

Interactivity between Candidates and Citizens on a Social Networking Site: Effects on
Perceptions and Vote Intentions

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Supplemental Appendix

RESULTS AMONG FACEBOOK USERS ONLY

	No Comments	Supportive Comments	Challenging Comments	Supportive Comments + Replies	Challenging Comments + Replies
Perceptions of candidate traits	1.48 (.67) N = 13	1.57 (.80) N = 13	1.08 (.66) N = 20	1.34 (.90) N = 19	1.17 (.66) N = 18
Perceptions of candidate motives	1.79 (.50) N = 14	1.83 (.63) N = 14	1.47 (.59) N = 20	1.82 (.70) N = 17	1.52 (.58) N = 18
Likelihood of voting for candidate	.93 (.81) N = 14	1.48 (.70) N = 14	1.03 (.63) N = 21	1.05 (.76) N = 20	.85 (.88) N = 20

Note: Table entries are means; standard errors are in parentheses.

H1A (No Comments vs. Supportive Comments):

Traits: $t = .30, p = \text{n.s.}$

Motives: $t = .23, p = \text{n.s.}$

Vote intentions: $t = 2.60, p < .05.$

H1B (No Comments vs. Challenging Comments):

Traits: $t = 1.51, p = \text{n.s.}$

Motives: $t = 1.59, p = \text{n.s.}$

Vote intentions: $t = -1.12, p = \text{n.s.}$

H1C (Supportive Comments vs. Challenging Comments):

Traits: $t = 1.84, p = .07.$

Motives: $t = 1.84, p = .07.$

Vote intentions: $t = 1.72, p = .09.$

H2 (Supportive Comments vs. Supportive Comments + Replies):

Traits: $t = -.84, p = \text{n.s.}$

Motives: $t = -.07, p = \text{n.s.}$

Vote intentions: $t = -1.87, p = .07.$

H3 (Challenging Comments vs. Challenging Comments + Replies):

Traits: $t = .38, p = \text{n.s.}$

Motives: $t = .31, p = \text{n.s.}$

Vote intentions: $t = -.98, p = \text{n.s.}$

RANDOMIZATION CHECKS FOR PARTISANSHIP AND DEMOGRAPHICS

For categorical variables, χ^2 tests were used to check for differences across conditions. For interval variables, F tests were used. No significant differences across conditions emerged for partisanship or any of the demographic variables.

Gender: $\chi^2 = 5.04$ (d.f. = 4), $p = \text{n.s.}$

Self-identification as African American: $\chi^2 = 3.86$ (d.f. = 4), $p = \text{n.s.}$

Self-identification as Hispanic: χ^2 was a constant given that the only two Hispanic participants were assigned to the website condition.

Party identification: $\chi^2 = 6.66$ (d.f. = 8), $p = \text{n.s.}$

Education (on a 5-category scale): $F = .97$ (d.f. = 4, 144), $p = \text{n.s.}$

Age: $F = 1.41$ (d.f. = 4, 145), $p = \text{n.s.}$

Note: These tests excluded the website condition, which was not included in the main analyses.

A. Hypotheses

The experiment was designed to assess the effects of observing interactivity between citizens and candidates through social networking sites (SNSs). It tests how exposure to supportive or challenging user comments on a fictional candidate's Facebook page—and candidate replies to each type of comment—influenced participants' perceptions of and willingness to vote for the candidate.

The specific hypotheses were as follows:

H1A: Compared to individuals exposed to a candidate Facebook profile with no comments or likes, those exposed to a candidate Facebook profile with supportive comments and likes from other users will view the candidate more positively and be more likely to vote for the candidate.

H1B: Compared to individuals exposed to a candidate Facebook profile with no comments or likes, those exposed to a candidate Facebook profile with challenging comments (and no likes) from other users will view the candidate more negatively and be less likely to vote for the candidate.

H1C: Compared to individuals exposed to a candidate Facebook profile with supportive comments and likes, those exposed to a candidate Facebook profile with challenging comments (and no likes) will view the candidate more negatively and be less likely to vote for the candidate.

H2: Exposure to candidate replies to supportive comments on Facebook will lead to more positive perceptions of the candidate and a greater likelihood of voting for the candidate.

H3: Exposure to candidate replies to challenging comments on Facebook will lead to more positive perceptions of the candidate and a greater likelihood of voting for the candidate.

B. Subjects and Context

Eligibility and exclusion criteria for participants. Participants were drawn from a panel of 1,215 adult residents of Delaware who had previously agreed to participate in research studies. The panel was recruited through two telephone surveys, one conducted in 2010 and one conducted in 2012. Members of the panel who were Internet users and for whom a valid email address was available (N=660) were eligible to participate.

