage of minority residents, were the most likely to use YouTube. Instead of party as a predictor of YouTube use, the only independent variable significant in the YouTube model was a candidate's revenue receipts. Incumbents with large amounts of money in 2008 were able to fund their advertisements earlier than lesser-known candidates (Shea & Burton, 2006; Williams & Gulati, 2011). Williams and Gulati (2010) concluded that funding available to the incumbents might explain why they increased their presence on YouTube compared to their challengers' utilization of the site. Incumbents have more items, having had opportunities to interact with the public during their last term(s) in various events and, as a result, receive more information and have more occasions to create content for YouTube. Although party affiliation and economics may play a role in who is using YouTube, the panacea of campaigners is voting. The current study examines voting as the outcome, a factor not considered in most previous research.

Candidate Websites

Creating websites for campaign purposes has been popular on the Internet since around 1996. There were 1,296 congressional and gubernatorial candidates (major and minor) maintaining campaign websites to reach out to as many voters as possible by the end of the 1990s (Kamarck, 2002). The campaign websites grew in popularity the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections, suggesting that the candidates found them to be an effective way to communicate their messages (Pole, 2010). The 2004 U.S. presidential campaign witnessed the inclusion of blogs in candidates' websites, although these early blogs functioned similarly to traditional campaign ads (Trammel, 2006). Web 1.0 websites evolved into two-way channels (Web 2.0) for actual conversations between the candidates and citizens. In the 2012 presidential

campaign, websites containing blogs acted as the central hubs for the candidates' digital platforms.

The 2012 campaign constructed social media platforms around official websites. These official websites acted as digital hubs and served as starting points for campaign messages, directing the movement between the differing social network sites of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. These social networking sites also referred visitors back to the main official website to participate politically (e.g., donate money, join an online community, volunteer, or read lengthy messages). The campaign website presented by the Obama team in 2012 was built on the knowledge gained from the 2008 strategy by tailoring content for different states, including the ability to reach any state party for localized updates and content. However, the information accessibility discussed in the literature does not focus on voting patterns of citizens, or even explore if the information accessibility aids in getting citizens to vote. The current study addresses these issues through its correlation of frequency of use and intensity of use and voting of participants.

Blogs

Studies focused on blogging are becoming more common in the literature. The early research on blogs examined their application to mobilize citizens during the early days of the Internet or pre-Web 2.0 technologies. Early studies examined citizens' perceptions of online sources of public information. Johnson and Kaye (2003, 2004) studied citizens' perceptions of the credibility of information on campaign sites. The findings of Kiouisis (2001) are similar to those of Johnson and Kaye (2003, 2004), namely that blog readers perceived political news in blogs as more credible than television but less credible than print. In addition, blog readers preferred reading blogs on different websites and ignored the social media sites such as YouTube

and MySpace as sources of political information. Johnson, Kaye and Kim (2010) and Johnson and Kaye (2010) suggested that individual reliance on blogs had no effect on political activity. While the blogosphere can be an online platform for democratic deliberations and discussion forums, it still needs further investigation, which the current study provides.

Johnson and Kaye (2010) hypothesized that Internet users (Web 1.0 and Web 2.0) get more choices of online information with greater control than traditional users. Also, a fragmentation of the online audience occurs, with individuals only seeking news or discussions that interest them. Hence, people online tend to associate with like-minded others, resulting in a fragmentation of the audience and polarized discussion in online blogs. Online media promote a false sense of community, attracting like-minded individuals with similar opinions.

An additional component of the current study is the examination of a move from traditional media to social media as a means of citizen participation. The following sections discuss the current research on the traditional media's role in political campaigns as a foundation for examining the transference to social media.

Traditional Media and Political Participation

Media scholars (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Eveland, Morey, & Hutchens, 2011; Shah et al., 2005) researching the influence of media on political participation find that the news in traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television can deliver political information that mobilizes citizens to political participation. In this sense, mass media are capable of provoking discussions among citizens' networks and possibly causing the news audience to reflect upon the candidate's issues. Mutz and Martin (2001) concluded that the mass media expose citizens to viewpoints that are different from their personal networks. These researchers theorize that mass media are stronger channels when seeking to promote deliberation of democratic ideas in society,

as interpersonal conversation is more likely to result in promoting participatory behavior among citizens.

Kaufhold, Valenzuela, and Gil de Zuniga (2010) stated that the present day political coverage of U.S. elections is often strategic and portrays elections as horse races, which elicits cynicism from media audiences. Competitive reporting by media challenges the scholarly research when the strategic use of the media by campaigns is more concerned with eliciting attention to the election rather than mobilizing citizens towards active political participations such as voting. Kaufhold et al. (2010) reported that negative trust of the media correlates to negative political trust. Mutz and Reeves (2005) put forth that the growing number of incivility moments on television reduces political trust among television viewers. It is the view of Mutz and Reeves that these growing conflicts in political television are promoting interest in elections at the expense of political trust. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2012) reported that 55% of Americans surveyed trust only a few news sources and 42% of the public see the news media as all the same. Alternatively, Deuze, Bruns, and Neuberger (2007) stated that news outlets that incorporate social media and invite citizens to join in a daily conversation increase the trust in the traditional news media providers.

According to the Pew Research Center (2012) despite the capacity of traditional mass media to mobilize citizens' political participation in elections, citizen use of such media continues to decline, in turn contributing to a decline in political participation. Further, the Pew Research Center reported that despite the decline in traditional media usage, television, radio, and newspapers continue to influence democratic citizenship. As such, the candidates in the 2012 presidential election invested heavily in the traditional media.

Although citizen use of traditional media declined during the 2012 Presidential Debates, the Pew Research Center (2012) reports that the majority of the American public still chose traditional media over social media. According to the Pew Report, 56% of the surveyed participants watched the debate on television in real time, with another 11% watching on both television and a social media site and 3% watching only on social media. The demographic breakdown of citizens watching the debates showed that audience members between the ages of 40 and 64 chose television as their preferred medium. Citizens under the age of 40 reported watching the debates on both social media and television, or solely on social media. However, the dominant media source across groups was television, with 83% of participants citing the medium as their principal media source.

Traditionally, the influence of newspapers exceeds television and radio in informing citizens, even when scholars controlled for the larger audiences. According to Goldman and Mutz (2009), citizens are able to expose themselves selectively to views in agreement with their own more often in newspapers than in broadcast television news. Newspapers tend to be more partisan than television news, which makes it easier for readers to match their own political identities with the views of newspapers.

The basis of media politics research is exploring how listeners, viewers, or readers experience attitudinal and behavioral changes based on party discourse. The politicized talk found on talk radio provides an avenue of citizen discourse and exposure to political information and issues during election campaigns. Lee and Capella (2001) found that the extent of an individual's exposure to talk radio was more influential in shaping a listener's attitude formation than his or her existing political knowledge. The tone and orientation of a message are additional important considerations when seeking attitude changes in individuals. Barker and

Knight (2000) contend that negative messages are more likely than positive media messages to bring attitude changes to radio listeners. Hofstetter et al. (1999) examined radio speak in conservative talk radio programming. The results of the study found that the audience received more misinformation in conservative talk shows than in moderate talk programming. Hall and Capella (2002) looked at Rush Limbaugh's conservative political talk programming and found that listeners tend to agree with his views, highlighting that media's political effect is more about agreement than discourse or exploring political differences on the issues.

Radio listeners and callers perceive radio programming as an authentic public sphere that offers an expression of alternative opinions in the voices of real people. The rapid growth of talk radio programming in the United States has commentators referring to it as electronic populism (Ross, 2004). This premise has not materialized. Boggs and Dirmann (1999) found that audience participation producing authentic political participation is an illusion. These shows function more as entertainment commodities. The results of audience participation on radio shows indicated that callers were not contributing meaningful participation despite participants' beliefs that they were ordinary voters putting forth their views. McNair, Hibberd, and Schlesinger (2001) and Ross (2004) discovered that almost half of the callers to radio talk shows are women who perceive themselves as interested in politics. This finding contradicts the common perception that women lack an interest in politics and are more concerned with their private sphere of family than the public sphere. This apparent contradiction is important to the current study, which considers the gender differences in participation patterns in social networking sites.

There is a trend of moving away from traditional media (Pew, 2012; Ridout, 2013; Webster, 2005). The conundrum is that although there is a move towards social media in many

studies, research does not conclude that there has been a move by a majority of citizens. Further, there is little information concerning the differences in effect between traditional media such as radio and social media on political participation and voting. The current study attempts, through its modeling of media usage, to determine which media are predictive of voting and, to a lesser degree, political participation.

The Influence of Traditional Mass Media on Voting

Media influence an individual's voting decisions. McCombs and Shaw's (1972) publication of the agenda setting theory describes the power of the mass media to influence the public on what issues are important. These researchers investigated the 1968, 1972, and 1976 presidential campaigns, focusing on two components: awareness and information in the framework of agenda setting theory. They attempted to evaluate the relationship between what voters in one community determined were the most important issues and the specific content of the mass media messages used during the campaign. They concluded that the mass media exerted a significant influence on what voters considered the major issues of the campaign. The insights gained from mass media assist individuals in predicting how others may vote in elections. These insights gained from media form a knowledge base for citizens to make electoral decisions.

The mass media are a source of a large quantity of information that is instantaneously shared with voters. Cohen and Tsfaty (2009) pointed out that the coordination effect or the influence of the media in voting correlates to voters' social beliefs. Citizens assess political information in the media and weigh their voting decisions based on their perceptions of how others will vote. Individuals act and vote in the belief that media influence the social

information shared by individuals. Elections, especially presidential elections, emphasize the importance of each voter's participation.

Blais and Nadeau (1996) found that some citizens form electoral decisions based not only on agreement with candidates' views, but also on an analysis of the possible results according to available media information. Cox (1997) stated that citizens want to avoid the feeling of a wasted vote. Certain citizens vote strategically, based on the probability of a candidate winning an election. Media serve as sources for these strategic voters, informing them of the voting intentions of other citizens and analyzing the political climate. Traditional media act as sources of information to predict how others will vote in elections through public opinion, political advertising, news coverage, political talk shows, television, radio, and newspaper stories and features.

The growing trend by journalists is to emphasize campaign coverage in the tone of strategic information or "horse race coverage." Kilgore (2012) pointed out that journalists tend to report campaigns like sporting events, rooting for the underdog as they overreact to campaign events and consistently emphasize changing polling numbers. Cohen (2009) noted that voters believe that journalists reporting in the media strongly influence voters, shift perceptions, and shape the outcomes of elections. If the media were inconsequential, then it would be difficult for voters to sense how others would vote or to vote strategically. The research conducted here examines if these trends continued in the 2012 presidential election.

Recent years saw the rise of studies examining the influence of mass media such as television, radio, and print on voting. Scholars considered newspapers and later, television, to be the most influential channels of political communication (Bennett & Entman, 2001). Recent studies exploring the media's capacity to personalize the content of political messages to

influence voting reflect early media scholars' contention of the power of mass media in campaigns (Druckman, 2005; Hayes, 2009; Van Aelst, Sheafer, & Stanyer, 2011). Traditional media's persuasive impact on a citizen's vote continues to be debated by scholars. Preasetekar and Hopmabb (2012) concluded that media do not personalize content to influence voting behavior but instead produce critical information to the public to assist them in their voting choices. Barisone (2009) argued that personalization of media content influences the electoral decisions of citizens in presidential elections. The results of studies investigating print media's influence on levels of political participation and voter turnout is mixed.

A handful of correlation studies exist investigating the relationships between television and campaign information or newspapers and campaign information (Robinson & Davis, 1990; Robinson & Levy, 1986; Weaver & Drew, 2001 1993), finding support that the majority of voters learn more about campaign information from newspapers than television. Alternatively, Price and Zaller (1993) found a tendency of more educated individuals reading newspapers, but did not find a causal impact on newspaper reading and learning about campaign issues. The research lacks conclusive evidence as to why political participation and voting continue to decline. The political ideology of a newspaper might be a more important determinant of political participation/voting.

The partisan affiliation of a newspaper influences a voter's decision-making. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010) found evidence that the content of a newspaper adapts to the beliefs of its readers. Gentzkow et al. (2011) found a statistically significant correlation between the voting behavior of a county and the affiliation of its newspaper. Additional findings by Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Sinkinson (2011) linked voter turnout to newspaper information. These results support Gerber, Karlan, and Bergan's (2009) finding that even a short exposure to a newspaper

influences public opinion and voting behavior. These studies support theories that individuals are more likely to vote when informed of the issues (Blais, 2000; Hochschild, 2010; Pande, 2011). In part, the current study looks at the correlation between newspaper reading to gain political information and voting in the 2012 presidential election campaign.

Media Convergence and Political Participation

Media convergence is the delivery of different media channels in one single platform (McPhilips & Merlo, 2008). The active audience is an important element of convergence. Scholars of convergence examine the intertextuality of audience engagement or how one medium is enhanced or augmented by another. Convergent media are transforming the traditional media audience with social media (Bird, 2011).

Broadcast and cable television reporting augmented their information on election night 2012 by incorporating Twitter maps or state-by-state breakdowns of how individuals discussed the election on Twitter. The 2012 presidential election merged television's comparatively passive audience with Twitter's active audience. The reporting presented in television used real-time mapping of tweets mentioning the candidates. Reporters read and counted tweets state by state during the telecast in an attempt to predict the outcome of the presidential election.

Increasing numbers of citizens are seeking new avenues for political information outside the traditional media. The presence of participatory journalism or user-centered news production as a form of news content is producing politically informed voters (Kaufhold et al., 2010). Social media strategist Joseph Lascia (2003) described blogging as "committing a random act of journalism" (p. 1). Scholars continue to debate whether bloggers compete with or complement mainstream media (Kaufhold et al., 2010). Ong (2008) reasoned that understanding the shift occurring in contemporary media politics recognizes that individuals are simultaneously citizens,

audiences, consumers, and family members seeking to move in new avenues outside the traditional domain of political participation. Understanding the multidimensional needs of voters will help political strategists understand how voters will seek and respond to campaign messages in new media politics.

While social networking sites continue to grow as important sources of information with each presidential election cycle, scholars are finding conflicting data concerning the convergence of traditional and social media. According to Millberry and Anderson (2009), Hindman (2006), and Webster and Ksiazek (2012), traditional media outlets including NBC News, CNN, and *Newsweek* combined with their online presence are attracting more users than non-traditional sites in Web 2.0, such as blogs. The online sites of traditional news outlets are reporting limited viewpoints reducing the breadth of information available to the public. Parmelee et al. (2011) contend that traditional media domination of the political information on Web 2.0 sites limits diverse viewpoints of candidates and campaign issues and restricts the emergence of a public sphere. Other studies (Ancu & Corma, 2009; Bichard, 2006) found that initially the online sites of traditional media (CNN and NBC) which had gatekeepers had not focused on patterns of gathering political information. Instead, the considerable growth in reporting political information occurred in social networking sites, blogs, and non-traditional political online sites, which did not have traditional mass media gatekeepers.

The nature of the Internet is constantly changing. The Web 1.0 Internet of the 1990s and early 2000s focused on users' political participation in an online (Web 1.0) environment that is much different from the present form. Many of the Web 1.0 Internet studies addressed users' political participation with traditional media in synchronous behaviors that mimicked their offline usage. The present Internet Web 2.0 research merges the offline behaviors with

traditional media of print, radio, and television and the asynchronous characteristics of the Internet. Dulio, Goff, and Thurber (1999) conducted a content analysis of all websites created by candidates for all open seats for the U.S. Senate. The candidates' online presence in the 1998 Senate election employed the websites in similar ways to traditional media of television, radio, and print with little adaptation to the online environment. Dulio, et al. (1999) found no evidence that the Internet had any impact on election results. Research consistently points out that the audiences are becoming more active in their media interactions, indicating that web users are more politically active (Ancu & Cozma, 2009; Tancer, 2008). However, the lack of consistency in the findings emphasizes the need for this research, which examines the political activeness of the participants.

