THE IMPACT OF FACEBOOK, TWITTER, AND YOUTUBE ON

MILLENNIALS' POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

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A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty in Communication and Leadership Studies

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Under the Mentorship of Dr. Giovanni Caputo

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Master of Arts in Communication and Leadership Studies

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By

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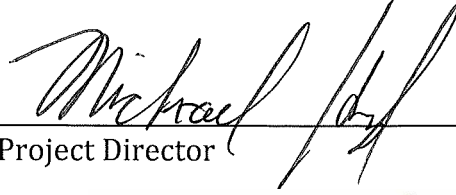
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ABSTRACT

Social media plays a prominent role in the daily lives of Millennials. The majority of Millennials use some form of social media, and with the amount of political content on various social media sites, it is worth examining how social media influences Millennials' political behavior. This study focused on three social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This research was rooted in George Gerbner and Larry Gross' Cultivation theory (1976), which states that long-term media exposure shapes reality. The study consisted of survey and focus group research, which attempted to determine how much time Millennials spend on each site, how politically active they are, and whether or not they thought their political behavior was influenced by social media. The resulting data showed that YouTube and Twitter were not used for political information, but Facebook is so saturated with political content that it may have a negative influence on formal political participation levels. Millennials may feel that participating in political dialogue on Facebook qualifies as formal political participation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Millennial Generation is large group of young adults that will have a significant impact on the political landscape in the near future. This study was based on the idea that Millennials' social media use has implications on their political behavior (i.e. political views, ideology and participation), and that this is a topic that needed to be researched. Millennials will comprise a very large portion of voters in coming elections. Their political participation, or lack thereof, will influence the outcome of these elections. While there is ample research on Millennials' use of social media, less is known about how sites such as Facebook Twitter and YouTube impact their political behavior.

Eventually, Millennials will become the generation that makes up most of the workforce and influencers of society. If they lack participation in political matters that influence their lives, they will ultimately have little control of those political influences. While Millennials seem to be very politically "active" and vocal on social media platforms, this does not necessarily translate to formal political action. It is of interest to examine what impact these social media sites have on Millennials' political behavior, because social media plays such significant role in Millennial lives.

The specific purpose of this study was to focus on influence that the social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have on Millennials' political behavior, meaning their political views, ideology and participation. Within the context of this research, political behavior will refer to how Millennials use social media to send and receive political information, how they use that information, and how it shapes their political views and beliefs, and voting habits. How Millennials politically identify online may carry over to how they identify in the real world. The survey portion of this study was

broken into two parts: a multiple choice question section and Likert-scale question section. The multiple choice questions were designed to examine how much time Millennials spend on each of the social media sites and determine whether the participants have voted or not, and the Likert-scale questions were designed to examine how the participants perceive their political activity level, their social media use level, and their awareness of where political information comes from on social media sites. After the survey data was collected, a focus group was held to further examine the influence of social media on Millennials' political behavior. The focus group discussion was analyzed and then compared to the results of the survey research.

Below is a short explanation of the remaining chapters in this study. Chapter two is a literature review that begins with philosophical assumptions and theory that this study is rooted in, a review of relevant literature, and then finishes with a rationale that leads into the research questions the study was based on. Chapter three is the scope and methodology of this study, which sets the parameters of the study and lays out how it was conducted. Chapter four is the study itself, where the information is presented and analyzed. Finally, chapter five wraps everything in the study up, and discusses the implications of the findings along with future studies that could this one as a foundation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Philosophical Assumptions

In the realm of social media, there is no shortage of political content. Whether it's a Facebook post from a friend or family member, a tweet from a news outlet, or a political debate streamed on YouTube, Millennials are constantly exposed to political content on social media. Since Millennials are constantly on social media, and see so many political messages, there are ethical considerations that content creators should heed. Because this study is rooted in Gerbner's 1976 Cultivation theory, which states that long-term media exposure shapes reality (Gerbner & Gross 1976, p. 173), it falls in the socio-psychological and socio-cultural traditions (Griffin, 2012, p. 366). In the socio-psychological tradition, researchers look for communication truths and universal laws of communication; the socio-cultural tradition is based on the premise that as people communicate they produce, and reproduce culture (Griffin, 2012, p. 38, 43). However, theorists in the socio-cultural tradition suggest the opposite. If that is the case, then peoples' communication or language affects reality.

The philosophical underpinnings of this study stem from Kant's Categorical Imperative. Griffin (1994) explains that the Categorical imperative is a belief that everyone has a moral duty to tell the truth (p. 461). Everyone, from a person posting on Facebook to a news anchor on the nightly news, has the responsibility to be truthful in his or her messages. Without truth in communications, researchers cannot find universal laws or communication truths. And so, Kant's Categorical Imperative represents a maxim in political communications—that all messages should be truthful. This study is based on

the idea that truthful political messages on social media influence Millennials' political behavior.

Theoretical Basis

This study is rooted in Gerbner's Cultivation theory, which states that long-term media exposure shapes reality. Their research was on television's influence on society, but is still relevant if applied to social media. The amount of time Millennials spend on social media, which may be more than they watch television, could shape their political reality. Gerbner and Gross (1976) write, "The environment that sustains the most distinctive aspects of human existence is the environment of symbols. We learn, share, and act upon meanings derived from that environment," (p.173). Millennials are constantly immersed in the social media environment, and act upon the meanings they derive from it.

Much has been researched on Cultivation theory since 1976. Morgan and Shanahan (2010) explain that cultivation is one of the three most cited theories in mass communication (p. 337). Many of these studies continue to focus on television's influence on viewers, and have branched into topics other than violence. Some of these other topics include drug use, premarital sex, and running away from home, among many others (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010, p. 340). As times change, so do the mediums that convey messages. Today, the Internet and computers have become one of the most heavily used mediums, especially amongst Millennials. Morgan and Shanahan (2010) write, "But can we still talk about cultivation in the age of YouTube, Facebook, Hulu, Twitter, and TiVo? The answer is yes," (p. 350). They go on to explain that these different mediums change the way people receive information, but it actually conveys

more information; people are exposed more information than ever. Cultivation theory is just as applicable to social media today as it is to television, and will continue to be relevant regardless of the shift in mediums.

Literature Review

The Millennial Generation is large group of young adults that will have a significant impact on the political landscape in the near future. This literature review examines information on Millennials' social media use and the implications it may have on their political behavior (i.e. political views, ideology and participation). According to Fry (2015), there are nearly 75 million Millennials, ages 18-34 (para. 1), out of the roughly 322 million people in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Excluding the 23 percent (about 74 million people) of U.S. residents under the age of 18 (United States Census Bureau, 2014), there are 248 million people of voting age in the country. That means Millennials make up almost one third of voting-aged citizens. Their political participation level will influence the outcome of current and future elections.

Despite the large number of voting-age Millennials, they may not participate in formal political processes, such as voting, at rates that older generations do. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Millennials made up 19 percent of all voters in the 2012 primary election, with about half of all Millennials turning out to vote (CIRCLE, 2012, para. 2). Millennials did have a significant impact on that election, but the turnout in the 2012 election was less than the 2008 election. It is possible that Millennial voter turnout will continue to decrease in future elections, particularly if Millennials do not have a candidate that they prefer. Robillard (2012) states that Obama received 67 percent of the Millennial vote in 2012,

which shows that Millennials overwhelmingly favored Obama (para. 2). Unless Millennials have a candidate that they support, it is possible they may not turn out to vote at all.