Procedures used to recruit and select participants. All panelists for whom a valid e-mail address was available were e-mailed a link to an online Qualtrics survey that included the experiment. The recruitment email read as follows:

Greetings from the “epicenter of politics” at the University of Delaware!

You’ll recall the University of Delaware’s nonpartisan Center for Political Communication contacted you earlier, and you were gracious to share your opinions with our pollsters. We very much appreciate your participation in our public opinion project, which we call “National Agenda.” We are hoping you will continue to work with us during the 2012 election year.

We are now conducting a brief online survey as part of our National Agenda Public Opinion Project. We sincerely hope you’ll participate. This study examines people’s opinions about political candidates and their use of the Internet. The results will be developed into papers to be submitted to academic conferences and journals.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to look at a message from a candidate and then complete a brief survey asking for your opinions about the candidate and the message. We will also ask you some questions about yourself.

The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. It is being conducted by Dr. Paul Brewer, Dr. Lindsay Hoffman, Dr. Philip Jones, and Dr. Jennifer Lambe, all of whom are faculty affiliated with the University of Delaware’s Center for Political Communication.

The results of our research will be reported publicly, but *your role will always be confidential*. Also, you may decline to participate at any time. Your information will *never* be used for sales, public relations, or any marketing purpose and it will be protected on a secured server.

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact Dr. Brewer at prbrewer@udel.edu or (302) 831-2793.

Recruitment dates. October 19 to November 5, 2012.

Settings and locations where the data were collected. Online via Qualtrics.

Response rate. Of the 660 panelists invited to take the survey, 290 started the survey, 284 were randomly assigned to one of the conditions, and 192 completed the survey. Missing data for 9 of the completed surveys resulted in their exclusion from the analysis (AAPOR RR1=27.7%).

C. Allocation Method

Randomization procedures. At the beginning of the survey, each individual respondent was randomly assigned to one of six conditions by the Qualtrics software. No blocking or restrictions were used.

Random assignment. To assess any issues with the randomization procedure, the table on the next page shows the means and standard deviations of demographic characteristics of respondents in each condition.

Blinding. Participants were not aware that there were multiple conditions, and were only shown one version of the candidate's web page.

Demographic and political characteristics of participants in each randomly-assigned condition

	Condition					
	1: No Comments	2: Supportive Comments	3: Challenging Comments	4: Supportive Comments + Replies	5: Challenging Comments + Replies	6: Candidate website
Age (years)	60.43 <i>13.34</i>	62.14 <i>13.22</i>	58.40 <i>14.21</i>	64.76 <i>10.48</i>	61.15 <i>12.83</i>	52.57 <i>13.69</i>
Education scale (1=Less than high school; 6=Graduate degree)	4.64 <i>1.28</i>	4.41 <i>1.24</i>	4.47 <i>1.28</i>	5.00 <i>1.08</i>	4.27 <i>1.57</i>	4.47 <i>1.33</i>
Proportion Black	0.03	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.13
Proportion Hispanic	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07
Party ID scale (1=Strong Democrat; 7=Strong Republican)	2.82 <i>2.33</i>	4.03 <i>3.23</i>	3.23 <i>2.05</i>	3.55 <i>2.31</i>	3.56 <i>2.44</i>	3.40 <i>2.09</i>
Ideology scale (1=Very Conservative; 5=Very Liberal)	3.46 <i>1.26</i>	2.89 <i>1.23</i>	3.37 <i>1.35</i>	3.14 <i>1.16</i>	3.15 <i>1.20</i>	3.23 <i>1.17</i>
<i>N</i>	29	29	30	32	33	30
						183

Note: Cells show means within each condition and standard deviations *in italics*. These responses were measured after respondents had been exposed to the experimental stimuli. The stimuli did not prime ideological or partisan conditions (and presumably would not affect demographic characteristics).

D. Treatments

At the beginning of the survey, participants were told: “For this study, you will be asked to look at the Facebook page of a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives. You will then be asked a series of questions.”

The following page presented a (static) screen capture image of a webpage for a fictitious candidate, “Dennis Felton”. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions:

1. “No Comments” condition. A Facebook page for the candidate that included two posts with no comments or “likes”, as below.



2. “Supportive Comments” condition. A Facebook page for the candidate that included two posts with supportive comments on each, and 8 “likes” for the first post and 3 for the second, as below.

facebook Search for people, places and things



 **Dennis Felton** Like

Highlights

 **Dennis Felton** yesterday

Thanks to everyone who came out to Bill's Pancake House today! I enjoyed meeting more voters and having a great discussion with them about what they want out of government.



Like · Comment · Share

8 people like this.

