Identity and Information Sharing in Social Media:

A study of Political Identity and Social Media Behavior

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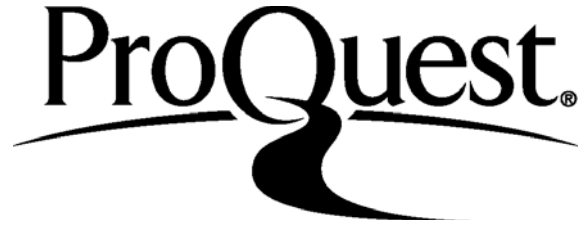MASTER OF ARTS

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Introduction:

Sharing information on social media has become a part of social life today, and scholars have begun to study the phenomenon. Marwick & Boyd (2010) noted that people find social media as an authentic space for social interaction. Chen (2011) found that the need to connect is the major gratification served by sharing on Twitter. Similarly, Livingstone (2008) found self-actualization and identity negotiation as a major goal behind social media use. Zhao & Rosson (2009) suggested that shared social media content contribute to the construction of personal schemas as well as the building of background perceptions of others (p.244). These and many other studies explain why we share information via social media. But the fact remains that we only share some, not all of our information on social media.

Past studies show that people use social media mainly to fulfill their sense of belonging and for self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). They also show that people are highly conscious about their identity while using social media (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002). Few scholars have focused on how identity predicts the content people share on social media. This study will analyze how political identity predicts the sharing behavior of people. Self-monitoring is another important factor that dictates how people manage identity. Further, current study will also explore the concept of self-monitoring and test whether self-monitors differ in there sharing habit in social media.

Literature Review

Social media is a web-based virtual space where individuals are able to create personal profiles and connect with known and unknown others. Social media are highly interactive platforms built on mobile and web-based technologies that can be used by individuals and communities to share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre 2011).

Despite its widespread use, social media have a relatively short history. Ellison & Boyd (2007) identify SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997, as the first social media site, although online interaction had been popular since the early 1980s when services such as CompuServe and Prodigy allowed for the creation of virtual communities. Other social media that came into existence during late 1990s and early 2000s include Live Journal, Asian Avenue, Cyworld, Fotolog, etc. Among social media popular today, Linkedin and MySpace were launched in 2003, Facebook and Flickr started in 2004, YouTube arrived in early 2005, and Twitter was launched in late 2006 (Ellison & Boyd, 2007).

In the past decade, social networking sites have spread from early adopters to the mainstream in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, 71% of online adults use Facebook, 23% use Twitter, 26% use Instagram, 28% use Pinterest and 28% use LinkedIn. The Pew report also shows that 52% of online adults use more than one social media. According to Facebook's "Third Quarter 2015 Financial Summery," the site has 1.01 billion

daily active users and 1.55 billion monthly active users worldwide. Similarly, according to Twitter's "Third Quarter 2015 Financial Report," the site has 320 million active users worldwide.

The success of social commerce, a branch of ecommerce, drives rapid adoption and development of social media sites. Adoption of web 2.0 technologies by social media sites motivated users to interact as well and create online content (Haiji, 2015). This process is termed social commerce and was found to be very successful in increasing trust level and purchase intentions of products and ideas among consumers (Haiji, 2015).

Brief history of social media

The first social networking site that allowed users to construct a profile and create a linked network of connections was SixDegrees.com, which was launched in 1997 (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). Despite its success in attracting millions of users, SixDegrees' business model failed and it shut down in 2000. During the same time period there were sites like AIM and ICQ that allowed the listing of "friends" or connections, but the list was not visible to other friends. Classmates.com also existed but it did not allow users to create profiles or list friends (Ellison & Boyd, 2007).

Another major website, LiveJournal was launched in 1999 where people were able to mark others as friends to follow their journals. LiveJournal encouraged its users to crate groups, follow each other and constantly update

the blog. In the mean time other existing online communities started adding the element of social networking into their sites. Korean site Cyworld started in 1999 and added social sharing of content in 2001; the Swedish web community LunarStrom added social sharing in 2000 (Ellison & Boyd, 2007).

Social media sites emerged rapidly thereafter. SixDegrees and Wikipedia came into existence in 2001. Friendster, LinkenIn, and MSpace were launched in 2003. Similarly, Facebook, Flickr, Orkut, and Digg emerged in 2004, although Facebook was initially for Harvard students only. In 2005 YouTube came into existence and Facebook went public in 2006 with the launch of Twitter. Tumbler was launched in 2007 and GoogleBuzz in 2010. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze every social media, yet it is important to understand the evolution of social media and to examine briefly the early trendsetters in the social media space.

Friendster:

Friendster launched in 2002 and was different from other social media in the sense that it was a dating site that allowed friends of friends to meet each other (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). It was introduced as a dating site to compete with other existing dating sites. This site gained popularity mostly among bloggers and gay men (Boyd, 2004). Friendster gained 300,000 users before any traditional media began covering the story (Ellison & Boyd, 2007).

Friendster lost its popularity primarily because of technical issues. As the site grew more popular, its infrastructure could not serve the increased traffic and

the site began to crash frequently (D Boyd, 2006). Frustrated users began to leave for other social media sites (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). A second problem for Friendster derived from its networking rules. Users had to face their professional peers and bosses along with their close friends on the website (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). Friendster allowed users to view profiles of people three degrees away (friends of friends of friends).

My Space

MySpace was launched as a social media site in 2003, and it benefited from Friendsters problems. As Friendster consistently lost early adopters, MySpace became a larger social media site (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). Indie-rock bands expelled by Friendster for failing to comply with profile regulations actively encouraged people to switch to MySpace (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). MySpace continued to make changes to its services and add features based on demand (Boyd, 2006). MySpace also allowed users to add graphics and customize their profiles as they wished. MySpace in 2006 was the most popular social networking site, but it too soon faded as Facebook gained momentum (Edosomwan & Prakasan, 2011).

Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media with the highest number of users around the world (include latest figure: 1.6 billion, according to Facebook's latest earnings report.) Facebook started by Mark Zuckerberg as a closed network at Harvard University in 2004 and became available to the public in 2006

(Caers, Feyter, & Couck, 2013). According to statistics from Facebook, Facebook has over a billion monthly active users in 2016, and 84.2% of these users are from outside the US and Canada. With support for over 70 languages, Facebook has a global presence. A network effect has helped spur Facebook's growth; as traffic on Facebook has grown, the network has become more valuable to its users. This cycle continues to attract more traffic to the network. Facebook allows people to express their opinion and share videos, pictures, news articles, etc. with others. As Facebook continued to make itself bigger and user friendly, it has added features like Events page, Games, Live Video Casting, Location Based Services, etc.