The rise in non-traditional sites such as blogs has implications for introducing a diversity of views and changing the political discourse. For instance, a Pew Research Center study (2009) reported a significant increase of voters (78%) from the 2004 presidential election using non-traditional sites to search for campaign information during the 2008 presidential election, accessing such sites as blogs, alternative news organizations, and fact-checking sites, or news satire sites such as *The Daily Show's* website (Smith, 2009). This percentage compares to 98% of voters during the 2008 presidential election who visited at least one online site affiliated with a major TV station or a national newspaper. An increasing number of tech-savvy citizens are gathering political information in both online non-traditional news sites and traditional sites. Parmelee et al. (2011) stated that the extent to which users seeking political information seek out non-traditional online sites or the trend of these non-traditional sites replacing or supplementing traditional sites is still unclear.

Online Political Participation

Scholars' confidence in the ability of social media (Web 2.0) to increase citizens' political participation continues to fuel the debates that began with Web 1.0 in the 1990s. Firestone and Clark (1995) argued that the Internet would lead citizens to recognize the importance of political participation again. The evolution of the mobilization debate, beginning with the introduction of social media, at times seems counterproductive as it lacks a variation in meaning, which reflects current political participation activities now found in social networking. It is the opinion of an increasing number of researchers that an increasingly complicated issue is what constitutes political participation (activities) within social media (Anduiza, Cantijoch, & Gallego, 2007; Gil de Zuniga, Veenstra, & Shah, 2010; Gustafsson, 2012; Schlozman, et al., 2011). The conceptual confusion is problematic in recent participatory political studies. Studies on mediated relations and political participation operate under a clear definition set forth by Brady (1999), describing political participation "as action by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing some political outcomes" (p. 737). Anduiza et al. (2007) and Gil de Zuniga et al. (2010) argue that instead of reliance on past definitions of political participation used during traditional media and Web 1.0 eras, a new definition should be created to reflect the current Web 2.0 platforms. Schlozman et al. (2011) suggest that political participation is "an activity that has the purpose or effect of influencing government – either directly by affecting the building or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the choice of people who make those policies" (p. 131). The Pew Surveys are examples used by Schlozman et al. to emphasize the need for new definitions to clarify the conceptual confusion with the inclusion of online participation activities. The surveys by Pew attend to how social media act as forums for political talk. For instance, friending a candidate is not the same as working for a campaign.

Traditional political participation activities do not justify the range of other political activities that increasingly rely on social media in political campaigns (Schlozman et al., 2011). Researchers (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2010; Hoffman, Jones, & Young, 2013) advocated that future studies should investigate the use and frequency of use of the asynchronous qualities of social media to change political participation. There is a lack of research focusing on the features in social media that are immediate, visual, self-selected, and impersonal and which of these features have an impact on citizen political participation and voting. The current study undertakes this task for each of the social networking sites (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Candidates Websites). In addition, researchers need to continue to redefine online political connection with activities that differ from traditional media and the early Internet in current studies. The participatory activities found in Web 2.0 are new and in some cases different from those found on the early Internet (Web 1.0) and early social networking sites. Traditional media participation dimensions of voting, campaign activities, contacting officials, and collaborative activities are now online activities (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Wang, 2007). Former traditional political participations are adapting to online media. Online political participation is moving away from displaying campaign slogans on cars or lawns, as citizens can convey these messages on personal websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2010; Gustafsson, 2010). Material explaining different patterns of alternative channels available on the Internet and their capacity to bypass traditional gatekeepers is missing from the literature to date (DiGennaro & Dutton, 2006).

Web 2.0 activities continue to grow despite researchers' lack of consensus in defining participatory activities. This dissertation attempts to focus the debate on the user-generated qualities of Web 2.0 platforms. Candidates no longer hold all the cards in producing messages;

instead, individual visitors to the sites engage in the conversation, forward tweets to others, or donate money to campaigns. This study examines the frequency and type of use of various components of each platform to measure the political participation of the participants.

Therefore, I aggregate these participatory activities to form a new definition of political participation. The proliferation of technological devices used to access the Internet continues to increase participation rates (Smith & Duggan, 2012), which in turn fuels the need for updated definitions as to what constitutes participatory activities. Sixty-nine percent of Americans in 2012 reported that they used social media, which is an increase of 37% from 2008. Twenty-two percent of registered voters reported sharing their vote for president on social media, with another 35% encouraging others to vote in the election (Raine, Smith, Schlozman, Brady & Verba, 2012).

The minimal existing research focusing on the effects of social networks on political participation are diverse in their conclusions. Differing methodology, measurements, and sample populations (Gustafsson, 2012). Schlozman et al. (2011) suggested evidence that inequalities in citizens' political opinions decrease when political participation occurs in an online rather than an offline format with the exception of differences due to age. An offline participation pattern exists where a user's participation levels peak around age 66, then declines. In addition, the researchers found that online participation activities present a conflict between young and middle-aged users who are less likely to engage in offline political activities while those over the age of 66 as a group were less likely to participate in online activities.

Zhang et al. (2010) examined the dependence of social media sites MySpace and YouTube on political participation and trust in government during the 2008 presidential election campaign. The results of this study found that a positive significant relationship exists between

social media and civic participation and a significant relationship between civic and political participation and interpersonal discussion. Zhang et al., (2010) argued that we could increase overall political participation in society if we encouraged citizens to increase their levels of online discussion. These research findings support an earlier claim by Zhang and Seltzer (2008) that online political discussions have a direct effect on political behavior, but not on political attitudes.

Gil de Zuniga et al. (2010) reviewed blogs and newspapers in the 2008 campaign, finding distinct differences in offline participation activities compared to online participation activities. The results of this study reflected citizens' awareness of new participation activities and behaviors in existence during the 2008 campaign. Evidence put forward in this study indicated the increasing convergence of media between traditional and social media communication to convey political communications during election campaigns. It is the opinion of a growing number of researchers (Bird, 2011; Jenkins, 2006) that we are experiencing a media convergence of online and offline political participation creating a digital democracy. The current study uses a convergence model – combining traditional, Web 1.0, and Web 2.0 activities – to explain voting among the study's participants.

Voting and the Internet

Voting is the most important political participation activity (Patterson, 2003). Individuals who do not cast a vote are withdrawing from the political community and society's fundamental principle of equality (Putnam, 2000). There is a dearth of empirical studies examining voters' exposure to social media during campaigns (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010; Strandberg, 2012). The studies that do exist in the literature concentrate more on subjects' exposure to specific social media than whether they mobilize citizens to venture to the polls (Dylko et al.,

2011; Gulati & Williams, 2010; Klotz, 2010; Wallsten, 2010). The current study attempts to determine if social media mobilize citizens to vote more so than do traditional media.

Previous studies on interpersonal social networks may offer transferable findings to understand how individuals form opinions in online campaigns. The findings from early social network studies on the influence of interpersonal relationship communication patterns in traditional media on voting may be applicable to digital media. The majority of these studies examined the exchange of information in interpersonal social networks or compared them to different consumptions of traditional media in the formation of political opinions and political deliberations (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Leighley, 1996; Livingstone & Markam, 2008; McLeod et al., 1999; Verba et al., 1995). For instance, McClug (2003) found a significant relationship between voter turnout and increased frequency of political discussions in interpersonal social networks. Other studies (Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague, 2004; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, & Bichard, 2010) set forth that the content of the discussion is a key factor in understanding patterns of political participation. Voter turnout increases when voters communicate with others who are expressing definite opinions on topics in campaigns, particularly regarding candidate preferences.

Empirical studies (Chen, 2013; Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Towner, 2013) proposed that citizens deliberating in cohesive political settings and discussing political issues are significant features in general electorates. These studies support the traditional studies of two foundational mass communication publications by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) and Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944). Katz and Lazarsfeld argued that traditional mass communication is more influential in motivating citizens to electoral participation, while Lazarsfeld et al.'s (1944) study, based on the 1940 presidential election,

reported that person-to-person transmission can be a more powerful force than the traditional media of magazines, newspapers, and radio (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010).

The 1990s saw an increase in Internet studies suggesting there are common communication strategies that candidates can enact to persuade voters to think and act about political issues in certain ways (Farnsworth & Owen, 2004; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). In addition, studies emerged investigating the impact of online social networks. Specifically, researchers inspected online social networks' influence on face-to-face patterns, focusing on whether online members bond or fragment (Bimber 1998; Rheingold, 1993; Schuler, 1996; Tsagarousianouet, Tambini & Bryan, 1998). There was some evidence that citizens using the Internet for political information were more educated and politically engaged, voted more, and overall had stronger tendencies to join political groups and partake in other forms of participation (Jennings & Zeitner, 2003; Norris, 1998; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001b). Bimber and Davis (2003) found that during the 2000 presidential election, Internet users held strong partisan ties to candidates, were quite knowledgeable about issues, and were already committed to voting for a candidate before turning to the Internet. The overall focus of studies in the early days of the Internet focused on citizens' interactions online, with the majority of these studies lacking in evidence to correlate online membership with real-world political participation and voting (Coleman et al., 2008).

Additionally, researchers developed models analyzing the complexity of deliberations in social networks using political science models of voting and mass communication (Redlawsk, 2004). These models included traditional media and Web 1.0 to predict patterns of political participation and voting. Data demonstrated that candidates receive votes in their favor through the acquisition of information. These minimal models are lacking an understanding of variations

in acquisitions of information influencing the voter (Redlawsk, 2004). A more recent study by Schmitt-Beck and Mackenrodt (2010) developed a series of political participation models to determine how informal communication in social networks and formal communication in mass media effected mobilization of political participation, including voting. A person is more likely to vote if he or she is part of a larger network of politically active citizens. On the other hand, strong presences of others who abstain from voting can also lead to others in the system to refraining from voting. The conclusion of the study stated that political discussions do not mobilize or demobilize individuals to vote.

Schmitt-Beck and Mackenrodt (2010) proposed that three main components need attention when studying the mobilization of voters. The first two components center on the personal attributes of the voter. Creating resources and materials that are user-friendly to persuade individuals to vote is a first consideration. An additional component stresses the importance of addressing voters' motivations. Finally, one needs to go beyond personal attributes and understand the social norms of political participation. To date, no studies exist linking electoral studies of interpersonal social networks and the effects of mass communication studies on audiences. Uniting the areas of personal attributes and audience effects provides insight on voters' interactions with other people in online deliberations and increases understanding of the impact of social media in voter turnout (Coleman et al., 2008; Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010). This study examines models similar to the traditional model and the Web 1.1 model in the previous research. Additionally, Web 2.0 and media convergence models are added to bridge the gap in the literature concerning mobilization of citizens to vote in the presidential election of 2012.

Web 1.0 and Voting

A summary of the literature reveals the optimistic expectations that Internet will mobilize citizens to different patterns of participatory activities, especially voting in elections. Despite scholars' optimism, many studies (Anduiza et al., 2008; Bimber, 1999, Bimber & Davis, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2004) stressed the inability of the Internet to fulfill its encouraging expectation to mobilize voters. The assumption that new media mimics the patterns of participation witnessed in traditional media is repeated in the results of these Web 1.0 studies. Bimber and Davis's (2003) in-depth case studies of online campaigns in 2000 found no causal relationship between website presence and voter choice. Bimber and Davis discovered that the viewing of candidates' websites by likely voters had no effect on their decisions about whether to vote or their voting preference. A few studies (Bruns, 2005; Dalgreen, 2005, 2011; Weber et al., 2003) did find support for the Internet conclusively determining a user's political participation and involvement. In addition to these researchers, Johnson and Kaye (2003) produced evidence to support mobilization in Web 1.0 in their study examining the level of political interest, participation, and voting behavior had on netizens during the 2000 presidential election campaign. They concluded that individuals who turned to the web during the 2000 election campaign became more politically active and reported higher levels of voting. The ongoing debate and the inconclusiveness of previous research warrant this study's exploration of Web 1.0 attributes and voting behavior in the 2012 presidential election.

Web 2.0 and Voting

There is a dearth of empirical studies examining the impact of Web 2.0 on voting in political campaigns. Panagopoulos, Gueorguieva, Slotnick, Gulati and Williams (2009) examined whether House incumbents who updated their Facebook profiles during the campaign

performed any differently in securing votes than House incumbents who did not update their profiles. The findings, based on the results of two multivariate regression analyses of House incumbents, found no difference in the final vote percentage estimates. In addition, incumbents who ran against challengers who updated their Facebook profiles did not fare any differently than those who did not. Ultimately, Panagopoulos, et al. (2009) found that Facebook did not have an impact on the 2006 elections in terms of the final vote percentages.

Lewis (2011) examined the Pew Internet and American Life Project information from the 2008 presidential election to determine if a correlation existed between level of blog reading and online political discussion or online political participation and voting by demographic measures such as age, education, gender, income, and marital status. Lewis (2011) discovered a strong correlation between blog reading, online chat, and online participation. Blog readers tended to vote more than non-readers did; however, the data were unable to predict voter choice after controlling for the demographics of the readers. Lewis concluded that if blog readers are more likely to vote than non-blog readers, candidates should focus their efforts on understanding how blogs engage citizens in campaign messages (Lewis, 2011). There are other Web 2.0 platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube that to date have not been included in the study of political participation/voting, which this dissertation seeks to rectify.

Theoretical Frameworks and Political Participation on the Internet

A number of academic foundational frameworks surface in the empirical studies examining online political participation. The pendulum of traditional research primarily swings between reinforcement theory and mobilization theory to explain citizens' participation. Reinforcement and mobilization theorists disagree about the influence of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 on political participation patterns occurring in new media. Contemporary debate among media

scholars has spread to encompass the inclusion of other theoretical frameworks including UGT, social network theory, online democratic deliberation theory, and normalization theories, into the basis of empirical analysis.

Mobilization theory takes a technological determinist stance, envisioning that the Internet will create an open, decentralized, and interactive space that will enfranchise marginalized citizens, making political information more accessible as it equalizes access to political information. Reinforcement theory, in contrast, originates from a perspective that society shapes communication patterns. The theory predicts that while the Internet has the potential to decentralize and create more opportunities for participation in the political process, the elite or those individuals with access to technology will benefit from it. Further, these elite individuals will devise ways to retain dominance of the information on the Internet. These theories are not necessarily exclusive of each other. Winneg (2011) suggests that data do not consistently show a pattern of either mobilization or reinforcement in political participation in various political activities on the Internet. The findings show that some occurrences can trigger small groups of individuals to participate in activities, typically undereducated citizens. Gustafsson (2010) noted a key factor when studying political involvement with social network sites stating,

It is crucial not to fall for the temptation to think that everything about political behavior online is inherently different and cannot be aided by traditional theories. At the same time, believing that there is nothing new at all with participation through a social network does not support the research. Existing theory must be continuously challenged. (p.

1112)

This dissertation examines this exact point. Are social media and traditional media inherently different or are they converging to create a comprehensive communication pattern to stimulate voting among participants?

