THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

HOW SOCIAL NETWORKING CAN REINVIGORATE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WEST: Good morning. I'm Darrell West, Vice President of Governance Studies and Director of the Center for Technology Innovation at the Brookings Institution. And I would like to welcome you to our forum on using social media to re-invigorate American democracy.

We are web casting this event at Brookings.edu, so I would also like to welcome the hundreds of people from across the country who have tuned in via the web. We have set up a Twitter feed at hashtagcticivic, that's hashtagcticivic, and so anyone can post comments or questions online. And after we hear the panel presentations, we'll be taking questions both from the Brookings audience, as well as from the Twitter posts.

When you look at the current state of American democracy, it is easy to feel frustrated. Money plays a huge role in campaigns and elections, our political institutions are dysfunctional and have difficulty addressing major problems. The civic debate is polarized and not very informative. News coverage often focuses on the sensational, as opposed to the substantive. And voters, not surprising given all these other facts, are very cynical about the motives and actions of elected officials. But despite these worrisome developments, there are promising signs on the horizon. Digital technologies make it easier to organize voters, communication costs have dropped to virtually zero on some platforms, people are able to access a tremendous amount of online material, and there are new tools for encouraging participation, social networking, and collaboration.

In 2008, we saw candidates in each party use technology in innovative ways. This is true for Candidates Obama, Clinton, McCain, Romney and others, as well as candidates running for other types of offices. They used it to reach out to small donors, organize electronic meet-ups, post videos, and convey substantive materials to

interested citizens.

The big question is how we can maintain that momentum and use social networking for grassroots mobilization and civic engagement? What are the best ways to deploy social networking tools? How can we re-invigorate American democracy? And what role will these techniques play in the upcoming 2012 campaign?

To help us think about these issues, we have put together a very distinguished set of experts. Macon Phillips is Special Assistant to the President and Director of Digital Strategy at the White House. He was instrumental in the President's 2008 campaign through the use of text messaging, online videos and social networking. He currently runs Whitehouse.gov and directs the President's use of digital technology, among other responsibilities. He is the former Director of Strategy and Communications for Blue State Digital.

Mindy Finn is going to be joining us very soon. She had car trouble on the way to this event, but she should be here any time. She is a Partner at Engage, a firm that provides advice regarding online technology. In 2008, she served as Director of East Strategy for the Romney campaign. In that position, she directed the candidate's web video operations, social networking, blog and email outreach, online advertising and user generated content.

Lee Rainie is Director of the Pew Internet in American Life Project. He conducts regular surveys on how technology is reshaping civic and economic and social lives. Many of you saw his recent study that came out last week on how people's social and networking activities affect their civic and political engagement. He's actually working on a new book entitled Networking, The New Social Operating System.

Diana Owen is a Social Professor of Political Science and Director of the American Studies Program at Georgetown University. She is the author of a number of

books, including New Media and America Politics and The Internet and Politics, as well as many articles on new media and civic engagement. She also has a new study that just came out examining the affects of civic education on political engagement.

Our format is as follows, I'm going to start with a few questions for our panel, then we will give both our Brookings and web cast audiences a chance to ask questions. And again, if you want to pose questions through Twitter, it's hashtagcticivic. And we have Christine Jacobs here of our communications staff who's following the tweets and we will incorporate some of your comments in the discussion, as well.

Mindy, good timing, please join us. Talk about a grand entrance, can't beat that. So I was just introducing the panel and discussing the format. Following the forum, we are going to compile the best suggestions for civic engagement and put out a short paper this week on ways social media can re-invigorate American democracy. That paper will appear on the Brookings web site at Brookings.edu. And also, anyone who wants to follow our work can sign up for RSS feeds on the Brookings web site or follow us through Facebook and/or Twitter. So why don't I start with Macon, who's been a real innovator in this area? What are the key roles that the White House, excuse me, what are the key tools that the White House employs to engage the American public and how have your strategies evolved since you began as Director of New Media?

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, thanks, and thanks for having me here. It's very exciting to get a chance to talk about these tools. We usually spend our time talking about policies and administration, but it's to really look at tools and tactics that we're using.

I think our focus has evolved over time to move from assessing what our current capabilities were within government, looking at the technologies that were in-house, our CMS, our posting, all the ways that we had organized the technology and the

content development prior to the administration and then looking at how we wanted to organize it and move them forward.

In addition to that, looking at a lot of the policies and a lot of the work that we need to do to really modernize how the White House communicates and engages with the public. And so that was our initial focus, and then as we worked through what was possible, I think we moved into a phase where we started to think about how we could actually use the tools that were available to us and the different techniques that were available to us, and I'll talk about that in a second.

But I think our – the main assets that we use are primarily our web site, Whitehouse.gov, but I like to tell people that the only person who has Whitehouse.gov as their home page is my mother, and that's I think entirely fair, because people aren't getting their – they aren't starting their sort of browsing experience at Whitehouse.gov. And, in fact, we're here to talk about where they are starting their browsing experience, which is getting an email from a friend, checking on a Facebook, checking to see what's going on with Twitter, that sort of thing.

So it's clear to us from the outset that in addition to our own web site, we needed to actually have a more robust web program, so we established presences at Facebook, and shortly after that Twitter, and a number of other networks that we've used, including Linkedin, which we've actually done some real interesting work with, as well. I tried to look at all those communities where we actually wanted to find people where they were. We're also looking at things like Cora and all these sort of new sites that are popping up everywhere and are just very compelling and full of experts.

And, frankly, some of the people that we're bringing onto the administration advisory roles already have presences there, like Steve Case, who's been really active on Cora, I think is a really good example of good engagement there.

So we're trying to understand a little bit about these new communities and how we can participate in them appropriately. So it's really evolved from making sure our own house is in order to then being able to venture out to I think communities where people already were and engage them.

MR. WEST: Okay. Mindy, as a social networking practitioner, how does social networking and new media impact politics at the grassroots level?

MS. FINN: Sure, well, first of all, thanks for having me here. This is one of my favorite topics, how social media is impacting democracy, and even to take it further, how it could potentially affect the level of stability in our politics for the positive or negative, and I think it's some of both. As far as how social media is impacting politics in the grassroots level, I think it's been – I don't, you know, want to exaggerate, but I think it's fair to say that it's having revolutionary affects.

We tend to, you know, it's not as apparent here in the U.S., when – even though we like to think that we're not very civil and we like to complain about the state of our democracy, we're in a much better state than some of the other nations that we're seeing have these major – these movements that are social media driven, where they're trying to overthrow the government, in places like Tunisia and Egypt.

But even so, I think here in the U.S., it's having revolutionary affects, everything from – on the way here actually, I was, you know, looking at my iPad when I was in the taxi, and I was getting a complaint because I'm advising a potential presidential candidate, and there was a story on the Huffington Post that a major fundraiser, probably the most permanent fundraiser for the campaign, was complaining, like how did this story happen, it was about a little web site mistake, and a lot of the other advisors were saying, well, this is an insignificant story, don't worry about it, and she, with full exclamation point said, insignificant, it's all over Twitter. So, you know, I think we're

really at the point where social media and new media and emerging media, you know, it is no longer new, it's a critical part of campaigns.

I think if campaigns are doing it right, it's part of the – it's the central nervous system of the campaign, and the reason is this, I mean political campaigns on our democracy is about people, and it's about connecting people and forming relationships with people, and that's what social media is all about, as well.

So the – while businesses and corporations and brands all face – I'd say struggle or aim to get benefits from the social media ecosphere, the, you know, they're having to kind of jam themselves into it, because it isn't natural necessarily, not all of their products are about people, but politics is about people, and so it's natural that you would have candidates engaging with constituencies on social media.

