

OVERCOMING THE LEARNING CURVE: THE USE OF
FACEBOOK BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

by

LUCAS LOTHAMER

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Abstract

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Lucas Lothamer, MA

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2015

Supervising Professor: Rebecca Deen

This study examines the use of Facebook by members of Congress as a tool for reelection. Specifically, the study looks at the various types of posts congressional members use, such as campaign advertisements or policy positions, and looks for explanatory variables to explain the usage of the social media by members of Congress. To conduct this research the Facebook pages of a sample of Representatives and Senators were examined with a bivariate and multivariate analysis. Overall congressional members employed a distinct strategy in using their campaign pages. Senators up for reelection and in competitive races were more likely to use campaign and negative attack posting. Representatives in competitive races were more likely to make campaign posts but tended to avoid making negative posts about their opponents. Congressional members did not show any signs of using their government official page as a resource for reelection. This was expected, although some observed behavior shows congressional members' knowledge over Facebook is incomplete. Only a few members used Facebook to promote fundraising or volunteer events such as phone banking and block walking. This suggests that while congressional members seek to capitalize on Facebook as a tool for reelection aims their knowledge of the social media is incomplete.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| Abstract | iv |
| List of Illustrations | vi |
| List of Tables | viii |
| Chapter 1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| Chapter 2 Reelection Imperative | 4 |
| Chapter 3 Using Social Media | 10 |
| Chapter 4 Data and Methodology | 18 |
| Chapter 5 Analysis | 35 |
| Chapter 6 Regression Tables | 88 |
| Chapter 7 Conclusion..... | 95 |
| Appendix A List of Members of Congress..... | 100 |
| References..... | 105 |
| Biographical Information | 111 |

List of Illustrations

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 4-1 Example of Credit Claiming Post..... | 19 |
| Figure 4-2 Example of District Service Post | 20 |
| Figure 4-3 Example of District Image Post | 21 |
| Figure 4-4 Example of Policy Expertise Post..... | 22 |
| Figure 4-5 Example of Against Washington Post | 23 |
| Figure 4-6 Example of National Post | 24 |
| Figure 4-7 Example of Engagement Post..... | 25 |
| Figure 4-8 Example of Volunteer Post | 26 |
| Figure 4-9 Example of Campaign Post..... | 27 |
| Figure 4-10 Example of Endorsement Post..... | 28 |
| Figure 4-11 Example of Negative Post | 29 |
| Figure 4-12 Example of Fundraising Post..... | 30 |
| Figure 4-13 Example of Miscellaneous Post..... | 31 |
| Figure 5-1 Senate Campaign Page – Campaign Posting..... | 35 |
| Figure 5-2 Seat Safety on Campaign Posting | 36 |
| Figure 5-3 Senate Campaign Page – Negative Posting | 37 |
| Figure 5-4 Seat Safety on Negative Posting..... | 38 |
| Figure 5-5 Senate Campaign Page – District Image Posts | 42 |
| Figure 5-6 Seat Safety on District Image Posts | 43 |
| Figure 5-7 Senate Campaign Page – Endorsement Posts..... | 44 |
| Figure 5-8 Seat Safety on Endorsement Posts | 45 |
| Figure 5-9 Senate Campaign Page – National Posts | 46 |
| Figure 5-10 Seat Safety on National Posts..... | 47 |
| Figure 5-11 Ideological Leaning on National Posts | 48 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 5-12 Senate Campaign Page – Policy Expertise Posts | 49 |
| Figure 5-13 Senate Campaign Page – Total Posts | 50 |
| Figure 5-14 Senate Official Page – District Image Posts..... | 59 |
| Figure 5-15 Senate Official Page – Seat Safety on District Image Posts..... | 60 |
| Figure 5-16 Senate Official Page – National Posts | 60 |
| Figure 5-17 Senate Official Page – Seat Safety on National Posts..... | 61 |
| Figure 5-18 Senate Official Page – Ideological Extreme on National Posts..... | 62 |
| Figure 5-19 Senate Official Page – Policy Expertise Posts..... | 63 |
| Figure 5-20 Senate Official Page – Total Number of Posts..... | 65 |
| Figure 5-21 House Campaign Page – District Image Posts | 70 |
| Figure 5-22 House Campaign Page – Seat Safety on National Posts | 71 |
| Figure 5-23 House Campaign Page – Ideological Extreme on National Posts | 72 |
| Figure 5-24 House Campaign Page – Policy Expertise Posts..... | 73 |
| Figure 5-25 House Campaign Page – Seat Safety on Campaign Posts | 74 |
| Figure 5-26 House Campaign Page – Seat Safety on Negative Posts | 75 |
| Figure 5-27 House Campaign Page – Total Number of Posts | 77 |
| Figure 5-28 House Official Page – Seat Safety on District Image Posts..... | 81 |
| Figure 5-29 House Official Page – Seat Safety on National Posts..... | 82 |
| Figure 5-30 House Official Page – Ideological Extreme on National Posts..... | 83 |
| Figure 5-31 House Official Page – Terms on Policy Expertise Posts..... | 84 |
| Figure 5-32 House Official Page – Seat Safety on Total Number of Posts..... | 85 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 5-1 Senate Polling Numbers | 39 |
| Table 5-2 Senate Campaign District Image, National, And Total Posts | 52 |
| Table 5-3 Senate Campaign District Image, National, And Total Posts Continued..... | 53 |
| Table 5-4 Senate Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts | 56 |
| Table 5-5 Senate Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts Continued..... | 57 |
| Table 5-6 Senate Official District Image, National, And Totals Posts..... | 66 |
| Table 5-7 Senate Official District Image, National, And Totals Posts Continued | 67 |
| Table 5-8 House Campaign District Image, National, And Totals Posts | 78 |
| Table 5-9 House Campaign District Image, National, And Totals Posts Continued..... | 79 |
| Table 5-10 House Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts | 79 |
| Table 5-11 House Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts Continued..... | 80 |
| Table 5-12 House Official District Image, National, and Total Posts | 86 |
| Table 5-13 House Official District Image, National, and Total Posts | 87 |
| Table 6-1 Senate Total Posts | 89 |
| Table 6-2 Senate Total Posts Continued | 89 |
| Table 6-3 Senate Campaign Posts | 90 |
| Table 6-4 Senate Campaign Posts Continued | 90 |
| Table 6-5 Senate Negative Posts | 91 |
| Table 6-6 Senate Negative Posts Continued..... | 91 |
| Table 6-7 House Total Posts | 93 |
| Table 6-8 House Total Posts Continued | 93 |
| Table 6-9 House Campaign Posts | 94 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 6-10 House Campaign Post Continued | 94 |
| Table A-1 Sample of Representatives | 101 |
| Table A-2 Sample of Representatives Cont. | 102 |
| Table A-3 Sample of Senators | 103 |
| Table A-4 Sample of Senators Cont. | 104 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

Past studies suggests that MCs (members of Congress) are purposive actors who utilize their resources methodically as a means for reelection (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1978). This has been confirmed in their committee assignments and voting in Congress, appearances in their states or districts, the utilization of resources such as franking, and their actions during campaigns such as the use of negative campaign ads attacking their opponents. For social media, the link between elections and behavior remains uncertain. There have been studies examining the effectiveness of social media in elections as a grassroots effort (Wagner and Gainous 2009). However, there exists a gap in the literature on why members of Congress use social media the way they do. Social media is likely a tool used by MCs for pursuing their goals such as passing policy and achieving reelection. My research will contribute to the existing scholarship by offering an explanation as to what specific variables influence the content of posts congressional members use and if they are similar to other forms of communication with their constituents such as traditional media and franking.

This study will examine the types of Facebook posts MCs use during the general election cycle. Any social media site could be studied in this manner. However, Facebook was chosen for this study for two reasons. First, the demographics of Facebook are more closely aligned to the general public than any other social media forum. While other social media sites, such as Instagram and Snapchat, have a majority of younger users, Facebook has seen an increase of users in older generations (25-34, 35-54, and 55+). Meanwhile, social media users under age 18 are not signing up for Facebook and instead joining other social media sites (Neal 2014). This makes Facebook more representative of a voting public and perhaps more highly valued by

politicians than other social media sites. Second, Facebook does not have a character limit in its posts while other sites, such as Twitter, are limited to 140 characters. This could be important as Facebook provides a greater means to pontificate over issues important to the MC. It is also easy to hit the 140-character limit and may be difficult for some to scale back their message to fit the parameters set by Twitter.

There are a few reasons why social media posts may differ from other forms of constituent communication. The rise of social media has provided congressional members with a means of constant communication with their constituents and with none of the reported cost associated with franking or media advertisements. The cost of posting, other than office resources such as the staffers to create and post the messages, is negligible. Social media sites such as Facebook provide a means of communication that can be less formal and much quicker than traditional mediums of communication. This allows for congressional members to broaden their message and include topics that they may not include in traditional communication with their constituents. In this study, I hypothesize that members of Congress will utilize Facebook as a tool and resource for reelection aims. This is to say that MCs are expected to respond to certain independent factors with specific types of posting. For example, being in a highly competitive race is expected to lead to a high amount of negative and campaign style posting, more fully explained in the methodology section (Chapter 4).

This is important for a variety of reasons. The first is that much of social media is not well understood. While some studies have asserted the effectiveness of social media in campaigns, the associated costs and its uses in congressional campaigns remains uncertain. It is true that the production cost associated with creating televised advertisements is negligible for social media and that posting a message is free for any person or organization. However, the act of managing social media sites may be time

consuming and the cost of having professional staff consistently updating pages could be a costly resource not widely understood. This may be indicative of social media sites requiring a certain amount of funding to be a viable tool in any campaign. It has been noted that the wide array of social media sites have been capitalized on by members of Congress in order to communicate directly to the public. With that in mind, it may be social media is changing the nature of campaigning in Congress.

Chapter 2

Reelection Imperative

Richard Fenno identified members of Congress as having “three basic personal goals: reelection, power inside Congress, and good public policy” (Fenno 1978). Fenno explains that these goals cause members of Congress to go through two distinct phases in their career. These are the “Expansionist” and “Protectionist” phases. In the expansionist phase a member of Congress is primarily concerned with seeking reelection by building their rapport with their constituents and extending their base of support. This will generally entail maintaining a high visibility with their constituents with town hall meetings, fundraisers, seeking local endorsements, and appearing at as many local events as possible. While junior members of Congress often do not enjoy the same seat security as senior members, more and more the expansionist and protectionist stages of an MC’s career are becoming blurred through incumbent advantages such as gerrymandering (Herrnson 2012). For many members of Congress, their first election is generally their only real competitive one¹ as upon their election Congress holds seminars on how to use franked mail, hold town meetings, and communicate effectively with the press. This, coupled with benefits such as gerrymandering they receive from the states, results with most members rarely facing strong opposition in the primary or general election (Herrnson 2012).

If the MC manages to secure a safe seat² the member transitions into the Protectionist stage. At this point the MC begins to focus more on power in Congress.

¹ There are cases in which the MC holds a continuously competitive district or loses in the primary or general election, or faces tough competition in the primary races, though these instances are rare.

² A “safe seat” is generally achieved by the political leanings of the majority of the constituency in the district, favoring a particular party, or by the popularity of the MC. In most cases, the MCs behavior in their voting record and campaign activity plays a crucial

They have established an effective campaign strategy and now work to protect their popularity among their supporters by displaying a favorable voting record. While senior members are in a more advantageous position to pass public policy they typically tend to avoid introducing innovative policy ideas unless it is specific to their district or in response to public disasters that receive a large amount of media coverage (Buchler 2011). Members in the protectionist stage, as the name may suggest, remain active in keeping their seat by actively campaigning in order to remain a positive figure in the eyes of their constituents. Many of these candidates maintain active “skeleton campaigns” in which the campaign’s structure and organization are left in tact year round (Herrnson 2012). Some of these campaigns, particularly the higher financed ones, send gifts to their constituents such as birthday cards or thank you cards for volunteering.

The tendency to avoid introducing innovative policy ideas and the professional structure of campaigns suggests much of what a MC does comes back to seeking reelection and pleasing their constituency. The message they send to their constituents is generally carefully planned out by their press secretary or communications director, one of whom generally works on the campaign during election year as well (Herrnson 2012).