Mobilization Theory

Mobilization theory renewed the interest of scholars in the growing number of citizens actively participating in social media sites. Scholars of mobilization theory maintain a strong favorable view of the potential of the Internet to transform the patterns of citizens' indifference to a functioning public sphere. Numerous mobilization studies (Bond et al., 2012; Bruns, 2005; Dalgren, 2005; Hayes, 2009; Klein, 1999; Norris & Krook, 2009; Rosenstone & Hanson, 2002; Stark & Lunt, 2012; Tambini, 1999; Weber et al., 2003; Winneg, 2009) supported Habermas' discursive framework that public discourse will grow to incorporate a diversity of ideas, topics, and arguments based on a variety of political viewpoints. Mobilization theory adheres to the optimistic view that a revitalized electorate will appear, incorporating an expansion of the political discourse in Web 2.0. Citizens' active blogging, commenting, and "liking" on Facebook and uploading videos on YouTube generate new forms of citizen journalism. Mobilization scholars (Bond et al., 2012; Bruns, 2005; Dalgren, 2013; Hayes, 2009; Klein, 1999; Norris, 2009; Rosenstone & Hanson, 2002; Stark & Lunt, 2012; Tambini, 1999; Weber et al., 2003; Winneg, 2009) predicted that the Internet will introduce new types of online engagement creating a new level in the playing field, motivating citizens to renewed interest in political participation.

Mobilization theory claims that civic networks use the Internet to rejuvenate citizens through accessing information preferences, connecting users with others sharing similar ideas and interests. Scholars stress that an increase in interactions between citizens and civic, public,

and political officials would reduce the costs of participating in politics (Anduiza et al., 2008; DiGennaro & Dutton, 2006; Hayes, 2009; Rosenstone & Hanson, 2002). Bond et al. (2012) measured the impact of online social networks (Web 2.0) in the 2010 congressional elections. The study validated that online political mobilization works. Online political mobilization prompted political self-expression, information gathering, and voter turnout. This finding supports a study conducted during the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections by Tolbert and McNeal (2003). Individuals shown election news on the Internet had increased rates of voting, advancing the potential of the web to mobilize towards online participation. Additionally, Bond et al. discovered other factors that went beyond the immediate effects of online participation, including social pressure to promote behavioral changes in the electorate. Findings indicate a strong suspicion that online behaviors can affect a variety of offline behaviors, including voting, supporting an earlier study by Bakker and de Vreese (2011) that various online engagements on the Internet had a beneficial impact on youth in political participation.

Lower communication and networking costs will make it easier for citizens to enter the political process and perform such activities as learning candidates' stances on issues, contacting elected officials, or organizing networks with others (DiGennaro & Dutton, 2006; Norris, 2001; Winneg, 2009). Rosenstone and Hanson (1993) predicted that political organizers, e.g., bipartisan groups such as Rock the Vote and Moveon.org could inspire voters. Moveon.org and Rock the Vote.com served as grassroots organizations, allowing members to recommend priorities and strategies on their Web 2.0 sites, supporting earlier studies by Winneg (2009) and Rosenstone and Hanson (2002). Winneg found that the increased reach of both Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 networks have a strong influence on political participation, exposing issues to new views and political interests. These increased opportunities for political participation attract new

participants to online forums, expanding the discourse and enhancing points of view in online communication and political environments. The web can influence the political process and we are still evolving towards a new public sphere (Winnege, 2009, 2011).

Reinforcement Theory

The general assertion of reinforcement theory is that the Internet will host a community with a fragmented discussion based on broad diversity and a scattering of public attention (Stark & Lunt, 2012). A premise of reinforcement theory is that the effects of the Internet will reinforce the status quo and lead to an underestimation of the total impact of mass communication (Meng, 2011). Reinforcement studies (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Bosnjak et al., 2008) found that the Internet will strengthen existing political participation patterns and most likely increase the gap between affluent and non-affluent individuals and between active and non-active users. While the Internet will make information more accessible, this expansion of knowledge will decentralize dialogue among its users and at the same time, an unfair playing field will emerge on the web. Certain users, especially the elites and politically involved users, will have greater access to technology, widening the gap between themselves and those who access information from the traditional media deliverables on television, on radio, and in print (Bimber & David, 2003; Norris, 2001; Weare, 2002). The technology offers another resource for the most affluent, motivated, active, and informed members of society. Selective attention to messages reinforces the existing biases in citizens' online participations (Norris, 2001).

Findings of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 reinforcement studies advocating for reinforcement principles are inconsistent. Bimber (1999) produced evidence of reinforcement theory in his analysis of how citizens engage with their government services. The more politically connected, better educated, older, and male people who fit the profile for reinforcement theory are more

likely to contact government for services. However, the study also provided evidence in support of mobilization theory, in that younger people were more likely than older people to use e-mail to reach out to government officials.

Bimber and Davis (2003) compared candidates' presentations of online information to traditional media in Internet-based campaigns to sway voters' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Bimber and Davis concluded that while campaigns need the Internet to obtain votes, overall it attracts only a few new or marginalized users to the campaigns. It was the opinion of Bimber and Davis that the Internet better serves activists seeking to mobilize politically interested users to donate, volunteer, and network communication messages and encouraging others to vote. The authors hypothesized that people use the Internet to meet their own campaign needs and not necessarily to produce mobilization, as the Internet expands the digital divide (Bimber & Davis, 2003). The current study puts forth the hypothesis that Web 2.0 will follow along similar lines to those found by Bimber and Davis. Despite the asynchronous qualities of Web 2.0, it will merely reinforce existing motivations and will not mobilize citizens to become involved in political activities, including voting.

Johnson and Kaye's (2004) study found consistent evidence for reinforcement theory, proposing that those who are already politically involved are the type most likely to seek out political news from the media. Johnson and Kaye suggested, "Political attitudes may have little influence on online credibility because studies suggest those online users, rather than becoming socially isolated and unmotivated, are politically connected and more likely to seek out information from the media than the general public" (p. 626). Anduiza et al. (2008) supported Bimber and Davis's (2003) findings of minimal effects or reinforcing effects of the Internet, maintaining "that it is all politics as usual: the Internet is not radically transforming patterns of

political participation” (p. 6). The use of information communication technology will more than likely widen the chasm of inequalities by reinforcing material barriers preventing marginalized groups and individuals from joining. Bimber and Copeland (2013) found continued support for the reinforcing influence of the Internet in the 2012 presidential election, supporting the claim put forth by Bimber and Davis. President Obama won the 2012 election with fewer votes than the 2008 election, including a smaller share of the youth vote.

Inconsistencies exist in the research examining the Internet (Web 1.0 and Web 2.0) and reinforcement of political participation activities. Boulianne (2009) highlighted inconsistencies between data quality and model designs in her meta-analysis of 38 studies examining political participation over election cycles. Bimber and Copeland (2013) stated that the findings found by Boulianne do not address research that analyzed more than one election cycle using identical models and controlling for political interest (Bimber & Copeland, 2013; Cho et al., 2009; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). The inconsistent results of using the Internet to alter patterns of political participation may be due to the emphasis in the literature measuring Internet use in single cross-sections, thus presenting results that are not generalizable (Bimber & Copeland, 2013). Further, time might be another reason for the inconsistencies of results to support existing reinforcing patterns of political participation. Integrating new political patterns and their role in elections will take time, as such patterns increase with each election (Cho et al., 2009; Xenos & Moy, 2007). The reinforcement and mobilization debate, the inconclusiveness of previous findings, and the lack of research into Web 2.0’s characteristics support the need for the instant study.

New Media Frameworks for Online Participation

Uses and Gratification Theory

Teams of researchers in the 1970s discovered that media users had a need either to connect with or to disconnect from others (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972; Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). Blumer and McQuail (1969) examined why people watched political programs. Researchers began to see a void in limited effects mass media research, as only minimal attention focused on how audience members used media. In response to this void, theorists Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch developed the Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT), based on earlier research by Herta Herzog (1944). Hertzog sought to understand why people engage in different types of media behaviors, analyzing an audience's needs with traditional media of newspapers and radio listening (West & Turner, 2010). UGT argues that people will actively seek out media to create personal gratification results (West & Turner, 2010). Additional researchers contributing studies to UGT are noted in the literature. McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) categorized media into four divisions in their UGT study to explain audience gratifications needs with media. Rubin (1981) found audience motivations for television could be explained by clustering gratifications into categories. Uses and gratification theorists argued that people are active and are able to assess and evaluate different types of media to achieve their personal communication goals (Chen, 2011).

The focus of past applications of UGT in communication research examines an individual's choice(s) of radio and television use. Presently, this mass communication theory is increasingly being used as a foundation theory for cyberspace research by a variety of academic disciplines such as communication, sociology, psychology, computer science, political science,

and educational technology (Hicks et al., 2012; Mondy et al., 2008; Park et al., 2009; Smock et al., 2011).

The onset of Web 1.0 saw a resurgence of UGT. Shanahan and Morgan (1999) proposed that with the introduction of Web 1.0, there was an adaptation of content from the previous dominant technology of society. For instance, history has shown numerous instances of adapting content to new technology, from radio shows including soap operas moving to television or modern-day television-watching on mobile devices (tablets and cellphones).

Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) predicted the use of the Internet within the framework of UGT and found five main motives why people use the Internet, with information-seeking being the most prominent. Further, users are more goal-directed and aware of their needs and can actively seek out information to fulfill those needs. Dimmick, Chen, and Li (2004) suggested that the Internet might replace traditional media as a source of information and news. They found that people are mimicking their communication patterns practices, interests, and behaviors of traditional media in Web 1.0, for instance reading the news on the web as they would read it a newspaper. The UGT approach is a singularly appropriate fit for studying the Internet and political participation.

A recurring theme in the literature is the positive correlation between media consumption and political participation. Only a few studies have found that people who use the web are more engaged in the political process and engage in other types of political participation activities, including voting (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Jennings & Zeitner, 2003; Norris, 1998; Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001a). Bimber (1998) and Johnson and Kaye (2004) envisioned that the increased access to political information on the Internet should make for an increasing number of informed citizens who participate in politics. Kaye and Johnson (2004) analyzed how people used

political information to meet their needs, but gradually moved away from examining political messages to instead examining mainstream media use or entertainment value.

Using UGT as a foundation, Tian (2006) explored the relationship between political use of the Internet and its perceived effects in three dimensions on political participation using post-election survey data from 2004. The investigation indicated that a direct relationship exists between political use of the Internet and users' perceptions of the effects of the Internet on political life. The more people use the Internet for political information, deliberation, and participation, the more clearly they realize the effects of political life. Studies (McMillan et al., 2003; Tambini, 1999; van der Heijden, 2003) examining the relationship between the perceived attractiveness of the website by users and civic engagement support Tian's (2006) findings. Websites that are easy to use and allow individuals to bypass gatekeepers of traditional media bring gratifications for users that encourage participation.

Park et al. (2009) applied UGT to the influence of college students' use of Facebook groups on civic and political participation. The researchers reported that students who went online to seek information had higher rates of civic activity. Many students reported using Facebook groups to organize parties on campus. The majority of the students used Facebook for recreational groups and associations, yet the researchers predicted that students with strong opinions might see the patterns of entertainment use transfer to political online participation activities. The data in this study led to an additional finding that student Facebook users are more prone to engage in civic and political activities offline. The research is insufficient to explain the motives of individuals' choices of social networking sites for political communication, despite the potential of Web 2.0 to reinvigorate the democratic process.

The application of UGT to Internet research has positive and negative implications. While it has a significant implication for improving political participation on the Internet (Boulianne, 2009; Cho et al., 2009; Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Gurevitch, Coleman, & Blumler, 2009; Xenos & Moy, 2007), it also has the potential for weakening public service obligations upon media producers. Bimber (2009) contended that the responsibility of producers of social media information is to avoid a weakening of individual behaviors that might result in marginalized citizens in political issues. There is a belief that users of media are egocentric consumers who want a divergence of opinions provided in traditional media, which presents challenges for developing engaged and knowledgeable citizens.

Online Deliberation Research

Citizens can reflect and deliberate about campaigns online and become knowledgeable about the political process. The user participation communication activities in Web 2.0 combined with candidates' intense promotion of campaign messages in social media may carry over to off-campaign periods, renewing citizens' interest in politics (Cho et al., 2009). A growing number of media scholars are moving away from the polarizing debate between mobilization and reinforcement effects of the Internet toward online deliberation research. Wright (2012b) suggests that studies centered strictly on mobilization and reinforcement theories provide only a limited analysis, defining studies from the selection of research questions to understanding the findings. The polarized debate between reinforcement and mobilization of the Internet becomes transfixed on technology as the key to creating massive changes in politics. Researchers tend to emphasize a technologically deterministic approach that has a negative effect when analyzing the empirical data.

Political deliberation is not a new concept. Popular democratic scholars such as Bryce (1973), Fishkin (1995), Dewey (1927), and Putnam (2000) agreed on the benefits of participation in politics. A prominent defender of democratic deliberation theory was Jürgen Habermas. Habermas (1989) argued for the creation of individual public opinion transcending to collective decision-making, configuring a public sphere and a participatory democracy. Citizens' conversations with definite ideas and opinions would provide reasons for their stances and collectively bring increased participation to society's concerns. Deliberation could serve as a means for motivating groups of individuals to clarify their needs and interests. The inclusion of social media in citizens' everyday communication practices sees modern scholars echoing the urgency of previous scholars towards a deliberative framework. The perspective of current scholars of online deliberation further echoes the views of the earlier deliberation scholars that democracy needs a comprehensive, socially inclusive participation of ordinary citizens deliberating society's issues and promoting constructive social change. It cannot be successful without society's interest and the reinvention of social media platforms in cyberspace (Schuler, 2001, 2009, 2010).

Scholars vary in the precise definition of deliberation. A basic definition of deliberation is "the performance of a number of communicative behaviors that promote a comprehensive group discussion" (Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2002, p. 401) in a setting where citizens share information and public concern, talk politics, form opinions, and participate in the political process (Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999). The definition of deliberation used by many scholars is a dialogue that offers equal opportunities to participate surrounding sociopolitical topics. Any definition should include the idea of a conversation of all citizens affected by a topic/issue, as well as the expression of diversity of thoughts by these individuals. The deliberation is open,

lively, and centered more on arguments than coercive power (Baek, Wojcieszak, & Delli Carpini, 2011). Deligiaouri (2013) summarized the overlapping view of deliberation, highlighting it as a series of events that establishes a process that produces a collective result, presenting opportunities to re-engage citizens in the political process. Public deliberations build public dialogue and the creation of a public sphere that is accessible to all citizens. In summary, deliberative procedures ensure that the final political decision stands as the outcome of a collaborative conversational process and as the outcome of a rational dialogue that encompasses the interests of citizens.

Empirical studies examining the impact of online deliberation in social media sites on political participation and voting are slowly appearing in the literature. Previous studies in political conversation may be transferable to online social networking sites. Deliberation research has taken three broad directions: (a) the probability and domains of everyday political conversation, (b) the general characteristics of deliberative conversation and the extent of exposure of disagreements in conversations and social networks, and (c) the effects of political conversation on political knowledge and participation (Eveland et al., 2011). Scholars suggest new directions for online deliberation research differing from face-to-face deliberation based on deficiencies in the current literature. Necessary shifts in online deliberation need to address the active Web 2.0 user and include studies of how active users assess the deliberative nature of political campaigns (Chadwick, 2009; Huckfeldt, Sprague, & Levine, 2000; Just et al., 1996). A change in the literature emphasizing the role of citizens functioning as communicators in relationships that enhance the previous research restricted to analyzing political conversations is needed (Eveland et al., 2011). This call for further research provides support and direction for

this dissertation, which uses the 2012 presidential election to expand the current body of knowledge concerning Web 2.0 and online political participation and deliberation.

Many online deliberation studies analyze citizens' Internet usage and political patterns by examining secondary data (Baek, Wojcieszak & Delli Carpini, 2011). The rise of new communication technologies holds promise for new deliberative discussions through online interactions. Social networking sites are encouraging a new form of political involvement for citizens' politics, wherein citizens contemplate and understand the issues and candidates during political campaigns. The range of activities available on social media sites provides a basis for researchers to explore campaign effects. A problematic concern is political communication scholars' emphasis on studying politics from a civics perspective. Analyzing a Facebook profile or blogs of representatives may be missing a salient point in the study of online deliberation (Papacharissi, 2010). It might be useful to acknowledge that political and social change happen among interpersonal interactions of ordinary citizens (Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Graham & Wright, 2013) and this may be different from the political participation activities associated with traditional media (Coleman, 2005; Van Zoonen, 2005).