Two other social media sites that emerged after Facebook -- Twitter and Instagram -- gained popularity quickly. Twitter is considered a micro-blogging site where people can follow other people and witness what they share. Twitter is popular as an outlet to share news and information. Similarly, Instagram is a social network where people can share pictures. Users follow others and witness the pictures they share. In 2012, Facebook acquired Instagram (Sengupta & Bilton, 2012). With the rise of Wi-Fi and cellular networks, Social Media sites are now mobile friendly and be accessed almost anywhere.

Affordability and Portability

The affordability and availability of computing devices and the Internet has significantly simplified the use of social media, making it accessible to a mass audience. The computer technology that began as large and expensive

mainframe computers has now evolved into affordable mobile devices. Mobile is a "service that is enabled by a wide array of electronic devices and networks across a range of locations" (Dutton et al., 2014). The mobile cell phone took over the market quickly as it was available for masses and affordable at the same time. Mobile phones were primarily based on voice calls, the ability to send text messages made it even more popular among people (Dutton et al., 2014). The mobile technology has advanced dramatically in the past decade. While general mobile phones remain in the market, most of them are being replaced by phones with "serious computing capabilities." So-called "smart phones" includes the facilities of a feature phone, but also the ability to take notes and diarize, take and send digital photos and video clips, build on global positioning satellites (GPS) tracking, and use a growing variety of sensors" (Dutton et al., 2014). The portability of smartphones and their ability to connect to the Internet and take pictures and videos have made them popular for social media use.

The fact that social media is available to people on their mobile phones at all times has opened many creative ways to utilize its potential. According to Jurgenson (2012), social media augments our offline lives. Celebrities, local businesses, corporations, political parties, and politicians have a significant social media presence, which they use to interact with their audiences.

Despite the growing sophistication and creative use of social media sites for various purposes, the major foundation of social media is a profile created by users that can be viewed by other users of the social media platform. A profile

page lets users express themself using text, photos, video, and graphics. A profile generally consists of information about the user such as name, age, location, interest, marital or relationship status, as well as photographs. Other social media users can view profiles. Social media provide users the ability to control the exposure of their profile to some extent. Users in social media connect themselves with others in the same social media whom they know or are interested in. Depending on social media this is termed "Friends," "Contacts," "Fans," etc. (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). Friends generally refer to bi-directional ties where both agree that they know each other. Whereas other ties like Fans, Followers, Subscribers, etc., refer to unidirectional ties where one user does not necessarily have to know the other person. If a person has ties with another user, he or she can see that person's friends and followers, but can only access their profiles if their privacy settings allow it. According to Ellison & Boyd (2013) this display of the person's social network, which allows users to navigate through the social network is a crucial component of social media (p.155). Apart from these fundamental aspects, social media also provide users with ability to send private messages, comment, like, share, etc., and more of these features are emerging, as social media is becoming more popular. Combining all these features, social media acts as a stage for self-presentation and social connection (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 304). Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, BlogSpot, etc. are popular examples of social media that serve this social role.

Identity

The idea of "self" is often confused with identity. "Self" is a collection of numerous identities a person holds. According to The Handbook of Self and Identity, (2005) overall self is organized into multiple identities, each of which is tied to aspects of social structure (p. 8). An individual picks up the relevant self or identity and acts accordingly. There are two different perspectives to look at identity: agency and social structure. Social structure explains identity as a relatively fixed role created by societal norms, and agency explains identity as role created by the individual through behavioral choices (Handbook of Self and Identity, 2005, pg. 8). The identities that arise from behavioral choices also include choices to be a member of a group, which is called social identity. According to Tajfel (2010), an individual's membership of social group derives social identity with awareness of the membership (values and emotional significance) attached to it (p.63). For example, an identity of father is a fixed role whereas an identity as a conservative (derived from belonging to a social group or political party, e.g., Young Conservatives of America or the Republican Party) is a behavioral choice. This study will analyze identity as agency, which is defined as the role created by the individual through behavioral choices.

A person's identity is defined by what he/she does in front of others. According to Goffman (2008) an individual who appears in the presence of others will mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others, which is in his interest to convey (p.129). Goffman uses "front region" and "back region" to

explain the identity performance. Front region is the space where an individual performs and back region is where suppressed or unperformed facts remain. Front region is the space or setting where "some aspect of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed." Those suppressed facts make an appearance in the back region (Goffman, 1959, p.69). So, front region is where the identity performance takes place and back region consists of the facts that are not performed or displayed to others.

In the front region, impressions are conveyed in two ways: performance given and performance given off (Goffman, 2008, p.129). Performance given is verbal and performance given off has to do with body language and appearance. A person theoretically has full control over performance given but only minimal control over performance given off. The phenomenon of identity performance has been the subject of extensive study in face-to-face settings. The following section will take a look at scholarly works on identity performance. This research seeks to contribute new knowledge to a growing body of work that considers how performance of identity plays out in the virtual realm of social media.

Identity in social media:

Researchers have consistently found that people are extremely identity conscious in online communication. A 2002 experimental study by Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons (2002) found that people are more aware about their identity while engaging in Internet interactions. The cognitive effort one requires

to accurately present their identity in the form of texts and graphics make them more concerned about who they believe they are while engaging in Internet than when interacting in real life.

Studies about self-presentation on the Internet have found that people tend to present a better version of their selves on the web. Jensen Schau & Gilly (2003) found people go to the extent of associating themselves with objects they don't acquire in real life in order to express themselves on the web. Similarly, Papacharissi (2002) found people associating themselves with aggressiveness, extroversion, compassion, and other behaviors to express their manners. Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin (2008) found that people tend to implicitly express a future better version of themselves on social media. These studies contend that people are identity conscious while using social media and share content that implicitly expresses their identity.

Identity performance varies; it is not the *same* all the time. We have different *identities* in different *places*, which is mainly because of *changes* in context and audience. According to Sherman & Cohen (2006),

> *"The self is composed of different domains, which include an*
> *individual's roles, such as being a student or a parent; values,*
> *such as being religious or having a sense of humor; social*
> *identities, such as membership in groups or organizations and*
> *in racial, cultural, and gender groups; and belief systems, such*

as political ideologies; and goals, such as being healthy or

succeeding in school (p.187)."