MCs employ a variety of mediums to communicate with the public. They often run TV ads, hold rallies, make speeches at public engagements, distribute literature, employ volunteer doorknockers, and seek endorsements from newspapers and local elites. There exists a significant body of literature over how MC’s utilize these mediums, communicate their message, and how effective they are at seeking reelection which is discussed below (Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2009; Lau and Pomper 2002; Meinke

role. A district with a party preference can still vote out the incumbent in that Party’s primary.

2009; Herrnson 2009; Burbank, Hrebenar and Benedict 2008; Malecha and Reagan 2012).

The frequency of campaign activity depends on the competitiveness of the race. MC's in both the House and Senate running in non-competitive races, or if they are running unopposed, often do not produce television ads (Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2009). If they are far ahead in the polls and face no strong competition many MC's apparently do not see any point in spending the money in activities that are not necessary. Druckman, Kiefer, and Parkin also conclude that there is a noticeable difference in the message the MC's address in their campaign during highly competitive races. Incumbents avoid taking risks in safe, non-competitive races and prefer to run ads on services provided to the district, their experience as a legislator, and their connection with their district. Negative attack ads are perceived as an unnecessary risk by MC's in safe races who do not want to risk alienating voters if they do not have to. MC's generally avoid these potential risks unless they are in a particularly competitive race. A study by Lau and Pomper found this behavior of negative campaigning to be rising in contentious Senate campaigns in the U.S. However, the study concludes that negative ads are more effective for challengers and that incumbents are better suited to stick with running ads emphasizing their record of services and sponsored legislation benefitting their state (Lau and Pomper 2002).

In regards to the MCs voting record, voters reward legislators who vote for bills with which they agree and punish those who vote for bills they are against (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010). The Ansolabehere and Jones study shows that when asked in a survey, respondents hold strong opinions over how their elected officials vote. The study does note that voters do not have knowledge about all roll-call votes but do have significant understanding of the salient issues of the day. In response to this behavior of

their constituents, congressional members largely vote according to their constituents' views. This, along with the high rate of incumbent success, offers support for the idea that congressional leaders are strategic about how they vote (Jacobson 1992). One example is the overwhelming Senate vote in 2005 in which 92 Senators voted against a pay raise. The vote was achieved with the knowledge that the House would not vote against a pay raise. The Senators knew the vote on the issue would look good for their constituents and would still result in a pay raise (Couch, King, and Stevenson 2007). The vote for this was cast with the knowledge that the House would not vote against a pay raise and that the Senate's vote would have no effect on the annual pay raise already established by law. While they want to be perceived as being against pay raises they do still want them, which is no surprise considering the living and personal costs of staying in office.

Couch, King, and Stevenson (2007) note that roll call votes can typically be explained by examining the party affiliation and ideology of the members: "it is uncommon for members of Congress to deviate from their party in roll call votes (p. 88)." This is especially true of members from ideologically extreme districts where partisan labels are advantageous to the member.

The politics of voting in Washington also appears to have changed with the growing reelection imperative, as well. Groseclose and Milyo (2010) argue that sophisticated voting by congressional members is on a decline because voters are unable to discern the politics behind sophisticated voting techniques. Sophisticated voting refers to congressional members, for example, voting to add a "poison pill" amendment in order to kill a bill by ensuring that the amended bill will not get passed by Congress. The study finds that congressional members would rather be able to display a "no vote" on the issue to their constituency even at the cost of the bill being passed by

Congress. Furthermore, the study asserts that sophisticated voting attempts are rare because congressional members avoid such situations. It is theorized in the study that congressional members want to appear firm in their position taking with their constituency. Adding a “poison pill” amendment and then voting no on the bill may give the appearance of them being uncertain on their position as constituents do not tend to understand the politics behind such a sophisticated maneuver. In other words, a no vote displays an easily understandable record of being against an issue rather than a lengthy and tiresome explanation behind their technical support of a bill. The study, along with the other literature examined above, asserts a rational-choice perspective in congressional voting behavior. The rational choice being to avoid doing something that the congressional members’ constituency may not understand and lead to them voting the congressional member out of office next election.

It is not surprising that congressional members desire clean and easily understandable voting records as they seek to relate their involvement in Washington back to their constituents (Meinke 2009). The study done by Meinke looks at congressional members, specifically members of the House, and how they craft their specific “style” in appealing to their constituents. By examining the growth of power of partisan positions such as Majority and Minority Leaders and the Whips, the study concludes that MCs will want to ingratiate themselves with their party by using partisan activity in their presentation of themselves in their district. The study notes that the degree to which this happens will vary by the member of Congress. An explanation for this varying degree of agreeing with party leadership is the district itself. As research in franking has suggested, congressional members from ideologically extreme districts often communicate with their constituents over national issues. It could be that the ability to

agree with party leadership has more to do with ideology of a member's constituency rather than the MCs desire to seek favors from party leadership.

Many factors go in to a congressional member's actions inside and outside of Congress. For example, one member may truly be passionate about a particular policy issue and their work inside Congress reflects that. However the most prominent determining behavior of an MC's behavior, particularly the way they communicate with their constituents, is their drive to get reelected to another term. As the behavior of congressional members is purposive in regards to their reelection aims, as examined above, their use of Facebook will likely follow a methodical pattern as well.

Chapter 3

Using Social Media

Chapter 2 explains the behavior of U.S. legislators as it relates to their campaigning and policy activities. Chapter 3 will assess the possible connection of these activities and the usage of Facebook. This is necessary as many of the hypotheses are drawn from the literature mentioned in Chapter 2. This chapter will then examine the existing literature covering MCs and their usage of Facebook.

First, congressional members typically maintain two separate Facebook pages. One of these pages is used for campaign activity and linked to the MC's campaign website. The other page is designated the MC's "Government Official" page and is linked to their DC (.gov) website. While I was unable to find any mention of Facebook specifically in terms of its usage in the existing campaign laws and rules it is stated that:

"All expenditures by a Member from his or her Member's Representational Allowance ("MRA") – including expenditures for staff, travel, and communications must comply with regulations issued by the Committee on House Administration [...] The *Handbook* provides that "[o]nly expenses the primary purpose of which [is] official and representational" are reimbursable from the MRA, and that the MRA may **not** pay for any campaign expenses or political expenses (or any personal expenses)." (Committee on Ethics)

As the "Government Official" Facebook page is linked to the MC's official website, and is managed by their DC office staff, it is likely that the congressional members feel posting campaign related material would violate the existing campaign rules. Theoretically the Facebook page could be shared with the MC's staff in DC and their campaign staff. However, the MC's appear to find it easier to maintain two distinct Facebook pages.

Social media is a fairly new method of communication, becoming largely used by politicians after the 2008 Presidential Election. It is a term that can be applied to any website that allows for the mass dissemination of user generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). There is a plethora of various social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, countless blogging webpages, and various other sites that allow for users to share information with an online community. For this study I will be examining Facebook. Today, it would be unusual to come across a political figure who does not have a Facebook or Twitter account. This is largely due to the numerous successes social media have had in campaigns as is suggested by the literature discussed in this section.

There is a striking difference between traditional media, such as newspapers and tv news, and the variety of news sources and social media choices online. Traditional media tends to focus primarily on negative ads and highly contentious races where there is no clear likely winner. Commercial pressures cause these traditional media sources to cover irregular campaign stories, such as the loss of the primary by the incumbent or a particular controversial advertisement, rather than the routine (Ridout and Smith 2008). Online advertising, social media in particular, grants incumbents a medium to communicate directly with their constituents without relying on traditional outlets. This allows for more control over the message rather than relying on the media which may alter the intended message in an effort to increase viewership.

Campaign activities predate the use of social media sites. Candidates maintain campaign webpages for a variety of reasons, the primary of which is to “reinforce and mobilize their political bases” (Bimber and Davis 2003). When Bimber and Davis analyzed online campaigns in 2003 they concluded that it was the Party’s base supporters that online campaigns relied on to speak to their friends about the given

candidates policy stances, campaign issues, and the candidates background. The study finds that while traditional media can magnify a campaign's message to the general public, a candidates website is only viewed by nine percent of adults (Bimber and Davis 2003). While campaign webpages may be limited in their scope, Facebook provides a broader reach. It may also be true that a candidate's Facebook page is only liked and followed by the political base of the candidate. However, when an MC makes a post, a like or comment on that post by one of their followers extends visibility of the post to that follower's friends on the social media site. This may be particularly true on Facebook as users of the social media site tend to engage in Facebook activities that reflect their "true self", known as qualities or information about themselves that they would not normally share in person (Siedman 2014). While people may avoid disclosing their political affiliation and opinions of candidates in person, this is not always the case on Facebook. Strong party or candidate supporters are likely to share stories or posts of a particular candidate increasing the visibility of a candidate's page past that of his immediate supporters.

There is a debate about the effectiveness of social media as the audience of the internet is not all encompassing of the general population. One study notes that the users of Facebook tend to be younger and more highly educated than the median of the general population (Herrnson, Stokes-Brown, and Hindman 2007). Herrnson, Stokes-Brown, and Hindman conclude that state legislators use Facebook depending on the demographics of their constituents and their history in electoral politics and career aspirations. They note that while the effectiveness of Facebook is unclear, state legislators are using it strategically based on their perceptions of its usefulness.

While the observation made by Herrnson, Stokes-Brown, and Hindman of the strategic adoption of Facebook by state legislators is helpful in forming the hypothesis of

its use by members of the U.S. Congress, its observation of the demographics of Facebook users has changed. The younger demographic of Facebook users ages 24 and below is declining with “6.7 million fewer people in these demographics, meaning younger people are not signing up for Facebook or getting rid of their accounts” (Neal 2014). Meanwhile, people in older cohorts are increasing their usage of Facebook. The same demographic report shows that there was a 32.6 percent of Facebook users between the ages of 25 to 34, a 41.4 percent increase of people between the ages of 35 to 54, and a 80.4 percent increase of people over the age of 55. This change of demographics indicates that the world of Facebook has become increasingly more beneficial to politicians as the teenage population has decreased and the membership of Facebook has become more representative of the general public.

Members of Congress have been responding to these recent changes in online audiences by increasing their press staff. Congressional offices are becoming increasingly active in new media outlets which has increased the workload of their staff. “They expect their press staffers to monitor their coverage and aggressively promote their presence and interests in a wide band of social networks and local, regional, and national audiences” (Malecha and Reagan 2012). The expansion of social media sites has allowed for any member of Congress to bypass the media filter and communicate their message directly to the public. Some MCs, particularly the more recently elected members following the 2010 midterm elections, have capitalized on the expansion of social media sites and have gained a high public following. Some of these MCs are often more interested in maintaining a high media profile than in acquiescing to their party leadership’s desire to keep a unified message on major policy issues.

This expansion of online media outlets and social networking has led to some MCs gaining such a large national following that they can be viewed as unofficial party

spokespersons (Malecha and Reagan 2012). Malecha and Reagan also note that “going public”³ has been adopted by some MCs in an effort to promote their own agenda in Congress. They explain that MCs who “go public” are not necessarily successful in their attempts at furthering their policy agenda or careers by this tactic but are increasingly gaining national attention. Malecha and Reagan make an interesting observation that the notion of the “iron triangle,” a system where congressional committees work with executive bureaucracies and special interest groups to pass public policy, is not seen as an ideal system by some high profile MCs. The act of gaining attention through steadfastly adopting stances on policy issues and posting videos of speeches is seen by some MCs as more preferable than participating as a low-visible rank-in-file MC, even at the risk of angering party leadership or other MCs. This study notes that usage of online media technology, such as social media, varies throughout Congress and they attribute this to the individual behavior and ambitions of the members themselves.

This observation is echoed in the work of Dennis Johnson who notes that awareness of the new media varies across MCs. Some lawmakers are at the forefront of communicating with their constituents and utilize the various online mediums to their full advantage (Johnson 2004). As far as these studies can determine the level usage of online forum differs among MCs and it remains difficult to discern the factors that identify how members will operate online.