It is the contention of a growing number of scholars that political participation and social change might occur in "third spaces" (Chadwick, 2009; Wright, 2013a). Wright (2012a) defined third spaces as nonpolitical online discussion forums where political talk emerges within the online conversation. He contends these spaces allow for inclusivity among the discussants, providing a complete picture of political participation and discussion. Eveland et al. (2011) state "for the vast majority of individuals it is their social life as communicators that is more central and influential than their lives as citizen[s]" (p. 1083). They argue that researchers need to shift the focus to political conversation and its interpersonal aspects, rather than framing studies from

a theoretical political framework. Cho et al. (2009) stated the importance of the inclusion of broader theoretical foundations applied to the contemporary study of the Internet to influence public opinion.

Previous research on electoral campaigns emphasizes the direct effect of elites' campaigns on political outcomes like voting or voter turnout (Bimber & David, 2003; Norris, 2001; Weare, 2002). Studies are shifting towards research that examines the citizen communication process. Wright (2006, 2007) states that the hyping of Web 2.0 to change politics sets up empirical studies that frame an analysis of technology as not having a significant impact on revitalizing political participation. Instead, Wright (2012b) proposed that researchers readdress the exaggeration of Web 2.0 when framing the debate. Further, Wright was concerned that the mobilizing expectation influences the research questions, the methodology adoption, and the analysis of empirical findings. Insignificant results then fuel the undue expectations of a pessimistic scholar's perspective. Online deliberation studies lack agreement on the potential of the Internet to create an e-democracy. However, the benefits of an online environment towards fostering a deliberative democracy include increases in the rate of opinion formation compared to traditional face-to-face dialogue (Papacharissi, 2002) and an increase in the number of opinions due to higher levels of identifiability and access to networked information (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013).

Inclusivity is a characteristic of the Internet, allowing one-to-many communication that goes beyond geographical constraints. Users can control content and can easily seek out and share information that is more diverse than face-to-face discourse, offering a broader representation of public opinion (Papacharissi, 2002). Halpern and Gibbs (2013) highlighted the key affordances of social media, presenting implications for online deliberation studies that

extend the types of available information. Online communities found in social media sites have the capacity to reveal significant personal information in profiles from pictures to contacts and interests. Second, the characteristics of notifications and RSS feeds (Web formats to publish online information in a standardized format) provide a greater access to information over traditional media. Additionally, embeds found in sites such as Twitter and YouTube offer valuable implications for online deliberation. An analysis by Halpern and Gibbs (2013) found that 8% of messages reviewed were arguments based on external sources such as quotes, data, and websites. These data suggest that individuals are not using this information to attack, but rather to debate rationally in social media. Scholars of research devoted to communicating in politics indicate that Internet activities such as interactive messaging, e-mail, online chats, and comment boards encourage participation, as participants can contribute in asynchronous ways in posts, messages, and images at minimal costs (Eveland et al., 2011).

Diversity of opinion seems better suited for the Internet than face-to-face deliberation. Online deliberators might feel less threatened by speaking up in conversations presenting different views (Bornstein & Rapoport, 1988). An online social presence may encourage people to share different viewpoints, offer diverse perspectives, elicit experiences that are more optimistic, and lead to increased conformity towards a group norm (Baek et al., 2011; Bargh & McKenna, 2002; Postmes, Spears & Lea 1998).

While the results of early Web 1.0 studies (Baek et al, 2011; Brunsting and Postmes, 2002; McLeod et al., 1999; Price & Capella, 2001) concluded that online and offline political discourse in traditional forms can encourage political participation such as rallies and protesting activities, online talk might be more effective. Baek, Wojcieszak, and Delli Carpini (2011) highlighted the potential implications of online deliberation, stating that the capacity of the web

to offer online anonymity to posts may lead individuals to see similarities in others, as the group remains anonymous, increasing self-efficacy and political mobilization. Traditional media present comparatively passive forms of political information, including encountering political information on television or print, while online media inspire an individual to action by e-mailing officials, posting and forwarding petitions with informal access to representatives using their websites or hyperlinks. Additionally, an increase in non-institutionalized participation occurs as the web links dispersed citizens, enabling global communication. An easily accessible network allows people to recruit others, organize supporters, and dispense information about future engagement opportunities. Informal participation makes it possible for dispersed individuals to organize protests and other grassroots activities (Baek et al., 2011; Garrett, 2006).

Not all scholars take an optimistic view of the potential of social networking sites to renew the democratic progress of participation. The hopeful optimism of some scholars that the online environment would be an inclusive space, where the power and class divisions related to socioeconomic factors would disappear, did not materialize. Anduiza et al. (2008), Bimber (2003), Jennings and Zeitner (2003) and Johnson and Kaye (2003, 2004) predicted the Internet would reinforce inequalities, promote continued exposure to consonant ideas, weaken community ties, and encourage incivility. Stromer-Galley (2003) found that individuals tend to limit communication in online environments to known individuals. Baek et al. (2011) concluded that the factors found in these previous studies continued to persist in online forums.

The findings of Baek et al. (2011) continue to support the existence of digital divide. Online forums disproportionately represent young, male, affluent, Caucasian, and educated citizens who are politically interested, knowledgeable, and skilled at using the Internet. Findings by Sunstein (2011) and Wojcieszak and Mutz (2009) could not support the potential that the

Internet encourages political diversity in ideas; in fact, they found a similar effect to Baek et al. (2011): Political online groups found in blogs, other online chat rooms, and message boards attracted like-minded individuals in discussion. This finding suggests that individuals prefer to present anonymously voiced controversial opinions and viewpoints expressed without a fear of consequences to conversing with dissimilar individuals. Asynchronous discussions can occur as a person posts a comment and then never returns to see responses or to add additional comments. When individuals join social media sites, the space can lack an internal balance (Norris, 2001), producing disparagement and disengagement between individuals and defeating the purpose of deliberation. False or multiple identities present challenges to creating an online community in virtual spaces. Members not meeting face to face and having the option to remain anonymous are less likely to maintain online identities and contribute in meaningful deliberations (Fung, 2002; Nie & Erbing, 2000).

While social networking sites may not reflect the political participations seen in the past, they may lead to transference of common and practiced traditional political participation forms to online sites. Schlozman et al. (2011) speculated that there would be a pattern of new technologies replacing the older technologies before the establishment of their unique capabilities. An additional practical and theoretical implication presented in studies by Conroy, Feezell, and Guerrero (2012) and Baek et al. (2011) analyzed the differences between offline and online participation patterns in social media. Individuals deliberating online are more politically and racially diverse citizens and report their online deliberations as more diverse. In addition, the results indicate that most online deliberators are also doing so face to face, which suggests that an online environment supplements the public sphere found in traditional media, rather than

replacing it. Conroy et al. (2012) found that Facebook political groups produce similar levels of fostering online political participation and engagement achieved in traditional media.

Social Network Model of Political Participation

The Social Network Model of Political Participation contends that social interactions provide opportunities for individuals to obtain and share information about politics and at the same time maintain the public activities of many people at the same time (McClug, 2003). Research focused on the spread of networked information and citizen participation is mixed. People do not create political attitudes in a vacuum or a solitary fashion. Instead, participation in joint contexts shapes individuals' experiences and political attitudes through social environments (Mutz, 2002). Past studies of political information on the Internet have considered the positive relationship between the amount of networked data entry and the number of the individuals discussing public matters and participatory behaviors (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004). Increased networking by citizens in political deliberations correlates directly to participation (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Leighley, 1996; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Conclusion

The literature lacks clarity as to how and to what extent citizens are participating in candidates' online social networking platforms during election campaigns. Specifically, there is a need to understand the new political online activities on these social networking sites and their influence on voters' political participation patterns, especially voting in campaigns. It is unclear whether citizens are shifting their political participation patterns away from traditional mass media towards candidates' social networking platforms to seek political information and participation in election campaigns. Papacharissi (2012) asserted that there is a blurring of

boundaries between the public and private spheres, redefining how citizens are politically engaged. There is insufficient research exploring the changing Internet and its impact on offline political patterns in traditional media and usage. It is unclear if citizens prefer traditional media or if there is a convergence of technologies, practices, and spaces occurring in new online social media sites that are replacing old political patterns or blurring the online and traditional public spheres. The research in this dissertation seeks to address these deficiencies.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

With the rise in social media platforms and political campaigns' use of them, political involvement may take on different forms in virtual communities. Traditional media led to the long-established forms of political participation in real communities contributing money to a political campaign, displaying campaign buttons, bumper stickers, or yard signs, volunteering to work on a campaign, joining a group or party organization, discussing political ideology/issues with friends or family, and of course voting. This dissertation focuses on contrasting traditional media participation activities with those of the Web 1.0 era and the Web 2.0 era using the 2012 presidential election campaign. Specifically, it examines the impact media technologies had on voting and whether a paradigm shift is evident from traditional media to social media use to generate votes.

Research Design

Data collection for this study employed two methods. First was the use of official data from the New Jersey Board of Elections to obtain a listing of all registered voters. The database organizes registered voters in New Jersey by name and address, voter ID#, birthdate, and past voting behavior since initial registration. The researcher purchased the data in September 2012 to generate the sample for use in this research. Subsequently, the researcher also purchased the data from November 2012 in February 2013 to access voting activities in the 2012 presidential election.

The second method of data collection was a mail survey of voters in Ocean County, New Jersey during October, 2012. The survey collected data concerning voters' use of traditional

media, Web 1.0 media and Web 2.0 media during the 2012 presidential election and voters' involvement in political engagement activities.

Sampling Strategy

The target area of Ocean County, New Jersey was selected because of its representativeness of registered voters determined by three criteria. First, the county includes urban, suburban, and rural areas. Second, party affiliation most closely resembles that of the New Jersey's registered voting population. New Jersey is primarily a Democratic state, but many voters (52%) register as unaffiliated with either Republican or Democratic parties. Third, the gender breakdown of the population is similar to statewide figures.

A power analysis determined the sample size. There were 368,393 registered voters in Ocean County in September 2012. Using a 95% confidence interval and a margin of error of +/- 5% required a sample size of 300. Babie (2010) stated that response rates to mail surveys are usually very low, requiring sample sizes to be larger than determined by power analysis. Return rates can be as low as 20% and, therefore, the sample size for this research was 1000 to account for this shortcoming.

The sample was a proportionately stratified random sample of voters in Ocean County, New Jersey. The stratification was political affiliation of the registered voters. Ocean County voters' political affiliations are 20% Democrat, 29% Republican, and 51% unaffiliated. Therefore, the sample consisted of 200 Democratic, 290 Republican, and 510 unaffiliated voters. Upon selection of the sample from the Board of Election database, survey mailings commenced. The mailing took place six weeks before the presidential election to reach voters prior to the election itself and during the heat of the campaign when the presumption is that political participation is at its highest rate. Studies comparing the response rates of surveys using

traditional mail and other instruments have consistently found higher response rates with traditional mail surveys. Kittleson (1995) and Schuldt and Totten (1994) found higher response rates with traditional mail than with e-mail, while Kwak and Radler (2002) found higher rates of return in traditional mail than on the Web. These studies were supported by Kaplowitz, Hadlock, and Levine (2014) who found a 10% difference in response rates between mail and internet surveys in their study.

In addition, while this study is a modest sampling of one county in New Jersey and does not employ the large sample size often found in national election surveys and general surveys, a finding by Keeter, Miller, Kohut, Groves & Presser. (2000) posits that lower response rates do not necessarily yield lower quality data. Thus, the sample size used in the research is adequate.

The survey instrument (Appendix A) contains questions concerning the use of traditional media, Web 1.0 media, and Web 2.0 media and the different types of political activities in which citizens can engage during the election cycle. The instrument was pre-tested using a group of registered voters from the local area who were not part of this sample. It was necessary to adjust the instrument to clarify activities because some older voters were unfamiliar with several terms contained in the first iteration of the instrument. Upon revision of the instrument, the mailing commenced.

During the collection period, a significant historical event occurred. On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy struck the New Jersey Shore and Ocean County was hardest hit, suffering tremendous devastation. Ocean County residents were without power for seven days or longer, if they had homes that were habitable. As a result, the final numbers of people returning surveys were 222. However, 28 surveys came after the completion of the presidential election and were

deleted. The final sample is 194. A power analysis found that the new margin of error is +/-7%. This is an issue of internal validity, discussed later in the dissertation.

Table 1 displays the political affiliation of the sample. There is a slightly higher percentage of Democrats in the sample and Republicans and Unaffiliated are lower than the population of Ocean County. The population of Ocean County, New Jersey voters consists of 20% democrats, 29% republicans, and 51% unaffiliated voters. This may be an issue denoting external validity problems, discussed later in the dissertation.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Political Affiliation of Sample

	Frequency	Percent
Democrat	56	28.9
Republican	54	27.8
Unaffiliated	84	43.3
Total	194	100.0

Table 2 displays the gender breakdown of the sample. The respondents are roughly in the same proportion as the population of the registered voters of Ocean County. Females are slightly over-represented in the sample. The actual percentage of female voters in Ocean County was 54.4%.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Gender of Sample

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	86	44.3
	Female	108	55.7
	Total	194	100.0

Finally, Table 3 displays the age of the participants in this study. The sample has a mean age of 53 years at the time of the election, which is slightly higher than the mean age of registered voters in America. The average age is 45.3 according to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics. A higher average age occurs in this sample, as there were no participants under the age of 21. Again, this is an issue of external validity. The actual mean age of voters in Ocean County was not available from the data provided by the Board of Elections.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Age of Sample

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	194	21	88	53.48	17.915

Operationalization of Variables

Dependent Variables

The dependent variable in the study is voting. The data for voting came from the New Jersey Board of Elections Database published in February 2013. The database provides the voter ID#, birth date, and past voting behavior since initial registration. The researcher matched the voting records of the sample selected from the September 2012 data from the New Jersey Board

of Elections by voter ID# and recorded it to complete the dataset for this research. The measure of the dependent variable is a nominal, dichotomous variable: 1 = yes, 0 = no. The establishment of voting by individuals was the official record of individuals' voting actions in the 2012 presidential election recorded by voting activities at the polls.

Independent Variables

Traditional media activities. The independent variables in the study are media-specific. The measurements for traditional media incorporate participants' activities using television, radio, and print. A Likert Scale measures each activity as follows: 0 = never, 1 = less than once per month, 2 = monthly, 3 = 2-3 times per month, 4 = weekly, 5 = several times per week, 6 = daily and 7 = more than once per day. Traditional media activities include the following:

TV:

- watch political ads
- watch debates
- watch news
- watch political talk shows

Radio:

- Listen to political ads
- listen to debates
- listen to news
- listen to political talk shows

Print:

- read political ads/flyers
- read ads in newspapers
- read newspapers/magazine political articles
- read political editorials

Web 1.0 media activities. Web 1.0 activities are the Internet activities available prior to Web 2.0 (social media sites). The Web 1.0 sites were static, not interactive or participant contributory. Most online political campaigns conducted even up to just a few years ago used Web 1.0 (Schweitzer, 2008; Vegeer, et al., 2011). Posted information includes

reading/downloading information similar to on-line brochures and advertisements. Vegeer, et al

(2011) stated,

the concept of Web 1.0 indicates that the campaign is predominantly hierarchical and one-sided, sent from the politicians and party to citizens using standard technology (primarily HTML) and providing static content that often is duplication from offline media sources and archived onto the website. (2011, p. 478)

Gulati and Williams (2007) summarized Web 1.0 as information dissemination to viewers of the website. Measurements for Web 1.0 media incorporate participants' activities using websites and blogs in addition to YouTube for reading/watching political content (imitating TV and print media formats) using the same Likert Scale. The activities consisting of Web 1.0 activities include the following:

- read candidate's website
- watch YouTube clip uploaded by candidate
- read/view information posted by candidate on website
- read/view tweets posted by candidate.