 **Jerry Degette** It was great to meet and speak with you today, Mr. Felton. You are the kind of representative that our state and our country needs at this time.
yesterday · Like

 **Dennis Felton** yesterday

Hey folks, we are already close to selling out of our new campaign t-shirts. Donate \$15 or more today to get yours.



Like · Comment · Share

3 people like this.

 **Maria Daines** Mr. Felton, I donated and I love my new shirt. You have my vote because you are a stand-up guy who will do what's best for our country.
yesterday · Like

3. “No Comments” condition. A Facebook page for the candidate that included two posts with challenging comments on each, and no “likes”, as below.

facebook
Search for people, places and things



Dennis Felton
Like

Highlights


Dennis Felton
yesterday

Thanks to everyone who came out to Bill's Pancake House today! I enjoyed meeting more voters and having a great discussion with them about what they want out of government.


Like · Comment · Share


Jerry Degette Enough with the nasty attack ads. You all are liars who care more about money than the people you represent. Now tell voters why we should vote for you.
yesterday · Like


Dennis Felton
yesterday

Hey folks, we are already close to selling out of our new campaign t-shirts. Donate \$15 or more today to get yours.


Like · Comment · Share


Maria Daines Mr. Felton, what are your policy goals? I get the impression that you have flip-flopped a lot. I just want to know what you stand for.
yesterday · Like

4. “Supportive Comments + Candidate Replies” condition. A Facebook page identical to the “Supportive Comments” conditions, except for the inclusion of a candidate reply to each comment, as below.

facebook Search for people, places and things



Dennis Felton Like

Highlights

Dennis Felton yesterday

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Like · Comment · Share

8 people like this.

Jerry Degette It was great to meet and speak with you today, Mr. Felton. You are the kind of representative that our state and our country needs at this time.
yesterday · Like

Dennis Felton Jerry, thank you for your comment! I am running for this seat because I want to speak for the people who lack effective representation in Congress. I have proven solutions for the problems facing our state and our country. Please [contact](#) me for more information on what I stand for. I hope that I can count on your support in this very important election!
yesterday · Like

Dennis Felton yesterday

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3 people like this.

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yesterday · Like

Dennis Felton Maria, thank you for your comment! I believe I am the right choice in this important election because I truly value the concerns and opinions of the people of our great state. My conversations with them have convinced me that the leadership in Washington needs to change, and my commitment to representing you will never relent. Please [contact](#) me for more information on my goals if elected. I hope that I can count on your support this November!
yesterday · Like

5. “Challenging Comments + Candidate Replies” condition. A Facebook page identical to the “Challenging Comments” conditions, except for the inclusion of a candidate reply to each comment, as below.

facebook
Search for people, places and things



Dennis Felton
Like

Highlights


Dennis Felton
yesterday

Thanks to everyone who came out to Bill's Pancake House today! I enjoyed meeting more voters and having a great discussion with them about what they want out of government.


Like · Comment · Share


Jerry Degette Enough with the nasty attack ads. You all are liars who care more about money than the people you represent. Now tell voters why we should vote for you.
yesterday · Like


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yesterday · Like


Dennis Felton
yesterday

Hey folks, we are already close to selling out of our new campaign t-shirts. Donate \$15 or more today to get yours.


Like · Comment · Share


Maria Daines Mr. Felton, what are your policy goals? I get the impression that you have flip-flopped a lot. I just want to know what you stand for.
yesterday · Like


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yesterday · Like

6. “Candidate Website” condition. A candidate’s own campaign webpage with the same substantive information as the “No Comments” condition, as below.

WELCOME!

Thanks to everyone who came out to Bill's Pancake House today! I enjoyed meeting more voters and having a great discussion with them about what they want out of government.

LATEST NEWS!

Hey folks, we are already close to selling out of our new campaign t-shirts. Donate \$15 or more today to get yours.

Administration of manipulations. Manipulations were administered via a Qualtrics online survey.

Details of experiment. Participants were not explicitly told whether the candidate was real or fictional. We chose to use a fictional candidate because the study was conducted during the month preceding a general election, and we wished to avoid (1) influencing respondents’ attitudes toward any actual candidate, or (2) capturing responses that reflected attitudes toward any actual candidate. Respondents were not debriefed following the study.


Participants were asked to confirm that they could see the website image immediately after it was presented to them.

E. Results

Outcome measures and covariates. Following is the full survey questionnaire.

Do you ever use Facebook?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



Display This Question:
If Do you ever use Facebook? **Yes** is **Selected** [Edit](#)

How often do you use Facebook?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Less than once a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ A few times a week
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ More than once a day

Please indicate how often you have done each of the following during the past month:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly
Viewed news about political campaigns on a news organization's Internet site	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Viewed websites of political candidates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
↳ Read comments about political campaigns on Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
↳ Posted comments about political campaigns on Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
↳ Viewed Facebook pages of political candidates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>




How well does each of the following describe **Dennis Felton**, the candidate whose Facebook page you just read?