While the ways in which MCs use Facebook has not been fully defined, there is no question when considering the growing online audience that social media sites such as Facebook can play a vital role in campaigns. Political participation of the public is dependent on how invested they feel in a campaign and how connected they feel with

³ “Going public” Is known primarily as a strategy used by the Presidency to use public persuasion to pressure Congress to adopt a particular policy agenda.

society. People who feel attached to particular issues, sensitive to the direct affect specific policies may have on them individually, and those who feel the candidates are trustworthy have a much higher rate of voting than those who do not make this connection (Putnam 1995). Now Facebook and other social media sites are allowing MCs to present themselves closer to their constituents and reach more people than traditional mediums allowed (Bode 2012). Bode finds that engaging in Facebook correlates in higher participation in political activities both online and offline. Facebook allows for greater networking opportunities which Bode finds can increase social capital and mobilize political activity. Bode makes an interesting observation in that the frequency of Facebook usage is not as significant as the way it is used. In other words, certain types of activities can yield different results. Candidates can post over policy issues, GOTV schedules such as block walking and phone banking, fundraising, and a variety of other topics, all of which generate different responses. While this study touches on the effects of Facebook it does not consider the underlying strategies that MCs may employ in using Facebook.

Effectiveness of Facebook has also been shown to vary among people with different socio-economic backgrounds. Gainous Marlowe and Wagner (2013) find that people of low socio-economic status are more likely to engage in Facebook activities than people of higher socio-economic status but more often do so for entertainment purposes. People from a low socio-economic background are less likely to encounter political stimulation and are less likely to be reached by MCs in their online activities.

While the reach of social media may have its limits, studies show that there are clear benefits for candidates embracing the new technology. A study analyzing all U.S. Congressional campaigns found that overall the campaigns that used Twitter in the 2010 elections had a better chance of winning than campaigns that neglected the use of

Twitter (LaMarre and Suzuki-Lambrecht 2013). Interestingly, the study found that less than half of the challengers used Twitter, while nearly 70% of incumbents used Twitter. Incumbents were also more active online which generated more followers. The study notes that social media sites could become another part of the incumbent advantage. Why incumbents utilize social media more than challengers is interesting. It could be that social media usage is actually somewhat costly and requires resource such as a paid staff member to manage the message. It could also be that incumbents already have these accounts set up or that they have more campaigning experience and are knowledgeable about the effectiveness of using social media as an election tool. Whatever the reason, it can be said that congressional members are actively using social media and are likely employing it as a resource for reelection.

Glassman, Straus, and Shogan (2010) have studied the nature of tweets when Congress is in session versus when it is not in session. When Congress is in session, members post about policy and position taking. When Congress is out of session or when members are in their district, the tweets are directed about the district. Twitter and Facebook provide a means of informing the public on the member's daily activities and this correlates to tweets or posts regarding where they are and what they are noticing. Twitter has proved to be an effective tool in mobilizing voter support and is strongly correlated to success at the polls. Citizens who live tweet questions during presidential debates also learn more over issues than people who do not tweet in questions (Houston, McKinney, and Spialek 2013). Tweeting does not, however, change peoples' attitudes over salient issues. This does present an interesting opportunity for Congressional members in terms of educating their constituents. While ideology is unlikely to change from social media activity, it can raise awareness of Congressional members' activities to their constituents.

The literature over Congress has often examined what influences Congressional actions and makes a strong case that congressional members are strategic actors who make decisions in their own self-interest of reelection. The tendency of MCs to avoid innovative public policy ideas that have not garnered wide media attention and demand from the public (Buchler 2011), their strategic voting behavior to build a record to present to their constituents (Jacobson 1992; Couch, King, and Stevenson 2007), and their use of congressional staff in planning a message to communicate to the public (Herrnson 2012) along with the high frequency of campaign activities in highly competitive races (Druckman, Kifer, and Parkman 2009) all suggest that MCs are purposive actors that desire to get reelected. Some aspects of social media used by political actors have been studied as discussed in this chapter. It has been established that political actors at times post in a comical manner and in ways that reveal more of their personal lives than would normally be shown in traditional television or mailer advertisements (Bode 2012; Siedman 2014). MCs have also been shown to have an awareness of the growing online media pressing by increasing their communications staff to accommodate the growing demands of the online media age (Malecha and Reagan 2012) Furthermore, campaigning online has occurred long before social media sites as MCs would, and still do, maintain a campaign website intended to raise money and energize their base constituents (Bimber and Davis 2003). However, there exists a gap in the literature where social media is concerned and why congressional members utilize it. While the successfulness of social media in elections has been examined, the different influences on congressional members when it comes to posting on Facebook has not been studied.

Chapter 4

Data and Methodology

As discussed in the previous chapters, MCs have been shown to act as purposive actors pursuing their electoral goals. This study capitalizes on this theory of strategic behavior of MCs and seeks to understand how legislators utilize Facebook to achieve their goals. While Facebook has been extensively researched many of the studies focus on the effectiveness of Facebook at building social capital and mobilizing base supporters. This study seeks to look at the MC's Facebook usage and identify factors that influence their posting.

As MCs have two distinct Facebook pages, both pages will be used for this study. To identify the "Government Official" page and the campaign page I used the pages that were linked to the MCs DC and campaign web pages. The dependent variable of the study, the Facebook posts, will be categorized into the following categories⁴:

Credit Claiming: The posts placed under this category are worded in a way that specifically talks about the congressional members' service to their constituents. The posts will have mentioned how they brought a number of grants or jobs to their district or state. These posts explain how their work in Congress has directly benefited their constituents.

⁴ Some posts may be placed in two or more categories depending on the content of the post. For example, if a post mentions a national issue, such as the Affordable Care Act, and also mentions how it has helped a member's district by bringing jobs and expanding coverage to its residents, the post would be placed in the "Credit Claiming" and "National" categories.



Carol Shea-Porter

September 2, 2014 · 🌐

I was proud to secure Memorial Bridge funding--our bipartisan effort to rebuild the bridge got great results for our local economy!



👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

Figure 4-1 Example of Credit Claiming Post

District Service: These posts are links or explanations on providing some form of service to the MC's constituents. A link that directs to a webpage to assist in enrolling for healthcare or providing a phone number or directions to get help with dealing with a government agency.



Figure 4-2 Example of District Service Post

District Image: These posts are used to express how the congressional member is first and foremost a member of the community they come from. They may have check-ins at events throughout their state, pictures of themselves at state monuments or attractions, or comments on specific state issues expressing their pride of being a resident of their state. For both Senators and Representatives, these posts have public relations aims at convincing their constituents that their roots are firmly planted in the communities they serve in Washington.



Mary Landrieu added 6 new photos.

October 17, 2014 · Edited ·

It was so wonderful to spend time with so many old friends and supporters in Avoyelles Parish yesterday. I can still remember my first trip to the parish when I was first elected to the State Legislature and its been a privilege with local leaders for many years now. And it was so moving to visit with the first registered African-American voter in Ayovelles, Harold Dashiell. He was a supporter of my father's and has been supporting me since my first state-wide run. I'm so proud to have his continued support and so many others in Ayovelles Parish.

-Mary

Figure 4-3 Example of District Image Post

Policy Expertise: These posts are aimed at showing their particular expertise over a given issue. They will mention specifics over an issue and their role in correcting the problem at hand. I have added this variable in regards to its use in past studies in that legislative activity can have positive benefits on electoral security (Johannes and McAdams 1981; Box-Steffensmeier and Grant 1999).



Figure 4-4 Example of Policy Expertise Post

Against Washington: These posts are aimed at distancing the congressional member from the institution of Congress. In these posts the Congressional members will attack Congress and criticize its effectiveness as to appeal to their constituents' low approval of the institution (Jacobson 1992). Congressional members often run against Congress as an outsider to improve their odds of reelection so it stands to reason that Facebook will be used as a medium by some to criticize Congress. What causes the decision to attack Congress on Facebook remains to be seen.

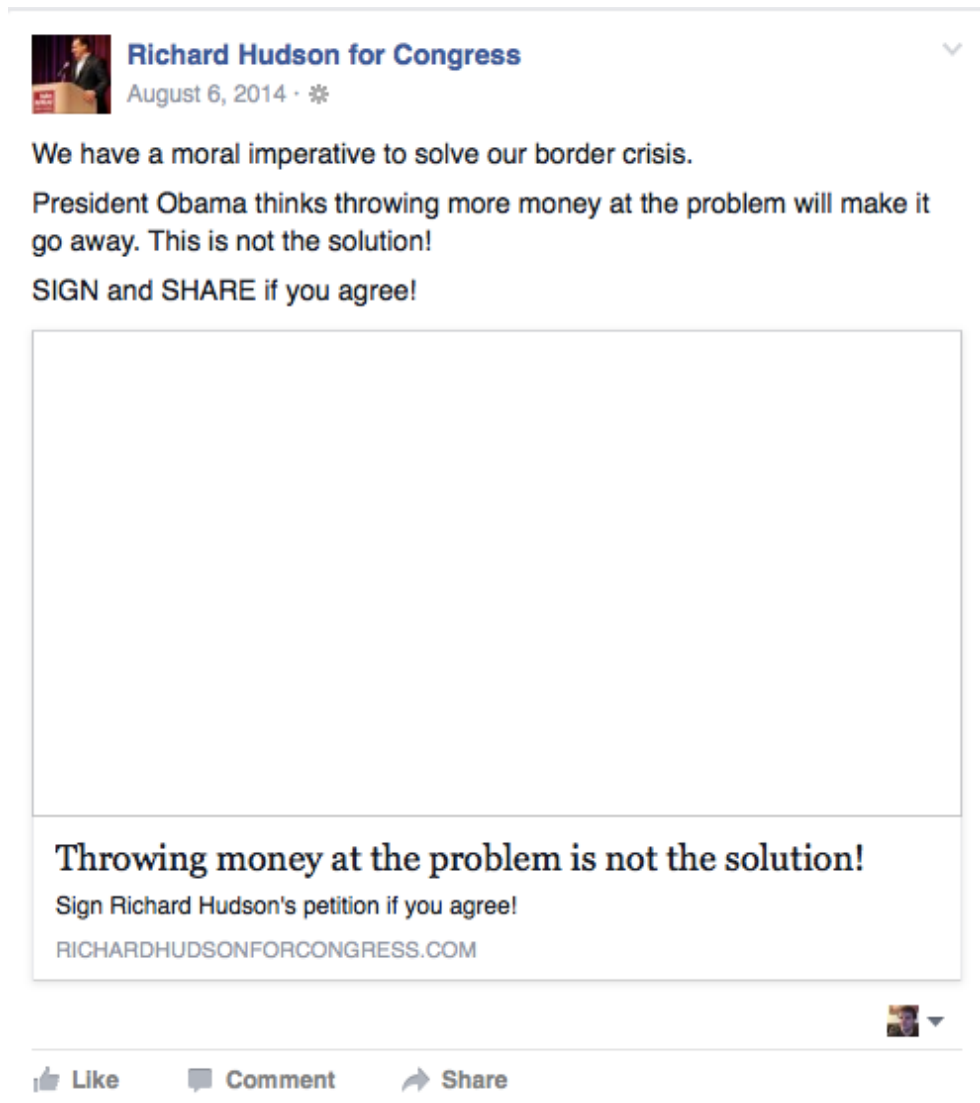


Figure 4-5 Example of Against Washington Post

National: These posts are ones in which the congressional member posts over a highly salient or contentious national issue. Such an issue may be the Affordable Care Act, gun control, abortion, or gay marriage. The number of terms served may influence a congressional member's decision to focus on national issues during a campaign. Unlike the "Policy Expertise" category, these posts will only reference the national issue and what the member thinks should be done. More senior members in later stages of their

career may feel safe enough to discuss national issues over issues specific to their district (Bennett and DiLorenzo 1982).



A screenshot of a Facebook post by Kirsten Gillibrand. The post features a profile picture of Kirsten Gillibrand, her name, and the date 'August 5, 2014'. The text of the post discusses Medicare's 49th anniversary and the author's commitment to protecting it. Below the text is a white box with the title 'Stand for Medicare' and a paragraph about Medicare's benefits. At the bottom of the box is the URL 'STANDFORMEDICARE.COM'. The post has interaction buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share'.

Kirsten Gillibrand
August 5, 2014 · 🌐

Last week, Medicare turned 49 years old, and I'm committed to fighting to make sure it remains strong for years to come. America's seniors have spent a lifetime of hard work paying into Medicare, and they deserve every last benefit they were promised. That's why I'm standing with my colleagues to protect and defend Medicare against all attacks from the right, I hope you'll stand with us by adding your name below.