All these identities are performed in particular contexts. For example, in the school one performs as a student; in a family one performs as a son or a father; in a church one performs as being religious. People frequently adjust their behaviors for different contexts; that is, one's identity performance changes based on the identity one wants to project to a particular audience (Papacharissi, 2012).

Social media is different from face-to-face communication and complicates identity performance. In a normal face-to-face communication, the audience is small and the context is specific, making it relatively easy to perform an appropriate identity. Social media brings many audiences and contexts together (Boyd, 2008) and makes it difficult for a person to perform based on their audience or context. For example, a woman might not want her family to know her the same way her friends know her. This is possibly the reason why people tend not to share all information with everyone on social media. They monitor their own activity and share appropriate information to project the identity of their choice.

Identity performance in social media:

Goffman's dramaturgical approach has been used in analyzing and understanding online behavior. Donath (1998) employed Goffman's identity

performance as an explanation for how people in the web can use multiple identities for deception (p. 56). Similarly, Schroeder (2002) uses Goffman's idea of "stages" of performance and compares it to "frames" in a virtual environment to explain interactions (p. 10).

Similarly, Goffman's concepts have been further developed and tested in the social media environment. Hewitt and Forte (2006) use Goffman's concept of performance to study how users manage their impressions online. They found that users find that Facebook makes impression management difficult as it brings all people together in one space (Hewitt and Forte, 2006). Robinson (2007) explains the concept he calls cyberself-ing (the expression of self in cyberspace) as similar to Goffman's Identity performance. He argues that Goffman's concept of performance given and performance given off are equally relevant in the cyberspace as it happens through texts and graphics (Robinson, 2007). Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis (2008) in their study about privacy in social media used Goffman's front and back regions of interaction to explain that the private (back stage) and public (front stage) profile of the same user. The study found that having a private profile is associated with higher level of online activity. Tufekci (2008) studied online social networking sites and found that many of the activities on social media can be explained by Goffman's concepts of presentation of the self and impression management. She concluded that the users of social networking sites also tend to use Internet for expressing themselves. Mendelson and Papacharissi (2010) studied the use of photo galleries in social media using

Goffman's concept of Identity performance. The study found that the picture galleries in social media are there for self-presentation and impression management (Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2010). Danah Boyd has consistently used Goffman's concept of Identity performance as a base to study user activities in social media sites like Friendster, MySpace, and social media by youth (Boyd, 2004, 2006, 2007).

Scholarly works mentioned above have different foci and raise different questions. However, these studies share in common the view that users select and share certain content on social media to generate a certain impression. Users post some material publicly and some they keep private. Based on these findings, we can conclude that Goffman's dramaturgical approach is an effective way to study social media use. This study extends this research by asking whether political identity informed by attitude extremity alters the way users share content on social media.

Political discourse in social media:

The availability of social media on mobile devices has made it a platform for effective political discourse and civic engagement. Occupy Wall Street and other occupation movements across the globe utilized social media to communicate (Jurgenson, 2012). Similarly, the Saving-Strandja movement of Bulgaria (Bakardjieva, 2012) and Tahrir Square uprising of Egypt (Lim, 2012) made significant use of social media and mobile communication to organize protests and coordinate activities. An analysis of Facebook in Finland found that

the digital public sphere has potential to "enhance social movements by facilitating individuals to network with other like-minded people in ways that can enhance their communicative power consistent with conceptions of the Fifth Estate (Sormanen & Dutton, 2015). People using social media on mobile phones have bigger and diverse networks (Hampton, Sessions, & Her, 2011). Also, people who use mobile communication technology to exchange information and connect with friends tend to have more civic participation (Campbell & Kwak, 2010). This indicates that social media coupled with the mobile Internet can be an effective platform for political communication.

Politicians are turning to social media as a political tool. President Obama utilized social media as a tool in the 2008 election, and other politicians have followed. A study about 2008 presidential election found that the use of social networking sites consistently predicted the level of political participation among young voters (Leticia Bode, Vraga, Borah, & Shah, 2014). Similarly, in the 2015 Singapore general election, the use of social media as an organizing tool was positively associated with public interest in election issues and the likelihood of people to participate in offline political activities (Soon & Samsudin, 2016).

The political content on social media reaches people using social media. According to the Pew Research Center, one third of young voters reported using social media sites for political purposes in the 2008 presidential election (2008). Social media users react to political content by sharing, commenting, following, liking and disliking, According to Bode (2014) social media use for political

purposes "influence political behaviors in multiple ways – both from identity formation and expression as well as informational exchange."

Political identity is a set of beliefs about a social and political system (e.g., parties, electoral candidates, policy concerns). The psychological mechanism that goes behind shaping the political identity has long been a focus of study in the social sciences. A dominant research paradigm in political identity has identified racial, ethnic, and socio-economic identity as determining factors influencing the development of an individual's political identity (Huddy, 2001; Jackson, 2011; Nisbet & Myers, 2010). Liberal and conservative are considered two dominant political identities in the United States. In current U.S. politics, liberal is associated with the Democratic Party and conservative with the Republication Party. Political identity of an individual depends on many factors, one of which is his or her attitude towards politically partisan issues.

Identity and Attitude

Joining a social group based on personal Identity triggers a continuous cycle as social group norms continue to influence personal Identity by shaping attitudes. Attitude can be conceptualized as the social psychology of individual and interpersonal interactions, or it can also be conceptualized as the social psychology of group and intergroup relations, (Smith & Hogg 2008, p.339). This study will treat attitude as product of group and intergroup relations with a focus on political party membership. Based on personal identity, individuals cognitively represent a social group like a political party. Smith & Hogg (2008) call these

groups a category prototype, which has a set of attributes that are connected meaningfully (p. 340). These attributes are formed based on the identities and attitudes shared with group members and by the differences they have with members of other groups. Attributes contain many factors including attitude towards objects, events, people and so forth (Smith & Hogg, 2008, p. 340). Prototypes prescribe these as membership-related, signaling to members what attitudes they ought to hold in relationship to other groups (p. 341). In this way attitude and identities continue to shape each other within group dynamics. Scholars have also found that identity and attitude are highly correlated and predictive of individual behavior. A study suggests that identity and attitude have similar effects on behavior (Smith & Terry, 2007). This study measures attitude extremity of the participants toward various partisan issues as an indicator of political identity.