	Not well at all	Not too well	Somewhat well	Very well
Likable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Popular	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consistent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Says what he means	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Real	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phony	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you lived in Dennis Felton's Congressional district, how likely would **you** be to do each of the following?

	Not likely at all	Not too likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
Visit his website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 Visit his Facebook page	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 "Like" his Facebook page	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 Comment on his Facebook page	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk to family members or friends about him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vote for him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Donate money to his campaign	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely do you think **other people** living in Dennis Felton's Congressional district will be to do each of the following?

	Not likely at all	Not too likely	Somewhat likely	Very Likely
Visit his website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 Visit his Facebook page	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 "Like" his Facebook page	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 Comment on his Facebook page	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk to family members or friends about him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vote for him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Donate money to his campaign	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about **Dennis Felton**.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
He is probably trying to make a real connection with voters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
He is probably just after people's money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
He is probably pretending to be different than he really is.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How well does each of the following describe the **Facebook page** you just read?

	Not well at all	Not too well	Somewhat well	Very well
Interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Credible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Real	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phony	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the **Facebook page** you just read.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The messages on the Facebook page were probably written by the candidate himself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Somebody working for the candidate probably wrote the messages on the Facebook page instead of the candidate himself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The candidate probably has no idea what his staff are writing on his Facebook page.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Some people don't pay much attention to politics while others follow it closely. How interested in politics would you say you are?

- ☐ Not interested at all
- ☐ Not too interested
- ☐ Somewhat interested
- ☐ Very interested

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Only some of the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Just about always

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Public officials don't care much what people like me think.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Finally, just a few questions for statistical purposes only.

Are you:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What is your age?

What is the highest level of education that you have attained?

- ☐ Less than high school (no high school diploma)
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college including community or junior college
- ☐ Four year college graduate
- ☐ Some graduate school
- ☐ Graduate degree

What is your race or ethnicity? Check all that apply.

- ☐ African American/Black
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other

In general, how would you describe your political views?

- ☐ Very Conservative
- ☐ Somewhat Conservative
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Somewhat Liberal
- ☐ Very Liberal

In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent?

- ☐ Republican
- ☐ Democrat
- ☐ Independent or other

**Display This Question:**

if In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent? **Republican** Is
Selected [Edit](#)

Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

- ☐ Strong Republican
- ☐ Not very strong Republican

**Display This Question:**

if In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent? **Democrat** Is
Selected [Edit](#)

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

- ☐ Strong Democrat
- ☐ Not very strong Democrat

**Display This Question:**

if In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent? **Independent or other** Is
Selected [Edit](#)

As of today, do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

- ☐ Republican Party
- ☐ Democratic Party
- ☐ Neither

You have completed the survey. Thank you for your participation.

Indices used. Based on a series of factor analyses and reliability analyses, responses to the items of interest were used to construct three measures, each coded to range from 0 to 3 (see Appendix C for wording). The first was an 8-item index measuring perceptions of candidate traits (coded so that higher values indicated more positive perceptions; $M = 1.28$; $SD = .73$; $\alpha = .96$). The second was a 4-item index measuring perceptions of candidate motives (coded similarly; $M = 1.69$; $SD = .56$; $\alpha = .76$). The third was a single-item measure for likelihood of voting for the candidate (coded so that higher values indicated greater likelihood of doing so; $M = 1.05$; $SD = .79$). See Appendix C for full information.

Prior specification of analyses. Analyses for H1A, H1B, H1C, H2, and H3 among the full sample (included in the main article) were specified prior to the experiment. Analyses for these hypotheses among the subsample of Facebook users (included in this supplementary appendix) were conducted to address concerns raised in the review process.

CONSORT Analysis

Number of subjects initially assessed for eligibility for the study: 1,215

Exclusions prior to random assignment and reasons for the exclusions:

- 555 excluded due to the absence of a valid email address
- 370 declined to participate
- 6 dropped out before allocation

Condition	Initially allocated	Received allocation	Did not complete/ Insufficient data	Included in analyses
No Comments	47	47	18	29
Supportive Comments	42	42	13	29
Challenging Comments	47	47	17	30
Supportive Comments + Replies	47	47	15	32
Challenging Comments + Replies	51	51	18	33
Candidate Website	50	50	20	30
Total	284	284	101	183

F. Other information

The experiment was reviewed and approved by the University of Delaware IRB.

The experiment was funded by the Unidel Foundation. The funders played no role in the analysis of the experiment.