Millennials are a young generation of people born between 1982 and 2003 (Winograd & Hais, 2009, p.1) and will be a major influence in shaping the political landscape. There seems to be a floating definition of what birth years are considered Millennials, but Agozzino (2012) explains that it is generally accepted that Millennials are born after 1982 (p. 184). She credits Howe and Strauss (2000) with this information, explaining that they have done extensive research on this subject and coined the term "Millennial." Winograd and Hais (2009) state that the Millennial Generation is larger and more ethnically diverse, as well as more technologically proficient than any generation before (p. 45). According to Winograd and Hais (2009), Millennials are also particularly adept in the use of peer-to-peer communication technologies such as Facebook, which will increasingly be used to inform and shape public opinion (p. 86). Schwalbe's (2009) findings concur with Winograd and Hais on the technology aspect. In a study, Schwalbe found that 96 percent of college students surveyed always carried a cell phone, using it daily (p. 57).

By the Numbers

According to the American Press Institute (2015), 88 percent of Millennials get some form of news from Facebook (para. 7). While this number may be encouraging, it is deceiving because less than half of Facebook-using Millennials are intentionally looking for news on the social media site (American Press Institute, 2015, para. 15). Twitter is used less by Millennials, but according to Duggan (2015), 23 percent of Millennials use

the platform daily (para. 6). Twitter is geared more towards status updates, so Twitter users may be actively seeking news, in contrast to Facebook users. YouTube is another site that is heavily used by Millennials. The American Press Institute (2015) reports that 83 percent of Millennials use YouTube to receive news (para. 7). YouTube recently started airing political debates, and also has the debates available after they are aired. Seeing that the majority of Millennials use YouTube, it is a potential political news source for them and may influence their political behavior.

According to research conducted by Lenhart et al. (2010), 72 percent of all young voters use some form of a social network, with Facebook as the most popular site (p. 3). Another finding of the research was that 18-29 year olds are more likely to use multiple social networks in a single day (Lenhart et al., 2010, p. 18). At the time of their study, MySpace was still a popular network, but will not be considered in future research, as it is no longer widely used. Lenhart et al.'s (2010) research showed that Twitter is also one of the more popular networks among young adults (18-29), with 33 percent of young adults using Twitter (p. 21).

The popularity and widespread use of Facebook and Twitter is of interest in relation to the question "how do of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube influence Millennials' political behavior" because it shows the significance of social media in Millennials' daily lives. Millennials may participate in political communications or activities on social media, but the same cannot be said about their participation in formal political processes. Vivaldi (2010) writes, "There is significant disagreement in both academic and popular writing about the degrees of (dis) engagement among young adults in the U.S…Some scholars hold…that there is a pervasive, and perhaps even

unprecedented, culture of political apathy among young adults in the U.S.," (p. 372). It appears that this political apathy among Millennials may still exist. Little (2009) explains that in a study, 76 percent of young people think politics are important, but only 24 percent said they had actually had an interest in them. (p. 120). He also explains that 41 percent of those surveyed did not know the difference between left and right wing politics (Little, 2009, p. 120). While this study was conducted with youth in the U.K., it is still important because it shows that political apathy is prominent amongst young people in places all over the world.

The prominence of social media sites has made them an influencer in the media world. Fresno Garcia et al. (2016) explain that social media is an independent actor that has the ability to shape audience attitudes at the same level of professional, or traditional media (p. 23). Through a social media analysis, Fresno Garcia et al. (2016) identify three types of social media influencer: disseminator, engager and leader (p. 23). An influencer, who could be a politician and opinion leader, could have a substantial effect on a Millennial voter through a social media site. In other words, social media may influence Millennials more than traditional forms of media.

What makes Millennials so connected to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter is their connection to technology in general. Miller (2013) states that Millennials demand constant access to technology and are able to maintain multiple technological activities at once (para. 8). This results in a constant flow of information, and a desire for more (Miller, 2013, para. 8). While there may be a wealth of information, Miller (2013) explains that this may create a divide between Millennials and political information or activity (para. 12). The massive amount of information Millennials have access to may

be a negative influence as it could limit their ability to distinguish between valid content and self-broadcasted content, meaning the information may not be true. Millennials may have access to a great amount of information, but they may not choose to consume political information, leaving them ignorant when it comes to many political matters.

Botterill and Dun (2015) concur with Miller's assessment; according to their research, Millennials use social media predominantly for entertainment or socializing (p. 537). Their research points to the notion that Millennials do not look to social media for political information. However, that may be changing, as there is an increasing amount of political content on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

It seems that Millennials tend to focus less on traditional media. Mindich (2005) explains that this decline in traditional media consumption has produced a generation of adults who barely have an outline of what they need to make an informed decision when voting (p. 9). Political messages communicated through social media often do not contain adequate information to inform a potential voter. Many times they are shared from an opinionated or illegitimate news sources. This shift from traditional media to new media leaves Millennials at a disadvantage when it comes to receiving political communication and therefore has an impact on their political behavior.

Millennials' political participation can vary greatly. Gilman and Stokes (2014) explain that in the 2008 presidential election, Obama captured 66 percent of Millennial voters (which was a similar to the 2012 election), and was a dramatic increase compared to past elections (p.58). While this was an increase in political activity for Millennials, Gilman and Stokes state that this is not the new norm. They explain that Millennials are a pragmatic generation, which undermines a long-term allegiance to one political party

(p.58). In other words, Millennials may be more focused on results, and care less about which party will provide results. Gilman and Stokes (2014) write, "Millennials are not eschewing politics as much as they do not see politics as a viable option for achieving the outcomes they believe are important. Beyond voting, other traditional forms of civic engagement…have also decreased for Millennials" (p. 58). This has led Millennials to find more accessible ways to participate in communities and in the world—one of those ways is through social media. Almost half (44 percent) of Millennials who use social networking sites use social media to "like" or promote political material, 42 percent to post thoughts on issues, and 36 percent to encourage others to act (Gilman & Stokes, 2014, p. 58). While this is not formal political activity, it may be the preferred way Millennials choose to be politically "active." The question is, does activity on social media translate to real-world activity?

Vatikiotis (2014) states that the advent of social media has revived the discussion on media engagement and participation of citizens (p. 293). He points to research that shows that social media encourages the public to engage in political discussion, but that these discussions lack the analytical and critical value that traditional media has (Vatikiotis, 2014, p. 298). A tweet or Facebook post is weak online activism, and has little or no political impact.

Millennial Characteristics

A common theme that Millennials have self-identified is that they are tech savvy (Gagnier, 2008, p. 33). Some of the other characteristics Millennials identified are that they are educated, open-minded, and involved (Gagnier, 2008, p. 33). In Gagnier's study, Millennial participants were then asked how their characteristics position them to address

important political problems. While there was difference of opinion, Gagnier goes on to say that at a summit held for Millennial research revealed that Millennials believe they are uniquely positioned to handle political issues (p. 33). Gagnier noted that these self-identified characteristics enabled the millennial generation to "bring attention to issues," "bring diverse solutions," and allow the generation to "network, make connections faster, and break down barriers," (Gagnier, 2008, p. 33). The Millennial participants in at this summit wrote the statement "We, the Millennial Generation, are uniquely positioned to call attention to today's issues and shape the future based on the great legacy we have inherited," (Gagnier, 2008, p. 33). Despite the positive attitude of Millennials, they may not be educated on political topics because the information they receive through social media may be inaccurate.

Rationale

The research explained in the literature review above shows that Millennials will have a major impact on politics in the near future. Their political participation can shape the country's future; however, only about half of all Millennials vote, even in their most active years. Current literature also shows that the vast majority of Millennials use some form of social media. While Millennials have constant access to technology and social media, they may still be ill informed on political matters. Sites such as Facebook can produce political information, but it may be inaccurate. Political activity on social media may not translate to real-world political activity.