Attitude extremity:

Attitude is defined as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor"(Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.1). Attitude and its strength have been studied as a predictor of human behavior, but a majority of the studies have found that attitude or attitude strength does not fully explain the related behavior (Snyder, 1987 p.203). Some scholars have even proposed alternative explanations to behavior in relation to attitude (Petersen & Dutton, 1975). Attitude strength is a larger construct with ten different components. According to Krosnick & Smith (1994) any of these

components could be used to differentiate weak and strong attitude. The current study measures attitude extremity to explain social media behavior.

In addition to a positive or negative direction, attitude also has a degree of favorableness or unfavorableness (Petersen & Dutton, 1975). The extent to which an individual likes or dislikes a given attitude object is called attitude extremity (Krosnick & Smith, 1994). Attitude extremity is unique compared to other measures of attitude strength. It is the only measure that "refers to the attitude itself" and not to dimensions, attributes, or judgments of the attitude (Visser, Bizer, & Krosnick, 2006). Also, it is the only dimension of attitude that is independent of other dimensions of attitude strength. Abelson (1995) has pointed out that attitude extremity is a feeling towards an attitude object and the length the individual would go to defend that feeling. The more extreme the attitude becomes, the more a person likes or dislikes the attitude object. For these reasons this study uses attitude extremity towards partisan issues as the indicator of political identity. Attitude extremity is operationalized as the deviation of an individual's attitude rating from the midpoint (Schuman & Tanur, 1993). The more a person departs from the neutral, the more extreme the attitude. It is important to understand why and how attitudes become more extreme.

How attitudes get extreme?

Various factors can lead to attitude extremity, according to Abelson (1995). This study relates to polarization, namely, group polarization, and expression polarization in the political realm. When the mean postdiscussion

opinion of a group is more extreme than the prediscussion opinion it is called group polarization (Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969). Group polarization effect is an increase in extremity of the attitude when like-minded people participate in discussion of a controversial issue (Abelson, 1995). Interestingly, this concept can be applied to the virtual environment as well. The Internet and the social media have made it possible for like-minded people to be together in the virtual space. As discussed earlier, social media has been used for bringing people with similar political attitudes together. This enables people with similar political beliefs to engage in discussion and trigger what Abelson (1995) calls group polarization.

Expression polarization refers to attitude extremity caused by repeated expression of attitude (Abelson, 1995). This concept is equally applicable in the context of social media used for political purposes. The like-minded people who gather in the virtual environment tend to express themselves in the form of likes and comments, and they do it repetitively as a member of the group. This triggers what Abelson (1995) calls expression polarization. Researchers have consistently linked attitude extremity as an outcome of repeated expression of the attitude (Downing, Judd, & Brauer, 1992; Krosnick & Smith, 1994). This applies for political attitude as well. Binder & Dalrymple (2009) in their study of 2004 presidential election found that the more a person talks about his/her attitude with the like-minded others, the more extreme his/her attitude becomes.

Scholars have associated attitude extremity with behavior. Downing et al. (1992) found that high extremity leads to an increase in subsequent behavior. However, there are not many studies that analyze the impact of attitude extremity in social media behavior. This study will analyze weather extremity of attitude predicts social media behavior. Based on the literature, this study posits that a person with high attitude extremity (strong political identity) is more likely to share political identity on corresponding issues on social media, and the person with low attitude extremity (weak political identity) is less likely to share political identity on social media.

H1: There will be positive relationship between attitude extremity and sharing behavior on social media; the more extreme the attitude the more likely an individual will be to share his or her attitude toward political issues.

How is social media different?

In regards to identity performance, a social media environment is different from face-to-face environment in two major ways. First, social media lacks the performance given off; one can use only performance given (Goffman, 2008). The performance in social media consists of texts and graphics as expressions where individuals theoretically have full control. Social media lacks other expressions like body language where individuals do not have full control. For

this reason social media gives people more control over how they want to present themselves compared to face-to-face interaction.

The second difference is that social media does not give users a precise context and precise audience. And, unlike in face-to-face communication, the user activity is recorded. Social media brings various audiences together in one spot, which Boyd (2008) termed "context collapse." It means information shared with a particular audience in mind could be accessed by unintended others. This can be an overstatement in the sense that social media is evolving and changing day-by-day. Present day social media give users some control over shared content. Danezis & Golle (2006) state that people tend to have misconceptions about the visibility of members' profiles (p.36). A recent study found that users underestimate their audience on specific posts by a factor of four, and their audience in general by a factor of three (Bernstein, Bakshy, Burke, & Karrer, 2013). Hence, we can conclude that social media users do not have full control over the exposure of the content they share and it can be exposed to anybody.

Identity is forged partially by an author and partially by the audience (Boyd, 2007; Merchant, 2005). Social media users direct information towards a certain audience but that information is then seen and interpreted by other audiences as well. In selecting who sees their post, they tend to use the default categories provided by the social media sites (e.g., family, friends, friends of friends, others, etc.) As discussed above these categories do not specify or limit the audience that can access the shared content. There is a possibility that the

shared content can be accessed by anybody in the social media platform and even beyond the specific platform through different loopholes.

Self-monitoring in social media

While performing identities people tend to manage impressions by monitoring and modifying their behavior so that they successfully perform the desired identity. While analyzing identity performance in social media as a dependent variable it is important to consider other factors that might affect the social media behavior. Many factors come into play in impression management; self-monitoring seems to have significant effect on social media behavior like sharing (Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2010). Snyder (1974) has discussed two kinds of people high self-monitors and low self-monitors. Current study will analyze if people in these two categories have significant difference in their social media behavior.

In the process of impression management, people tend to monitor their expressive behavior, a concept Snyder (1974) calls self-monitoring. Strategic self-presentation, where individuals observe, regulate, and control their public appearance, is called self-monitoring (Snyder, 1987). The postulates of self-monitoring theory states that people differ meaningfully in expressive control (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). In other words, the theory of self-monitoring is about "the extent to which people value, create, cultivate, and project social images and public appearances" (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

High self-monitors control their image to greater extent to match the social climate (Snyder, 1987, p.5). Furthermore, high self-monitors tend not to be consistent in their behavior through different social circumstances. Low self-monitors tend to express their true feeling, even though it goes against the social climate (Snyder, 1987, p.5). Low self-monitors are consistent in their behavior despite differences in social circumstances. For the sake of desired public appearances and a concern for situational appropriateness, high self-monitors strictly control their expressive behavior whereas low self-monitors don't bother much about social appropriateness (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Most of the studies on self-monitoring have focused on face-to-face communication and in this study we will test if the finding holds in social media.