Just to be, you know, more specific, Facebook is the preeminent social network, I don't think anybody can deny that, but the statistics show. Maybe Lee probably has, you know, is – is a master of all of those statistics, but what we are seeing is, the – instead of – and I'll even – I'll point to the Obama Campaign as an example, and sort of where you would have field representatives in the past, so the people who were responsible for organizing sections of geographic areas to turn them out to vote were called field representatives, and you still had field representatives, but you also have people that are replacing, working side by side, and probably ultimately replaced that are called data desk coordinators.

Data, again, we don't necessarily want to think of each of us as a number, as pieces of data, but we have been in politics for decades, even centuries, but that's a result of the social media revolution, and I can't call it anything else, in that there's – we're able to have a closer connection, I think, even though we're saying data and we're using numbers, we're able to have a closer connection to people in their

communities because we know more about them, we know about who their friends are, we know more about the interests that drive them, and so the person to person connecting that has been critical for politics for years is now in overdrive through social media, and particularly Facebook. And so, you know, I think we're really at the point where, when I first started working in, you knew, new media and politics about ten years ago, and I was trying to convince political candidates and elected officials about why they needed to pay attention to the fact that the internet was going to change politics and they needed to integrate it into their efforts, the pushback was, well, the technology is just really depersonalizing politics, it's depersonalizing politics because I like to shake hands and I like to meet people face to face, and, you know, just filling up a web site and having, you know, an online chat, you know, it's depersonalizing politics, and I used to push back and say, you're wrong, it's repersonalizing politics, because you're having to reach out to so many – to such a large piece of the population that it's not possible to form a personal connection with every single one.

So instead, politicians have prioritized their time by spending most of it with those who can contribute big dollars, and then reserving the end of their campaign to try to meet some voters, you know, person to person.

Now, campaigns are not just the candidate, but their staff and their field reps or their data desk coordinators can be having, or their social media managers can be having these one on one relationships, conversations and interactions every single day. So I think it's a really exciting time. As much as we keep saying this is the age of the internet in politics, I still think that we're at the beginning, because we're at the point where, you know, the internet more and more is starting to echo and resemble and parallel our lives offline, and as that continues, I think we'll really see where we'll no longer have these cube sides of a campaign, the social media, the grassroots side, and

the traditional grassroots side, that it will all be one campaign, and the social media infrastructure or social networks will really be central nervous system political campaigns.

MR. WEST: Okay. Lee, last week Pew put out a new research project. I'm just wondering, what has your research revealed about the ways that social networking can improve participation and collaboration in governance?

MR. RAINIE: Well, first of all let me say thank you for having us here, it's an honor for me and for Pew to be part of this, especially in your behalf, Darrell. You've been an early teacher and an early understander of this, and you were certainly my teacher in a lot of these – the ways that we're studying the impact of the internet on politics. The first thing to say about our research is that the bad news story just isn't there. Mindy was talking about the theory and the potential threats that use of social media were thought to be bringing to politics, that they were pulling people away from real friendships, they were pulling people away from their communities, they were distracting them, they were pulling people into cocooned spaces, where they didn't engage people with different ideas and different information.

All of that is not sustained in the work that we've done. The story is a very different one. People particularly who use Facebook have more friends, more close friends, more likely to be involved in politics, more likely to be open to diverse points of view, and so there's sort of a negative executive summary of what's going on on the impact of social media and politics, all the fears that people have just aren't being born out.

The other thing that we see in our data is that everything is growing. In the 2010 campaign, it was an off year election, so it wasn't quite at the level of the presidential election of 2008, but all the metrics of use of social media are going up. Twenty-two percent of internet users used social media in one way, shape or form in the

2010 election, 26 percent used their mobile devices to connect to politics. All those numbers will keep going up for the reasons that they've been describing. And the internet itself is just going to become more and more important part of the campaign.

We've seen, since we began studying this is 2000, that the internet now has surpassed TV among broadband users in many respects, some used for politics, and it passed newspapers as a main source of political news and information for internet users in 2008, so the metrics keep going up.

The other things that are exciting about the social networking spaces in politics relate to diversity. We did a piece of work in the 2008 campaign where we asked people about general civic activities, do they attend meetings, do they sign petitions, do they talk to their neighbors about politics.

In all of the online spaces where they could essentially be doing something like offline activity, signing a petition or attending a meeting, the universe stratified the way it always has, what your people – better educated people are always more likely online and offline to be involved in politics. The one exception to that was social networking spaces, where there was more diversity by race and socioeconomic status for the people who were being involved in politics. There were ways in which these spaces were being used by a wider array of people with more enthusiasm for the spaces, so that's one special element of the impact of the social networking sites.

The other thing relates to something that is less happening in America, but more is in evidence in the Middle East and North Africa. In these spaces, people are more aware of what other people in their networks are doing. And one of the primary reasons that you might get off your – out of your chair and go to protest or become involved in politics is when you see other people in your network doing the same thing. There are networking effects of how this can help mobilize people.

The third way to talk about the difference in social networking spaces compared to other kinds of spaces is that general trust in our society is moving away from big institutions towards networks. And we see this getting played out in three domains in the way that people actually use their networks to help them navigate political spaces, new spaces, and just general information spaces.

The first thing they do is they depend on their networks to help alert them to what's important in the world. A lot of people now have their Facebook page as their home page, and so they're checking in with their friends in a whole variety of ways and looking to see what their friends are reading, where they are, what's going on in their lives. They use their Twitter feeds in the same way. So they're centuries, social networks are centuries for what to pay attention to.

The second thing is, social networks help people evaluate the quality of the information they're encountering online. We see it time and time again. When people encounter information that doesn't match with the way that they think the world works, or it doesn't comport with what they think is going on in the world, they will turn to their networks to help them evaluate both the truthfulness of the information, but also the weight that they should give it. Is it a Richter 10 event that really should change my whole view of the world, or is it a pop gun event that really is a little factoid that doesn't much matter to me? So social networks help people evaluate information and navigate these spaces.

The third thing is, especially with social media, our networks now are our audiences. People post to their networks because they want to mobilize people, they want to share their ideas, they want their friends to know what they're doing, and so in many respects, they are acting like media nodes, they're acting like web casters and publishers in trying to entertain their audience, enlighten their audience, enrich their

audience, and they're getting feedback about that, which is a very different element of the way that the media ecosystem works now from the broadcast era where there wasn't a lot of feedback coming in.

MR. WEST: Okay. Thank you very much. Diana, you just put out a new study, as well, examining the affects of civic education on political engagement. What did you find about the role of social networking?

MS. OWEN: Well, first, I'd also like to thank Darrell for having me here at this forum. Actually, Darrell is probably responsible, in part, for me becoming a political scientist. I have an undergrad at GW.

MR. WEST: My apologies.

MS. OWEN: My advisor introduced me to Darrell, who talked me into it, so thank you in so many ways. This project is work that I'm doing in conjunction with Suzanne Soule at the Center for Civic Education, and also the assistance of a crack team of graduate students from Georgetown University, some of whom are here and blogging the event.

The study examines the influence of civic training on the development of political orientations and citizenship skills. And one big aspect of the study looks at whether civic education actually prepares people to use social media for politics, particularly as the environment is changing more and more in that direction.

So far for that study, we have conducted a national survey that's been put out by knowledge networks for us, an original survey. We also did an original survey of alumni of the We The People program. And we are in the process of doing in depth interviews with students and teachers from across the country.

So our goal is really to look at the ways a civic education imparts the necessary knowledge, builds the necessary skills that would encourage social media use

in campaigns. And the primary part of the study that we've released so far deals with social media use in the 2008 campaign, which is actually how I got interested in this topic of the link between civic education and social media use in that campaign. There's been, you know, for more than a quarter century high quality civic education programs that have been put into place in schools, and I wondered if that was one of the reasons why we're starting to see a payoff in terms of younger people becoming more engaged in the campaign. And I was actually surprised at the strength of the findings in support of that. I think the primary finding from the study is that there is a strong link between civic education and use of social media, particular in campaigns.

Taking a civics course, just even a basic civics course of any type, be it, you know, part of a history course if civics is packed on or a dedicated civic education course greatly increases the probability that a person will use social media at least for election purposes.