It is well documented that most Millennials use social media, and that many of them do not participate in political processes. However, there is less known about the connection between Millennials' social media use and their political behavior. Are

Millennials who use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube more politically active because of political information communicated to them through those sites? Is the opposite true? Current research fails to answer these questions. This study sheds light on how Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube influence Millennials' political behavior.

Research Questions

Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube influence Millennials' political ideology and views, and they also affect their political participation, because of the political content shared on those sites. Millennials use social media to feel involved, informed, and politically active, but in reality, many are not. This study seeks to answer two questions:

RQ 1) How do the social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube influence the way Millennials report their political behavior?

RQ 2) Do Millennials who are active on Facebook and Twitter, and receive political information through YouTube, report to be more politically active in a formal manner (meaning voting) because of the information communicated to them through these social media sites?

Chapter 3: Scope and Methodology

Scope

This study examined the influence of the social media sites Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and the influence they have on Millennials' political behavior, meaning their political views, ideology and participation. Within the context of this research, political behavior referred to how Millennials use social media to send and receive political information, how they use that information, and how it shapes their political views, beliefs, and voting habits. This research sheds light on Millennials' use of social media, and its connection to their political behavior.

The scope of this study focused on Millennials who are active on social media and who are also at least moderately politically active. Not every survey participant had participated in one or multiple elections, but those who have not also had valuable input. Their knowledge of political matters may have been influenced by social media, and swayed them to not vote. To keep the scope focused, the study only examined Millennials who are active on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube (excluding all other social media sites), which made the scope moderate in size. Participants in the survey were selected through convenience sampling, meaning that subjects only became participants if they were available to take the survey (Rubin, 2010, p. 202). The sampling frame for this study was Millennials on social media—only those who chose to take the survey were participants. Millennials had the opportunity to participate in a survey that was distributed online, shared through social networks. This data in this study was comprised of surveys from 100 participants (from online methods), and one focus group consisting of five politically active Millennials. The research conducted in this study was rooted in Gerbner's

Cultivation theory, which states that long-term media exposure can influence reality. Ultimately, the questions on the survey and the topics discussed in the focus determined how social media influences Millennials' political behavior.

Methodology

The research in this study was qualitative and quantitative. The majority of data collected for this study was through survey research. Neuman (2012) explains that survey research can provide accurate, reliable and valid data, but to do so, questions must be constructed correctly (p. 309). The research question "how do Facebook, Twitter and YouTube influence the way report their Millennials' political behavior," was the basis of the questions constructed for the survey. This survey was conducted via Survey Monkey, because it was an easy way for subjects to participate. It was distributed through personal social networks (Facebook and Twitter), and if the participants were willing, they could share the survey through their own social networks as well. The target audience for this research was Millennials who are frequent social media users. There were two important aspects to focus on when creating this survey: keeping the survey as short as possible and ensuring that quality information is obtained. The survey can be found in Appendix A.

The second form of research conducted in this study was focus group research. Neuman (2012) explains that focus group research is a special form of qualitative research in which people are informally interviewed (p. 459). The focus group session was a group of five Millennials who met and openly discussed their views on social media and political participation of Millennials. An outline of a discussion guide and questions for the focus group research can be found on Appendix B.

Instruments

The survey research portion of this study contained open-ended and closed-ended questions, as well as Likert-scaling questions. The focus group research portion followed a guideline that the interviewer used to conduct the discussion. This discussion was an open environment, where participants discussed their thoughts and built on each other's thoughts.

Survey research

The population in this study consisted of 100 Millennials, who were between the ages of 18 and 34. This research was conducted in the Northern New Mexico area, which is where most of the participants were located. However, because the survey research was conducted online, and shared through social networks (such as Facebook or Twitter), there was participation from places outside of New Mexico. The sample of participants is representative of a larger Millennial population.

Focus Group Research

Participants in the focus group research portion of this study were also Millennials in the Northern Mew Mexico area, but that does not mean that the participants were originally from New Mexico. Focus group participants came from a number of places around the United States, but were the area at the time. This was an ideal situation, as it was a better representation of Millennials overall. Focus group research for this study consisted of one focus group session with five participants.

Data Analysis

The first portion of the survey, the multiple-choice questions, was analyzed through descriptive statistics. Neuman (2012) explains that descriptive statistics describe basic patterns in data (p. 386). The data collected from these questions created an idea of how much time and political content Millennials see on social media, as well as if they vote. There was also an opportunity for participants to describe why they do not vote (if they do not), which explained the tendencies of non-voters. The descriptive statistics collected from the multiple choice questions were compared to the Likert-scale questions, and themes could be identified. From that, it could be seen how much influence social media sites had on Millennials' political behavior.

The results from the Likert-scale, the second portion of the survey, were analyzed on an additive scale. There were three scores resulting from the Likert-scale questions: the participant's political activity level, their social media use level, and their awareness of where the information comes from. A higher score in any category indicated that the participants were more politically active, more active on social media, or more aware of the source the political message comes from.

The data collected in the focus group and interviews was also analyzed with descriptive statistics, from which themes were identified. The focus group session was set up for politically aware Millennials, which allowed for a more informed perspective to be examined. While the survey participants may or may not have been politically active, or active on social media, the focus group participants were more active, or informed, in both regards. The questions for focus group participant selections ensured that the participants are active on social media and politically active or aware. The themes that

were searched for in any portion of the research were: 1) how active is the participant on social media 2) how politically active the participant is 3) the participant's awareness of the political information source and 4) correlations between social media activity levels and political activity levels.

Reliability

Neuman (2012) explains that it is difficult to achieve perfect reliability, and this study was no exception (p. 208). With the ever-changing political landscape, the dynamic world of social media, and the Millennial generation limited to a set number of years, this study may not be able to be exactly repeated 30 years from when it is published. However, its strength is in its representative reliability. This study provided an accurate view of how the Millennial generation's political behavior is influenced by social media now, and in the near future. While this study can be repeated at any time, the results will differ as Millennials' age and their perceptions change.

Validity

The data collected in this study yielded valid results. The interpretation of the data could not vary because of the correlations shown between social media use and political behavior, and the themes identified in the focus group session. The data in the survey was analyzed, and compared to the data collected from the focus group. This study measures the construct it purports to measure, which Rubin (2010) explains is construct validity (p.203).

Ethical Considerations

This study did not raise any major ethical concerns. The research was conducted in an accurate, honest and precise manner, and followed the rule of do no harm. There were no risk factors associated with this study and no information was withheld from participants; the study involved no deception. Participants were only participants if they chose to do so. All participants were treated fairly and respectfully.

Informed Consent

Participants in any form of research in this study were given a form to read and sign, acknowledging that they understood the study they participated in. To enter the online survey, participants had to agree to consent form terms, which acted as their signature. Focus group participants were given a consent form to read and sign before the session began. A copy was made for their records (if they chose), and the original was documented. This included a description of the study, explained any risks, confirmed that their responses are confidential, identification of the researcher, that their participation is voluntary and can be terminated at any time, and an offer to provide a summary of the findings, if they wish to view them. The consent form can be found in Appendix A.