Studies have found that self-monitoring tendencies have profound effects on behavior in social situations. Snyder (1979) (p.95) and Snyder & Monson (1975) have found that high self-monitors show cross-situational variability in public self-presentation based on the situation and low self-monitors show consistency across situations. Based on the difference between social media and face-to-face communication, and on other studies of self-monitoring, it is clear that sharing in social media favors both high self-monitors and low self-monitors in different ways. There are a few important factors that might affect social media behavior of high self-monitors and low self-monitors.

First, social media tends to bring multiple audiences together to create a homogeneous mixture of contexts and audiences. This quality of social media is

not favorable for high self-monitors as they maintain variable image among different group of people. However, as social media gets more and more advanced, the sites tend to provide control over exposure of the shared content which may favor high self-monitors who want to keep people in non-overlapping groups. For the low self-monitors, the homogenized audience does not make much difference, as they tend to have a consistent image throughout different groups of people.

Second, from the discussion above we know that social media provides full control over the content a user wants to share as social media in theory provides full control over the performance given and lacks performance given off. This quality of social media tends to favor the high self-monitors as they strive for full expressive control. However, for low self-monitors full expressive control may be a matter of interest but not a major factor that might effect their social media use. Because of these dimension makes social media different from face-to-face interaction it is difficult to predict how the behavior of self-monitors differ in social media environment.

RQ: Is degree of self-monitoring related to social media sharing?

Methods:

Participants: A total of 132 participants took part in the survey. Participants were undergraduates from a large mid-western university enrolled in communication courses. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 47 years (M = 21.11 years), and consisted of 67.4% female (n = 89) and 32.6% male (n = 43).

All respondents received extra credit in a university course in return for participating in the study. All the variables in the study were measured based on self-reported data. All participants took part in an online survey to report their social media behavior.

Independent variables:

Political identity: Political identity was measured in terms of attitude extremity. The more extreme attitude signifies stronger identity and vice-versa. A 12-item measure composed of partisan issues was used. Three of those items were used to establish political agenda only and were dropped before analysis, leaving a 9-item scale for final analysis. Participants were asked to rate themselves in 9-point Likert-type favorability scale of -4 (extremely unfavorable) to 4 (extremely favorable). Participants also had "Don't know" as an option, which was later, recoded as 0 or neutral. The outcome was than recoded to five-point (0 – 4) extremity scale with 4 being the most extreme and 0 being the least extreme. The further away the participants indicated they were from the neutral or 0 the more extreme their attitude was. To be specific, 4 and -4 were recoded as 4 (most extreme), 3 and -3 were recoded as 3, 2 and -2 were recoded as 2, 1 and -1 were recoded as 1, and 0 was recoded as 0 (neutral). For example, if a participant chose -3 for Obamacare, the score would be recoded as 3, as it deviated 3 points from neutral or zero (see Appendix B).

Scores from all nine individual statements were summed up for overall score. The possible range for attitude extremity scale was 0 to 4. The summed

attitude extremity scored showed a normal distribution with Mean = 2.3, S.D =

0.75, Range = 0.56 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α= .70 (see Table 1).

To break it down; Climate Change yielded a left skewed distribution with

Mean = 2.49; Obama Care yielded a normal distribution with Mean = 2.5; Medical

Marijuana yielded a left skewed distribution with Mean = 2.53; Recreational

Marijuana yielded a left skewed distribution with Mean = 2.38; Death Penalty

yielded a normal distribution with Mean = 2.02; Gun control yielded a normal

distribution with Mean = 2.15; Immigration yielded a right skewed distribution with

Mean = 1.64; Abortion yielded a left skewed distribution with Mean = 2.30; and

Gay Marriage yielded a left skewed distribution with Mean = 3.09

Self-Monitoring: This variable is a measure of whether a person is high

self-monitor or low self-monitor. Self-monitoring was measured using the original

25-true/false questions employed in the seminal work of Snyder (1975). The

scale consists of 25 statements where answering true (agreement) in response

to some is indicative of high self-monitoring. While answering false

(disagreement) in response to other statements is indicative of high self-

monitoring. For example, agreeing with the statement, "I would probably make a

good actor," indicates high self-monitoring, but agreeing with the statement, "I

find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people," indicates low self-monitoring.

The data was recoded so that 1 indicates low self-monitoring and 2 indicates

self-monitoring (see Appendix A).

Scores from all individual statements were summed up for overall score. The possible range for self-monitoring scale was 25 to 50. The summed self-monitoring scores showed a normal distribution with M = 39, Mean = 38.58, S.D = 3.86, Range = 29 to 48. Current data yielded reliability of α = .66 which is acceptable provided that the original self-monitoring scale had reliability of α = .70. Based on the response to the self-monitoring scale 38.6% (n = 51) participants fell into low self-monitor category and 61.4% (n = 81) participants fell into high self-monitor category.

Dependent variables:

Sharing political position in social media: To identify the sharing behavior, participants were asked if they are likely to share their position on partisan issues with audiences via social media. It was originally measured using 12 items with a 9-point scale for four audience categories. The four audience categories – Family, Friends, Friends of Friends, and Others – were selected to replicate the environment on Facebook, the most popular social media site. Three of the 12 items used were present to establish political context and were removed for analysis. A total of nine statements on partisan issues were used based on clearly conflicting position of the Right vs. the Left. Participants were asked to rate their sharing behavior with each of the four kinds of audience categories. Participants had to report likelihood of sharing their position in a 9-point scale with -4 being extremely unlikely and 4 being extremely likely. Participants had "Don't Know" as an option if they were unfamiliar with the topic;

it was later recoded as neutral or "0". For example, when asked "How likely are you to share your political views on **L***egalization of marijuana for recreational use* with the following audiences on social media?" a score of '-4' would indicate participant being extremely unlikely to share and a '4' would indicate participant being extremely likely to share for each audience category (see Appendix C).

The average score for overall sharing behavior was Mean = 0.11, S.D = 2.04, Range = -4 to 4. This measure yielded normal distribution and a reliability of α = 0.93. A total of 72 (54.5%) participants were likely and a total of 59 (44.7%) participants were not likely to share their political identity in social media. The remaining 1 (0.8%) was neutral (see Table 2).