Only 19 percent of people with no civic education, and our study is the national sample, is 25 percent almost of the population use social media, so a very small percent. That jumps to 34 percent when you take into account people who have taken a civics course of any type.

We also look specifically at people who had not only taken a basic civics course, but also have been involved with civics curriculum innovation, such as the We The People program, which we're focusing on a lot, but others, like a close-up, and there's many, many of these high quality programs. These are programs that involve more interactive forms of learning and engage the students more specifically with the agenda of promoting better civic participation.

Forty-two percent of people who had taken part in these types of programs have used social media in the 2008 campaign. Over and above that, these

were the people who were innovating. These were primarily young people who are also not just using basic social media, we have many, many measures of the different types of social media use, but they're the ones that were engaging with the more advanced or innovative forms of social media.

Another corollary to this major finding is that the quality of the civics curriculum matters. What we found is that people whose civic education experience involved active learning, innovative approaches, you know, some way of really engaging the students with the civics curriculum, whether it involved using social media directly as part of the curriculum or not were much more likely to engage with social media during the 2008 campaign. Programs that integrated problem solving, collaborative thinking, all of these kinds of more effective types of curriculum innovations created a greater sense of political agency in students. They gained more political knowledge, they developed higher levels of political interest, and they became much more confident in their ability to take part in civic life. And I think that's why they were at the forefront of innovation in social media used for politics in that campaign.

One other finding that we had was that we looked at the influence of extracurricular activities, because the research on civic education often shows that extracurricular activities might have an enhanced affect on, you know, kind of political participation compared to the classroom curriculum, and what we found is that participation in extracurricular activities was not associated with the use of social media in the 2008 campaign, which kinds of runs somewhat counter to prior findings in other areas.

And this includes whether they took part in student government and other kinds of activities that might be related to politics. The one exception was if they volunteered on a campaign, which would make sense, or if they worked in the office of a

political leader. Another finding from our study is that quite a few people reported having the instructions that directly incorporates the use of social media into the curriculum. And I feel that for the future, this might be, you know, an important area for civic educators to kind of enhance the curriculum.

For the national sample, it was less than one percent to experience social media, but some of these people are older that are in that sample, so we looked at – we had an over sample of younger people, 30 and under, and only about six percent of that national sample have had a civic program that directly incorporated some sort of digital media use in a way that would be meaningful for going on to participate in politics, either an election or otherwise.

However, it's incredible the extent to which this influences their ability to participate in campaigns, at least in politics more generally. Sixty-seven percent of those in our sample who had any kind of, you know, social media integration into their civics course engaged in the 2008 campaign through social media. And they were also, again, the ones that were using the most innovative approaches, doing things on their own even to get involved in the campaign outside of campaign and party organizations. So it seems that incorporating these types of activities into the civics curriculum can be very effective in encouraging social media use of politics more generally.

MR. WEST: Okay. I'd like to throw out two questions for our panelists, and any of you can jump in, and after that we'll open the floor to questions and comments from you. The questions are, one, in terms of the 2012 elections, how do you envision social media being used therein? Are there differences with how some of these tools were used in 2008 and 2010? And the second question is what are your specific ideas on how to use social media to re-invigorate American democracy? Anybody who wants to jump in.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'll take a – I'll jump in, if that's okay, and take the second one first, because I don't – I don't think I'm going to speak to the first directly.

MR. WEST: Actually, just between us, I mean you can tell us anything about 2012.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yeah, I mean the truth, I'm not really – I mean a lot of it I think would be speculation in my personal capacity, but it's probably not wise to dig into. What I'll say in the sort of – how did you phrase the second question?

MR. WEST: How will – how can social media be used to re-invigorate American democracy?

MR. PHILLIPS: All right. So this is – this is – there's a lot of answers, and I want to highlight one example that I think – it's very interesting to think about how it can be applied moving forward. And it actually is relevant to what happened in the Arab spring and sort of in the Middle East.

What was very interesting was, I mean there's a lot of interest aspects of this activity there, but one of the aspects that was fascinating to us was the curation of the social media content. So to your point earlier, Lee, about how people are looking at the stuff for alerts, they're looking at the stuff for waiting, they're looking – they're using the stuff as their own broadcast vehicles, I thought that was really interesting, but I think, in addition, the media is changing to take advantage of this material and really elevating it and adding a lot of fuel to the comments people have.

I mean I would argue, without the media structure, I mean we might not know about what was going on there, or it would have had different – it would have come here in a very different way, if at all. But there are people like Andy Carbon who were really on top of this from MPR and did a really fascinating job curating all of the messages and putting those in context for Americans who didn't understand the

language, the culture, the countries, what was going on, so that we could follow that in real time. We saw a lot of that with the green revolution in Iran the year before.

We recently did an event with Andy and with somebody from – with Mark Lynch from Foreign Policy Magazine that was coupled with the President's speech around the Middle East. And what was – what our goal was to engage with stakeholders in the arguments that the President was making about Middle East policy.

And obviously, one of those groups were the people who are active on social media, or using social media to really engage, sometimes in their own country, about this issue. And we basically asked Andy and Mark to interview Ben Rhodes, who's one of our chief policy-makers and spokesmen on national policy issues, after the speech, and it was really up to them what they wanted to ask, but what we encouraged them to do was really try to curate questions from the audience that had been watching the speech, the people who had been in that region in particular who wanted to know what the United States thought about this.

And we had this really interesting – I think Andy wrote a wrap-up post that it was sort of like juggling while he was doing something else, chewing gum or something, it was like – it was a very phonetic interview because it was the first time we had done it, but the whole time he was looking at a screen and relating what people were saying to Ben, and then as Ben was answering it, people were watching his answers on the live stream, and he was watching these groups, these individuals respond and then relating those responses back to Ben and having – facilitating a conversation between a large group of people and an American policy official.

That's, to my mind, a new model of engagement. It's certainly not perfect. And if you go back and look at the video, and we posted it at the White House, I mean it's pretty fast paced, and those guys are really digging in on their computers, kind

of tweeting away.

But it was really exciting for us to think about how we can blend traditional media and social media to reach people who care a lot about these issues, and not just tell them what we think, but also to understand their response, and to have a chance to actually have a conversation with them.

And I bring that up to sort of ask the question, how can we do that in domestic politics, as well. And we're certainly working on a number of projects, and I think we've had a few examples here and there where we've done that, but I think that's going to be a space we see a lot more activity in, you know, the media as being more of an organizer than maybe they have been in the past because they recognize that people really appreciate what journalists have to say, but they also have something to say themselves.

And you see models like Josh Marshall, who's a blogger, he's always used his readers as an asset in his stories, and a lot more of that is happening, where it's not just a single journalist, it's the journalist and their readership who are actually driving the story and are actually engaging with the administration and whoever else they choose.

MS. FINN: I'll jump in. My answer to both questions is generally the same, but then I'll drill down, which is, I think both to the question of how is social media being used differently in 2012 than 2008, and also, how can social media re-invigorate our democracy is that – we should be – I don't want to oversimplify it, but we should be looking to the people for the answer to both, and by that I mean – so in – as far as the 2012 elections, one thing that we have been seeing happen over the last, you know, we could say ten years, certainly the last four to eight years in the presidential elections is that campaigns have become more decentralized, they've been forced to become more

decentralized.

Going back to, you know, 2004, when I worked on the Bush/Cheney re-election campaign, we had a blog, but didn't allow comments on a blog. That would be unthinkable that you would allow comments on a blog. And so it was basically, you know, it was a diary, but one that was not interactive. And it's another interactive thing, but just an example.

2008, where, obviously the Obama Campaign had the my.barackobama.com network based on the idea that there's a lot of people to self-organize it. Similarly in 2004, in the Bush Campaign, we had people setting up their own parties and events for the President and being able to invite their own networks and giving them tools to do so, tools to organize their own precincts, so all that was happening.