Chapter 4: Study Analysis and Results
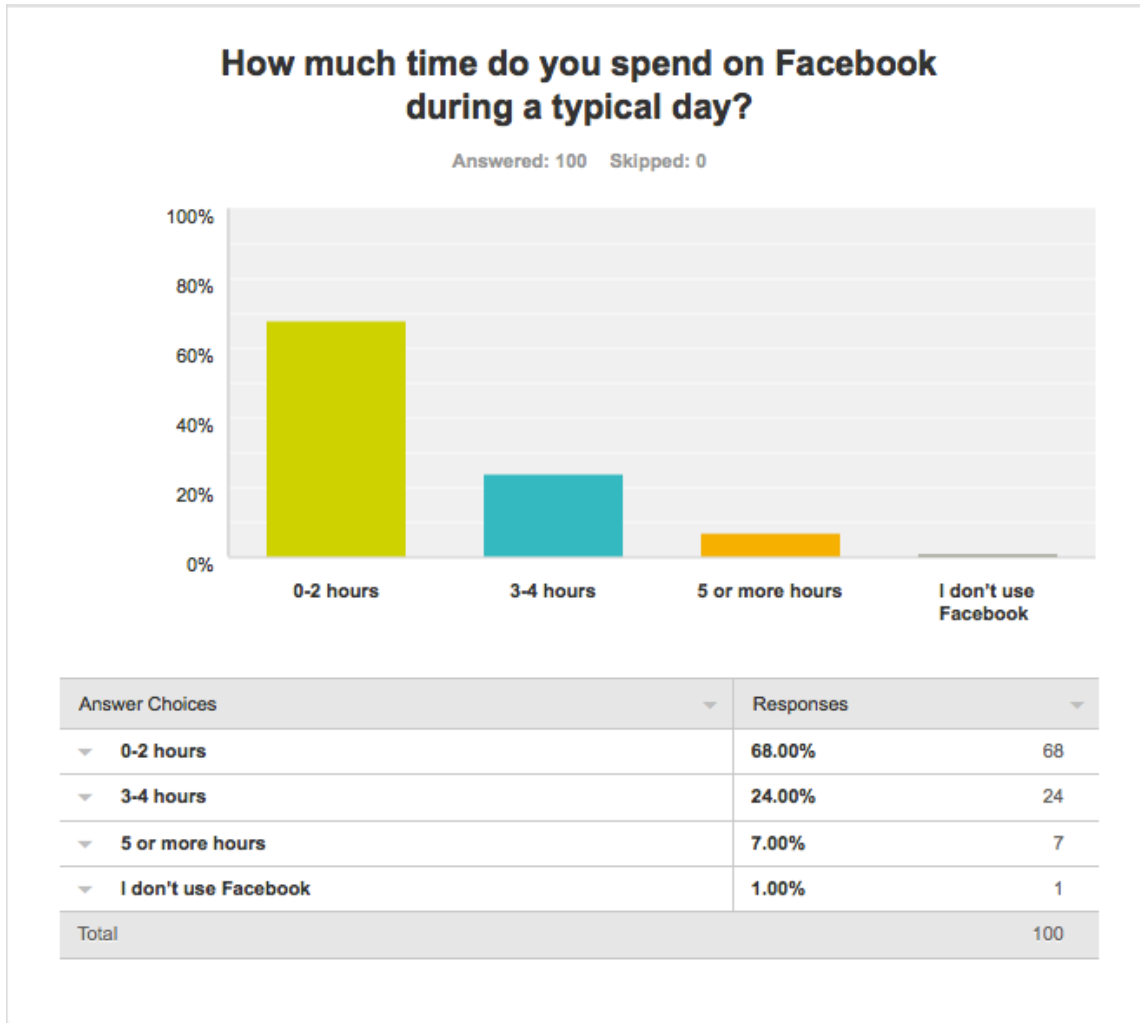
Introduction

Surveys were distributed via SurveyMonkey on Friday, March 4, 2016; the survey was closed on March 17, 2016. During this period, 109 surveys were collected; however, nine surveys were omitted because participants were outside of the Millennial age range, leaving 100 valid surveys. The survey was broken into two portions: a multiple-choice question section that consisted of 10 questions designed to explore how much time Millennials spend on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, how much political content they see on each site, and discover if they are politically active in a formal manner. The second potion of the survey consisted of 19 Likert-scale questions that further examined the participant's political activity level, their social media use level, and their awareness of where the information comes from. The details of each multiple choice are explained below.

Survey Results

The average age of survey takers was 25.8 years old, which falls nearly in the middle of the Millennial age range of 18-35. Out of the 100 respondents, 65 percent voted in the last presidential election, and 70 percent have voted in any election. Within the survey, there was section that allowed for participants to explain why they have not voted, if they wanted to clarify. There were 30 responses, and three common themes could be derived from the answers: 1) participants did not know enough about the candidates and did not feel they should vote, 2) voting is not important, and 3) they did not support any candidate. Another common answer the question "if you have not voted, or chose not to vote, please explain why," was that the respondent was not old enough.

For the purposes of this study, these answers were not taken into account, as it was not the respondents' choices to not participate in an election.

The majority of participants did use some form of social media daily. The figures below expand on Millennials' use of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and also detail how much political content the participants saw on each platform.

How much time do you spend on Facebook during a typical day?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
0-2 hours	68.00%	68
3-4 hours	24.00%	24
5 or more hours	7.00%	7
I don't use Facebook	1.00%	1
Total		100

Figure 1

As seen above, the vast majority of Millennials use Facebook and 68 percent are on the site for at least 0-2 hours daily; 24 percent are on for 3-4 hours and 7 percent are on for five or more hours. Only one respondent did not use Facebook. Of the three sites this study focused on, Facebook was by far the most heavily used. Regarding political content, only 3 percent of respondents said they did not see any political posts on Facebook; 10 percent said they see 1-3 political posts on Facebook daily; 16 percent said they see 4-5 political posts daily and 71 percent said they see more than six political posts daily while on Facebook.
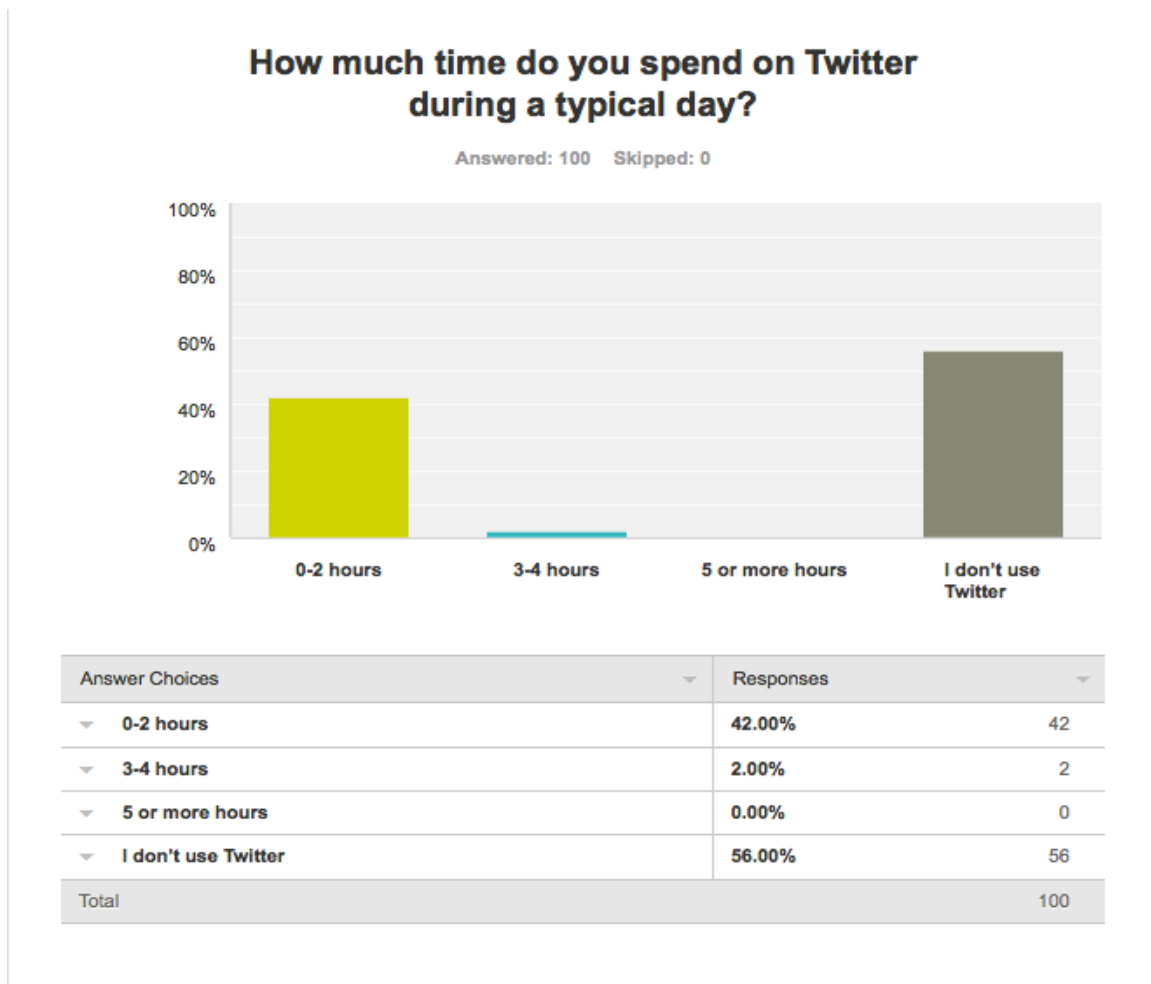
Figure 2