Scores from all individual statements were averaged for each issue to get overall score. Specifics for each issue are as follows:

Climate Change: The averaged scores for sharing information about climate change showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = 0.63, S.D = 2.37, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .93. Based on the response, 62.1% (n = 82) participants were likely and 31.8% (n = 42) participants were not likely to share their position on climate change via social media. Remaining 6.1% (n=8) were neutral.

Obama Care: The averaged score for sharing information about Obama Care showed a slightly left skewed distribution with Mean = -.27, S.D= 2.53, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .96. Based on the response, 40.2% (n=53) participants were likely and 43.2%(n=57) were not likely

to share their position on Obama Care via social media. Remaining 16.7% (n=22) were neutral.

Medical Marijuana: The averaged scores for sharing information about medical marijuana showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = .06, S.D = 2.6, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .95. Based on the response, 49.2% (n = 65) participants were likely and 41.7% (n = 55) participants were not likely to share their position on medical marijuana via social media. Remaining 9.1%(n=12) were neutral.

Recreational Marijuana: The averaged scores for sharing information about recreational marijuana showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = -0.32, S.D = 2.66, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .94. Based on the response, 42.4% (n = 56) participants were likely and 49.2% (n = 65) participants were not likely to share their position on medical marijuana via social media. Remaining 8.3% (n=11) were neutral.

Death Penalty: The averaged scores for sharing information about death penalty showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = -0.18, S.D = 2.54, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .96. Based on the response, 44.7% (n = 59) participants were likely and 41.7% (n = 55) participants were not likely to share their position on death penalty via social media. Remaining 13.6% (n=18) were neutral.

Gun Laws: The averaged scores for sharing information about gun control laws showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = .03, S.D = 2.49,

Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .95. Based on the response, 53% (n = 70) participants were likely and 38.6% (n = 51) participants were not likely to share their position on gun laws via social media. Remaining 8.3% (n=11) were neutral.

Immigration: The averaged scores for sharing information about immigration showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = -0.22, S.D = 2.52, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .96. Based on the response, 46.2% (n = 61) participants were likely and 41.7% (n = 55) participants were not likely to share their position on immigration via social media. Remaining 12.1% (n=16) were neutral.

Abortion: The averaged scores for sharing information about abortion showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = 0.02, S.D = 2.82, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .95. Based on the response, 50% (n = 66) participants were likely and 42.4% (n = 56) participants were not likely to share their position on abortion via social media. Remaining 7.6% (n=10) were neutral.

Gay Marriage: The averaged scores for sharing information about gay marriage showed a left skewed distribution with Mean = 1.28, S.D = 2.61, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = .95. Based on the response, 69.7% (n = 92) participants were likely and 25% (n = 33) participants were not likely to share their position on gay marriage via social media. Remaining 5.3% (n=7) were neutral.

Corresponding sharing behavior for each of the above listed issues were measured for four-audience category namely Family, Friends, Friends of Friends and Others. An average of all the issues for each audience category was calculated to create four sharing variables: 1. Sharing with Family, 2. Sharing with Friends, 3. Sharing with Friends of Friends and 4. Sharing with Others. These four variables were further merged to create two sharing variables: Sharing with Known audience, and Sharing with Unknown audience. The Known is an average of Family and Friends and the Unknown is an average of Friends of Friends and Others.

Known: The averaged scores for sharing information about political position on social media with known audience showed a slightly left skewed distribution with Mean = 0.47, S.D = 2.13, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = 0.92. Based on the response, 63.6% (n = 84) participants were likely and 36.4% (n = 48) participants were not likely to share their position on political issue with known audience via social media.

Unknown: The averaged scores for sharing information about political position on social media with unknown audience showed a normal distribution with Mean = -0.31, S.D = 2.08, Range = -4 to 4. Current data yielded reliability of α = 0.97. Based on the response, 43.9% (n = 58) participants were likely and 52.3% (n = 69) participants were not likely to share their position on

political issue with unknown audience via social media. Remaining 3.8% (n=5) were neutral.

Results:

Comparing attitude extremity and sharing behavior: The first hypothesis predicted that the higher attitude extremity would be correlated with higher sharing behavior. A correlation analysis between attitude extremity and sharing behavior was conducted to test these hypotheses. We found $r = 0.2$, $p < 0.05$, thus confirming that there is a positive correlation between attitude extremity and sharing behavior. This finding supported hypothesis 1 (see Table 3).

A correlation was conducted between attitude extremities and sharing information on the corresponding issue to shed light on how each measure contributed towards hypothesis 1. Climate change yielded $r = 0.372$, $p < 0.01$. Obama Care yielded $r = 0.325$, $p < 0.01$. Medical Marijuana yielded $r < 0.188$, $p < 0.05$. Recreational Marijuana yielded $r = 0.296$, $p < 0.01$. Death Penalty yielded $r = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$. Gun Laws yielded $r = 0.180$, $p < 0.05$. Immigration yielded correlation of $r = 0.068$, $p < 0.329$. Abortion yielded $r = 0.254$, $p < 0.01$. Gay Marriage yielded $r = 0.265$, $p < 0.01$.

Further, hypothesis 1 was tested for male and female participants. For female the test yielded $r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$ and for male it was $r = -0.02$, $p < 0.91$. Similarly, hypothesis 1 tested based on party affiliation. For Republicans, the test

yielded *r* = 0.365, *p* < 0.05, for Democrats it was *r* = 0.17, *p* < 0.14 and for Independent it was *r* = -0.04, *p* < 0.84.

Self-monitoring and sharing behavior: The Research Question asked whether degree of self-monitoring is related to sharing on social media. A point-biserial correlation analysis between self-monitoring and sharing was conducted to find possible difference in sharing behavior between high self-monitors and low self-monitors. The result showed *r* = 0.04, *p* < 0.651. To test weather degree of self-monitoring has effect on sharing with know and unknown audience, point-biserial correlation analysis was conducted. The first analysis was conducted self-monitoring and known audience, it yielded *r* = -0.01, *p* < 0.949. The second analysis was conducted between self-monitoring and unknown audience, it yielded *r* = 0.07, *p* < 0.39.

Further, correlation analysis was conducted between self-monitoring and sharing for male and female participants. For female the test yielded *r* = 0.46, *p* < 0.670 and for male it was *r* = -0.09, *p* < 0.52. Same test was conducted for political party affiliation. For Republicans, the test yielded *r* = -0.142, *p* < 0.45, for Democrats it was *r* = 0.13, *p* < 0.27 and for Independent it was *r* = -0.20, *p* < 0.34.