Stand for Medicare

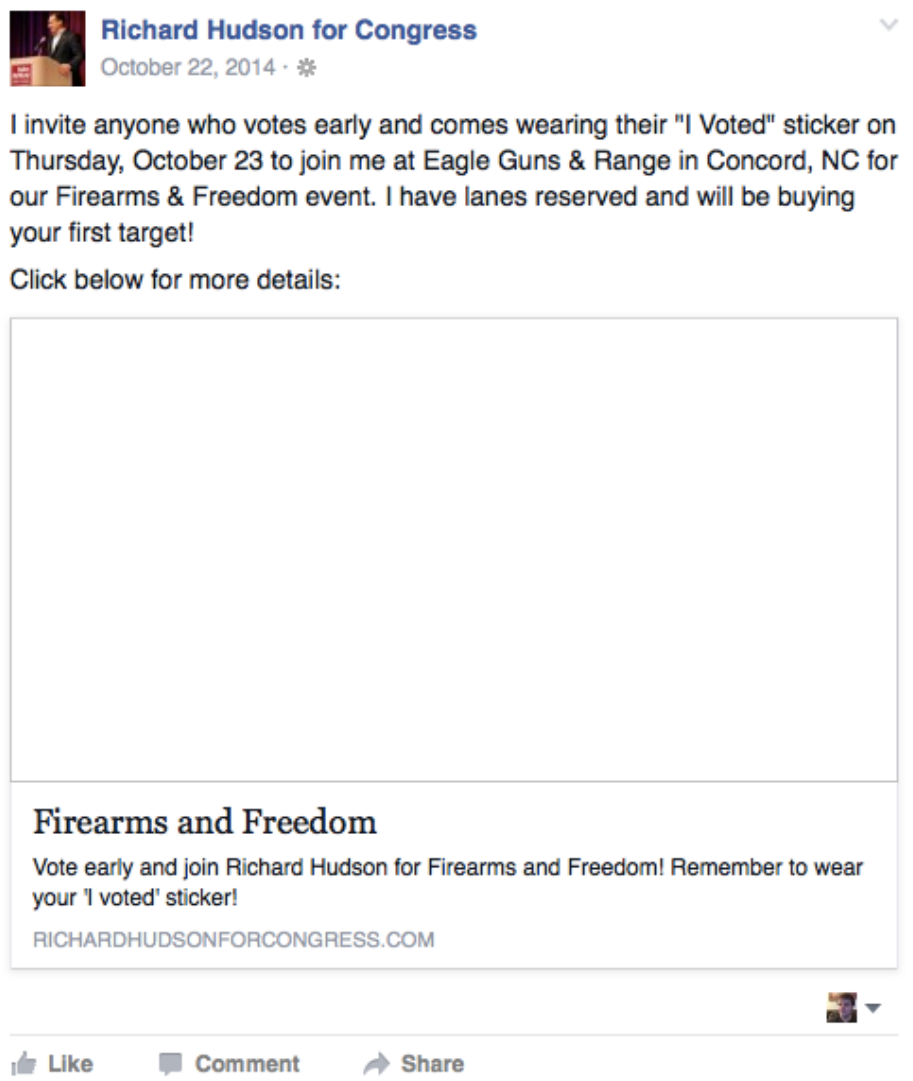
It's been 49 years since Medicare was signed into law. Today, 49 million Americans can go see their doctor, obtain affordable prescription drugs, and access life-saving medical procedures because of Medicare. Despite that success, Tea Partiers want to end the time-tested guaranteed benefits of Medic...

STANDFORMEDICARE.COM

Like Comment Share

Figure 4-6 Example of National Post

Engagement: These posts will show the MC's schedule around their district. They will invite constituents to town hall meetings, campaign rallies, or other events where they are speaking with the public.



A screenshot of a Facebook post from the page "Richard Hudson for Congress". The post is dated "October 22, 2014" and includes a small profile picture of Richard Hudson. The text of the post reads: "I invite anyone who votes early and comes wearing their 'I Voted' sticker on Thursday, October 23 to join me at Eagle Guns & Range in Concord, NC for our Firearms & Freedom event. I have lanes reserved and will be buying your first target! Click below for more details:". Below the text is a large, empty rectangular box. At the bottom of the post, there is a section titled "Firearms and Freedom" with the text "Vote early and join Richard Hudson for Firearms and Freedom! Remember to wear your 'I voted' sticker!" and the website "RICHARDHUDSONFORCONGRESS.COM". At the very bottom of the post, there are icons for "Like", "Comment", and "Share".

Richard Hudson for Congress
October 22, 2014 · 🌐

I invite anyone who votes early and comes wearing their "I Voted" sticker on Thursday, October 23 to join me at Eagle Guns & Range in Concord, NC for our Firearms & Freedom event. I have lanes reserved and will be buying your first target!
Click below for more details:

Firearms and Freedom
Vote early and join Richard Hudson for Firearms and Freedom! Remember to wear your 'I voted' sticker!
RICHARDHUDSONFORCONGRESS.COM

Like Comment Share

Figure 4-7 Example of Engagement Post

Volunteer: These posts are sign-up sheets or information where constituents can get involved in the MC's campaign. They will be asking constituents to come phone bank, block walk, or participate in other campaign activities.



Figure 4-8 Example of Volunteer Post

Campaign: These posts are advertisements endorsing the MC and encouraging constituents to vote for them. These posts may show a link to a video ad, a reminder to vote, or information of polling sites.



Figure 4-9 Example of Campaign Post

Endorsement: These posts inform that they have received the support of a newspaper or other organization.

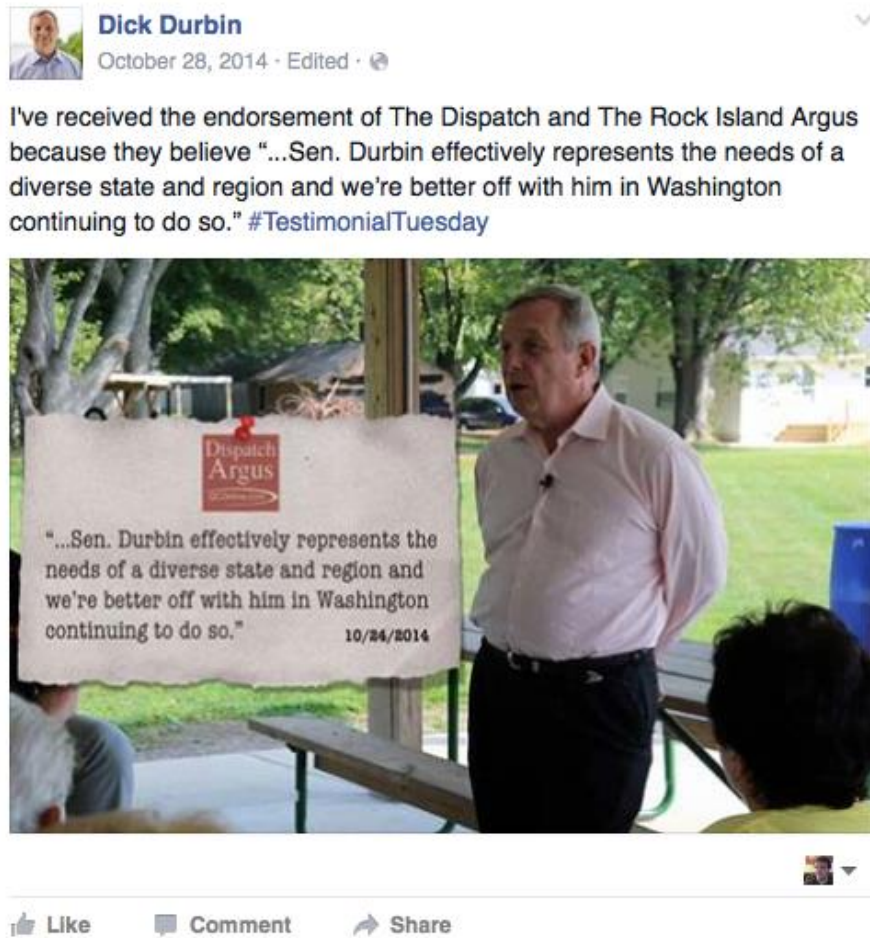


Figure 4-10 Example of Endorsement Post

Negative: These posts attack the challenger the MC is currently facing in the campaign.



Figure 4-11 Example of Negative Post

Fundraising: These posts will include a link to a site where donations can be made toward the MCs campaign.



Figure 4-12 Example of Fundraising Post

Miscellaneous: If a post does not fit any of the categories listed above, they are placed in a miscellaneous category.

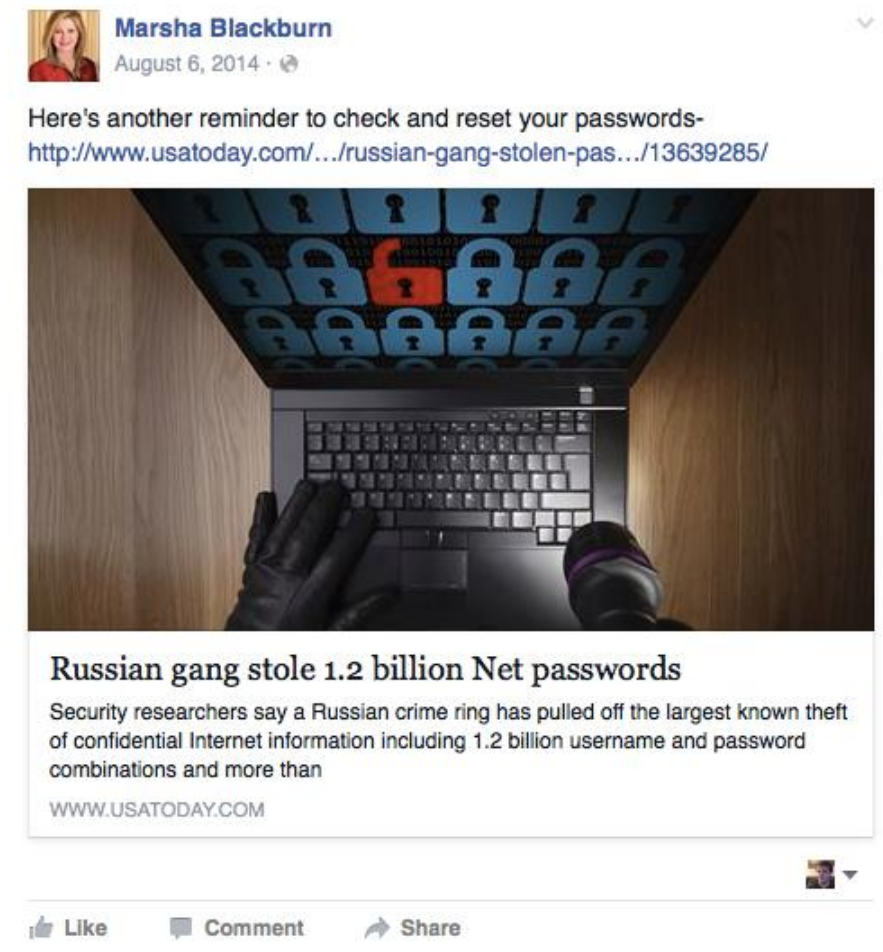


Figure 4-13 Example of Miscellaneous Post

The dependent variables, the Facebook posts, have been placed into the above categories based on the literature examining MCs behavior and their use of traditional media and social media sites. The independent variables for this study, listed below, were listed because of their use in past studies.

Ideological Extreme: At times members of ideological extremes tend to focus more on national issues rather than constituent services (Yiannakis 1981; Maltzman and Sigelman 1996). The ideological makeup of MCs was taken into account by using the National Journal's ideological composite score. The National Journal's score is calculated by examining the roll call voting record of Congress and assigning a score for each member based on their 'yea' and 'nay' votes. This measurement is similar to the nominate scores used by Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal to measure ideology in Congress (Keith and Rosenthal 1997). This measure has been updated up to the 112th Congress and used primarily to study ideological changes in Congress over time (Carroll, Lewis, Lo, McCarthy, Poole, and Rosenthal 2013). The reason the National Journal scores are used for this study is that they are updated to the current congressional members used in this study. As vacant seats open and new members join Congress it is necessary for this study to use a dataset that is updated to include the current members. The National Journal scores are similar to the Poole and Rosenthal measure as they each use the roll call votes to determine ideology of the members of Congress. The National Journal differs in that it uses a composite percentile scoring and looks only at the current members and how they rank with one another based on their 'yea' and 'nay' voting record. This method does not allow for a cross-sectional analysis to view how the members have changed over time. However, as this study is only looking at how members post from August to November 2014, a time-series analysis is not necessary.