Now, in comes the social media revolution, and I'm going to keep calling it that, and campaigns – even the Obama Campaign, not to hopefully make it – doesn't take issue with this, even the Obama Campaign, which is heralded as the most internet centric campaign that we've ever had, who decentralized their grassroots, still very much had control of that network through the my.barackobama.com network.

But now with the buried entry to solo, for people to organize their own networks, with kind of tools that have such wide adoption, like Facebook, where you have over half of Americans that are – adult Americans that are on this network, the biggest way that it's going to be used will – is not to much how the campaigns are going to be using it, but how people are going to be using it to organize – to have impact on the election.

So I don't think we're going to see the most interesting, you know, impactful ideas or programs coming out of the campaigns themselves, but I think they'll be coming from the "grassroots" directly. And I think that we'll see that play out in ways

that we don't even know yet, where, you know, an issue is going to be forced to become, you know, become an issue that's discussed at the base, or an issue that every candidate has to answer to because a group is going to push it up through social media, and it's not something the campaigns necessarily will want to address or something they would have addressed on their own.

You know, so the media, as Macon said, recognizes this, it's why they are trying to set up debates where they have – they use tools like Google Moderator or, you know, Youtube, or Twitter to kind of curate and filter out questions that really have come from the bottom and include them in debates.

But I think, again, that's a way where they're trying to control it. I think the whole process is going to be forced to have to address certain questions that they may not want to because of the affect of social media and a low barrier entry for the grass – for people to kind of set that agenda.

The second question, which is similar, as it plays into the first, is, two things, I mean one is, there's this whole debate over civility and social media. I was recently on a panel that was titled Civility and Social Media and Oxymoron, and I think people ask that question because they assume the answer is yes, it is, because we hear and we tend to focus on the negative. We tend to focus on, you know, the anonymous kind of bashing of – that can go on via social media, or, you know, the types of stories or the partisan bickering that's playing out on social media.

However, I think asking that question is the same as asking, you know, human kind and civility and oxymoron, you know. I mean as long as there's humans, there's going to be a lack of civility. So the question, though, is social media making us less or more civil.

Lee touched on a really important point, which I was happy to hear him

say, because I think it challenges a theory that's put out in a book called The Filter Bubble, and hopefully, again, Eli Pariser, who is the Founder on Move On, doesn't mind me challenging his book because I'm counting – I'll give you the name of his book, maybe some of you will go and buy it, I'm promoting it, it's called The Filter Bubble, and his theory is that because Facebook and Google and, you know, and all of the tech companies are so dedicated to providing relevant content to us, and by serving up relevant ads and putting us in – with little mini micro targets, that we're in danger of kind of living in the self-re-enforcing networks, where all we hear are continued – we can only hear one opinion, we only hear certain information, and so we tend to live in this, you know, fantasy world where we think that what we believe is right, and they're self-re-enforcing, and this is a real danger.

Of course, he also says that this is how we live a lot in our offline world. We tend to live in these communities where we'll live in the communities where people have similar socioeconomic status, similar race, background, interest, and so we live in the self-re-enforcement world.

And I want to do more research on this. I was happy to hear Lee mention – but my theory is that that's not true at all, that Facebook and social networks are exposing us to more views and more opinions than we have been in the past, particularly when we were a rural based society, and the reason being – well, first of all, there was a good article this morning I happened to read by Mashable – the heads of Mashable, and Chris Taylor, who was talking about how some people think we'll eventually get to this social utopia, where we're all just connected to, you know, a million other people via social networks and how that won't happen because studies show that we can only really have relationships with 150 people, Malcolm Gladwell talks about that in Tipping Point, and so we'll never have this utopia, because even if we have 5,000

Facebook friends, there's really only 150 people, even if it's online, that we have real relationships with.

The difference is, rather than that 150 people being the 150 people that live in our geographic space, or the 150 people that go to our church, or the 150 people that are – that we volunteer with at our political party committee, that 150 people are various people that we know from school, from conferences, when we go to other countries, to other cities, and so our networks are actually becoming more diverse.

And in that, again, to get to the point of how that affects civility, I think it remains to be seen, but I think it holds promise to us actually becoming more civil because of social media, not less opinionated, and potentially not less partisan, but more civil because we're exposed to more ideas and more people and deeper aspects of those individuals through social networking than we would have when we were limited by our geography.

MS. OWEN: Okay, thank you. I guess in response to the question about ways of encouraging social media to use for invigorating democracy, I think it's important that we do this responsibly, and I guess I'll tie it into my own research.

I already mentioned the fact that civics instructions that incorporates more active types of learning and uses social media itself in the curriculum is lacking in this kind of, you know, kind of educational instructional strategy, it really does encourage social media use, and I think that a lot of the key to having more civil and perhaps more responsible social media use is to have this, you know, kind of germinate in the educational process.

One thing I am concerned about is that as the use of social media proliferates in the public sphere that the civic education gap is also translating into a social media gap and a social media for politics gap that I think is of great concern.

I mean one of the key findings of my study is that the school – there's really unequal access to the best civic education programs, and it is the poor schools that get the programs that are lacking in the kind of interactive types of education programs that are the ones that are most effective for encouraging young people to get out there and to participate.

So I guess one thing I'd like to see is a closing of this gap. And by making, you know, kind of high quality civic education that takes into account social media use more universally available so that students do have the necessary skills to go out and actually use this media effectively. Kind of having it, you know, kind of occur in a haphazard way, which is what I think is happening now, is still – I think is empowering, you know, kind of more of the same types of people, and I think that more people are getting left out, and those who traditionally have been left out, it's just continuing that process.

In terms of 2012, and I'm interested in how some of the practitioners will kind of respond to this, one of the things I think might be happening is that we're having a greater fragmentation of the platforms that people are using for social media to access campaigns. And, you know, I guess the press was calling the 2008 the Facebook Campaign, and then Facebook was out by 2010, it was the Twitter Campaign, and who knows what's next. And from what I can tell from some of the work that I've been doing is that this fragmentation, you know, kind of works to keep some people interested, but these are the people that have, you know, kind of a great interest in politics and social media – and/or social media to begin with, and over time, people are finding that these platforms, as they shift, and, you know, what was popular in one election is no longer popular in the next, or, you know, some of them become more integrated into the process, but there's the latest and the greatest, that it's difficult and time consuming for

citizens to keep up with all of this.

So it's – I think that causes some, you know, I think some problematic implications for going forward to just see where things are going to be going in 2012. And I also think with this fragmentation of the platforms, this creation of greater echo chambers, where people are just listening to the same story from people who agree with them, as opposed to having this greater, more wide based civil discourse in that broad kind of definition.

So I'm kind of interested to hear, you know, the practitioners talk about where we might be going in 2012 given this fact. I think it's hard to sustain interest in, you know, some of these new platforms that are novel, and they get picked up in one campaign, and the press makes a lot about them, and the research that I've done shows that, you know, the actual audiences who were using them regularly are really, really tiny, even though they get a tremendous amount of hype, and I think, you know, that's probably because there's a fragmentation of the social media audience and campaigns across a lot of platforms, and I'm not quite sure yet what the implications of that are.

MR. RAINIE: Ditto, so I won't repeat a lot of stuff. But I'll tell you what we're going to be studying in the 2012 election and maybe beyond that. The first thing, there's a tremendous amount of excitement in the technology community and in the political community about location services, the potential to reach people where they are and connect them to networks, connect them to political organizations or influences in their networks.

I think Diana is right, we will see a relatively small incidence level, but it is a – it is – one of the striking things that we saw in 2008 that now is embedded in the political culture is that a formerly cautious culture, the political culture used to be laggards when it came to adopting this stuff. In 2008, that completely changed, and it was sort of

every technology that came along, everybody wanted to be the first to try it, and the first to embrace it, and the first to use it, and I think that will play out with location services. We'll see probably more innovation on the practitioner side than on the adopter side, but we're going to watch that.