In contrast, Twitter was the least-used social media site that this study focused on. Only 42 percent of Millennials use Twitter for less than two hours everyday and 2 percent use Twitter for 3-4 hours daily, while the majority (56 percent) do not use Twitter at all. Those numbers reflect on the amount of political content seen on Twitter. The majority of participants (72 percent) do not see any political posts while on Twitter; 5 percent see 1-3 political tweets daily; 8 percent see 4-5 political tweets daily and 15 percent see six or more political tweets daily.

How much time do you spend on YouTube during a typical day?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0
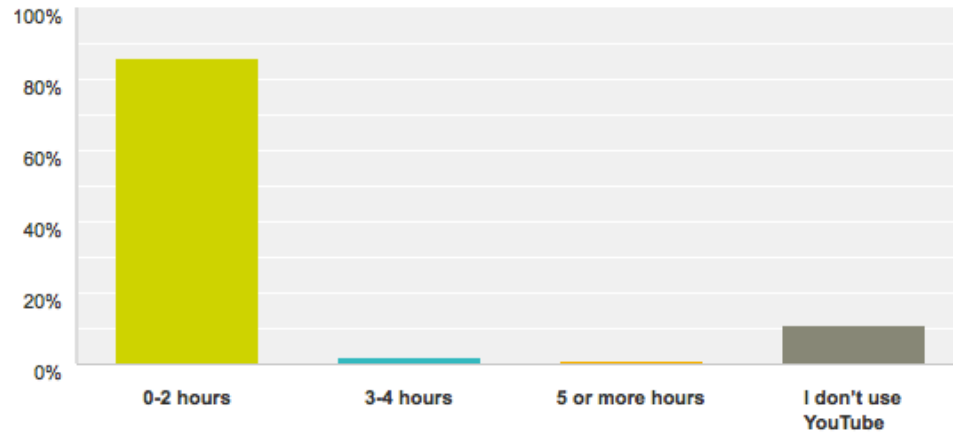
Answer Choices	Responses	
0-2 hours	86.00%	86
3-4 hours	2.00%	2
5 or more hours	1.00%	1
I don't use YouTube	11.00%	11
Total		100

Figure 3

YouTube was the second most heavily used social media site in this study, with 86 percent of all respondents using YouTube daily. While most Millennials spend time on YouTube every day, the majority does not see any political content on the site. 55 percent of participants do not see any political content on YouTube; 35 percent see 1-3 political messages on YouTube daily; 5 percent see 4-5 political messages daily and another 5 percent see six or more political messages on YouTube every day.

Likert Scale Results

The Likert-scale questions were analyzed on an additive scale. Higher numbers indicate that the participants thought that they are more politically active, more active on social media, or more aware of the source the political message comes from. Of the 100 participants who took the survey, 87 chose to answer the Likert-scale questions.

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am politically active	10	36	25	11	5
I read about politics online from traditional news sources	15	49	12	8	3
I am politically informed	12	42	21	8	4
I am active on social media	27	39	12	8	1
I see a lot of political messages on Facebook	53	25	6	3	0
I see a lot of political messages on Twitter	8	7	44	9	19
I watch political debates on YouTube	8	9	25	20	25
Political content I see on Facebook is from a political party	6	16	23	35	7
Political content I see on Facebook is from friends and family	38	41	2	6	0
I value political messages my friends post on social media more than sponsored content	8	15	26	22	16
I value sponsored political messages on social media more than friends' content	1	7	31	29	19
I get political information from Facebook	4	24	27	16	16
I get political information from Twitter	1	8	29	14	35
I am interested in politics	15	46	11	10	5
Voting is important	46	28	9	4	0
I share political messages on Facebook	6	12	13	20	36
I share political messages on Twitter	2	4	24	12	45
My friends' political messages on social media influence my political behavior	2	11	19	23	32
Sponsored political messages on social media influence my political behavior	4	14	20	21	28

Figure 4

Political Activity Level

The following questions from the Likert-scale were designed to assess

Millennials' perceptions of their own political activity levels.

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am politically active	10	36	25	11	5
I am politically informed	12	42	21	8	4
I get political information from Facebook	4	24	27	16	16
I get political information from Twitter	1	8	29	14	35
I read about politics online from traditional news sources	15	49	12	8	3
I am interested in politics	15	46	11	10	5
Voting is important	46	28	9	4	0

Figure 5

46 of 87 of respondents (52 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed that they are

politically active, while 25 of 87 (29 percent) considered themselves to be neutral on the

statement "I am politically active." Only 16 out of 87 (18 percent) are not politically

active. There were similar numbers on the statement "I am politically informed." 54 of 87

respondents (62 percent) are politically informed, 24 percent neither agreed nor

disagreed, and only 14 percent were not politically informed.

The statements "I get political information from Facebook" and "I get political

information from Twitter" were included in the political activity level assessment

because they identify a Millennial who is actively searching for political information on

one of those sites. For the purposes of this study, actively searching for political

information was an indicator of political activity. The responses to these statements were

split; 32 percent said they get political information from Facebook, 31 percent neither

agreed nor disagreed with the statement "I get political information from Facebook" and 37 percent said they do not receive political information from Facebook. Even fewer respondents get political information from Twitter; 10 percent said that they do, 33 percent neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement "I get political information from Twitter" and a majority (56 percent) said they do not get political information from Twitter. A majority of respondents also said that they receive political information from traditional media sources; 74 percent said they look to traditional media sources for political information while only 12 percent said they do not use traditional media for political information; 13 percent were neutral on the statement "I read about politics online from traditional news sources."

A majority of participants said they were interested in politics; 69 percent were interested in politics, 13 percent said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement "I am interested in politics," and only 17 percent were not interested in politics. An overwhelming majority (87 percent) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that voting is important while 10 percent were neutral, 5 percent disagreed, and nobody strongly disagreed with the statement "voting is important." The responses to this group of Likert-scale questions show that a majority of Millennials perceive themselves to be politically active and do consider formal political activity to be important. The next set of questions examines how active Millennials see on each social media site.

Social Media Activity Level

The following questions were designed to assess Millennials' perceptions of their social media activity levels.