District Competition: The measurement of the safety of a district will gathered using the Cook Political Report. For the "Safe" district category in this study I will use the "Solid" and "Likely" categories provided by the Cook Report. "Solid" races are races that are considered guaranteed wins for a particular party. The "Likely" races are not competitive but are races that have a slight chance of becoming so. These are the races

that the party is all but guaranteed to win the election. For the competitive races this study uses the “Competitive” and “Lean” races. The “Competitive” races are ones where no side has any clear advantage while the “Lean” races are ones that are competitive but one side has a slight advantage.

Seniority: As congressional members go through cycles in their careers, it have taken into account the number of terms served. It is possible that more senior members with leaderships positions will be more likely to post over national issues and be less inclined to attack Congress as they may feel more attached to the institution or feel it would not serve their reelection interest as they hold leadership or chair positions. Likewise, junior members of Congress may post rhetoric attacking Congress or the federal government as a whole.

Party ID, Ethnicity (coded using information from the House website), **Age**, **Region of the Country** (coded using the regions used by the 2010 U.S. Census), and **Gender** are control variables considered in this study. A comparative sample of MCs (a full list of MC names listed in the Appendix) was used to conduct this study. The members were categorized into the independent variables listed above and a stratified sample was taken to reflect political party, ideological extreme, seniority, seat safety, geographic region of the country, gender, ethnicity, and age. However, it should be noted that ethnicity could not be used for the Senate sample as the low number of minority members prevent its use. There are also more safe seats in the House than competitive ones as the number of competitive races in the House were low.

Based on the literature examined, the following hypotheses were formed to test how MCs use Facebook and if they are utilizing the resources in a methodical fashion:

H1: Congressional members in competitive races will be more likely to use District Image posts showing their involvement in the community they serve.

H2: Congressional members in safe races will be more likely to use National Posts discussing national issues.

H3: Senior congressional members will be more likely to use National Posts and Policy Expertise posts.

H4: Ideologically extreme congressional members will be more likely to use National Posts.

H5: Senators not up for reelection will post less frequently and be more likely to use National Posts.

H6: Congressional members in competitive races will be more likely to use Campaign, Negative, Fundraising, Engagement, Volunteer, and Against Washington Posts.

H7: Congressional members in safe races will have a diminished amount of overall posting than congressional members in competitive races.

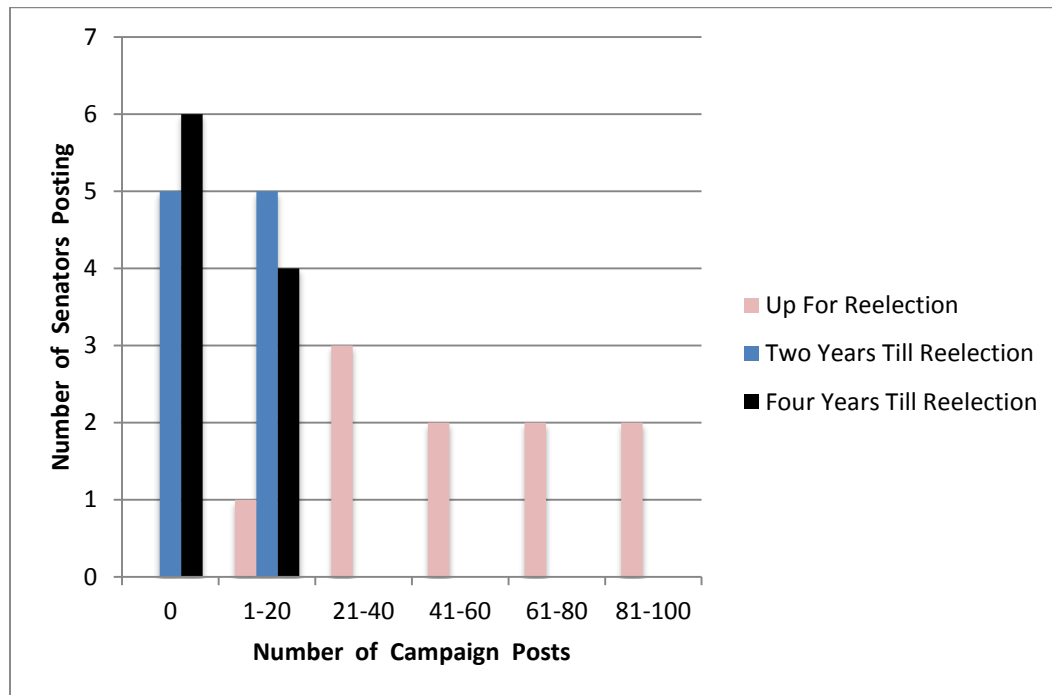
The hypotheses listed above will be tested with a chi-square test of significance and multiple regression. Chapter 5 will discuss the results of the bivariate analysis of the chi-square tests while Chapter 6 will discuss the significant relationships identified in the multivariate analysis of the OLS multiple regression tests.

Chapter 5

Analysis

Senate Campaign Posts

The research looking at the usage of Facebook by members of Congress takes into account the different Facebook pages maintained by the members. Most of the members typically maintain two separate accounts, one for campaigning, and one for their official page as a member of Congress. These pages are linked to either their campaign website or their official government website.

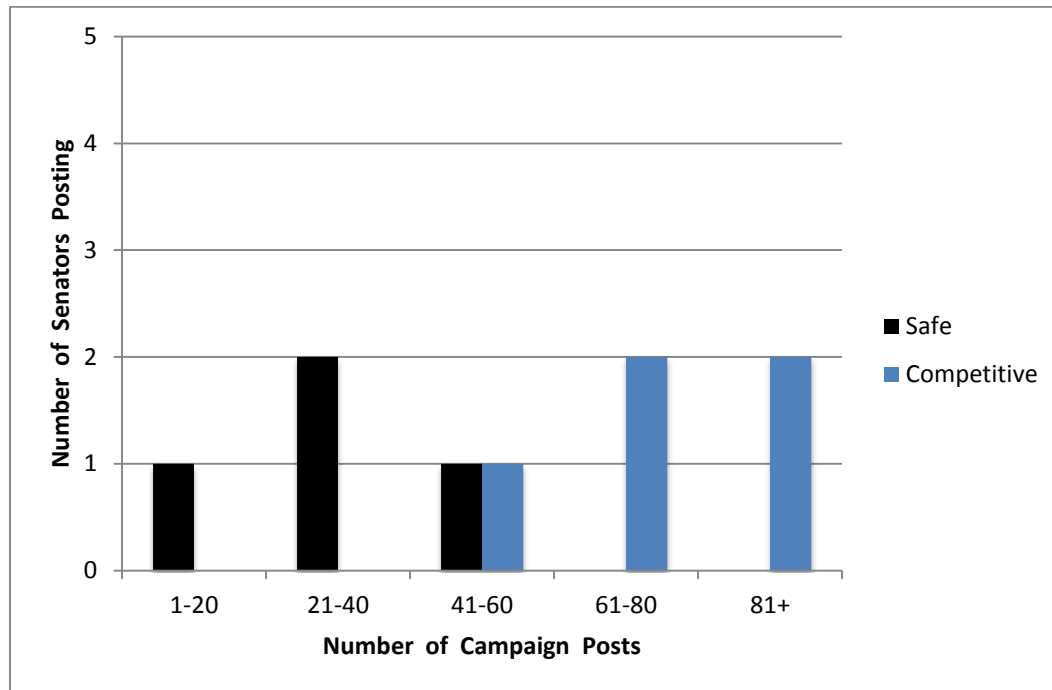


$p < .001$

Figure 5-1 Senate Campaign Page – Campaign Posting

The above graph shows the relationship between the Senators (a sample of 30) and their number of campaign posts. The relationship is one where Senators up for reelection tend to post at a higher rate than Senators who have two or four years until

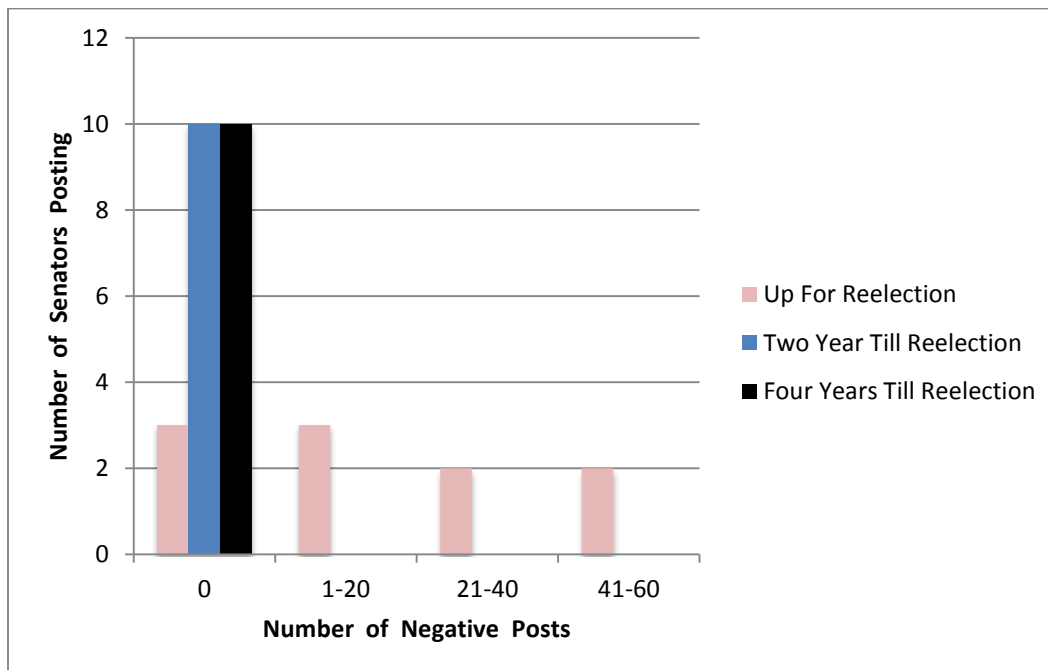
reelection. This relationship is to be expected from the perspective that congressional members use Facebook in a methodical manner. However, there are some discrepancies among the Senators up for reelection in 2014. Some tend to post on the high end while some tend to post more on the low end of campaign posts.



$p < .050$

Figure 5-2 Seat Safety on Campaign Posting

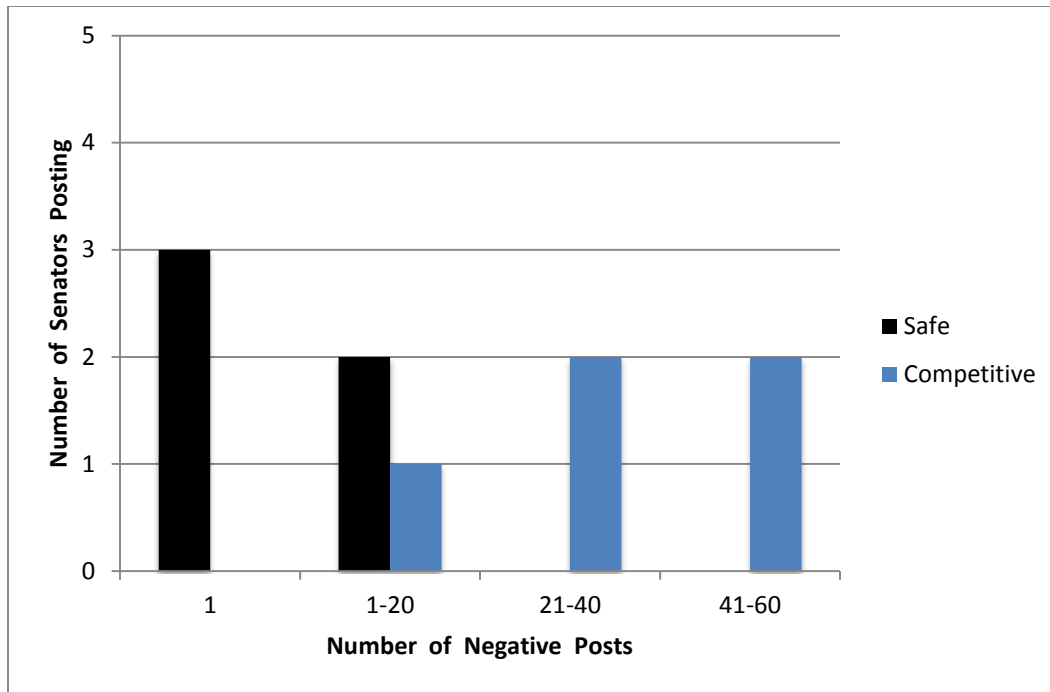
Figure 2 displays the ten Senators up for reelection in 2014 and displays the number of campaign posts with seat safety as an independent variable. The shown by members up for reelection are explained more fully when controlled for seat safety. Senators in competitive races to post more campaign posts than Senators in safe races. It was expected that election status and seat safety would influence activity on Facebook. The evidence supports the hypothesis that Senator and members in safe races tend to post less than those facing an election cycle in a competitive race.