Participants' involvement was much less than their traditional media activities. Web 1.0 activities were not a source of political information for the study participants. Viewing tweets was added to this section because it resembled Web 1.0 activities. Viewing tweets did not meet the user-generated requirement of Web2.0 activities. However, the participants in this study did not view tweets rendering further discussion unnecessary.

Political Participation Activities Corresponding to Traditional and Web 1.0 Media

For both traditional media and Web 1.0 social media sites, political participation occurred externally to the medium. In other words, political participation was separate from the medium itself (Zhang et al., 2010). Offline (traditional) participation is not the case with Web

2.1 media, as discussed below. The construction of an additive participation index for political participation measures these activities as 0 = no and 1 = yes, with the construction of an additive participation index for political participation. The activities measured to construct this index were:

- contribute money to campaign
- display campaign buttons and bumper stickers and yard signs
- volunteer to work on campaign
- join a political party or group
- discuss political ideologies/issues with family and friends

Political Activities with Web 2.0 Media

Web 2.0 activities differ from traditional and Web 1.0 activities because of their ability to change and contribute information to social networking sites. Web 2.0 technology leads politicians and optimistic scholars to predict increases in political participation of its citizens in electoral campaigns. Web 2.0 refers to a bottom-up approach focusing on sharing content online, collaboration of online content, and encouraging socialization with others online. Web 2.0 includes blogs and social networking sites such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook (Cormode & Krishnaumurthy, 2008). Several of these Web 2.0 sites continued to include Web 1.0 activities. What differentiates these Web 2.0 sites from Web 1.0 categorization are the user generated activities of the media. Activities which allow content creation are categorized as Web 2.0. Those with only reception characteristics were listed under Web 1.0 activities earlier. In other words, participants could be in a Web 2.0 site, using only Web 1.0 activities. This distinction is important to this study. Previously, research simply looked at what sites participants were using, but did not investigate in what activities they participated. This research examines the nature and frequency of activities in each site, thus the importance of separating activities from previous media classifications.

Candidates no longer hold all the cards in producing messages. Instead, visitors to Web 2.0 sites can post messages and engage in the conversation, which may frame the conversation concerning political messages and points of view. Posting to a candidate's Facebook wall or tweeting to others about a candidate's positions are examples of the asynchronous nature of Web 2.0 social media platforms. Candidates combine the sites and their multiple features in one-stop platforms for disseminating their campaign messages, socializing, and encouraging blogging from citizens (Vergeer, et al., 2011). Research suggests that it is beneficial to explore each separate 2.0 platform individually and further suggests an analysis of each activity within each platform for its potential impact on participation/voting (Dylko et al. 2008; Williams & Gulati, 2010; Wright, 2012a).

For this dissertation, Web 2.0 platforms include Twitter, interactive websites, Facebook, and YouTube activities having participatory characteristics distinguishing them from the Web 1.1 activities described earlier in this chapter. The same Likert Scale measured the activities in the Web 2.0 platforms.

Twitter use includes the actions of following or follower. Following a candidate on Twitter means a person is able to view the tweets from the candidate(s). This gives candidates access to send direct messages to a user whom is following them. When candidates follow private citizens, the latter now have access to send direct messages to the candidate. Twitter's Web 2.0 activities include:

- following a candidate
- follower of a candidate
- tweet on a candidate's web site
- tweet about a candidate's political issue
- go to a group site to tweet about a policy issue

A second Web 2.0 platform is websites of candidates. In the 2012 presidential election, websites were interactive, allowing, for the first time in presidential elections, visitors to participate in the conversation and engage in furthering the candidate's message. Unlike its Web 1.1 predecessor, Web 2.0 technology permitted participants and visitors to interact with the candidate and each other. Website activities included:

- posting to a candidate's website
- share candidate's website with family and friends, or others

The same Likert Scale measured each activity.

Similar to websites, YouTube was in its infancy during the previous presidential election and was analogous to TV viewing. In 2008, YouTube users primarily viewed the clips posted on the candidates. In 2012, the platform was more interactive and thus entered into the Web 2.0 era's collaborative nature. The activities of YouTube include:

- like/dislike a video
- comment on a video
- subscribe to candidate's YouTube channel
- create and upload YouTube clip for the candidate on your YouTube site.

The same Likert Scale measured each activity.

The final Web 2.0 platform used in this study is Facebook. The inclusion of this social media site is new in terms of presidential election platforms. Facebook was introduced late in the 2008 presidential campaign and did not have the same strategic presence seen in the 2012 election. The 2010 mid-term election cycle utilized facets of Web 2.0, but its familiarity to voters in presidential elections was unclear. The remainder of the Facebook activities functions as Web 2.0 activities and includes the following:

- write about a candidate's issue on Facebook
- share a comment about a candidate's issue with others
- upload a photo/video of a candidate

- post opinions about a candidate to your wall
- post about a candidate to a friend's wall
- post to a candidate's wall
- participate in a political activity in Facebook
- purchase political merchandise from a shop on Facebook
- sign a political petition on Facebook
- share a candidate's Facebook site with others
- like/dislike a political comment posted on Facebook
- comment on a post in Facebook (dialog with others)
- subscribe to a Facebook site for information and updates
- go to a group site on Facebook and comment or post.

The same Likert Scale measured each activity. These Facebook activities advance online political deliberation or public political discourse (Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Graham & Wright, 2013; Papacharissi, 2010).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The grand research question for this study is:

GRQ “Are the Presidential candidates’ social media platforms mobilizing citizens towards voting?”

The current debate among scholars is whether social media replace traditional media in mobilizing political participation. In contrast, social media may simply reinforce the traditional media political participation models. The new media may not be introducing new participants into the process, but merely transporting the already politically engaged citizens into social media usage.

RQ # 1: Is there a correlation between media platforms and voting in the presidential election of 2012?

RQ # 2: Is there a correlation between the frequency of media platform usage and voting in the 2012 presidential election.

H1: Web 2.0 media activities will have higher correlation with voting than Web 1.0 media activities or traditional media activities.

Previous research (Howard & Park, 2012; Langlois, et al. 2009) recommended examining the individual activities within each specific social and traditional media networking site instead of looking at the sites as a whole. In the current study, this researcher correlated the frequency of use for each activity in each social and traditional media site with voting in the 2012 presidential election. A series of tests using the eta coefficient measured the correlation between voting and media activity. The significance level is .05 for these tests. Eta is the appropriate test as the dependent variable is dichotomous, nominal, and the independent variables are continuous. There is some debate concerning using Likert scale as a continuous level variable. Since the number of categories in the scale is 8 this warrants the test.

Previous research did not attempt to use modeling to explain the likelihood of voting. This study considers four models to investigate which, if any, best explains the likelihood of voting. The first model is the traditional model (television, radio, and print media). The second model is the Web 1.0 model (read a candidate's website, watch YouTube clips uploaded by candidate, read/view information posted by the candidate on Facebook). Third is the Web 2.0 model (including the individual activities of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and candidate blog as described above). The fourth and final model is a combination of all possible activities from traditional media, Web 1.0, and Web 2.0.

The third research question is:

RQ # 3: Does the media platform used by citizens increase their likelihood of voting?

Previous research (Anduiza, Cantijoch & Gallego, 2009; Bond, Faris, Jones, Kramer, Marlow, Settle & Marlow, 2012; DiGennaro & Dutton, 2006; Hayes, 2009; Rosenstone & Hanson, 2002)

posited that social media is replacing traditional media as the method of delivering political messages to the masses. The increase in dedicated funds and campaign workers for the social media environment over the last two presidential election cycles indicates that politicians believe this transformation is occurring. The hypothesis which follows is:

H2: The Web 2.0 model is the strongest predictor of voting compared to Web 1.0 activities or traditional media activities.

Web 2.0's niche is that it allows people direct, active involvement in the political process. Scholars predict and assume that Web 2.0 is efficacious in increasing political participation despite the lack of studies to support such claims. The current study addresses this gap in the literature.

Logistic regression measures which model is the more predictive relative to voting by the participants in the 2012 presidential election. The four models, one for each media category and a combined model will be compared and contrasted to resolve research question #3 and test hypothesis #3 as well.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The data analysis section describes the results of the research into media usage and voting from the survey conducted in Ocean County, New Jersey for the 2012 Presidential Election. The divisions in this chapter include frequencies and descriptive statistics, correlation measures, and logistic regression models. The latter two address the research questions and hypotheses posed in this study. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to complete the data analysis for this study.

Frequencies and Descriptive Statistics

Section one of this chapter examines the frequencies of traditional political participation, traditional media, web 1.0 media, and web 2.0 media platforms. All of the tables contain the frequency within the category and in parentheses the percentage. Table 4 displays the frequency of voting, which is the dependent variable for the study. There is ample variation in the dependent variable to proceed with the study. As noted below, slightly more than 54% of the sample voted in the 2012 presidential election. Although a sad commentary on our system of democracy, the variation in the dependent variable is important and present here.

Table 4

Frequency of Voting

Activity	No	Yes
Voting	89 (45.9)	105 (54.1)

Table 5

Frequencies of Traditional Political Activity in 2012 Election

Activity	No	Yes	Missing
Contribute Money to Political Campaign	160 (82.5)	34 (17.5)	0
Display campaign buttons or bumper stickers or yard signs	163 (84)	30 (15.5)	1 (.5)
Volunteer to work on campaign	184 (94.8)	9 (4.6)	1 (.5)
Join a political group or party organization	179 (92.3)	14 (7.2)	1 (.5)
Discuss political ideology/issues with friends or family	58 (29.9)	136 (71.1)	0

Table 5 contains the frequencies for traditional political participation. Previous research (Zhang et al., 2010) stated the political activities in traditional and Web 1.0 eras were independent of the medium contrasting to web 2.0 models which are media reliant. The sample did not participate to a major degree in traditional political activities with the exception of discussing politics with family and friends. This is an interesting finding when combined with the sample's mean age of 53.48. Although the percentages and mean age of those voting in the 2012 election are not available, this sample appears to be older and would more likely engage in these traditional political activities than their younger counterparts. The fact that so few reported

taking part in traditional political participation activities is surprising as this was a long standing staple of political campaigns.

The frequencies of Twitter Activities are contained in table 6. An overwhelming percentage of the sample, on average 92.85%, never engaged in Twitter Activities. The activities most completed were following a candidate and being a follower of a candidate, yet fewer than

Table 6

Frequencies of Political Activities of Twitter in 2012 Election

Activities for Twitter	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day	Missing
Following a candidate	162 (83.5)	6 (3.1)	3 (1.5)	4 (2.1)	8 (4.1)	3 (1.5)	6 (3.1)	0	2 (1.0)
Follower of a candidate	169 (87.1)	6 (3.1)	4 (2.1)	1 (.5)	5 (2.6)	2 (1.0)	6 (3.1)	1 (.5)	0
View tweets (messages and links)	177 (91.2)	1 (.5)	2 (1.0)	1 (.5)	2 (1.0)	4 (2.1)	4 (2.1)	3 (1.5)	0
Tweet on a candidate's Twitter site	193 (99.5)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (.5)	0	0
Tweet about candidate or political issue on your Twitter site	185 (99.4)	4 (2.1)	0	2 (1.0)	1 (.5)	1 (.5)	1 (.5)	0	0
Go to a group	187	0	1	1	2	1	2	0	0

site and Tweet about candidate/issue	(96.4)		(.5)	(.5)	(1.0)	(.5)	(1.0)		
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30 persons participated. The results are consistent with the age composition of the sample.

Twitter users are comprised of younger people, who are absent from this study.

Website and blog activity frequencies are contained in table 7. Websites and blogs appeared in the social media/political milieu in 1996, becoming an integral part of gubernatorial and congressional campaigns in 2000 and presidential campaigns in 2004 (Pole, 2010).

Candidates in the 2008 presidential campaign included both websites and blogs in their strategies making their presence in the 2012 campaign a familiar occurrence. This study's sample engaged in reading a candidate's website more often than any of the other web based activities in Twitter or other Website/Blog activities with 30% reading websites of candidates, a web 1.0 activity that

Table 7

Frequencies of Website and Blog Activities in 2012 Election

Activities for Website(Blog)	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Read Candidate's website	135 (69.6)	30 (15.5)	14 (7.2)	10 (5.2)	1 (.5)	2 (1.0)	1 (.5)	0
Post to candidate's website	188 (96.9)	4 (2.1)	1 (.5)	0	0	0	1 (.5)	0

Share candidate's website with a friend or another site	167 (86.1)	13 (6.7)	8 (4.1)	3 (1.5)	1 (.5)	1 (.5)	1 (.5)	0
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closely resembles print media. However, almost half of that group did so less than once per month.

YouTube activity frequencies are displayed in table 8. The sample watched clips uploaded and posted by candidates more frequently than any other activity. Thirty-three percent of the sample report engaging in this activity, but over half of that group did so less than once per month. This activity also falls under the paradigm of web 1.0 and appears to be an arm-chair form of political engagement requiring little effort on the part of the participant. There continues to be a substantial percentage of the sample who did not engage in any of the activities listed under YouTube.

Table 8

Frequencies of Political Activities on YouTube in 2012 Election

Activities for YouTube	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day	Missing
Watch clip uploaded and posted by candidate	130 (67.0)	35 (18.0)	8 (4.1)	8 (4.1)	4 (2.1)	8 (4.1)	0	1 (.5)	0
Like/Dislike a video	157 (80.9)	14 (7.2)	10 (5.2)	4 (2.1)	5 (2.6)	2 (1.0)	2 (1.0)	0	0
Comment on a video	171 (88.1)	8 (4.1)	7 (3.6)	3 (1.5)	2 (1.0)	1 (.5)	1 (.5)	0	1
Subscribe to the candidate's YouTube Channel	189 (97.4)	3 (1.5)	1 (.5)	0	1 (.5)	0	0	0	0
Create and upload your own YouTube clip on your own YouTube site	190 (97.9)	0	3 (1.5)	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 9 contains the frequencies of Facebook activities. Participants engaged in several of these activities at higher rates than other social media platforms' activities. One example is

approximately 24% of the participants shared comments about a candidate's issue. Although the range of the activity was on the lower end of the scale, the use is notable. Also, over 30% liked a comment. This is a form of political participation as well. Commenting on a post (dialogue with other viewers) is analogous to discussing issues with family and friends in the traditional political participation model. Twenty-five percent of participants engaged completed this activity. Although respondents engaged in these activities infrequently, these are signs of participants using social media platforms to engage in political activity, an important finding in this study.