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am active on social media	27	39	12	8	1
I see a lot of political messages on Facebook	53	25	6	3	0
I see a lot of political messages on Twitter	8	7	44	9	19
I watch political debates on YouTube	8	9	25	20	25
I share political messages on Facebook	6	12	13	20	36
I share political messages on Twitter	2	4	24	12	45

Figure 6

A majority (76 percent) of respondents are active on social media; 14 percent said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement "I am active on social media," and only 10 percent said they were not active on social media. A vast majority of participants see a considerable amount of political content on Facebook; 90 percent said they "see a lot of political messages on Facebook," only 7 percent said they neither agreed nor disagreed with that statement and only 3 percent do not see a lot of political content on Facebook. Fewer respondents see political messages on Twitter; only 17 percent do, while 51 percent were neutral on the statement "I see a lot of political messages on Twitter;" 22 percent do not see a lot of political content on Twitter. Most Millennials do not watch political debates on YouTube; 63 percent do not watch debates on YouTube, 29 percent were neutral on the statement, and only 20 percent watch debates on YouTube.

In contrast to consuming political information on social media, Millennials do not seem to share as much political content. Only 21 percent of participants share political posts on Facebook, while 7 percent share political posts on Twitter. About 15 percent of respondents said they were neutral on the statement "I share political posts on Facebook," and 28 percent were neutral about the same statement regarding Twitter. The majority of participants do not share political posts on Facebook nor Twitter; 64 percent do not post political content on Facebook and 66 percent do not tweet about politics. It should be noted that while the majority of participants are active on social media, most do not post political content on Facebook or Twitter, and most do not use YouTube to watch political debates.

Political Message Source Awareness Level and Political Content Influence

The following questions from the Likert-scale portion of the survey were designed to assess Millennials' awareness of the political content sources on social media, which source they valued more, and also examine whether or not they felt they were influenced by that content.

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Political content I see on Facebook is from a political party	6	16	23	35	7
Political content I see on Facebook is from friends and family	38	41	2	6	0
I value political messages my friends post on social media more than sponsored content	8	15	26	22	16
I value sponsored political messages on social media more	1	7	31	29	19

than friends' content					
My friends' political messages on social media influence my political behavior	2	11	19	23	32
Sponsored political messages on social media influence my political behavior	4	14	20	21	28

Figure 7

It appears that the participants were able to identify the source of political content on social media; 25 percent said that political content they saw on Facebook is from a political party, 26 percent were neutral on that statement, and 48 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "Political content I see on Facebook is from a political party." Far more respondents identified family and friends as the source of political content on Facebook; 91 percent of respondents said that friends and family were the source of political posts on Facebook, 2 percent were neutral, and only 7 percent disagreed with the statement "Political content I see on Facebook is from friends and family;" nobody strongly disagreed.

Respondents value political content from friends and family more than from sponsored political posts—meaning they come from a party, party affiliate, or candidate. 26 percent of respondents value political content from friends and family over sponsored political content; 30 percent were neutral and 7 percent disagreed, saying they valued sponsored content more. Very few participants valued sponsored political content more than friends' political content; only 9 percent valued sponsored political content on social media more, 36 percent were neutral, and 55 percent strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement "I value sponsored political messages on social media more than friends' content."

Regarding social media's influence on Millennials, participants seemed to believe that they were not influenced by friends and family, or by sponsored content. 15 percent said they were influenced by political content posted by friends and family, 22 percent were neutral and 63 percent said they were not influenced by their friends' political content. Participants responded similarly to the statement "Sponsored political messages on social media influence my political behavior," 32 percent said they were influenced by sponsored political content, 23 percent were neutral, and 56 percent said they were not influenced by sponsored political content.

The data collected from the Likert-scale question portion of the survey shows a few interesting correlations. First, Millennials are very active on social media, especially on Facebook. YouTube is also heavily used by Millennials, but it is not typically used for political information gathering. Twitter is used less than the other Facebook and YouTube, and is not heavily used for political information by Millennials. The data from theses questions are similar to the data collected from the multiple-choice questions on the survey. This information in itself is not surprising.

Second, Millennials are fairly politically active. The majority believed they are politically informed and consider themselves to be politically active. Again, these numbers are similar to the responses in the multiple-choice portion, with 65 percent of Millennials having voted in the last election, and 70 percent having voted in any election. Third, Millennials are good at identifying the source of political information—they seem to be able to easily distinguish between sponsored political content and content that their friends and family post.

Finally, Millennials do not believe that they are influenced by political content on social media, but it seems there may be a negative correlation between social media use and formal political activity. There is a correlation between the time spent on social media and the number of political posts seen on Facebook, but it does not carry over to political activity levels. 52 percent of participants are politically active, a much lower number than the 76 percent that are active on social media, and the 90 percent that see a lot of political content on Facebook. These numbers suggest there may be a negative correlation between social media use, political content seen on Facebook, and formal political activity.

Research question one asked, "How do the social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube influence the way Millennials report their political behavior? To answer that, it seems Millennials report that Facebook does in fact influence their behavior because they are less active in a formal political matter. While the survey respondents believed (for the most part) that social media did not influence them, the themes that arose in the focus group showed otherwise. Twitter is not heavily used, and has less influence, if any at all, on Millennials' political behavior. YouTube has very little impact on Millennials' political behavior. While the majority does use YouTube, very few actually use it for political information. Research question two asked, "Do Millennials who are active on Facebook and Twitter, and receive political information through YouTube, report to be more politically active in a formal manner (meaning voting) because of the information communicated to them through these social media sites?" Again, the answer to that question is no; if anything, it seems that Millennials report to be

less politically active in a formal manner, possibly because of Facebook. This is expanded on below in the focus group results.

Focus Group Results

The focus group was conducted on March 18, 2016 with five Millennial participants. All of their consent forms have been kept on record, but have not been published in this study to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The focus group consisted of three male participants and two female participants; the average of the group was 29.6 years old. The focus group allowed for an in-depth discussion of politics, social media, and Millennials' media use. While there were some things the group agreed on, there were other points that the group had varying opinions on. The summaries of notes from each participant are listed in Appendix C.

Themes in Focus Group

A few common themes were identified during the focus group. First, was the concept that social media can be useful for creating dialogue that otherwise would not happen. Second, social media has shifted the way people consume information, particularly among Millennials. Third, focus group participants thought that voting is important. And finally, everyone agreed that social media does have some influence on Millennnials' political behavior. The formal discussion section below examines these themes in more detail.

Formal Discussion

Among the focus group members, three used social media and two did not. Because of this, there were some differing opinions. The first theme that could be identified is that social media could be useful for creating dialogue about political topics.

The group identified a paradox, saying that social media both unites and divides Millennials. They believe that people who all agree on one topic, share posts with each other and strengthen the views they already have. At the same time, those same people are exposed to differing views, which often starts a dialogue. While this was not the focus of the discussion, it was an interesting note that all agreed upon.

All of the participants agreed that social media has created a shift in the way Millennials consume media. There was, however, a disagreement in what type of media held more influence. Participants one and two, and participant five thought that traditional media held more influence than social media, while participants three and four thought that social media is more influential. Again, there was a split in opinion regarding the source of political content on social media. Participants three and five thought that friends' political posts were more influential while the others thought a post from a family member was more influential.

One topic that most participants agreed on was the idea that voting is important. Four of five participants agreed on that, while the last thought voting is only important at a local level. The group was however more divided on if they actually vote. Two participants said they have not voted and do not plan to in the upcoming election. The reasons for that were that they do not believe voting is important and that they do not support any of the candidates. These were both common themes that appeared in the multiple-choice question section of the survey.