Discussion

One of the major motivations behind social media use is the need for self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). We found that people with higher attitude extremity are more likely to share their stance on political issues in social media than people with lower attitude extremity. Current study found that people use social media platform to express their political identity based on their attitudes. Specifically, the data shows that the more attitude gets extreme the more users are likely to share their political identity in social media.

In day-to-day life people encounter different context and scenarios. According to Sherman & Cohen (2006), Identity performance is not same throughout contexts. Studies have confirmed that context affects information disclosure (Emanuel, Neil, & Bevan, 2014). Social media in general brings many contexts together creating context collapse. To navigate this multiple context and organize different contexts separately, users depend on social media groups (Duguay, 2014). Group in social networks paly a vital role in how people use social media. We found that sharing of the information is different based on the kind of group it is shared with. People were interested in sharing their stance on abortion with friends but not with the family. Separating groups of people gives users opportunity to perform different identities with different groups and contexts. People might have groups separated based on their interest, hobbies, political inclination, profession, etc.

Identity performance on social media gets more complex as displaying memberships in groups and associations with people itself becomes a part of identity performance. Papacharissi (2013) noted that the public display of social connections or friends is the center of identity performance that is used to authenticate identity. The online context of the user is also going to dictate identity performance in social media in regards to information disclosure.

Further, political expression or participation in social media groups can make user's attitudes extreme; this has been the case with offline interaction. In the face-to-face scenario, studies have found that discussion between like-minded people increases attitude extremity (Abelson, 1995; Downing, Judd, & Brauer, 1992; Krosnick & Smith, 1994; Binder & Dalrymple, 2009). This might also be the case in the digital environment as social media group is similar to offline group discussion.

Like-minded people tend to be in the similar social media group. For example a supporter of abortion will join the Facebook page supporting a women's right to chose the procedure. There will be instances where people with opposing views join the group to debate the participants – trolling, as it is called. These so-called "trolls" will eventually be removed from the group. Hence, groups on social media tend to tend to constitute people with similar viewpoints. This scenario matches in-group discussion of like-minded people in offline context. Hence, it can be argued that the political participation/expression in social media will contribute to extremity of attitude. Identities are performed to

these groups of people. Scholars have found that social media groups allow users to perform their idealized political identities (Marichal, 2013). The performance of idealized political identity by the group members can paly a role in modifying the political identity of the members as they come across other members posts.

The broader implication is that sharing happening in social media is based on users identity. Goffman's dramaturgical approach is clearly applicable to social media environment. Users tend to share content on social media as a performance of their Identity. Identities are presented, compared, adjusted, and defended against political realities in the virtual space (Papacharissi, 2013), which influences formation and expression of it (Bode, 2014).

Studies have shown political participation in social media has important implication for offline political participation. The increase in political participation positively affected the growth of traditional political participation in the 2008 election (Bode et al., 2014). Similarly, the people who use social networking sites for political express are likely to discuss politics and participate in offline activity (Soon & Samsudin, 2016). Boulianne (2015) analyzed research on social media use and political participation and found that social media has positively predicted the political participation in majority of those studies. Recent study has also found that exposure to political information in social media sites lead to seeking and sharing political information, attitude change and offline political behavior (L Bode, 2012). Although all social media groups are not equally

effective (Sormanen & Dutton, 2015), recent studies have found the evidence that social networking site use for political cause has positive effect on offline political participation(Zúñiga, 2014). Based on these findings it can be argued that political participation in the social media sphere is crucial for politicians and can be a primary battleground during elections in the future.

Current study found that there is variation in the motivation behind sharing in social media between people of different gender and different political inclination. Statistics shows that 39% of adult American population is involved in civic or political activity in social media (Rainie et al., 2012). Studies have indicated that Republicans and Democrats both share information in social media to achieve different goals like, encourage voting, encourage action, share political stories, etc. (Rainie et al., 2012). Current study found that Republican social media users who have extreme attitudes towards political issues tend to share their opinion on social media. However this was not the case with Democratic social media users. In the case of Democratic social media users the extremity of attitude was not a strong indicator of what they wanted to share over social media. Similarly, current study also showed that the motivation for social media use varies between male and female. Female participants were likely to share information in the social media if they have extreme attitudes towards the issue. However, for men attitude extremity was not predictive of their social media sharing. This shows people from different social group might have

different motivation to share information in social media. Further research on how different social groups differ in social media use will be informative.

People differ in extent to which they regulate, control, and observe their identity in interpersonal and social situations (Snyder, 1987). High self-monitors tend to manipulate the information to look more desirable in front of the others (Fandt & Ferris, 1990). This monitoring of expression shapes how the social media user is perceived by other people. Past literature shows that self-monitoring can consistently predicting how people represent themselves (Hall & Pennington, 2013). Recent studies have also showed that how people present themselves in their social media shapes the strangers' perception of the users (Hall & Pennington, 2013). Considering these facts, current study accessed weather high self-monitors and low self-monitors differ in sharing information in social media. We found that high self-monitors and low self-monitors do not significantly differ from each other in sharing political identity in social media. Further analysis also revealed that the high and low self-monitors did not differ in sharing political identity between known (family / friends) and unknown (friends of friend / others) audience. This can be interpreted as political identity being comparatively rigid identity shaped by attitude towards social issues. For this reason people tend not to shy away from expressing their political attitude on social media. However, this finding could also be an outcome of shortcomings in sample or data collection.

A diverse sample could have led to more conclusive findings. Current study used students of mass communication form a school as a sample. Social media is a topic of study for communication students and they are well informed about the outcomes of social media activities. Hence, they are more likely to be cautious while using social media especially when it comes to a critical issue like politics. Communication students understand the larger effect of information shared on social media. This factor could have encouraged them to share political information despite being high or low self-monitor. A similar study with sample from all walks of life is required for more interesting and generalizable findings on this topic.

An updated self-monitoring scale could have led to different findings. Current study used the original true/false scale of Snyder (1974) to measure self-monitoring. While being used by a lot of studies the original self-monitoring scale has been criticized for construct validity and difficulty to determine what the scale is measuring in totality (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; O'Cass, 2000). Recent studies that deal with self-monitoring in mediated communication (i.e. Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011) have used revised scale proposed by (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Other scholars have also proposed revision to the self-monitoring scale. A similar study using different self-monitoring scale might shed light on variation between high and low self-monitors that we might have missed in current study.