Table 9

Frequencies of Political Activities on Facebook in 2012 Election

Activities for Facebook	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Write about a candidate's issue	163 (84.0)	16 (8.2)	6 (3.1)	3 (1.5)	3 (1.5)	3 (1.5)	0	0
Share comment about a candidate's issue	148 (76.3)	19 (9.8)	10 (5.2)	8 (4.1)	4 (2.1)	2 (1.0)	3 (1.5)	0
Upload a photo/video	170 (87.6)	10 (5.2)	3 (1.5)	4 (2.1)	3 (1.5)	2 (1.0)	2 (1.0)	0
Read/view information	124 (63.9)	17 (8.8)	8 (4.1)	9 (4.6)	10 (5.2)	9 (4.6)	16 (8.2)	1 (.5)
Post to your wall	159	12	2	5	4	5	5	2

	(82.0)	(6.2)	(1.0)	(2.6)	(2.1)	(2.6)	(2.6)	(1.0)
Post to friend's wall	164 (84.5)	10 (5.2)	3 (1.5)	3 (1.5)	5 (2.6)	4 (2.1)	3 (2.5)	2 (1.0)
Post to candidate's wall	190 (97.9)	3 (1.5)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (.5)
Participate in activity (T-shirt)	187 (96.4)	4 (2.1)	0	2 (1.0)	0	1 (.5)	0	0
Purchase/Shop	184 (94.8)	5 (2.6)	1 (.5)	0	4 (2.1)	0	0	0
Sign Petition	163 (84.0)	20 (10.3)	7 (3.6)	3 (1.5)	1 (.5)	0	0	0
Share site with others	158 (81.4)	14 (7.2)	9 (4.6)	7 (3.6)	3 (1.5)	2 (1.0)	0	1 (.5)
Like a comment	133 (68.6)	17 (8.8)	8 (4.1)	8 (4.1)	12 (6.2)	7 (3.6)	7 (3.6)	2 (1.)
Comment on a post(dialogue with other viewers-user)	146 (75.3)	16 (8.2)	8 (4.1)	2 (1.0)	11 (5.7)	6 (3.1)	3 (1.5)	2 (1.0)
Subscribe to site for info/updates	166 (85.6)	12 (6.2)	6 (3.1)	5 (2.6)	3 (1.5)	0	2 (1.0)	0
Go to a group's Facebook and comment (post)	174 (89.7)	3 (1.5)	5 (2.6)	6 (3.1)	5 (2.6)	1 (.5)	0	0

Table 10 records the frequency of political activities for Television. Since the 1960 presidential election, television reigned supreme as the dominant medium for political campaigns. In contrast to the social media platforms, participants in the study used television more frequently relative to the presidential campaign of 2012. Approximately 50% of the participants watched political advertisements several times per week or more. Sixty-two percent.

Table 10

Frequencies of Television Activities in 2012 Election

Television	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day	Missing
Watch Advertisements (paid commercials)	26 (13.4)	14 (7.2)	7 (3.6)	12 (6.2)	17 (8.8)	29 (14.9)	47 (24.2)	41 (21.1)	1 (.5)
Watch News reports	11 (5.7)	6 (3.1)	6 (3.1)	12 (6.2)	15 (7.7)	24 (12.4)	83 (42.8)	37 (19.1)	0
Watch Political talk shows	37 (19.1)	24 (12.4)	14 (7.2)	11 (5.7)	21 (10.8)	29 (14.9)	38 (19.6)	20 (10.3)	0

Watch TV Debates	No	Yes	Missing
	23	171	0

	(11.9)	(88.1)	
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of the participants watched news reports daily or more. Fifty-five percent of participants reported watching political talk shows at least weekly. Eighty-eight of the respondents further reported watching the presidential debates on television. Clearly this group of citizens preferred television to forms of social media.

The frequencies of radio activities appear in table 11. Respondents report much less use.

Table 11

Frequencies of Radio Activities in 2012 Election

Radio	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day	Missing
Listen to advertisements (paid commercials)	71 (36.6)	15 (7.7)	9 (4.6)	5 (2.6)	3 (6.7)	18 (9.3)	40 (20.6)	22 (11.3)	1 (.5)
Listen to News reports	56 (28.9)	9 (4.6)	8 (4.1)	3 (1.5)	11 (5.7)	22 (11.3)	56 (28.9)	29 (14.9)	0
Listen to Political talk shows(Talk Radio)	95 (49.0)	19 (9.8)	5 (2.6)	10 (5.2)	7 (3.6)	12 (6.2)	26 (13.4)	20 (10.3)	0

Listen to Radio Debates	No	Yes	Missing
	129 (66.5)	65 (33.5)	0

of the radio in obtaining information or engaging in political activity than their use of television. Although radio activities were more frequent than social media activities, radio comes in a distant second place to television. Approximately 44% listened to radio news for political information. However, 49% stated they never listened to a political talk show on the radio (30% higher than was reported for TV). Only 33% of the respondents reported listening to the debates on radio.

Finally table 12 contains the frequencies of print media activities during the 2012 presidential election campaign. What is most striking here is that three of the four activities recorded one third of the sample never engaging print media for political information. Even though 66% reported some activity in this area, print media seems, at least among this sample, to be less important. Of the activities with the highest frequencies, reading articles in papers and magazines on a daily basis (26.3%) recorded the highest frequency.

The sample's participants appear to prefer television as their medium of choice. Few engaged in social media activities. Radio and print media, although more actively used than social media, was a distant second to television. Certainly some participants were active users of more than one type of medium, and there were users in all activities. Frequency of use is but one measure. Do the frequencies correlate to voting on the part of the participants? This is focus of the next section.

Table 12

Frequencies of Print Media Activities in the 2012 Election

Print	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day	Missing
Read political advertisements (flyers)	71 (36.6)	28 (14.4)	10 (5.2)	17 (8.8)	29 (14.9)	15 (7.7)	19 (9.8)	5 (2.6)	0
Read political advertisement (newspapers)	75 (38.7)	22 (11.3)	6 (3.1)	10 (5.2)	27 (13.9)	17 (8.8)	30 (15.5)	7 (3.6)	0
Read Newspaper/Magazine Articles	40 (20.6)	14 (7.2)	12 (6.2)	13 (6.7)	29 (14.9)	23 (11.9)	51 (26.3)	10 (5.2)	2 (1.0)
Read Editorials	61 (31.4)	18 (9.3)	4 (2.1)	9 (4.6)	28 (14.4)	21 (10.8)	42 (21.6)	9 (4.6)	2 (1.0)

Correlation of Frequency of Media Activity and Voting

The grand research question for this study is "Are the Presidential candidates' social media platforms mobilizing citizens towards voting?" Conclusions drawn from the data require testing several hypotheses originating from two research questions. The first research question, "is there a correlation between the frequencies of media platform activities and voting in the 2012 presidential election?" examines the correlation between political activities and media activities to voting among the sample used in this study. The first hypothesis, "traditional political activities significantly correlate to voting" is addressed in table 13. Contingency coefficients were calculated using SPSS. The results in table 13 show all activities were weakly correlated to voting in the 2012 presidential election among the study's sample and none of the activities were statistically significant. There is no support for the stated hypothesis and therefore it fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 13

Correlations of Traditional Political Activities and Voting

Activity	Value	Sig (2 tail)
Contributed money to a candidate in the 2012 Presidential campaign	.043	.55
Placed a sign in your yard/used bumper sticker/wore a button in support of a candidate in the 2012 Presidential Election?	.11	.13
Volunteered to work on a campaign in the 2012 Presidential Campaign	.10	.14
Joined a political group or party organization in the 2012 Presidential Candidate Election?	.06	.42
Have you discussed political ideas or ideology with family or friend during the 2012 Presidential Candidate Election?	.054	.45

The second research hypothesis, “the frequencies of Web 2.0 media activities will have higher positive correlations with voting” is tested using a series of analyses shown in tables 14 through 16. Each table is a single media platform model, traditional media activity, web 1.0 media activities, and web 2.0 media activities. Correlations testing for each activity within the medium were computed and the results displayed.

In table 14 the correlations between traditional media activities included television, radio, and print media and voting show that most of the values for the activities are weak and not statistically significant. The negative values are inverse relationships, and the crosstab tables reflect that persons who did not engage in traditional media activities voted at the same rate as those who did engage in such activities. The tests conducted for these activities were point-bi-serial correlation tests.

The only statistically significant correlation of a traditional media activity was watching the debates on television. Both watching the debates on TV and listening to debates on radio were dichotomous variables (0 = no, 1 = yes). As voting was also measured in the same fashion, the tests conducted for these two activities were contingency coefficient tests. The results were that although watching debates on TV was weakly associated with voting, it was significant. Therefore, voting is correlated with watching debates on TV.

Table 14

Correlations of Traditional Media Activities and Voting

Activity	Value	Sig (2 tail)
Watch Advertisements (paid commercials) on Television	.13	.08
Watch News reports on Television	-.02	.80
Watch Political talk shows on Television	.06	.42
Listen to Advertisements (paid commercials) on Radio	.03	.71
Listen to News reports on Radio	-.03	.70
Listen to Political talk shows(Talk Radio) on Radio	-.03	.72
Read political or election Advertisements (flyers)	-.04	.59
Read political/election Advertisement (newspapers)	-.04	.60
Read Newspaper /Magazine Articles focused on election/politics	.02	.76
Read Editorials focused on election/politics (newspapers)	.01	.90
Watch Debates on Television	.27	.04*
Listen to Debates on Radio	.17	.43

* p<05

Web 1.0 activities are contained in Table 15. A series of point bi-serial tests results show the web 1.0 activities are all weakly associated with voting. Three of the four are inversely related to voting and none are statistically significantly associated with voting.

Table 15

Correlations of Web 1.0 Media Activities and Voting

Activity	Value	Sig (2 tail)
Read/view information Posted by the Candidate (Facebook)	-.137	.06
View tweets (messages and links) posted by candidates (Twitter)	-.05	.50
Watch clip uploaded and posted by candidate (You Tube)	.09	.23
Read Candidate's official website (Website/Blog)	-.031	.66

Table 16 incorporates the social media activities associated with web 2.0 technologies as described in detail in chapters 2 and 3. The table identifies activities within each platform for ease of identification. The results are interesting and perplexing. The correlation coefficients reflect that each activity is weakly correlated to voting. However, those activities which are statistically significant have higher values but are inverse relationships. Interestingly, all of these are Facebook activities. For example, uploading a video or photo on Facebook has a coefficient value of .155, using the absolute value of the coefficient, which is a weak relationship. It is also an inverse relationship (value = -.155), but is statistically significant at the .05 level. Other activities which were significant include: posting political messages or comments on your own wall, posting political messages or comments to a friend's wall, participating in an activity on Facebook such as creating videos or t-shirts, sharing Facebook sites with others, liking a political comment on Facebook page, and commenting on a political post dialogue with other viewers-users). All were inverse, weak relationships, but statistically significant. Participants who never

engaged in these activities were more likely to vote.. Examining the cross tabulation tables bears this out for all activities with inverse relationships.

Table 16

Correlations of Web 2.0 Activities and Voting

Activity	Value	Sig (2 tail)
You Tube Activities		
Like/Dislike a video about a candidate	.01	.86
Comment on a video about a candidate	.08	.26
Subscribe to the candidate's YouTube Channel	.095	.19
Create and upload your own YouTube clip on your own YouTube site	.031	.67
Blog and Website Activities		
Post to candidate's website	-.060	.45
Share candidate's website with a friend or another site	-.046	.53
Twitter Activities		
Following a candidate	.054	.46
Follower of a candidate	.024	.74
Tweet on a candidate's Twitter site	-.08	.28
Tweet about candidate or political issue on your Twitter site	-.052	.47
Go to a group site and Tweet about candidate or political issue	-.10	.16
Facebook Activities		
Write about a candidate's issue	-.14	.054
Share comment about a candidate's issue	-.10	.17
Upload a photo/video	-.155	.031*

Post to your wall political messages or comments	-.16	.026*
Post to friend's wall political messages or comments	-.17	.02*
Post to candidate's wall political messages or comments	-.07	.34
Participate in activity in Facebook like creating videos or T-shirts	-.17	.02*
Purchase/Shop like buying any political materials such as bumper stickers or signs	-.11	.12
Sign Petition in Facebook	-.04	.59
Shared Facebook site with others	-.19	.009**
Like a political comment on Facebook page	-.18	.014*
Comment on a post(dialogue with other viewers-users)	-.14	.047*
Subscribe to Facebook site for info/updates	-.09	.23
Go to a group's Facebook and comment (post) political comments or messages.	-.04	.56

* p<.05 **p<.01

Predictive Modeling Logistic Regression

The second research question asked whether the media platform used by citizens increased the likelihood of predicting voting. The related hypothesis tested whether the Web 2.0 model will have greater predictive results than the other media models. To test the hypothesis the researcher constructed a series of logistic regression models, one for each of the media platforms, and one combined model. The results of these models are detailed below.

Null Model

The null model establishes the baseline for comparison of all models. The null model is a logistic model containing only the constant in the model. Table 17 displays these results. Table 17 demonstrates that the model, knowing only the y intercept, predicts the voting of participants at 52.7%. This is slightly higher than the 50% assumption that would normally be predicted having no information about the participants.

Table 17

Predictive Efficacy of the Null Model

	Observed	Predicted		
		VOTE		Percentage Correct
		no	yes	
VOTE	no	0	89	.0
	yes	0	99	100.0
	Overall Percentage			52.7

Table 18 shows the variables in the null model. As stated, only the constant is loaded into the null model. The constant is not statistically significant as a predictor. The Exp (B), informs how likely it is to predict voting. In table 18 the Exp (B) of 1.1 means we are 1.1 times more likely to predict voting which is only slightly more than guessing if a participant will vote.

Table 18

Null Model Variables in the Logistic Regression Model

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0 Constant	.106	.146	.531	1	.466	1.112

Traditional Media Model

Table 19 displays the results of knowing the variables in the traditional model and how likely one is to be able to predict voting. The variables in this model predict the voting behavior of the participants correctly 66% of the time, which is a strong model. Compared to the null

Table 19

Predictive Efficacy of the Traditional Model

	Observed	Predicted		
		VOTE		Percentage Correct
		no	yes	
VOTE	no	54	35	60.7
	yes	29	70	70.7

Overall Percentage			66.0
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model, the traditional model increases the likelihood of correctly predicting voting by 13.3%. Table 20 provides the beta coefficients for the traditional model. These allow the estimation of the likelihood of predicting voting knowing the variable present in the equation. The column Exp (B) shows the increase in the likelihood of predicting voting. In the traditional model several variables are statistically significant. Knowing the participants political party reduces the likelihood of predicting if a participant will vote. Participants who watched TV ads were 1.3 times more likely to vote. Participants who watched TV news were .26 times less likely to vote.

Participants who watched the debates on TV were 3.4 times more likely to vote than those who did not watch debates on TV. Finally, a Nagelkerke R Square was computed for the traditional model. This statistic is similar to the R^2 value of a linear regression model. For the traditional model the value was .231 which means the traditional model explains only 23% of the variance in voting in this study.

Table 20

Traditional Media Variables in Logistic Regression Model

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Party Affiliation	-.578	.221	6.822	1	.009	.561
Age	.018	.010	3.003	1	.083	1.018
(TV) Watch political ads	.250	.097	6.693	1	.010	1.284
(TV) Watch news	-.301	.141	4.563	1	.033	.740
(TV) Watch political talk show	.095	.090	1.125	1	.289	1.100
(Radio) Listen to political ads	.076	.106	.510	1	.475	1.078
(Radio) Listen to news	-.098	.107	.835	1	.361	.907
(Radio) Listen to Political talk shows	-.142	.098	2.072	1	.150	.868
(Print) Read political ads/flyers	-.068	.130	.274	1	.601	.934
(Print) Read political ads in newspapers	-.187	.139	1.806	1	.179	.830
(Print) Read newspapers/magazines political articles	.044	.150	.087	1	.768	1.045
(Print) Read editorials	.013	.136	.009	1	.923	1.013
Gender	-.569	.349	2.650	1	.104	.566
(TV) Watch debates (yes/no)	1.226	.596	4.235	1	.040	3.406
(Radio) Listen debates (yes/no)	.554	.441	1.578	1	.209	1.740
Participation Index	.245	.194	1.600	1	.206	1.278
Constant	.771	1.162	.440	1	.507	2.162

Web 1.0 Model

Table 21 contains the values of predicting voting using the variables in the Web 1.0 model. The model predicts with 61.7% accuracy the voting behavior of the study's participants. The web 1.0 model is approximately 5% less predictive when compared to the traditional model. However, when compared to the null model, its predictive efficacy is 9% higher.