The second thing is behavioral ads. I mean targeted – micro targeting in markets was a big thing through the 2000's, but now in online spaces, particularly social networking spaces, where ads can be served up based on people's expressed or implied preferences, it's going to be interesting to see how the political community adopts this. The commercial community obviously is going crazy for this kind of stuff. Will there be privacy push back from people who don't want to be known this way or don't want messaging sent to them this way? We don't know yet exactly what people's tolerances are, but we'll be paying a lot of attention to it.

The third thing, there is no way to measure it in a research perspective, but somebody, and it might come out of the political community before it's the commercial community, is going to come up with a unified field theory of communication, where the platform fragmentation that we see now will somehow – we will begin to understand – using lots and lots of data from these data center folks, an understanding where TV messaging integrates with Twitter messaging and integrates with face to face meetings and plays out, and so we'll begin to understand in 2012 and probably moving forward exactly how the pieces fit together in ways that we didn't before.

And the final question that we might have answered in 2012, we'll certainly get a lot more data, so far in all of us who have tried to measure the impact of the internet and social media on politics have not found yet that it's bringing new people into the process.

Yes, there are first time people who come into politics for this, but they're

the same kind of people in their parent's generation and grandparent's generation who are political actors. There's no hard evidence yet that these new technologies which are supposed to be empowering to people, supposed to encourage engagement, have yet brought in a big, new increment of actors to politics.

There were tantalizing data in 2008 that were impossible to disentangle because it was just a unique election, where technology was being used in unique ways, we had a unique candidate, the enthusiasm – we were in the middle of a couple of wars, and so there were hints that maybe these new technologies might bring new people into the process, I think we'll get a lot more direct evidence on that in 2012 that will help, you know, answer the utopian versus dystopian question about whether this helps or hurts.

MR. PHILLIPS: Let me say two follow-ups to that, and also to what Mindy said, which is, first on The Filter Bubble thing, I don't agree with it completely, but I did have one reaction I just wanted to throw out there. I haven't read the book yet, so I can't really argue on its substance, although I think it's an interesting idea just to even look at some of the articles about the book, the things you don't realize about what Google knows about you and how it gives you results, and why your Facebook feed actually starts to have the same people that show up over time, and there's a lot that you may not know about how this stuff works, I didn't know, I should say.

To me, the argument around The Filter Bubble boils down to the idea of people seeing what they want to see versus what they need to see. And I say that as a citizen, it's not as the government sort of deciding what you should see. But, to my mind, I want to be challenged, and I want to hear about things that I may not seek, problems, things that sort of push back on my assumptions and opinions. And I do think, particularly with the sort of blog era, I don't even know if there's a name for this, but maybe there's like sort of like the prehistoric era, is there going to be like a Paleolithic,

but sort of the blogolithic area where, you know, from like 2000, I don't know, 2000 maybe through 2006 – 2007, you did see a lot of this clustering.

You saw a lot of people seek out people that agreed with them, both – on all sides. And you could see from those comment threads that often times they weren't civil, and that's I think fairly clear. And so that sort of begs the question, people sort of left, you know, without social media, they were seeking out things that they agreed with, and then once they found a lot of the people who agreed with them, they got really wired up about issues and why anybody could ever not agree with them, I think that was part of the issue.

Now, what is social media, how does it change that? I don't know the answer, that's the reason I can't really say that that, you know, Mindy's right, but I think what's interesting is that social media certainly has a potential to expose us to new ideas, but how people use those tools I think remains to be seen whether we're finding that people tend to cluster again with like minded people and whether – or whether they're actually going to use these tools to seek out new things.

And I would argue that this room, these panelists, just because they spend their time researching and thinking about these things, sort of have a bias that they do seek out new ideas all the time, more than the general public. And there's been a lot of literature about this, the whole bowling alone thing, you know, all of this stuff that's I think very interesting sociological research, just about what people tend to do and where they tend to be interested and participate and things online.

The second thing I'll say is just a teaching moment that we had from the 2008 campaign, to the point that Mindy made about control. And I think that there's some truth to what she said. We built a system that allowed us to shell out a lot of data, to deploy a lot of tools, and in order to do that, we had to have an environment that we

could control, and it'll be interesting to see how that change is moving forward. But one of the things that I still go back to was how that system that we created was actually used by our supporters against us in a way. During the campaign, there was a big row about Fiza (?) It was a big issue, really super important, and our supporters wanted to know where the President stood.

There were some sort of disputes about his position and sort of anger about sort of this issue generally. And our supporters used the tools that we had put forward for them to organize and support the campaign to actually organize a sort of movement to get a response from the campaign, to sort of make us know that this was not okay.

And the teaching moment was not that it was sort of – changed the course of history, it changed all of our policy ideas, it changed everything, but just the act of engaging them was super important and actually was really I think for a lot of people all they wanted.

And so what we ended up doing is seeing this growing group organized around this issue. Everybody was kind of walking around the building saying, holy cow, what is going on, this is not what we want to be talking about, this is not a convenient issue, all that sort of stuff, and it got to the point where we said, you know, let's just tell them, you know, where we stand. And so we had Denis McDonough, who is now the Deputy National Security Advisor. I remember seeing him sitting at a laptop, kind of looking at us like, what is going on here, and just answering questions from people.

We had a live chat in the comment thread of this group, and it really diffused the situation. I don't think everybody was happy. I mean it's one of those things like we may not agree on things, but at least we're going to tell you where we stand.

But I can tell you, moving forward, that was a teaching moment, because

we realized that organizing and using these tools isn't just about right or wrong, it's about people wanting to be heard and us having a new kind of way to communicate with groups and with people who care passionately about issues, and we've sort of taken that as we've moved forward into a lot of the work we've done on the administration side.

MR. WEST: Okay. Let's move to the audience phase of this. Why don't we start with Christine Jacobs who's been following the Twitter feed, so any questions that have popped up there?

MS. JACOBS: Sure; our first one is for Macon, comes from Sally Bronzeton who's tweeting from Philadelphia. She wants to know what went into the decision to have the President write his own – do his own tweeting.

MR. PHILLIPS: That was the campaign's decision. I think it's a convenient decision because if we want to have the President – I should say if the President wants to use the White House account, he can also use his initials there. But I think for them, there's probably a desire to use it. It's a tremendous asset to the campaign, and it's, you know, there are a lot of people, and I think it's unrealistic to move from where they were to having sort of constant updates from the President. That's just not what this President is doing right now.

And so to use it more as a campaign organizing tool, they needed to be very clear with the people who had followed that account that this is how we're going to be using it, these are the kinds of updates you're going to get, and I think that sort of speaks to a larger idea that the campaign and this administration really tries to hold ourselves to, which is authenticity and clarity in terms of how we're using these tools, and setting expectations about who are using these things and what the sort of outcomes of these things, or these exercise are meant to be.

MR. WEST: Okay. Questions from people in the audience. Right here

on the aisle. There's someone coming up with a microphone. If you could give your name and if you are affiliated with an organization. And we'd ask people to keep their questions brief just so we can get to as many people as possible.

MS. PHELPS: My name is Lauren Phelps and I'm affiliated with Citizens for Global Solutions, and my question is, with regards to the recent tweet of NY Senator Ball about the gay marriage and his direct question to the people about how he should vote, I'm sure in your expert opinion this is a positive development, but do you think that this is in any way opening up sort of a – setting a precedent that might end up putting a strain on the system in any way? I mean do you think this is opening up a box for, in the future, the President of the United States sending out a tweet asking if we should engage in a military, you know, altercation with another country? Do you think this is a negative or positive and what do you think the ramifications of this –?

MR. WEST: Although maybe that wouldn't be such a bad idea if he did that.

MS. PHELPS: What do you think the ramifications of that particular action might be?

MR. WEST: Okay, good question. Panel.