Finally, all of the participants agreed that social media does influence the political behavior of Millennials. The participants were told that the survey portion of this research indicated that for the most part, Millennials believed that social media does not influence

their political behavior. The focus group participants unanimously disagreed with that. The consensus from the focus group was that people like to believe that they are not influenced by the content they see on social media, but likened it to advertising, in that the constant exposure to political content will influence behavior without them necessarily recognizing it. The focus group participants also said they thought social media actually decreased formal political activity. They believed that Millennials may think that posting or reading political content on social media qualifies them as "politically activity," but that they do not actually go out and vote; even some of the focus group participants said that they are not registered to vote.

The "advertising" aspect of the discussion was unprompted, and confirmed that Cultivation theory was appropriate to use in this study. What the participants referred to as "advertising," would be more accurately described as Cultivation theory. This constant exposure to political content on Facebook over extended periods falls under Cultivation theory. While Cultivation theory originally focused on prolonged exposure to violence on television and its effect on peoples' reality, the same concept is applicable in this study. As people spend more time on Facebook, the more political content they see, which in turn could influence their political behavior, and their formal political participation (their reality).

When comparing the responses from the Likert-scale questions to the focus group discussion, it seems that Facebook may influence Millennials' political behavior. The high rate that Millennials use Facebook at and see political posts on Facebook does not match their formal political activity level, and the discussion in the focus group raised the

idea that Millennials are dissuaded from formal political activity because they are

overwhelmed with political content from Facebook.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

Summary

The findings in this study revealed that Millennials report that social media does not have an influence on their political behavior, but that it may have more influence than they thought. Of the three social media sites examined in this study, Facebook was the most heavily used, and also was the most influential, according to themes identified in the focus group discussion. Twitter was the least used site, and Millennials reported that they do not typically use Twitter for political information. YouTube is widely used, but again, Millennials seem not to use YouTube for political purposes. The Likert-scale questions revealed that participants were very active on social media, fairly politically active, and able to identify the source of political content on social media. While Facebook is the most-used site, and Millennials see a lot of political content on Facebook, it seems that it could be a negative influence on political activity. The focus group participants all agreed that Facebook does influence political behavior, and may decrease formal political activity because it may serve as a way for Millennials to "participate" without actually voting.

Implications

Because social media plays such a substantial role in the lives of Millennials, this study had fairly significant implications. Social media use shows no signs of slowing down; in fact, Millennials' social media will most likely increase as more social media sites are created. Some of these sites will not have an influence on Millennials' political behavior. As shown above, a site such as YouTube are heavily used by Millennials, but does not influence their political behavior. On the other hand, Facebook is the most

heavily used site and does seem to have some influence on Millennials' political behavior. An interesting topic that arose in the focus group research was the similarity between advertising and social media. Participants discussed that the constant exposure to political content on social media is similar to the constant exposure of advertising. The participants noted that people do not think social media influences them, but thought it does. If social media does influence Millennials' political behavior in a way that makes them less politically active, the political landscape will suffer. If the Millennial Generation continues to believe that being politically active on social media is sufficient, then they could pass those same qualities to their children, continuing the pattern of political inactivity. If this is the case, social media could be a detriment to the formal political process.

Limitations

This study did have a few limitations. First, the number of participants overall was 105 people, which may not be a large enough sample size to make a generalized assessment of social media's influence on Millennials. A larger sample size would have made for a more valid study. Another limitation that stemmed from the small sample size was the fact that most of the participants were from a very localized area; a majority of the participants were from the Northern New Mexico area. Ideally, a larger study would have selected participants across the United States. People in New York may have different political habits from people in New Mexico. The last sample-size limitation involved the focus group; only three participants used social media. Again, a larger sample would have given greater diversity in the focus group discussion.

Second, this study asked participants to assess their own behavior on social media and their own political behavior. If this study could have been conducted on a larger scale, it would have been ideal to observe the participants actual behavior for extended periods of time, instead of having them report it. Again, if this were possible, it would have added validity to the study, as it would have examined actual behavior of participants.

Future Studies

This study could be used as the basis of a longer, more in-depth examination of the influence of social media on Millennials' political behavior. As social media continues to evolve, it will be of interest to continue to examine how it influences Millennials. It seems that the prominence of social media will continue into the future; it appears it will continue to be a part of Millennials' daily lives, and may very well continue to be a popular among future generations. This study is rooted in Cultivation theory and future studies could take the same approach. The idea that long-term media exposure shapes reality will not fade away, but rather will be able to applied to any form of media. Millennials are exposed to social media daily, sometimes for more than five hours in a day. If current trends of high social media activity and low political participation continue, it will be of interest to further examine how social media influences political behavior, and this study can act as a foundation for continued, more in-depth analysis.

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Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Project: The Impact of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube on Millennials'
Political Behavior

Principal Investigator: Nicholas Njegomir, Graduate Student, Gonzaga
University, nnjegomir@zagmail.gonzaga.edu
Master's of Communication and Leadership Studies

Advisor or Sponsor Information: Dr. Michael Hazel, Gonzaga University

Please complete this questionnaire as it is designed to better understand the effect of
social media on Millennials' political behavior. This survey is designed for Millennials
between the ages of 18 and 35. If you agree to be in this study, it will take about 5-10
minutes of your time.

This survey consists of 10 multiple-choice questions and 19 agree/disagree questions.

Your responses are voluntary and confidential and your name will not be associated with
the findings. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to and are free to
stop taking this survey at any time. By entering the survey, you agree to participate in this
research.

If you have any questions, feel free to email the address above.

Thank you for your participation.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Project: The Impact of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube on Millennials' Political Behavior

Principal Investigator: Nicholas Njegomir, Graduate Student, Gonzaga University, nnjegomir@zagmail.gonzaga.edu
Master's of Communication and Leadership Studies

Advisor or Sponsor Information: Dr. Michael Hazel, Gonzaga University

Please participate in this focus group as it is designed to better understand the effect of social media on Millennials' political behavior. If you agree to be in this study, it will last about one hour in a focus group session.

Your responses are voluntary and confidential and your name will not be associated with the findings. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to and are free to stop taking this survey at any time.

If you have any questions, feel free to email the address above.

By signing this consent form, you indicate that you are voluntarily choosing to take part in this research.

_____   _____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date   Printed Name

Your signature below means that you have explained the research to the subject and have answered any questions he/she has about the research.

_____   _____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date   Printed Name

POLITICAL ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT

Please respond to the following statements. If you do not use a certain social media site, leave the space blank.

Theory	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am politically active					
I read about politics online from traditional news sources					
I am politically informed					
I am active on social media					
I see a lot of political messages on Facebook					
I see a lot of political messages on Twitter					
I watch political debates on YouTube					
Political content I see on Facebook is from a political party					
Political content I see on Facebook is from friends and family					
I value political messages my friends post on social media more than sponsored content					
I value sponsored political messages on social media more than friends' content					
I get political information from Facebook					
I get political information from Twitter					
I am interested in politics					
Voting is important					
I share political messages on Facebook					
I share political messages on Twitter					
My friends' political messages on social media influence my political					

behavior					
Sponsored political messages on social media influence my political behavior					
Additional Comments:					

Instructions

[Please answer the following questions.]