Table 21

Predictive Efficacy of the Web 1.0 Model

	Observed	Predicted		
		VOTE		Percentage Correct
		no	yes	
VOTE	no	43	46	48.3
	yes	28	76	73.1
	Overall Percentage			61.7

Table 22 displays the beta coefficients for the Web 1.0 model. None of the variables in the model are statistically significant predictors for increasing the likelihood of voting. However, party affiliation was significant, but an inverse relationship. A Nagelkerke R Square was computed for the Web 1.0 model. Its value was .115 which means the Web 1.0 model explains only 11.5% of the variance in voting in this study.

Table 22

Web 1.0 Media Variables in the Logistic Regression Model

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Party Affiliation	-.476	.190	6.287	1	.012	.621
Age	.006	.009	.382	1	.537	1.006
Voter's gender	-.451	.318	2.004	1	.157	.637
(Website) Read Candidate's website/blog	-.085	.168	.258	1	.611	.918
(Twitter) View tweets	-.006	.120	.002	1	.963	.994
(Facebook) Read/View information	-.126	.089	2.007	1	.157	.881
(YouTube) Watch clips uploaded by candidate	.250	.144	2.985	1	.084	1.284
Constant	1.614	.971	2.766	1	.096	5.024

Web 2.0 Model

Table 23 contains the predictive efficacy for the Web 2.0 model. The Web 2.0 model predicts with 67.4% accuracy the voting actions of the study participants. Comparing this to the null model, the Web 2.0 model increases the prediction percentage by 14%, a substantial increase. The Web 2.0 model increased the prediction ability 1.4% over the traditional model and 5.7% over the Web 1.0 model. The Web 2.0 model has a higher predictive efficacy than the other three models.

Table 23

Predictive Efficacy of the Web 2.0 Model

	Observed	Predicted		
		VOTE		Percentage Correct
		no	yes	
VOTE	no	43	44	49.4
	yes	18	85	82.5
	Overall Percentage			67.4

Table 24

Web 2.0 Media Variables in Logistic Regression Model

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Party Affiliation	-.332	.217	2.334	1	.127	.717
Age	.007	.011	.461	1	.497	1.007
Gender	-.333	.367	.820	1	.365	.717
(Twitter) Follow a candidate	.738	.516	2.043	1	.153	2.092
(Twitter) Follower of candidate	-.682	.527	1.673	1	.196	.506
(Twitter) Tweet on candidate's twitter site	-22.278	8240.325	.000	1	.998	.000
(Twitter) Tweet about candidate's political issue	2.148	.847	6.427	1	.011	8.569
(Twitter) Go to group site to tweet about a political issue	-1.234	.646	3.645	1	.056	.291
(Website) Post to candidate's website	-1.118	1.363	.672	1	.412	.327
(Website) Share candidate's website with another	1.710	.831	4.229	1	.040	5.529
(Facebook) Write about a candidates issue	-1.449	.816	3.149	1	.076	.235
(Facebook) Share comments about candidate's issue with others	.706	.563	1.569	1	.210	2.025
(Facebook) Upload a photo/video of a candidate	-.183	.397	.212	1	.645	.833

(Facebook) Post to your wall about a candidate	-.303	.579	.273	1	.601	.739
(Facebook) Post to a friend's wall about candidate	-.389	.438	.788	1	.375	.678
(Facebook) Post to candidate's wall	15.008	4113.273	.000	1	.997	.717
(Facebook) Participate in a political activity	-35.438	5845.521	.000	1	.995	.000
(Facebook) Purchase/Shop merchandise from candidate in their site.	1.234	1.118	1.219	1	.270	3.434
(Facebook) Sign a petition	-.580	.908	.408	1	.523	.560
(Facebook) Share candidate's site with others	-.378	.688	.302	1	.583	.685
(Facebook) Like/Dislike a comment	-.293	.328	.796	1	.372	.746
(Facebook) comment on a post(dialog with others)	-.085	.440	.038	1	.846	.918
(Facebook) Subscribe to site	.456	.482	.894	1	.344	1.577
(Facebook) (Facebook) Go to a group site on Facebook and comment or post	.685	.616	1.236	1	.266	1.983
(YouTube) Like/dislike a video	-.005	.279	.000	1	.986	.995
(YouTube) comment on a video	1.778	.992	3.212	1	.073	5.918
(YouTube) Subscribe to a candidate's YouTube channel	16.482	9537.797	.000	1	.999	.113
(YouTube Upload candidate's YT clip to one's own site	-10.237	4768.898	.000	1	.998	.000

Constant	1.109	1.141	.945	1	.331	3.031
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Table 24 contains the beta coefficients for the Web 2.0 model. Two variables are statistically significant indicators of the likelihood of voting.

Tweeting about a candidate or political issues indicates a participant is 8.6 times more likely to vote, while sharing a candidate's website with a friend or other website makes a participant 5.5 times more likely to vote. Although not statistically significant, participants commenting on a candidate's YouTube video are 6 times more likely to vote. A Nagelkerke R Square was computed for the Web 2.0 model. Its value was .338 which means the Web 2.0 model explains 33.8% of the variance in voting in this study. This is also higher than the other models.

Combined Model

Table 25 shows that the combined model, the model containing variables from all models predicts that voting at nearly a 75% rate. This model clearly outpaces the other models in predicting accurately who will vote.

Table 25

Predictive Efficacy of the Combined Model

	Observed	Predicted		
		VOTE		Percentage Correct
		no	yes	
VOTE	no	62	25	71.3
	yes	21	75	78.1
	Overall Percentage			74.9

Table 26 contains the beta coefficients for the combined model. When all variables appear in the model from the traditional, Web 1.0, and Web 2.0 models several variables increase the likelihood of voting with statistical significance. Tweeting about a candidate or political issue indicates a participant is 26.0 time more likely to vote. Writing about a candidate's issues on Facebook decreases the likelihood of voting with statistical significance. Watching political advertisements on television and watching the debates on TV made a participant 1.4 times and 4.8 times more likely to vote in the 2012 presidential election respectively. Additionally, there were two other variables that were not statistically significant, but increased the likelihood of voting. Those participants who shared a candidate's website with a friend or other website were 4.8 times more likely to vote. Participants commenting on a candidate's YouTube video were 18.9 times more likely to vote. Nagelkerke R Square was computed for the combined model. Its value was .501 which means the combined model explains 50.1% of the variance in voting in this study. This is also higher than the other models. Although this model appears to best explain the variation in voting, it may be an artifact of the number of variables in the model. The more variables used in the model, the higher the R^2 value. This is true for pseudo R^2 values as well.

Table 26

Variables in the Combined Logistic Regression Model

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Party Affiliation	-.449	.290	2.396	1	.122	.638
Age	.015	.015	.996	1	.318	1.015
Gender	-.237	.467	.258	1	.612	.789
(Twitter) Follow a candidate	.564	.539	1.093	1	.296	1.757
(Twitter) Follower of a candidate	-.624	.581	1.153	1	.283	.536
(Twitter) View tweets	.248	.480	.268	1	.605	1.282

(Twitter) Tweet on candidate's website	- 24.747	8180.124	.000	1	.998	.000
(Twitter) Tweet about a candidate's political issue	3.259	1.390	5.500	1	.019	26.021
(Twitter) Go to group site to tweet about a political issue	-1.548	.914	2.866	1	.090	.213
(Website) Read Candidate's website	.127	.351	.131	1	.717	1.136
(Website) Post to candidate's website	-1.177	2.443	.232	1	.630	.308
(Website) Share candidate's website with others	1.568	1.235	1.613	1	.204	4.799
(Facebook) Post about a candidate's issue	-2.450	1.114	4.839	1	.028	.086
(Facebook) Share comments about a candidate's issues with others	.458	.734	.389	1	.533	1.581
(Facebook) Upload photo/video	.248	.481	.265	1	.606	1.281
(Facebook) Read/view information about the candidate	.300	.232	1.667	1	.197	1.350
(Facebook) Post to your wall	-1.337	1.043	1.641	1	.200	.263
(Facebook) Post to a friend's wall	-.153	.586	.068	1	.794	.858
(Facebook) Post to a candidate's wall	16.541	4024.021	.000	1	.997	.520
(Facebook) Participation in political activity	- 38.361	5719.804	.000	1	.995	.000
(Facebook) Purchase/shop	1.372	1.452	.892	1	.345	3.943

(Facebook) Sign a petition	-.914	1.306	.490	1	.484	.401
(Facebook) Share site with others	.063	.899	.005	1	.944	1.065
(Facebook) Like/Dislike a comment	-.974	.505	3.722	1	.054	.377
(Facebook) Comment on a post	.168	.541	.096	1	.757	1.182
(Facebook) Subscribe to site	.469	.746	.395	1	.530	1.598
(Facebook) Go to a group site of FB and common on post)	1.500	1.068	1.974	1	.160	4.481
(YouTube) Watch clip uploaded by candidate	.386	.346	1.248	1	.264	1.472
(YouTube) Liked/disliked a video	-.157	.489	.104	1	.748	.854
(YouTube) Comment on a video	2.942	1.554	3.583	1	.058	18.960
(YouTube) Subscribe to candidate's YT channel	16.314	7371.334	.000	1	.998	.848
(YouTube) Create upload YT clip to own YT site	-9.502	3685.667	.000	1	.998	.000
(TV) Watch political ads	.305	.120	6.418	1	.011	1.357
(TV) Watch news	-.320	.172	3.465	1	.063	.726
(TV) Watch political talk shows	.229	.122	3.529	1	.060	1.257
(Radio) Listen to ads	.223	.136	2.690	1	.101	1.249
(Radio) Listen to news	-.139	.138	1.018	1	.313	.870
(Radio) Listen to political talk shows	-.231	.134	2.984	1	.084	.794
(Print) Read Political ads/flyers	-.277	.171	2.616	1	.106	.758

(Print) Read political ads in newspapers	-.178	.180	.979	1	.322	.837
(Print) Read newspapers/magazines	-.099	.196	.255	1	.613	.906
(Print) Read editorials	.102	.172	.348	1	.555	1.107
Participation Index	.420	.352	1.426	1	.232	1.522
(TV) Watch debates(yes/no)	1.564	.727	4.632	1	.031	4.779
(Radio) Listen to debates (yes/no)	.286	.564	.256	1	.613	1.331
Constant	-.165	1.582	.011	1	.917	.848

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Unlike previous research into political activity and social media, this study examined the use of specific activities available in social media platforms and voting. Candidates in the 2012 presidential election campaign allocated increasing sums of money for social media in their campaign strategies, based on the assumption that more voters were moving away from traditional media platforms and obtaining information and engaging in political activities via the Internet than in previous elections. Recent studies about the shift to social media and its effects on offline political activities including voting concentrate on social media platforms as a whole (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Chadwick, 2009; Chang and Aaker, 2010; Vitak, Zube, Smock, Carr, Ellison, and Lampe, 2009; Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla, and Williams, 2010; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer & Bichard, 2010). President Obama's maximization of social media, coupled with his large margin of victory in the 2008 presidential campaign, led to the predictions that citizens' would transition from traditional media use to social media use for political participation activities. This study examines the effectiveness of the individual activities from each platform and if they correlate with voting. Further, the current study combines characteristics from the different platforms into traditional, Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 activities for the purposes of examining the efficacy of each model relative to voting, and to determine if there are particular activities within models that predict voting by participants.

This final chapter contains a summary of the most notable findings from the study, a set of possible explanations for these findings, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research. The dependent variable in this study was voting, measured as 1 = yes and 0 = no. The data for this variable were retrieved from the voting records compiled by the New Jersey State

Board of Elections. Fifty-four percent of the study's participants voted in the 2012 presidential election which is slightly less than the 59% voting nationwide as reported by the United States Election Project 2012 (McDonald, 2013). Voting is the gold ring of political participation. Candidates spend large amounts of money to encourage citizens to vote.

Frequencies

Traditional political activities included, contributing money to a political campaign, displaying campaign buttons or bumper stickers or yard signs, volunteering to work on a campaign, join a political group or party organization, and/or discussing political ideology/issues with friends or family. Seventy-one percent of participants in this study discussed political ideologies or issues with friends far exceeding other activities. Seventeen and one half percent of the participants contributed money to a campaign which was the second most frequent activity, a distant second. Both of these activities were passive in nature.

The most frequent Twitter activity use among the study's participants was following a candidate. Only seventeen persons reported engaging in this activity at least weekly. On average 93% of the respondents in this study did not use Twitter for political participation in the 2012 presidential election campaign. The one Twitter activity that participants engaged in was a passive activity, merely requiring participants to read tweets, analogous to reading a newspaper or written political advertisement. This study's participants did not engage in the synchronous qualities contained in Twitter.

Websites and blogs were introduced to the presidential campaign in 2008 and used in the 2010 congressional election cycle as well. Interestingly, slightly less than 30% of respondents reported reading a candidate's website or blog, 50% of whom did so less than once a month. These frequencies indicate that the study's participants continue to engage in the most passive

activity within the social media platform. This finding suggests that while citizens are slowly broadening their media choices they are still not transitioning their media patterns from passive to active activities.

Thirty-three percent of the participants reported viewing a YouTube clip, but 22% reported use less than monthly. Similarly, liking/disliking a candidate's YouTube video was completed by 20% of the respondents, the majority less than once a month. These results continue the pattern that the study's participants are not moving their traditional or passive media use to utilize the synchronous activities of social media.

Facebook had a stronger presence in the 2010 Congressional campaigns than in the 2008 presidential campaign races. This platform includes a wider range of activities than those previously discussed. Three activities are particularly notable. First, reading and viewing information about a candidate was the most frequent activity. Thirty-six percent of the respondents reported engaging in this activity. The distribution was even across the categories. Second, 31% of the participants reported liking a comment on a candidate's Facebook page. Respondents again were evenly distributed across the categories. Finally, 25% of the sample reported commenting on a post by other users. Half of those participants reported doing so less than once per month. Although there is a slight shift towards asynchronous activities in Facebook, the most frequent activity, reading and viewing information continues to demonstrate the study's participants' reluctance to shift from passive activities associated with traditional media.

Traditional media platforms of television, radio and print yield very different results than social media platforms. Regarding television, participants watched advertisements (paid commercials), news reports, and political talk shows at a much higher rate and frequencies than they engaged with Internet platforms. In fact, well over 50% of the respondents reported

engaging in these activities on at least a daily basis. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents report watching presidential debates on TV at least once. Forty-two percent of the sample listened to political advertisements at least daily while 55% reported listening to news reports on politics at least daily. However, 49% of respondents did not listen to political talk shows on the radio, while only 33.5% reported listening to debates on radio. Print media represents the final type of traditional media platform. More than 50% of the respondents reported reading political advertisements (flyers) or reading political advertisements in newspapers less than once per month. In contrast, over 42% stated that they read political articles in newspapers and magazines more than once per week, and 40% read editorials more than once per week.

The frequencies lead to several conclusions. First, the respondents in this sample favor traditional media over any form of social media. Second, even when they use social media, the activities mirror those of traditional media and are more passive than active. Third, few participants used newer, asynchronous forms of social media activities to engage in political activities.

An increasing number of studies (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Boulianne, 2009; Cho, J., Shah, McLeod, Scholl, and Gotlieb, 2009) suggest a positive correlation between digital media use by citizens and political participation and voting in election campaigns. Adhering to the premise of mobilization theory is the growing supposition that the more individuals use digital media, the more likely they are to participate in the political deliberations and voting in elections. The conclusion of previous research is that technology drives citizens' political participation and voting patterns (Vaccari, 2010). The current study contradicts this assertion.