$p < .001$

Figure 5-3 Senate Campaign Page – Negative Posting

Election status and seat safety significant predictors on negative posting as well. Negative posts are posts that specifically target the incumbent's opponent, usually by attacking their opponents past record. In this instance none of the Senators that have two or four years till reelection use any negative posts. This is not surprising as most of them do not have a declared opponent nor is any immediate electoral attention on their seat. The below figure shows a similar breakdown for the ten Senators up for reelection when compared to seat safety.



$p < .010$

Figure 5-4 Seat Safety on Negative Posting

Similar to Figure 5-2, Figure 5-4 displays the relationship between seat safety and the use of negative posts. Senators in safe races typically post few negative ads, if any at all, while all the Senators in competitive races use more negative posts than their counterparts. There is some disparity among those in safe races and competitive races that is worth examining. For example, there are some Senators in safe races that have a lower posting rate than others in safe races while the same is true for those in competitive races. Election status and seat safety are the two variables that appear to be significant variables in explaining the behavior of Senators when using their campaign pages.

Table 5-1 Senate Polling Numbers

| | RCP Lowest | RCP Highest | Campaign | Negative |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Jeff Sessions | Unopposed | Unopposed | 1 | 0 |
| Susan Collins | +19 | +40 | 23 | 0 |
| Dick Durbin | +10 | +14 | 31 | 4 |
| Tim Scott | +20 | +29 | 33 | 0 |
| Al Franken | +9 | +11 | 60 | 10 |
| Mitch McConnell | +5 | +9 | 53 | 47 |
| Kay Hagan | -3 | +4 | 71 | 57 |
| Mary Landrieu | -26 | -15 | 72 | 33 |
| Jeanne Shaheen | -4 | +7 | 94 | 30 |
| Mark Begich | -6 | +6 | 100 | 16 |

Real Clear Politics.

The chart shows the range of their polling numbers between August 1 to November 4, 2014. This provides a clearer picture of what is driving the posting of Negative and Campaign posts by the Senators up for reelection. The above table shows that Senators are, on average, aware of their ranking in the polls and post accordingly. Jeff Sessions, for example, ran unopposed and only made one post during the election in regards to encouraging his constituents to go vote. Senators Collins, Durbin, and Scott, neither of them dropping below a double-digit lead in the RCP polls, posted at around the same rate in terms of campaign posts. Those in competitive races post higher amounts of campaign content.

Negative attack comments on Facebook follow a similar trend to the campaign content. The Senators in safe races tend to avoid the possibility of alienating voters with the appearance of running a negative campaign strategy. Senators in safe races post more negative content. The frequency of posting by Senators in competitive races of the campaign and negative type posts is expected when comparing Facebook to more traditional campaign mediums. TV ads and mailers, for instance, are used less frequently by MCs in safe races (Druckman, Kiefer and Parkin 2009). If the notion that

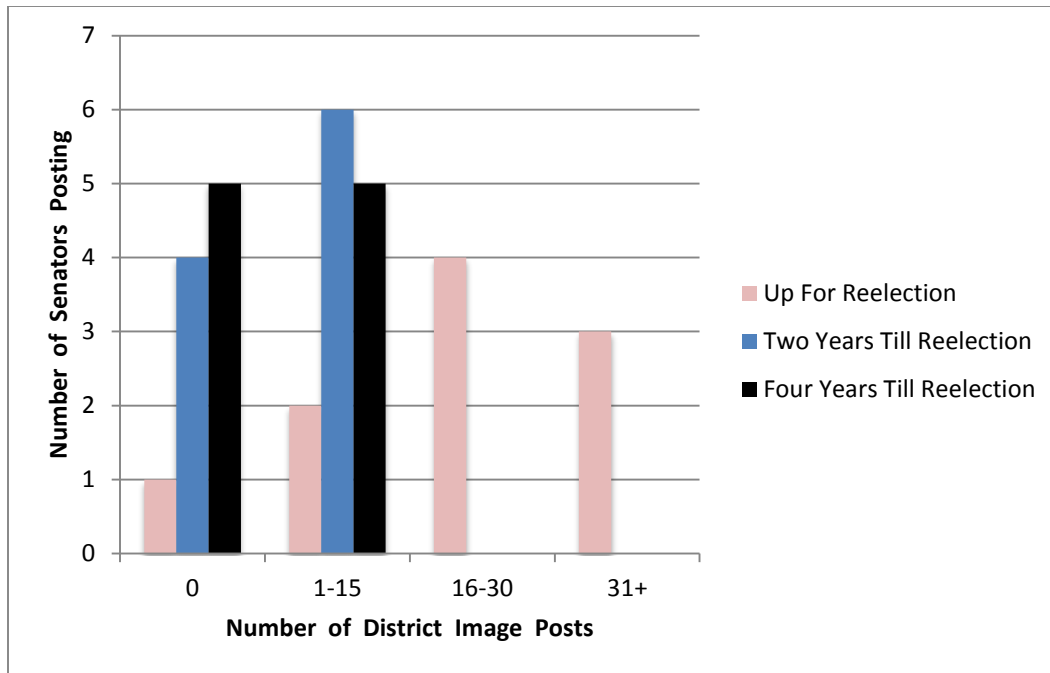
members of Congress act in a methodical manner the general trend observed in Table 1 is to be expected. However, there is some evidence that suggests Facebook is not universally perceived by MC's to be a beneficial technology.

The behavior displayed by Senator Sessions is not surprising considering he ran unopposed in the 2014 elections. He posted no Negative content, as he did not have an opponent, and only made one post over campaign content. Only Senator Begich, on the other hand, breaks the pattern in terms of negative posting. Other than Senator Landrieu, Begich was likely in the most competitive race of 2014. His polls show him in the lead against his opponent only once between August 1st to November 4th. Despite this, he posted relatively few negative posts attacking his opponent. Senator Kay Hagan, in an equally competitive race as Begich, posted more than three times as many negative posts as Begich.

Another inconsistency is observed in the activity of Senators Al Franken and Mitch McConnell. While Franken was considered to be in a safe race and McConnell in a competitive one, there is not much of a difference in their polling numbers. McConnell, at times, dropped lower in the polls than Franken but otherwise remained at similar levels of support. This similarity in poll numbers is reflected in the two Senator's rates of campaign posting but not in the rates of negative posting. The cause of this dichotomy between the two could be that McConnell trailed closer to the margin of error in the polls than Franken did. It could also be that he felt pressure from a vocal opponent in Allison Grimes and, being in his Party's leadership, had more media attention and scrutiny. Popularity being a factor would also explain why Franken, a former comedian and actor, posted a higher number of campaign posts than did the other Senators in safe races such as Senator Dick Durbin, who had similar polling numbers as did Franken.

When the campaign and negative posts are added together, showing the total number of all campaign content both positive and negative, seat safety and polling numbers become a more predictable measure of campaign activity on Facebook. These findings suggest that Senators post on their campaign pages depending on their seat safety and polling rankings. The use of negative posts also appears to be more likely a decision the member's campaign team made rather than a consistent variable among Senators in competitive races. Senator Begich, for example, tended to run a more positive campaign and posted relatively few negative ads, Senator Hagan, running for reelection in as equally a competitive race as Begich, tried the opposite strategy of posting more negative posts with a lower number of campaign posts.

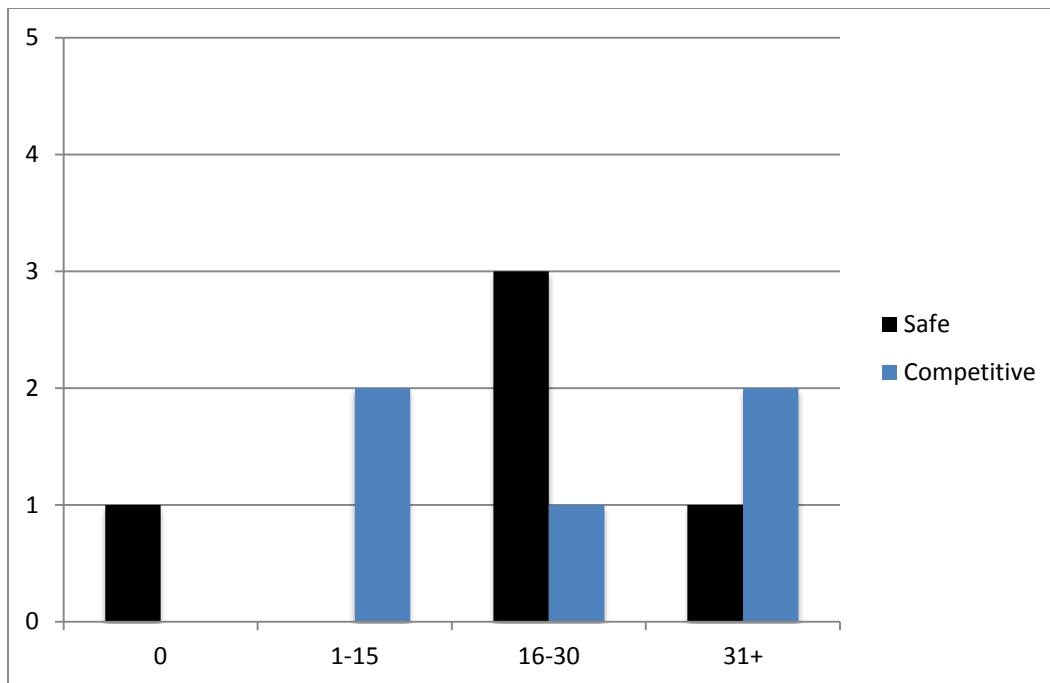
This evidence confirms Hypothesis 6, in the case of Senators, that those in competitive races post more negative and campaign content than those in safe races. However, there are some limitations of the study. It is beyond the parameters of this research to identify how effective campaign posts and negative posts are in terms of electoral engagement. Because Senators Hagan, Landrieu, and Begich all lost the 2014 elections and it is difficult to separate other factors in the campaign, it is difficult to ascertain if it is more effective to use a larger amount of negative posts attacking your opponent than it is to stick with campaign posts that largely consist of GOTV efforts. However, the numbers do suggest seat safety has a high influence as to the amount of campaign activity used on Facebook; among Senators in competitive races, negative ads appear to be a decision that a campaign team may decide to forgo or embrace. In other words, it may be that MCs are still experimenting with Facebook.