Age:

1) _____ **How Much time do you spend on Facebook during a typical day?**
   a. 1-2 hours
   b. 3-4 hours
   c. 5 or more hours
   d. I don't use Facebook

2) _____ **How Much time do you spend on Twitter during a typical day?**
   a. 1-2 hours
   b. 3-4 hours
   c. 5 or more hours
   d. I don't use Twitter

3) _____ **How Much time do you spend on YouTube during a typical day?**
   a. 1-2 hours
   b. 3-4 hours
   c. 5 or more hours
   d. I don't use YouTube

4) _____ **I voted in the last presidential election**
   a. Yes

b. No

5) _____ **I have voted in any election**

    a. Yes

    b. No

6) _____ **If you have not voted, or chose not to vote, please explain why below**

10) _____ **I watch political content on YouTube**

    a. Yes

    b. No

7) _____ **How many political posts do you see daily (estimated) while on Twitter**

    a. 1-3

    b. 4-5

    c. 6 or more

    d. I don't see any/don't use Twitter

8) _____ **How many political posts do you see daily (estimated) while on YouTube**

    a. 1-3

    b. 4-5

    c. 6 or more

    d. I don't see any/don't use YouTube

_____

9) _____ **How many political posts do you see daily (estimated) while on Facebook**

    a. 1-3

    b. 4-5

    c. 6 or more

    d. I don't see any/don't use Facebook

Appendix B

Questions for focus group participant selection

- How old are you?

- How much time do you spend on Facebook/Twitter?

- How much political content do you see on each?

- Are you interested in politics?

- Do you vote?

- Do you believe voting is important?

- Where do you get your political information?

Discussion Topics for Focus Group

- Begin discussion on social media

    o Political content on social media

    o Time spent on social media

- Move towards political activity

    o Political tendencies

    o Voting

    o If not active, why not?

- Ties between social media and politics

    o What influences their opinions more?

    o Friends' political content

    o Family's political content

    o Sponsored political content

Appendix C

Participant 1-Age 34, female
Questions for focus group participant selection
- How old are you?
  - 34
- How much time do you spend on Facebook/Twitter?
  - Does not use either, used to have Facebook, but lost interest
- How much political content do you see on each?
  - NA
- Are you interested in politics?
  - Yes—became more and more interested in politics as she got older
- Do you vote?
  - Yes, I vote in almost every election
- Do you believe voting is important?
  - Yes, it is our right to vote—so we should
- Where do you get your political information?
  - YouTube, some major news outlets—Fox, New York Times etc.

Discussion Topics for Focus Group
- Begin discussion on social media
  - Political content on social media
    - Social media is good for starting discussions/debate and helps people think about political topics
  - Time spent on social media
    - More time spent on social media=more political awareness
- Move towards political activity
  - Political tendencies
    - Moderate views, mostly active, votes in primaries
  - Voting
    - Will vote republican, maybe not this year though
  - If not active, why not?
    - Is active, but wants candidates to be more moderate—too extreme this year
- Ties between social media and politics
  - What influences their opinions more?
    - Believes that traditional news is more influential than social media
  - Friends' political content
    - Can also be influential—not as much
  - Family's political content
    - More influential than friends' because people are typically closer with family
  - Sponsored political content
    - Is more influential because the sources have credibility. Truer platform of what political candidates say.

Participant 2-Age 35, male
Questions for focus group participant selection
- How old are you?
    - 35
- How much time do you spend on Facebook/Twitter?
    - None, also deleted Facebook two years ago, lost interest—never had Twitter
- How much political content do you see on each?
    - NA
- Are you interested in politics?
    - Yes, believes they are important
- Do you vote?
    - Yes
- Do you believe voting is important?
    - Yes, sends a message, represent your voice—your duty
- Where do you get your political information?
    - Traditional media outlets—Fox, newspapers

Discussion Topics for Focus Group
- Begin discussion on social media
    - Can be a good thing—starts conversation, presents opposing views
    - Political content on social media
        - A lot. Extreme in most cases, not informative, but still puts idea of politics in a young generation's head
    - Time spent on social media
        - None—but knows most people are
- Move towards political activity
    - Political tendencies
        - Independent, formerly republican. Does not like what either part represents anymore. Too divided.
    - Voting
        - Does vote if he supports a candidate.
    - If not active, why not?
        - Is active
- Ties between social media and politics
    - What influences their opinions more?
        - Sponsored content and traditional media is more influential
    - Friends' political content
        - Can be influential. Was more influenced by friends when younger
    - Family's political content
        - More influential—people vote how their parents/family vote.
    - Sponsored political content
        - Sponsored content comes from the source, so it is more influential

Participant 3-age 27, male
Questions for focus group participant selection

- How old are you?
  - 27
- How much time do you spend on Facebook/Twitter?
  - Three hours/day on Facebook, does not have Twitter
- How much political content do you see on each?
  - A lot on Facebook. Too much. Its every other post these days
- Are you interested in politics?
  - Not really. "I learn what I need to make an informed decision on voting, but don't look into past the facts."
- Do you vote?
  - Yes
- Do you believe voting is important?
  - Absolutely—its our duty
- Where do you get your political information?
  - Major news sites

Discussion Topics for Focus Group

- Begin discussion on social media
  - Not a good thing—misinformation
  - Political content on social media
    - Social media is a complete joke, should not give any thought to what one sees on social media. Its all memes from your friends and propaganda from the political parties
  - Time spent on social media
    - Too much time on social media can warp reality—there are no facts and eventually begin to believe lies.
- Move towards political activity
  - Political tendencies
    - Republican
  - Voting
    - Does vote, will not this year
  - If not active, why not?
    - Is active, but participant that this year he will not be voting.
- Ties between social media and politics
  - What influences their opinions more?
  - Friends' political content
    - Friends' content is more influential. Your friends are your friends because you think alike, so you'll agree with their posts and reinforce your view already"
  - Family's political content
    - Not really influential
  - Sponsored political content
    - Ignores sponsored political content—"propaganda"

Participant 4-age 26, female
Questions for focus group participant selection
- How old are you?
  - 26
- How much time do you spend on Facebook/Twitter?
  - None on Twitter, on Facebook at various points all day, maybe two hours
- How much political content do you see on each?
  - None on Twitter, a lot on Facebook.
- Are you interested in politics?
  - No.
- Do you vote?
  - No
- Do you believe voting is important?
  - Not really. Maybe at a local level, but votes don't count on the national level.
- Where do you get your political information?
  - From social media—when she sees posts—not really looking for it.

Discussion Topics for Focus Group
- Begin discussion on social media
  - Political content on social media
    - Unites and divides people. Unites people with same views and divides others.
  - Time spent on social media
    - The more time spent on Facebook, the more political ads you see. "Annoying."
- Move towards political activity
  - Political tendencies
    - Would lean democrat
  - Voting
    - Does not vote
  - If not active, why not?
    - Does not think it matters
- Ties between social media and politics
  - What influences their opinions more?
    - Social media is more influential. Millennials spend so much time on social media that they ignore traditional media. News is more accurate but less influential
  - Friends' political content
    - Not influential—mostly jokes
  - Family's political content
    - Family is somewhat influential
  - Sponsored political content
    - Completely ignores sponsored content—scrolls past most political posts

Participant 5-age 26, male
Questions for focus group participant selection
- How old are you?
  - 26
- How much time do you spend on Facebook/Twitter?
  - About 1.5 hours on both
- How much political content do you see on each?
  - A lot on Facebook, more on Twitter because of election year.
- Are you interested in politics?
  - No
- Do you vote?
  - No
- Do you believe voting is important?
  - Yes
- Where do you get your political information?
  - Traditional media—major news networks

Discussion Topics for Focus Group
- Begin discussion on social media
  - Political content on social media
    - Mostly satire, but there is still value in it. Starts discussion about important topics.
  - Time spent on social media
    - You begin to see the same posts over and over. People just sell things as their own idea.
- Move towards political activity
  - Political tendencies
    - Neutral, does not support either major party
  - Voting
    - No
  - If not active, why not?
    - Has not voted because he has never supported a candidate—does not this year either
- Ties between social media and politics
  - What influences their opinions more?
  - Friends' political content
    - Friends' are more influential because you spend more time with them.
  - Family's political content
  - Sponsored political content
    - Most sponsored content is junk—cannot trust what it says because its paid for. "Lies."