MR. RAINIE: It's sort of an inevitable outgrowth of all kinds of messaging. You know, lawmakers, public officials have sought feedback from constituents forever, they have used other methods, and one of the real hallmarks of this is that it is the era of feedback. You're going to get it whether you want it or not. And people are not primed to rank and rate and otherwise pitch their voice into the comment. And so it just sort of follows through a traditional interaction with constituents with new methods, and people are anxious to do it. Is it going to become ubiquitous and all major policy decisions are made this way? I would bet probably not.

MS. OWEN: I would also say that, you know, once it's done and the novelty wears off after a while, either stop doing it or very few people are going to pay attention to it, so I would agree with Lee in terms of it not being a real problem.

MR. PHILLIPS: I mean you can say one other thing about that is that it's – I think generally, at least right now, the social media tools are used for many things, but they're certainly not used for decision-making, but they can be used for discovery. And OSTP, which is a sort of part at the White House, is doing a lot of stuff on expert net and these initiatives that are really focused on bringing new experts into policy-making process, so if we're going to invest in clean energy, can we actually find the 150 experts on clean energy who are on Twitter and put them on a list and follow them and see what they're working on right now, and that's – I think there's a tendency, particularly with the political side, to look at these things as like mass public engagement, but there's also real opportunities to find niche pools of expertise to get input, and that's been all the more important on the government side.

MS. OWEN: Just one little final point on that is Macon's example of the Fiza vote and how they use social media to not change the position, but engage people and let them know that their opinion mattered is one of my favorite for how to do it well. But another one where it actually did change the action is, Governor Jindal in Louisiana, in I think 2009, maybe 2008, the legislature was going to vote themselves a pay raise, and initially Governor Jindal said that he was not going to veto it, that he didn't necessarily support it, but the legislator voted it and, you know, voted for it, and he wasn't going to veto it. There was such tremendous pushback, both through social media, Twitter, Facebook, but also through, you know, emails, letters, every other form of communication, some of which have been used for a very long time, as Lee mentioned, and ultimately the Governor did change his position and said, look, the people – I've

heard, you know, overwhelmingly from people I recognize this is a big issue. I'm sure he probably also saw poll numbers about how it hurt his approval, and changed his position.

I only make that point to say not that legislators or executives should always change their position, but it really depends. There might be times when the public expresses their opinion and it does not jive with where the executive or legislator sits, and they have to make that decision, that's why we're in a representative democracy.

But, on the other hand, at times, it may be – the voices may be so overwhelming and amplified through social media in a way they weren't before that it does justify changing it. So I think it will be interesting to watch, but I don't think – I absolutely agree with Lee and others that it won't become ubiquitous or become what – become the mechanism for legislators to make decisions.

MR. WEST: Okay. Other questions from the audience. Right here.

MR. MCCARTHY: Thanks, it's Mark McCarthy with Georgetown and with the SIIA. Darrell, it's a great panel. I wanted to pick up on Lee's focus on privacy for a second; I think that's an issue that really should be thrashed out a little bit more, but from a slightly different direction.

In other countries, the use of social media for political activity is something that can play into the hands of authoritarian government, they can find out who you are. And, of course, when you're civically active on Facebook or Twitter, they typically have your identity, and the information that you are active then becomes sort of part of your permanent record, the internet doesn't forget.

So is there a concern here that, just like, you know, young people should be worried about what – the pictures they put on Facebook, and, you know, what they say, you know, about their activities? Should they be worried about their political activity in the sense that it can then become part of, you know, large aggregated data bases and

can be subject to data analysis, maybe good purposes, maybe bad purposes, but is there a tension there, and if so, what do people think about it?

MR. WEST: This is what I'd like to refer to as the digital fingerprints question. We're all leaving fingerprints all over the place; what do you make of it?

MR. RAINIE: I'll go first.

MR. WEST: Such a shy panel.

MR. RAINIE: Americans give very conflicting signals about the value of privacy in their lives. At the attitudinal level, it's a preeminent value. If you ask them straight up, controlling their information, being in charge of how it's used, it's a very strong thing, and yet a lot of them are in a highly transactional mode when they get to the moments when disclosure or sharing becomes part of it.

And in the social media spaces, one of the things that we consistently hear, particularly from young people, is, yeah, our parents are freaked out that we're posting so much stuff online, it's going to hurt us when we're before the Senate Judiciary Committee trying to get that judgeship, but they could talk immediately about the rewards that they get, that they are enriching friendships, that they are establishing trust, that they're creating communities that they didn't have before, and so they're doing a risk reward calculation, and a lot of them are being fairly active in managing the reputation. You know, they're checking on their name, and they're checking on whether people have tagged photos, and asking them to take down photos that they wished weren't there, but they're also reporting rewards.

And so it's a tension that won't go away, and it's – we have not clearly established what new laws need to be made in this new era, we have not nearly come close to establishing the social norms, the book of etiquette that applies, what does a friend mean now, I mean that's a very, you know, fluid concept and a very contested

concept.

So that's a sort of way of saying the paradox continues, and it's more frat in these spaces, and, you know, in interesting ways, Americans have gone through wave after wave of data breaches, you know, big time data spills, and have sort of taken the hit and not really rebelled. And so it's interesting to watch from a research perspective sort of figuring out what their tolerance levels are, and my guess is they vary by context, they vary by people, and it's – we're still going to be debating this the next time Brookings has this in the 2016 election.

MR. WEST: And they vary a lot by age, as well. Christine, do you have another question from our web casting audience?

MS. JACOBS: This one comes from Josh Studl, who's a social media practitioner here in Washington. He wants to know do tech tools make social media users more civically engaged. Are mobile smart phone users more engaged than say a desktop/laptop user?

MR. PHILLIPS: I mean I'll just tee up one thing for Lee to talk about, because I'm sure you have more data about it. One thing that's really exciting about mobile use – mobile phone use for me is just it's a whole new audience of people. So not everyone has iPads or really even laptops, so the more you can start moving your engagement and your content to mobile devices, you reach a lot of new audiences, and I think there's a large degree that's underserved audiences and audiences that may not actually be getting it anywhere else. I don't know if you can talk a little bit about that.

MR. RAINIE: What we know is, the people who do it are really engaged, but the mystery in the question is still a mystery, which is, is it bringing new people into the process. Macon's point that it's a much more diverse universe, many more young people are in those spaces, many more ethnic and racial minorities are in those spaces

and love their engagement with their mobile devices in ways that whites, and particularly upscale whites don't, and so it's exciting to think about the possibilities, but we don't yet know whether it's a new level of engagement that brings new people into the process.

MR. WEST: Okay, a question in the back, right there.

MR. BIRNBAUM: Yeah, I'm Nolan Birnbaum from Georgetown University and the Editorial Board of the Nation. This is a university question. If you'll look at the enumerable studies about social movements and political movements done across the board, a couple of things stand out, one is, they originate and definitely use, secondly, they frequently create new – and one of the reasons they do, part of the process is that people use these movements to develop new or strengthen old identities, affiliations, the daily contact, face to face contact in primary groups is terribly important, also for sustaining political values frequently across generations. Given this historical background which dates at least since the invention of printing, how would the social media deal with this problem of the terrible importance to people of primary interaction of an enduring kind?

MS. FINN: I can just – it's kind of response to the previous question, too, which is, I think this is where the growth of mobile is going to become very interesting, because as much as I was saying before, our online worlds are starting to reflect the way we interact offline.

There are still tremendous barriers and the fact that, you know, going online, spending time on a social network or really in any other kind of – consuming any other online media or interacting with it is still very much an isolating experience, where you're sitting, you know, behind a desk or with a – or now with laptops, at least people can be, you know, in coffee shops, but ultimately, it was a pretty isolating experience, even while you were networking with people virtually.