Limitations and Implication for Future Research

This study consisted of 132 participants who are communication students enrolled in a Public University. More inclusive and larger sample size from all walks of life would make a better sample for a study of this kind. Also, all of the participants were young adults who grew up using social media. It is possible that the sample is too comfortable using social media compared to general public. This factor might have skewed the findings for self-monitoring variable.

Personality difference is a crucial factor in social media interaction. This study analyzed how self-monitoring relates to sharing behavior in social media. However, we were not able to find any significant difference in social media sharing based on level of self-monitoring. The original scale created by Snyder (1975) was used to measure self-monitoring. It is possible that the measure of self-monitoring using different scale could yield different results.

Social media platform is rapidly changing. In the current study we used four categories of audience, which is default to most social media sites. However, social media allows users to create their own groups/categories and name them accordingly. We did not address it in this study. It is possible that high self-monitors tend to create their own audience categories and group for sharing and ignore the default categories. This might have affected our findings about self-monitors.

Conclusion:

This study measured social media user's attitude extremity, political identity, and sharing behavior in social media for various groups of audience. We found that Goffman's concept of the performance of the self is very relevant to social media interactions. Those who held more extreme attitudes (positive/negative) appear more likely to share that attitude on social media to help enhance their perceived identity. Hence, it defines who they are politically, which appears to be a significant portion of their overall political identity. The participants are not so sure about their position on the partisan issue so they tend to take less extreme stance. The attitudes that are less extreme or close to neutral do not explain the participant's identity. Hence, it does not define who they are politically, thus they are less willing to share it on social media. Since social media brings multiple contexts and categories of audience together, people tend to use social media groups. And Identity performance of same individual tends to vary from group to group.

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Appendix

Figure 1

Self-Monitoring Scale

Twenty-Five Item Measure of Self-Monitoring (Snyder, 1974)

1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people. (F)
2. My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. (F)
3. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like. (F)
4. I can only argue for ideas, which I already believe. (F)
5. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information. (T)
6. When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues. (T)
7. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain others. (T)
8. I would probably make a good actor. (T)
9. I rarely need the advice of my friends to choose movies, books, or music. (F)
10. I sometimes appear to others to be experiencing deeper emotions than I actually am. (T)
11. I laugh more when I watch a comedy with others than when alone. (T)

12. In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention. (F)
13. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons. (T)
14. I am not particularly good at making other people like me. (F)
15. Even if I am not enjoying myself, I often pretend to be having a good time. (T)
16. I'm not always the person I appear to be. (T)
17. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor. (F)
18. I have considered being an entertainer. (T)
19. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than anything else. (T)
20. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting. (F)
21. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations. (F)
22. At a party I let others keep the jokes and stories going. (F)
23. I feel a bit awkward in public and do not show up quite as well as I should. (F)
24. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end). (T)
25. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them. (T)

Figure 2

Measure of Attitude Extremity

Please select the circle below the number that best reflects your position on each of the following issues. If you don't know, please select "D/K."

	Extremely Unfavorable					Extremely Favorable				
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Eco-friendly laws to stop Climate change	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
*Drilling oil in Alaska	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
*Omitting the racial description of crime suspects on the U of M campus	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Obamacare	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Legalization of marijuana for medical purposes	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Legalization of marijuana for recreational use	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Death penalty	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Restricting peopls ability to carry concealed guns	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Stricter immigration laws	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Legalization of abortion	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Legalization of Gay Marriage	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
*Military deployment in the Middle-East	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Note. * These issues were used to set the political atmosphere and were removed before analysis.

Figure 3

Measure of Sharing Behavior

How likely are you to share your political views on **climate change** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely							Extremely Likely		
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on **Obamacare** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely							Extremely Likely		
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on **legalization of marijuana for medical purposes** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely							Extremely Likely		
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on **legalization of marijuana for recreational use** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely								Extremely Likely	
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on the **Death penalty** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely								Extremely Likely	
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on **concealed handguns** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely								Extremely Likely	
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on **illegal immigration** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely								Extremely Likely	
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on **abortion** with the following audiences on social media?

	Extremely Unlikely								Extremely Likely	
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How likely are you to share your political views on **gay marriage** with the following audiences on social media?

	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	D/K
Your family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Your friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends of friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
General public	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Table 1

Measure of Attitude Extremity

	Mean		
Climate Change	2.49		
Obama Care	2.5		
Medical Marijuana	2.53		
Recreational Marijuana	2.38		
Death Penalty	2.02		
Gun Laws	2.15		
Abortion	2.30		
Immigration	1.62		
Gay Marriage	3.09		
Attitude Extremity (average)	2.3	S.D = 0.75	α = .70

Table 2

Measure of Sharing on Social Media

Issue	Mean	α	S.D	Sharing%	Not Sharing %	Neutral%
Climate Change	0.63	0.93	2.37	61.2	31.8	6.1
Obama Care	0.27	0.96	2.53	40.2	43.2	16.7
Medical Marijuana	0.06	0.95	2.60	49.2	41.7	9.1
Recreational Marijuana	-0.32	0.94	2.66	42.4	49.2	8.3
Death Penalty	-0.18	0.96	2.54	44.7	41.7	13.6
Gun Laws	0.03	0.95	2.49	53.0	38.6	8.3
Immigration	-2.22	0.96	2.52	46.2	41.7	12.1
Abortion	0.02	0.95	2.82	50.0	42.4	7.6
Gay Marriage	1.28	0.95	2.61	69.7	25.0	5.3
Average Sharing	0.11	0.93	2.04	54.5	44.7	0.8

Table 3

Correlation between attitude extremity subscale and sharing behavior subscale

| | Sharing | | | | | | | | | |
Attitude Extremity	Climate Change	Obama Care	Medical Marijuana	Recreational Marijuana	Death Penalty	Gun Laws	Immigration	Abortion	Gay Marriage	Total Sharing
Climate Change	0.372**									
Obama Care		0.325**								
Medical Marijuana			0.188*							
Recreational Marijuana				0.296**						
Death Penalty					0.227***					
Gun Laws						0.180*				
Immigration							0.068			
Abortion								0.254**		
Gay Marriage									0.265**	
Total Attitude Extremity										0.2*

Note: *p< .05; **p< .01.