One possible explanation for the overuse of traditional media activities in the current study is the sample's age. The respondents are older than the voting public in general with a

mean age of 54 years. There are no participants under the age of 21. Those are the group known as digital natives who are seemingly instinctive users of social media. It is possible, even likely, that the age of the sample may impact these conclusions. Therefore, the study's conclusions may not be generalizable to the population of voters and presenting an external validity concern for the study.

Correlations

Research Question 1 examines the strength and direction of relationships between the different media platforms activities and voting in the 2012 presidential election. Previous research (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2010; Hoffman, Jones, & Young, 2013; Howard and Park, 2012) recommends examining the individual activities within each particular social and traditional media site instead of looking at the sites as a whole. In this study, the researcher first parceled the various site activities into traditional media, Web 1.0 media, and Web 2.0 media activities, abandoning the examination of individual platforms. This allowed the current study to examine these activities individually. Previous research examined the platforms in total.

Traditional political activity is an important related factor in this study. The evolution of social media includes ways of participating in the political process as well as information gathering techniques. Examining if traditional political activities were correlated to voting in the 2012 presidential election begins the process of thoroughly examining if and to what extent a paradigm shift is occurring.

A series of tests using the contingency coefficient as a measure of correlation between voting and political activity produced weak coefficient values which were not statistically significant. Discussing political ideas or ideologies of the candidates with family and friends was the most frequently engaged activity. However, among the participants in this sample, the

correlations were weak and not statistically significant. Study participants contributing money, placing signage, volunteering on a campaign, joining a political party, or discussing ideas/ideologies did not correlate to voting in the 2012 presidential election. These findings contradict a previous study by Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal (2008).

Traditional media platforms combined television, radio, and print activities. Point bi-serial tests were computed on these activities. The only statistically significant activity correlating with voting was watching debates on Television. The association was weakly-moderate, however. The fact that watching debates on television was statistically significant may result from the accessibility of television, the contextual information produced by television, or the ease and familiarity of the medium.

Correlation of Web 1.0 activities to voting using point bi-serial tests produced no statistically significant results. The coefficient values were weak. However, the direction of the associations for reading information posted by candidates on Facebook, viewing candidates' tweets, and reading candidate's official website were in the opposite direction than hypothesized. Previous studies showed a positive correlation with Web 1.0 activities. However, the current study found that respondents who did not frequently participate in these activities were likely voters. One possible explanation is that the participants in this study were not moving from traditional media to social media sites to gain information or partake in political activities. One exception to this trend was watching a YouTube clip uploaded or posted by the candidate. Although a weak association and not statistically significant, the relationship was in the expected direction. The mobility of new media devices such as tablets, laptop computers and smartphones make it easier to access the Internet and YouTube clips. The similarity of YouTube

viewing and television viewing and the mobility features of accessing devices was thought to have a positive association to voting as predicted by the reinforcement theory.

The final series of correlations completed included the Web 2.0 activities. Point bi-serial correlation tests produced a variety of findings. YouTube activities were weak and not statistically significant. All were in the expected direction indicating a positive relation. Participants using the social media activities were more likely to vote than those who did not use YouTube activities. Blog and website activities were inverse associations, which were not significant. Both were weakly correlated. These blog/website activities required the respondents to be active users; they had to post or share the site with others. The Twitter activities also were weak correlations. All were not statistically significant, but three were in the opposite direction than expected. The inverse relationships occurred between tweeting on a candidate's Twitter site, tweeting about a candidate on your Twitter site, or going to a group site to tweet about a candidate's political issues and voting. The study's participants who never engaged in these activities voted more often. Although the coefficient values for all Facebook activities were weak, several were statistically significant. However, all associations were inverse. Voters who never used any Facebook activities voted more often than participants engaging in the activities. Among the statistically significant activities were uploading a photo/video, posting a political comment to your wall, posting to a friend's wall, like a political comment and engaging with others were significant at the .05 level. Sharing a Facebook site with others was significant at the .1 level. These results clearly demonstrate that the participants in this study were not more likely to vote if they engaged in Web 2.0 activities as predicted by previous research (Vitak et al., 2011),

Watching debates on television was the only activity producing a positive, statistically significant relationship indicating that voters watched the debates. The weak, inverse, statistically significant relationships do not support the hypothesis that voters are moving away from traditional media toward social media. This sample is not matriculating to social media as was predicted.

Predictive Models

The second research question asked whether use of particular media platforms increase citizens' likelihood of voting. Past research (Bond, et al., 2012; Hayes, 2009; Anduiza, et al., 2008; DiGennaro and Dutton, 2006; Rosenstone and Hanson, 2002) found that social media were replacing traditional media in the delivery of political messaging. Keeping with those findings, the current research hypothesized that use of Web 2.0 platforms would be the best means of predicting the likelihood of voting. To test this hypothesis and address the research question the study developed four models to predict voting in the 2012 presidential election.

Logistic regression initially examines the null model, which predicts the dependent variable with no independent variables in the model. One would expect that the model was likely to predict voting 50% of the time. In this study, the predictability of the null model was 52%, very close to the expected value of 50%. The traditional model increased the prediction of voting by 14% to 66%. The Web 1.0 model increased predictability to 62%, an increase of 10% from the null model. Finally, the Web 2.0 model saw an increase of 15% from the null model to 67%. At first glance, it would seem that the Web 2.0 model increased the ability to predict if a respondent would vote at a higher level than the other models. However, one should be cautious to accept this conclusion as the Web 2.0 model included twice the number of variables as the traditional model and outperformed it by only 1%. Even taking the results at face value does not

provide indisputable evidence that social media is replacing traditional media. Finally, the combined model increased the ability to predict voting 23%, from 52% to 75%. It is most likely that the results of the logistic models' predictive components demonstrate a convergence of media in political messaging (Jenkins, 2006)

Logistic regression procedure also computes a Nagelkerke R square statistic. Similar to the R square statistic in linear regression models, the Nagelkerke R² determines the amount of variance in the dependent variable is accounted for by the variables in the model. The Nagelkerke R² results were:

Traditional model; .231 or 23% of the variance; (16 variables)
Web 1.0 model; .115 or 11.5% of the variance; (8 variables)
Web 2.0 model; .338 or 33.8% of the variance; (28 variables)
Combined model; .501 or 50% of the variance; (45 variables)

The results here show that the Web 2.0 model does account for a greater portion of the variance in voting than the traditional and Web 1.0 models. However, the combined model accounts for 50% of the variance in voting for the participants in this study. The number of variables in an equation affects the R² values. Simply the addition of variables inflates the R² value and is a reason for caution. In this sample, the Web 2.0 model outperforms the traditional and Web 1.0 models and lends support to the hypothesis that Web 2.0 best explains the likelihood of voting. However, the combined model supports the convergence hypothesis posited by Jenkins (2006), explaining almost 50% of the variance in voting for the sample.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of the study do not support the growing contention of previous scholars that the Web 2.0 features of the Internet will mobilize individuals to new political participation behaviors. The registered voters participating in this study continue to mimic the traditional communication activities previously used in print, radio, television and social media sites. The

current frequency patterns and choice of media by the participants are better explained by Reinforcement Theory and the Uses and Gratification Theory.

A breakdown of all online activities contained in the social media platforms supports the claim of reinforcement scholars that the Internet will not motivate new online users to participate politically in election campaigns. The 2012 presidential election campaigns had access to a new and more sophisticated Internet than was available in the 2008 general election. The optimistic predictions of Web 2.0 to reinvigorate political participation did not surface in this study's findings. Despite the increase accessibility and mobility of the web including faster Internet speeds, tablets, increased amounts of online information and sophisticated synchronous tools offering the capacity to deliberate in an online community, social media had minimal effect in stimulating and reinventing political participation and voting among these participants. Klapper (1960) and Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng (2011) found mass communication primarily reinforces the status quo. This study supports this conclusion.

Previous Uses and Gratification research suggests that while Web 1.0 has characteristics that can stimulate political participation, the Internet reinforces the existing political participation patterns taking place in traditional media. The results of this study echo these studies' findings. An important underlying assumption of the Uses and Gratifications theory is that media users are active and will evaluate media to meet their needs. The findings in the current study suggest that while users are beginning to venture into new media and converge new media choices with traditional media choices, it appears participants are uncomfortable with the mechanics of new media. Participants in the current study who ventured into new media attempted to translate their traditional political participation patterns in the social media sites. These participants did not seem to capitalize on the asynchronous tools offered in the social media sites to promote online

community. This current study reinforces the contention of Reinforcement and Uses and Gratification scholars that the Internet does not significantly mobilize voters in campaign elections.

Practical Implications

The results of this study indicate that older registered voters have not surrendered their use of traditional media to social media in their quest for political information and engagement. Registered voters in this study preferred passive activities versus the user generated activities found in social media. Candidates' campaigns are increasing their focus with social medial media to mobilize voters. However, little evidence is available to support the notion that older populations are moving to social media for political deliberation and engagement. Candidates may be wise to tailor their messages not solely on the content but on the channel and activity preferred by voters. It might be wise for candidates to instead see social media as reinforcing rather than mobilizing. More media choices should not assume that voters will be mobilized to vote in these campaign messages. Instead, based on the results of this study, voters reinforced their participation patterns in traditional media and are slowly seeking out these same traditional patterns in social media platforms. Future messages by candidates should be targeted not only to a particular demographic but to the preferred specific political participation activity.

Limitations of the Study

One major limitation to this study was a history effect happening right in the middle of data collection and the week before the election. Superstorm Sandy came on shore and devastated the New Jersey Coast. The study was in the coastal county most affected by the storm. Thousands of residents had their homes destroyed or severely compromised by the storm and the county was without power for a minimum of eight days and in fact some residents are

still without power and homeless during the writing of this document. The aftermath of the storm affected the sample size, the return rate and representativeness of the sample.

The sample underrepresented Republicans and unaffiliated voters and over represented Democratic voters. This may explain the overall percentage of voters in the sample. Ocean County is historically a Republican county in terms of its voting record. Although 50% of the voters claim no party affiliation, outcomes strongly demonstrate Republican leanings. The storm and the overrepresentation of Democrats in the sample may explain the poor voting turnout because Democrats vote less often than Republicans and unaffiliated voters in Ocean County (NJ Board of Election Data).

The return rate poses another problem. There is no way to differentiate between those responding to the survey and those who did not. Are there differences between the two which affects the validity of this study? This question compromises the conclusions of this research.

Model misspecification is a concern in any research as it is a factor in bias. It is possible that the measures used in each model (traditional, Web 1.0 and Web 2.0) may interact with other unidentified measures leading to spurious results. It is difficult to determine how environmental events and social factors affect the variability in voting. There are individual factors as well which enter into a participant's decision to vote or not. These factors are impossible to include in such a study.

Suggestions for Future Research

One major shortcoming of this study is the sampling process. A stratified proportionate sample using political party affiliation as the strata determining variable may be insufficient. One suggestion is to include gender as a stratifying variable as male and female voters may choose different media to engage in political activities and information gathering.

The second suggestion is the inclusion of qualitative data to explain participants' selection of different activities. This research seeks to answer how often, if ever, did participants use various media activities. Conclusions were drawn based on quantitative analysis assumptions. However, one of the findings in this study was that there were inverse relationships to voting in many of the significant variables. This is an unexpected finding and qualitative exploration could shed light on this finding. Bimber and Copeland (2013) put forth that a focus on technology as the driver of citizens' political participation seems to be a poor measure of understanding political engagement. It is their contention that surveys emphasize the medium rather than the context of the message. The multitude of online political experiences might not strongly correlate with how frequently or intensively someone uses digital media.

The third suggestion is to determine if it is the message or the medium carrying the message. Much of the recent research examines the medium of the Internet and concludes political participation would increase as citizens moved from the traditional media of print, television and radio to interactive media sites. This study did not support that contention; in fact, it refuted those claims in a significant fashion. Overwhelmingly, participants did not engage in social media platforms relative to the 2012 presidential election. Research should examine the underlying interest of political interest, party affiliation and the information sought from citizens by candidates.

A fourth suggestion is to study registered voters' level of proficiency and comfort with using technology. Specifically, it may not simply be a bivariate relationship, but one where there is an intervening variable. The thought that comes to mind is the combination of a citizen's comfort level with social media platforms and their political interest. It may be the interaction of

these two variables that translates into increased political participation and voting. This relationship should be examined in future election campaigns.

One final suggestion that is not accounted for is the candidates themselves. This research does not account for the candidate's 'use of social media. Were both candidates similarly using social media, or were there differences in what attracted participants back to the sites? This study did not examine the depth and detail of candidates' use of social media, just that they used it and it was available to the public. Future studies should include a qualitative component to address these questions.

Concluding Comment

This study set out to determine if registered voters were moving away from traditional media to social media in their quest for political information and participation, The findings indicate that for this sample, the answer is no. What this study does indicate is that older voters did not move to social media for political information and engagement. The lack of younger voters who are digital natives most likely skewed the results. However, it may be wise for politicians to understand that all voters are not pursuing social media for political issues. Targeting and tailoring the message to the media's most likely users is an important factor in future campaign strategies. Politicians need to consider both the medium and the receiver(s) of the message using that medium in their allocation of campaign resources. This study demonstrates social media is not a one size fits all strategy.

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Appendix A

Survey of Political Engagement and Media Activities

1. Which of the following activities have you done during the current Presidential Election Campaign? Check all that apply.

Contribute Money to Political Campaign	
Display campaign buttons or bumper stickers or yard signs	
Volunteer to work on campaign	
Join a political group or party organization	
Discuss political ideology/issues with friends or family	

2. The following questions ask about the **social media** activities you have participated in during the current Presidential Election. Each activity asks how frequently, if at all, you engaged in the social media activities. Please use the following frequency list to record your answers.

Activities for	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Twitter								
Following a candidate								
Follower of a candidate								
View tweets (messages and links)								
Tweet on a candidate's Twitter site								

Tweet about candidate or political issue on your Twitter site								
Go to a group site and Tweet about candidate or political issue								

Activities for Website(Blog)	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Read Candidate's website								
Post to candidate's website								
Share candidate's website with a friend or another site								

Activities for Facebook	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Write about a candidate's issue								
Share comment about a								

candidate's issue								
Upload a photo/video								
Read/view information								
Post to your wall								
Post to friend's wall								
Post to candidate's wall								
Participate in activity (T-shirt)								
Purchase/Shop								
Sign Petition								
Share site with others								
Like a comment								
Comment on a post(dialogue with other viewers-user)								
Subscribe to site for info/updates								
Go to a group's Facebook and comment (post)								

Activities for YouTube	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Watch clip uploaded and posted by candidate								
Like/Dislike a video								
Comment on a video								
Subscribe to the candidate's YouTube Channel								
Create and upload your own YouTube clip on your own YouTube site								

3. The following questions ask about the **traditional media** activities you have participated in during the current Presidential Election Campaign. Each activity asks how frequently, if at all, you engaged in the social media activities. Please use the following frequency list to record your answers.

Television	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Watch Advertisements (paid commercials)								
Watch Debates								
Watch News reports								
Watch Political talk shows								

Radio	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day

Listen to advertisements (paid commercials)								
Listen to Debates								
Listen to News reports								
Listen to Political talk shows(Talk Radio)								

Print	Never	Less than 1 per month	Monthly	2-3 times per month	Weekly	Several times per week	Daily	More than once per day
Read political advertisements (flyers)								
Read political advertisement (newspapers)								
Read Newspaper/Magazine Articles								
Read Editorials								