$p < .001$

Figure 5-5 Senate Campaign Page – District Image Posts

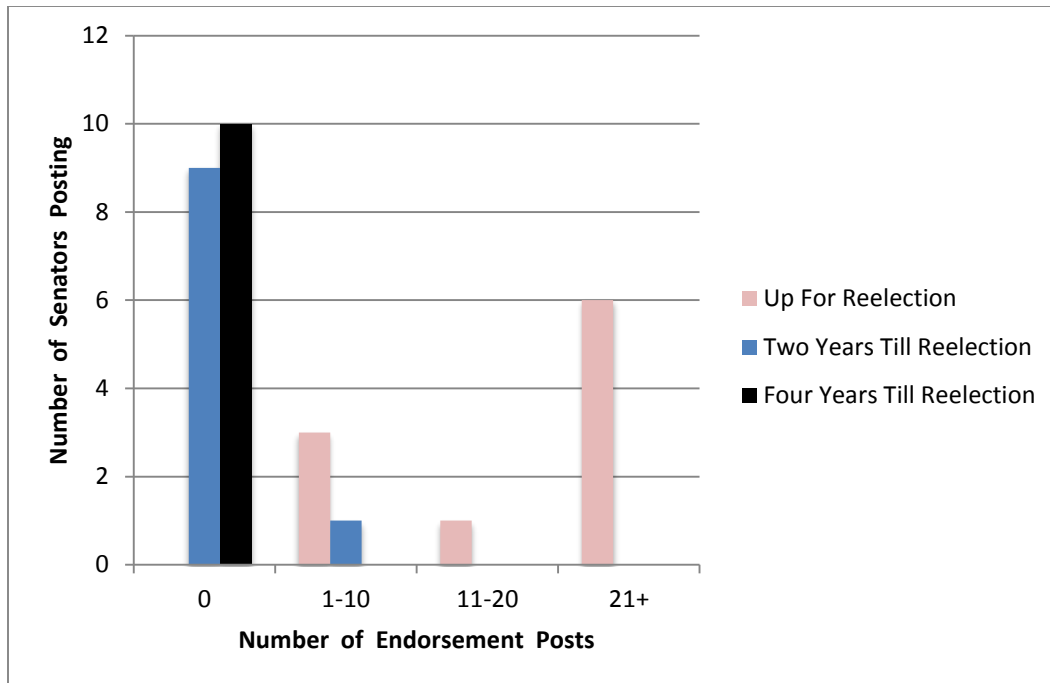
Throughout the study there is a sizeable amount of evidence to suggest that MCs are still learning how to use Facebook or that they are adapting a personal style to its usage. This is suggested in that there are some categories of posts that are not influenced by any of the independent variables other than reelection status. For example, while seat safety appears to be an important determining factor in campaign and negative posting, there are some instances where election status is the only significant predicting variable. One such instance is posts relating to district image. Figure 5-5 shows how Senators up for reelection often post more about their district and how they relate to it. Though some Senators tend to avoid doing this on their campaign pages. Senators not up for reelection tend not to use many district image posts. However, Senators who do not use any district image posts are also the same Senators (not up for reelection) that refrained from posting any material during the observed three-month period.



Not a significant measure

Figure 5-6 Seat Safety on District Image Posts

Figure 5-6 shows the Senators up for reelection and the number of district image posts they made during the observed three-month period. The relationship between seat safety and district image posts are not significantly related. Hypothesis 1, assuming that those in competitive races post more district image posts is not confirmed. This may be because these posts are made on the MCs' campaign pages and the focus is kept on campaign content. It is also possible that Senators consider district image posts worth posting regardless of seat safety, though they are clearly less important than campaign content as the low number of district image posts would suggest.



$p < .001$

Figure 5-7 Senate Campaign Page – Endorsement Posts

Predictably, a similar effect is evident in Figure 5-7, displaying the relationship between election status and Endorsement posts. Endorsement posts being posts in which a member of Congress posts that they received the endorsement from a special interest group or a well-known figure such as a former president or the state governor. Most Senators not up for reelection do not post about their endorsements from third parties.

Similar to district image posts, seat safety does not display any significant pattern to predict the usage of these posts by Senators up for reelection. Senators in Competitive races tend to post their endorsements at around the same level. This may be that, regardless of the Senators' competition, political party or ideological extreme, the Senators post their endorsements as they receive them. Some Senators not up for

reelection use their campaign page to endorse other candidates, a behavior not observed among members of the House.

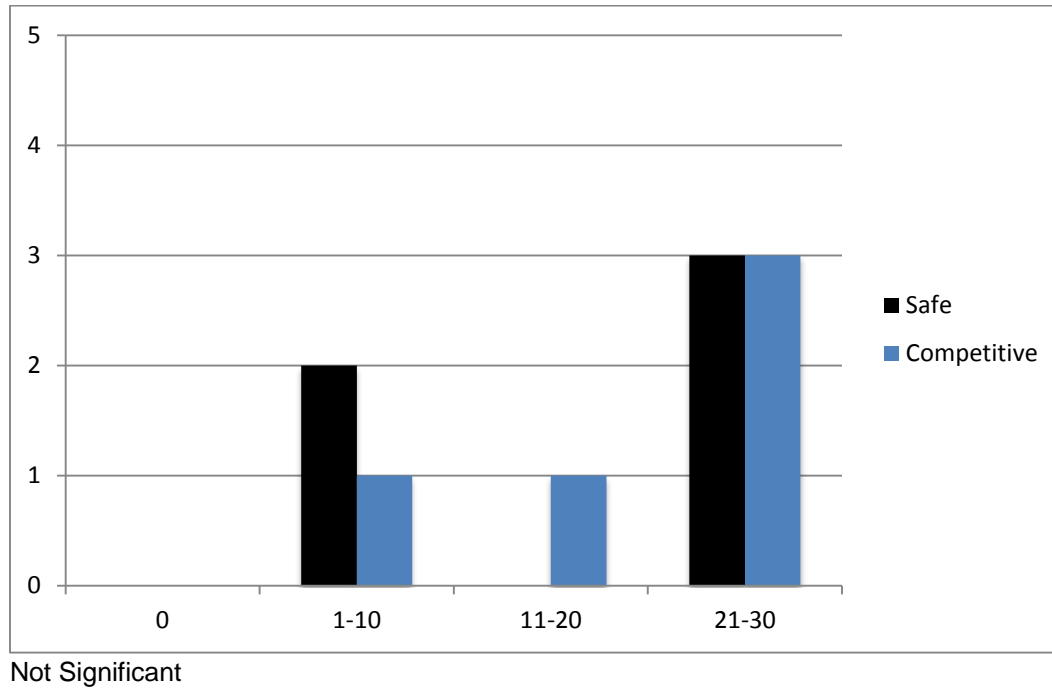
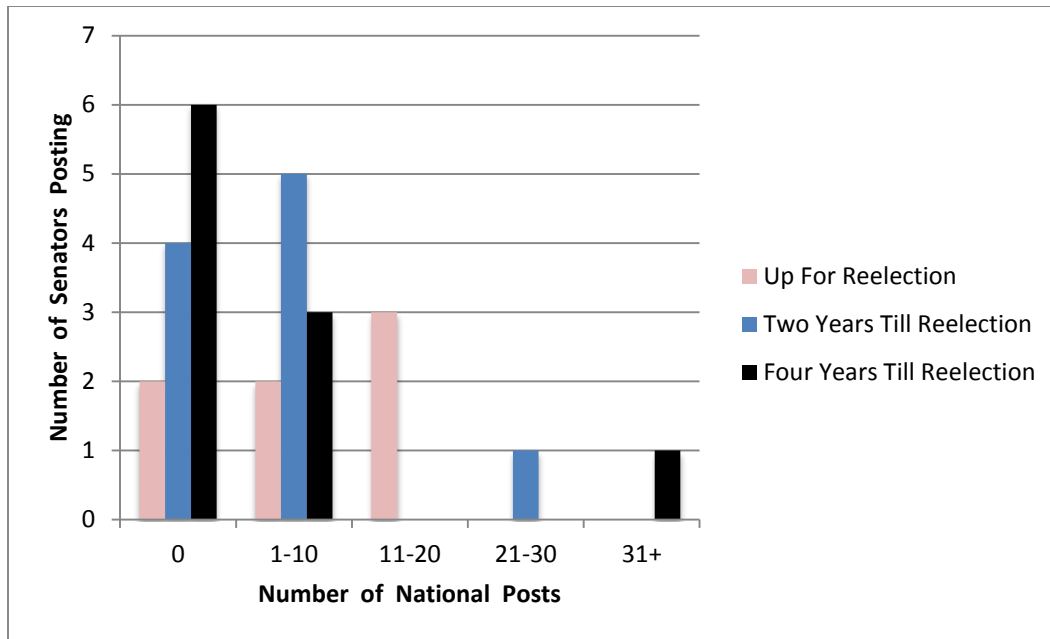


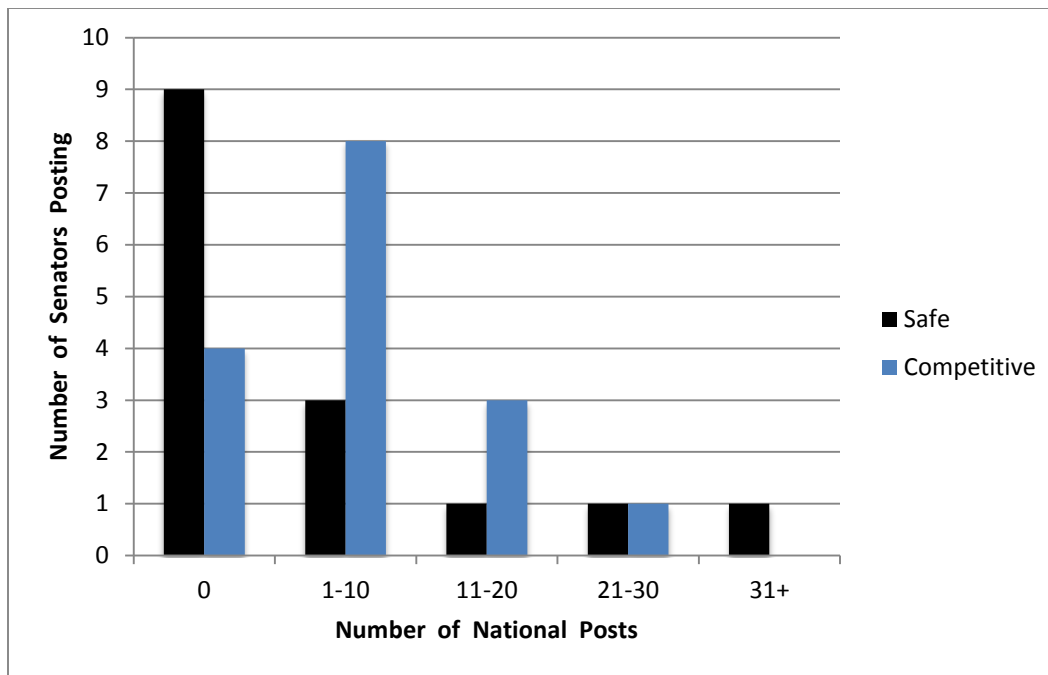
Figure 5-8 Seat Safety on Endorsement Posts



Not Significant

Figure 5-9 Senate Campaign Page – National Posts

Unlike with the other forms of posting, posts about national issues appear unaffected by election status. National posts are also independent of seat safety. The hypothesis that those in safe races would post more over national issues is disconfirmed. The theory was that those in safe races would be more inclined, not having to dedicate as much energy towards reelection aims, to communicate their views on national issues to their constituents. However, the relationship is not significant.