The difference with mobile is that it is not as disruptive to people interacting with others face to face. Yes, I mean we still have the problem of – you see it now, particularly with younger generations, is that we'll be in circles and everybody is on a mobile device and not really looking at one another face to face or interacting, or they're down, you know, they're texting, however, we're getting closer to the point where people can be networking and interacting with others virtually while at the same time interacting with them personally, and the two are not in conflict as much as they were before the growth of mobile. I don't have an answer to that, but I think that will be interesting to see.

I'd also point to Lee's point earlier, which is, all of the research shows that those who spend a lot of time on social networks, you know, the fear was that they – it was hindering personal contact and face to face contact or real friendships and relationships, where the data shows that the opposite is true, that those who spend the most time social networking or have the greatest networks online are also those who have the most friends and are the most interactive in reality.

So again, I think the data will have to guide us there, but from everything that we're seeing so far, there isn't, you know, there's isn't this great problem with people spending all their time online and not forming real relationships.

MR. PHILLIPS: I mean this also – and I hope this gets to your question, but just that made me think of one other sort of obvious trend to all of you that's created a lot of I think stress in large institutions like the U.S. government and the White House and so forth, which is, in the use of social media, I think there's an increasing expectation that it's people to people.

So you see sort of – most of the new Twitter accounts said the new campaign season on both sides are about individuals who have a certain role in the

campaign, you know. You also have sort of the candidate or the campaign's sort of institutional voice.

We have at White House, which is the institutional voice, but as we developed, we started to realize that actually the more – some of the more interesting accounts are ones that are attributed to people.

I think there's a reasonable expectation that's understandable about when people go to use these tools to connect with other people that's sort of what they want. And it's really tough for institutions to devolve into a collection of individuals rather than an institutional voice. That creates a whole host of stress just on the communications apparatus in process of the White House, but it's also – when you look across the U.S. government, it raises really interesting questions about customer service and how people are coming to expect interactions with individuals at Comcast and what that means for the government and whether that expectation is actually going to transfer as they start to apply private sector expectations to public sector services.

So, you know, it's a really interesting point you make about, you know, the history of movements and how they're about identity, but I think one of the challenges for us is making social media engagement centered around people rather than institutions.

MS. FINN: I'd just like to raise one point in relation to what you said about cross generational communication. I actually think social media is facilitating that, particularly as the people that are using this media are now no longer just the youngest age group, and so I think the possibility and the reality of people from different generations being able to interact about politic and engage in that way might even be more prolific than in kind of the real world, where people, you know, kind of hang out with people around, you know, their own ages and less maybe in the work place. But I think

that it does a lot to encourage cross generational communication.

MR. WEST: Okay. Yeah, Christine, another question from the web cast.

MS. JACOBS: Sure, I've got two that are related. The first from Andrew Foxwell here in D.C., the Director of New Media, iConstituent. He wants to know, what are the tools, either real or hypothetical, that look at more than ten percent of the citizenry involving democracy? The second question comes from Nikki Willoughby at Common Cause. She wants to know, can you define engagement for me, is that comments, petition signatures, physical turnout, how do we know if it's working?

MR. RAINIE: Define engagement. I mean here's the thing I think about engagement, very simple, is if more than one parties are involved, and if they all leave with something new that they didn't know before, and to my mind, that's, you know, if you get questions from the public, it helps you understand what the public wants to know, that's a takeaway.

And I think if the public gets information that they didn't know, they feel like they were heard, that's engagement, as well. So if all the parties come in with something, leave with something more than they came, to my mind, that's one goal and indication of successful engagement. In the particular application of broad comments, and otherwise, I think you can look for examples there, but that's sort of one – one thought that we apply generally.

MR. WEST: And the other question, how do we get more than ten percent of the American public engaged?

MR. RAINIE: Free icons.

MS. OWEN: I think there are some tools already that people are using more than ten percent web sites. You know, some of the things that are easier to use I think are already engaging more than ten percent of the – at least in campaigns.

MR. PHILLIPS: Let me – I'll throw out another one then. You're right; I think these tools allows us to reach a lot of people. Let's talk about the content in the social media world and what content is – what people want to see and what they want to consume. And you see the media kind of moving in this direction, too, I'll just throw out an example.

So we have these videos called the White House Whiteboard, and I think they're terrific, but I'm biased. But essentially a number of other policy officials grab a whiteboard and they do very quick explanations about point of view about a certain policy. And we have pretty good success with them. A lot of them are in sort of the tens of thousands of views. We've had some break over 100,000. We try to make them about issues that are in the news so that people are sort of checking that out.

Last week we released a video clip of the President calming a baby. Raise your hand if you've seen that. Okay. Now, raise your hand if you've seen the White House Whiteboard. All right, that's not – so for us, you know, it's to that question about how do you reach ten percent or get over ten percent, you have to sort of recognize, you know, what people actually want to do, and, you know, who are you trying to reach, and is it okay to actually only reach 10,000.

For us it's frustrating to see these videos go viral and get, you know, a lot of views when, in fact, our policy videos don't get as many views. And I think if you can figure out a way to blend them a little bit, and I'm not – we haven't solved this problem, but if there's a way to connect the two, that's a very powerful opportunity to not only sort of get stuff out there that people want to see, but also help them better understand the policy positions.

MR. WEST: So we can just have the President calming a baby while discussing American health care.

MR. PHILLIPS: I thought about sort of having him give like a policy speech like petting Bo, something, you know, it's going to work.

MR. WEST: Okay. There's a question in the back. Yes, right there.

MS. BADGER: Emily Badger with Miller-McCune magazine. One of the other criticisms in social media has been that it enables people to feel like they're engaged without actually doing a whole lot. All you have to do is click on a like button or join a fan page on Facebook and maybe that makes you think that you don't have to go knock on doors or you don't have to give money, and, in a sense, it makes it easy to fill large groups, but not necessarily to deploy them to actually achieve something. And I wonder if Lee, in your research, if you found that this is a legitimate concern, and generally speaking to the rest of the panel, whether or not this does actually seem like a legitimate potential downside of social media.

MR. RAINIE: Well, it's actually a concern that existed when Bob Putnam wrote about it, sort of pre-social media and pre-internet, where, you know, the nature of involvement in groups, particularly big national or international groups, was writing a check or somehow being a very casual participant rather than being a deeply engaged one, and the concern exists there.

My answer to the sort of what is engagement question isn't as crisp as Macon's. I think there's a spectrum of engagement, and I think everybody's aspiration is to move people to the next step on the spectrum.

So you get a lurker, you know, they're paying attention. That builds awareness, that might help that particular person become more engaged with the policy debate, and you want to move that lurker to a commenter. Then you want to move the commenter to a forwarder, somebody who passes along messaging, and then maybe show up at a meeting and show up door to door.

And so everybody I talked to in the political community understands this as a moving target and something where you're just trying to move people from one stage to the next if you can.

MS. OWEN: I'd comment on that, too. I think all the last three questions are related, which is, my definition of engagement is purely just any kind of interactivity, any kind of interaction, whether that's consuming something, whether that's sharing something, whether that's signing a petition, you know, sending an email, writing a letter, showing up at an event.

To Lee's point: there's just different values to each of those actions. And the question is – I think the bigger question, though, is, what is the value, and are there activities that, in the past, we may not have considered real civic engagement or having value that do have value.

So to the question of how do we get – what tools do we put in people's hands to get more than ten percent of people civically engaged, I don't know the answer, but I think the question with the social media era is, if we can't move ten percent to show – maybe we can't move more than ten percent to show up at an event or write a letter or whatever we qualified as true civic engagement, or show up at a hearing, Congress, or watch CSPAN, I mean whatever it is, but can we get the marginal – can we have like a marginal list because of the crowd source affect of social media, where people are at least consuming this content or potentially sharing it. Or maybe I'm a political person, so I post something political, most of my network is not, and all of a sudden they're exposed to something they haven't been before, but they may not even realize has impacted them. And when they're in a conversation with friends, you know, a week later and they're talking about that topic that somehow plays into the conversation that they have.

So I think it's an interesting question without a clear answer, but it

definitely has to do with, you know, what we can observe engagement, which I just consider interactivity.

I agree with Lee, there's a spectrum of that engagement. We want to move people to engage further and engage deeper. And I think we can do that in a – I don't think we devalue the potential for increased engagement even at lower level because that's progress, even if those people aren't the type who are going, you know, go knock doors or write letters or show up at a committee hearing or watch CSPAN.

MS. FINN: I'd just like to say that – oh, sorry, about engagement, that political scientists have really, you know, kind of for the past few years, been struggling with, you know, kind of an operational definition of engagement because of the fact that all sorts of new media created new opportunities to participate. And I think one of the things that social media in particular, and new media in general, offer for engagement is the easier ability to kind of – and more fluid ability to go in and out of engagement.

You know, it doesn't necessarily have to be a progression that's sparked by an election or, you know, kind of some formal organizational invite. The invitation is kind of always there in some form or another, and people can more fluidly come and go, participate when they want to and when they don't. So I think we have to change the way that we conceptualize engagement to something that is a more fluid type of interactivity, I guess.

MR. WEST: Okay. There's a young lady right there who has a question. If you could stand up and we'll get the microphone to you. Yeah, right there.

MONICA: Hi, I'm Monica, I'm with Brookings. I'm wondering – we're talking a lot about people who are engaging and how far out their reach is of social media. But I wonder about the people we cannot engage, perhaps not in America, because there are a lot of – I mean most people have mobile phones and computers, but

in countries like India where actually a large amount of the population does not have a mobile phone or a computer, and so I'm wondering about whether we're actually broadening the gap between the two strata's of society in perhaps the more privileged and the lower just by putting so much emphasis on social media.

MR. RAINIE: One of the most interesting things to watch about the Indian media ecosystem is that the – my understanding of it is, and I don't master these data, but I think it's the case that the most driving part of it is newspapers. You know, while this culture has gone through agonies with what's going on with its printed newspapers, they are tremendously succeeding in India, in part, because that's the best delivery mechanism for this kind of information.

There's a rising middle class that is hungering for this information even if they are not in places where, you know, high technology is available to them. And so, yeah, markets respond to these things, but I think you're right, and Diana's work is very powerful on this. There are digital divides, and in many respects, the nature of this conversation is sort of what – are there problems connected with social media for, in her work and in our work, the bigger gaps relate to people who don't have it and don't use it, and because they're the people with smaller networks, they have fewer friends, they're less likely to get social support, they're less likely to engage the political system.

So we can talk a lot about the 50 percent of the population who has – in America that has social networking services, but the people who are disengaged and who are hurting for that level of disengagement are the people who have no access to technology. So I think your point is spot on and ties to research that relates to America. But there, you know, it's an evolving situation even in places like India.

MR. WEST: Right here in the front row, we have a question?

MS. LEWANDOWSKI: Hi, Jackie Lewandowski with the Committee of

Concerned Journalists. And my question is on political – general press coverage of the election in 2012 and the role of social media. Will we see this as an opportunity to integrate more in-depth coverage of issues or will we see the news kind of strengthening and reaffirming partisan relationship, but online? That's one of the critiques, is that there's an emphasis on the horse race elements of coverage rather than in-depth issue take on policy.

SPEAKER: (off mic)

MS. LEWANDOWSKI: So basically the role of social media in the upcoming coverage.

MR. WEST: The question was how social media will affect press coverage in the upcoming election; is it going to reinforce partisanship, will there be more substance, how's it going to affect things.

MS. FINN: Well, I think the coverage has remained pretty similar even in the new media era. Horseraces are always there and it seems to dominate coverage issues. You know, they do get coverage, they just, you know, don't seem to get quite as much play or as much publicity as when there's some sort of a scandal or, you know, something about candidate's personalities. So I always find that kind of fascinating, the fact that there's, you know, kind of – the more information that we have, the more it kind of – the same in terms of the type of content that we get.

One thing that I'm concerned about is the decline in the number of formally trained journalists. I think they perform a tremendous service in terms of going out and getting original stories, and, you know, with the shrinking pool of journalists due to the problems with the finances, and, you know, kind of the journalism industry, they're relying more and more on getting information that they're finding, you know, kind of online and through social media that may or may not be accurate or factual, and it starts to drive

the agenda, and that forces issues out.

So I think we saw a lot of that in 2010, you know, with the rise of these kind of, I don't want to call them celebrity candidates, but certainly interesting types of candidates and their personal stories dominating, you know, what should be kind of local coverage in an election now become national news.

And I think it's – the real issue is the fact that we have this declining pool of real journalists. There's fewer and fewer journalists that are on the bus or on the plane with the candidates covering the events as they unfold, so, you know, you're getting – you may have a lot of journalists out there, you know, citizen journalists, but they're not formally trained, and I think that does matter in terms of the way that the story is told. And it also translates after the campaign trail into the coverage that you get of the governing process, because if you have fewer formally trained journalists who have gotten to know the candidate now become leader, and know the right questions to ask, and, you know, are able to provide real insight, I think that's a real difficulty.

MR. WEST: But we know if the story involves boxer shorts, that's going to trump everything else.

MS. OWEN: Just to respond to that, I think it's a really important question, because it seems that – it would seem that in the era of social media, we should be least concerned about journalism because it's been driven by a standard of ethics and responsibility as the fourth estate and as a check on the halls of power, you know, there is an established code of ethics and responsibility that even in the era of social media, we would hope, at least it would seem, however, it does not seem, from, you know, my analysis, that that's happened, because of being driven by ratings and because of being driven by page views and readers, we have extremely irresponsible things happening in the world of journalism.

Of course, we have irresponsible things happening in politics, but we've come to expect that. So I just, you know, just in closing, I don't have an answer, but I think that it's a real concern and something that – I would hope that there's organizations that will be able to transcend the era that's driven just by, you know, ratings and pockets in the world of journalism.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yeah, I completely agree. And to – I think to the point that Diane made, what's interesting about social media generally with regards to journalism, just how quickly things get fact checked, you know, like what – and that doesn't mean that everything you read online is true, but what happens is, when there are egregious issues with an article or with something that somebody said, you know, even Meet the Press now, if you watch Meet the Press, you can go on Twitter and watch a whole sort of litigation of everything that was said, and not just that, not just people with opinions, but like pulling in articles about some of the guests said three years ago, and really just sort of going through all this and hashing it out.

And I think it's ultimately what the journalists choose to use, what they choose to cover, that's the thing, but I think social media generically or sort of in the abstract is a great tool. It's so many more eyes and ears for journalists that can't be everywhere at once, but now they theoretically have eyes and ears at every rally, for everything that everybody says anywhere, I mean that's, you know, that's a huge asset. How they filter that and how they curate that kind of gets to my earlier point about Andy Cargo what he's done, you know, abroad. It's a really fascinating potential, and I think that the folks who figure that out well, who cultivate a readership that really feels like that journalist or that curator, whatever they're called, reflects what they're hearing and what they're saying and sort of what they're also seeing on social media will be very influential in the election.

MS. OWEN: Can I just make one more point? I agree with you, but my

one concern about that is the fact checking after the fact. Once something is released, then it's fact checked. And, you know, just this week there's a story about the woman who was apparently, you know, kind of not treated well by the TSA. I don't even know what the real story is now, but there's alleged fact checking after the fact going on and we still don't know, and I think, you know, trained journalists would do the fact checking before. They don't always get it right, and they are driven by, you know, monetary concerns, but I think having a little bit more, you know, kind of responsible reporting at the outset instead of having to try and cover it later might be a good –

MR. WEST: And sometimes we have to fact check the fact checking, as well, so there are multiple levels.

MS. OWEN: Yes.

MR. WEST: We are out of time; I'm going to make that the benediction. But I want to thank Macon and Mindy and Lee and Diana for sharing their views. We're going to pull together some of the best ideas. We'll be posting a paper on the Brookings.edu web site in the next two or three days, so thank you very much for coming out.

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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