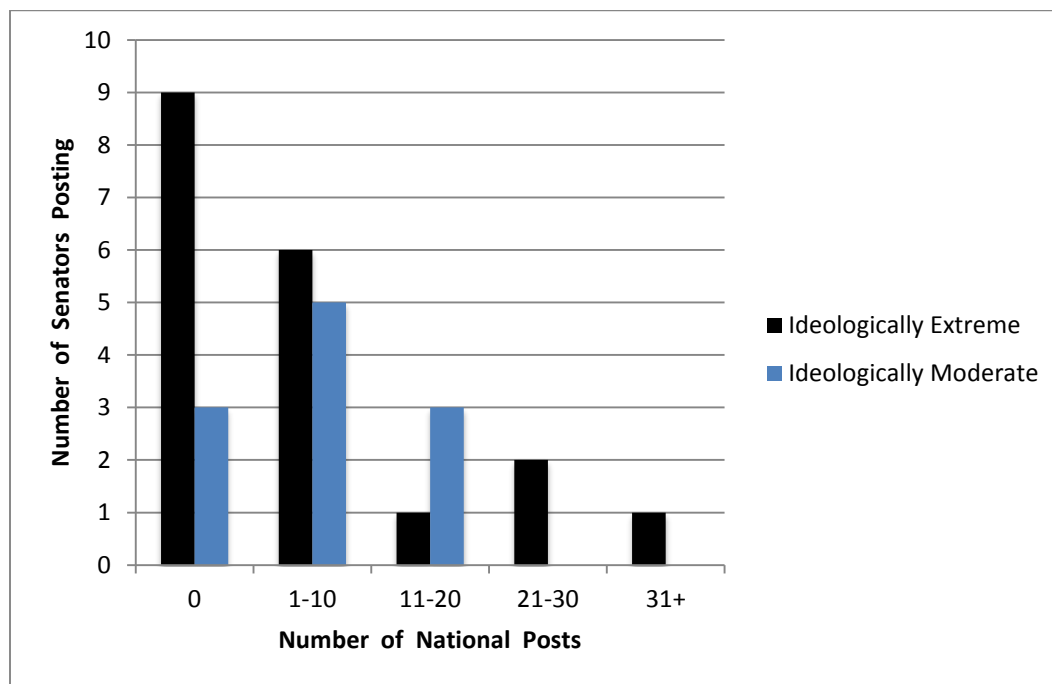


Not Significant

Figure 5-10 Seat Safety on National Posts

It was also hypothesized that national posts would be affected by how ideologically extreme a member was. Theoretically, a member who is more ideologically conservative or liberal would post more on national issues. Some members of strong ideological leanings come from states with similar ideological leanings. This, along with the growing partisan divide among the American electorate, may have inspired Senators in safe races to post more about national issues such as gay marriage, climate change, or the minimum wage. However, this hypothesis is not confirmed. While members still post occasionally over these issues, the primary focus of their posting is on campaign activity. It may be that this hypothesis is disconfirmed because these pages are designated as their campaign page and members consider advertisements, GOTV efforts, and negative attack ads more effective in improving their chances at reelection. Kristen Gillibrand, a Senator not up for reelection until 2018, shows an example of why

this may be the case. Gillibrand maintains her campaign page as her only official page and has yet to designate an official page that is linked to her government website. She is also the one Senator to post more on national content, 36 times, than the other Senators. This may indicate that Senators use the two pages for two distinct purposes. The government official page to communicate to their constituents about issues important to them and bypassing the filter of the traditional media, and the campaign page, used to rally their supporters. It may also point to the possible learning curve that some members have yet to fully embrace social media as a valuable resource.

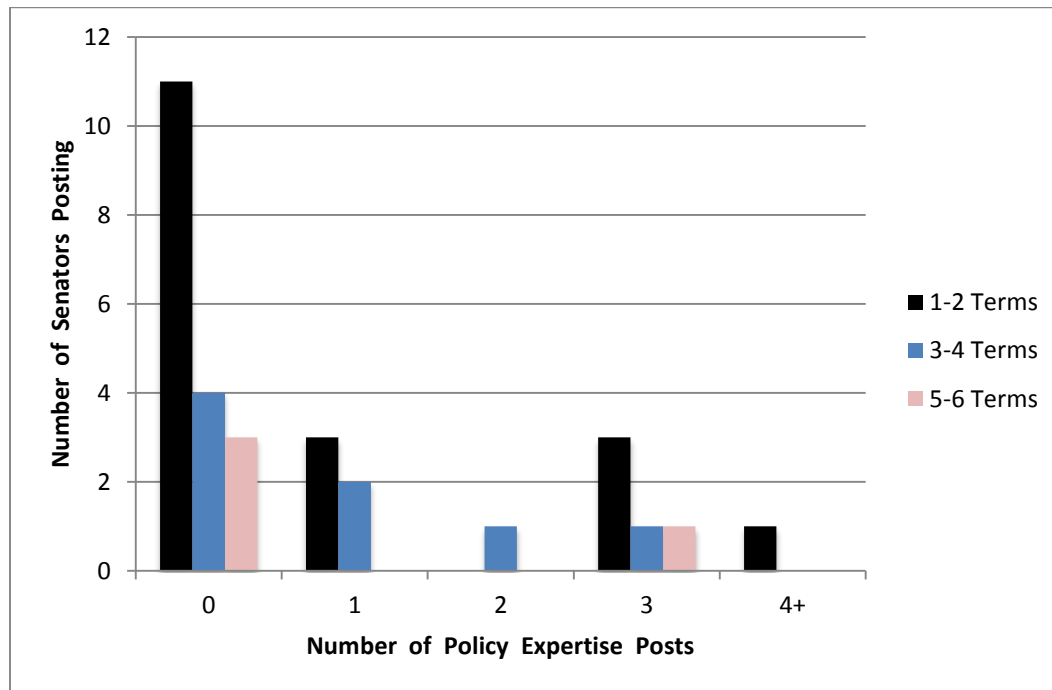


Not Significant

Figure 5-11 Ideological Leaning on National Posts

While the highest posters of national issues are ideologically extreme within their respective parties, there lacks any statistical significance to the relationship. Ideologically moderate and extreme Senators appear to be posting at around the same levels. Thus,

Hypothesis 2 predicting that ideologically extreme Senators would post more is not confirmed

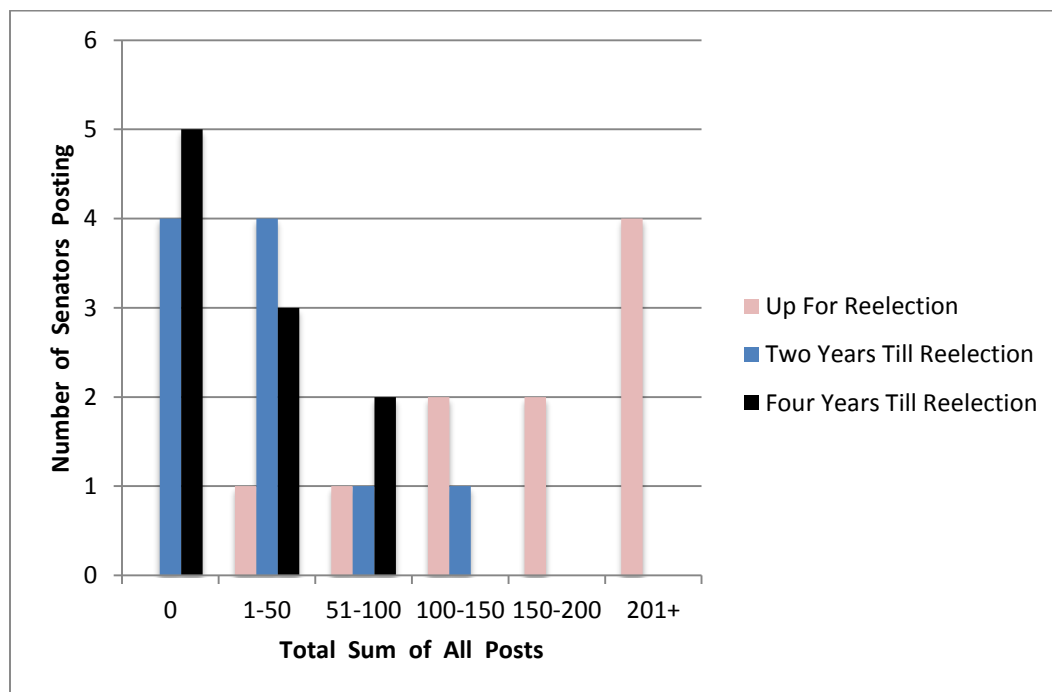


Not significant

Figure 5-12 Senate Campaign Page – Policy Expertise Posts

Figure 5-12 looks at policy expertise posts, posts that cover how the member has passed policy that has benefitted their constituency, and the number of terms served. It has been shown that more senior members often emphasize their past successes in Congress that have served their districts or states. Theoretically, more senior Senators would use Facebook to underscore how they have brought federal dollars and beneficial policy to improve the lives of their constituents. However, this is not the case. Not only is there no pattern in revealed in policy expertise posts with terms length as an independent variable, these types of posts are rarely used at all.

The hypothesis that more senior members would use policy expertise posts is not confirmed. It is surprising that these types of posts are not more frequent. It may be that more senior member see more of a benefit in using Facebook for more current issues and campaign content than remind their followers of their past record. The policy expertise posts themselves are also about bills that were passed within the last few days of when the post was written on the members' walls. It is likely that members see Facebook as something to use for current information and want to keep the news feed focused on events in real time.



$p < .001$

Figure 5-13 Senate Campaign Page – Total Posts

Figure 5-13 shows the relationship between election status and the total number of all posts posted on the Senators' campaign page. Senators up for reelection, as expected, post more overall than the Senators not up for reelection, thus confirming the fifth hypothesis of the study as far as the campaign pages of Senators are concerned.

There is, however, some overlap between the two groups that cannot be explained by seat safety or ideological extreme. Election status is the only identifier that is a reliable predictor on the frequency of posting on the Senators' campaign pages. The hypothesis asserting those in safe seats will post less is not confirmed. While this hypothesis holds true for campaign related content it is not so for total number of posts overall.

Table 5-2 Senate Campaign District Image, National, And Total Posts

| Name | Election Status | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Jeff Sessions | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Susan Collins | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Moderate | 151 | 0 | 198 |
| Dick Durbin | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 22 | 14 | 112 |
| Tim Scott | Up For Reelection | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 21 | 8 | 74 |
| Al Franken | Up For Reelection | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 23 | 21 | 221 |
| Mitch McConnell | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 5 | Extreme | 13 | 2 | 130 |
| Kay Hagan | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 13 | 13 | 200 |
| Mary Landrieu | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 3 | Moderate | 27 | 6 | 225 |
| Jeanne Shaheen | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 64 | 12 | 273 |
| Mark Begich | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 57 | 12 | 316 |
| Harry Reid | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 5 | Extreme | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Rand Paul | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 4 | 21 | 141 |
| Kelly Ayotte | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 5 | 1 | 9 |
| Patty Murray | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 4 | Extreme | 10 | 6 | 24 |
| Chuck Schumer | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 3 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ron Wyden | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 6 | 6 | 22 |
| Chuck Grassley | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 6 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 5-3 Senate Campaign District Image, National, And Total Posts Continued

| Name | Election Status | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------------------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Jerry Moran | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 6 | 3 | 51 |
| Barbara Mikulski | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 5 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lisa Murkowski | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jeff Flake | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sherrod Brown | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 2 | Extreme | 9 | 6 | 19 |
| Martin Heinrich | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Dean Heller | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Heidi Heitkamp | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 10 | 6 | 55 |
| Deb Fischer | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sheldon Whitehouse | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| John Brasso | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dianne Feinstein | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kristen Gillibrand | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 11 | 36 | 66 |

The mixed confirmation of hypotheses suggests Senators are still overcoming a steep learning curve when it comes to using Facebook. This is perhaps the most surprising observation made in this section. Campaign and Negative posts follow a predictable pattern depending on reelection status and seat safety. However, much of the behavior is erratic and follows no observable pattern. Susan Collins, for example, a Senator in a solidly safe race, posted a total of 198 posts compared to Mitch McConnell, a Senator in a competitive race, who posted a total of 130. Collins engages in little campaign related content on her news feed and instead posts more often about her appearances around her state. Meanwhile, Collins neglects her government official page as she only posts 44 times on that page. Al Franken follows much the same pattern as Collins does, posting 221 times on his campaign page and not posting anything on his government official page.

Further evidence supporting this learning curve theory is the variety of campaign techniques that occur sporadically among the Senators. Al Franken and Kay Hagan frequently posted about volunteer opportunities with their campaign that refer viewers to locations where they can help block walk or make phone calls during specific time frames. Mark Begich posts extensive details about his campaign schedule, giving specific times and locations people can come to hear him talk. Most Senators up for reelection and in competitive race tend to use these types of posts but at strikingly different rates. This suggests that the Senators' campaign teams are still experimenting with different strategies when it comes to Facebook.

Overall, Senators appear to be using their campaign pages sparingly, as if Facebook had an associated cost. This is to say that, for the most part, Senators not up for reelection tend to disregard their Facebook pages with a few exceptions. Rand Paul, for example, is the only Senator not up for Reelection who posts at a similar level to the

Senators up for reelection in 2014. This anomaly is likely due to his 2016 Presidential bid as no other Senator not up for reelection had a similar level of posting.

Table 5-4 Senate Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts

| Name | Election Status | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | Engagement | Volunteer | Fundraising |
|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------|---------------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Jeff Sessions | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Susan Collins | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Moderate | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Dick Durbin | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 11 | 5 | 0 |
| Tim Scott | Up For Reelection | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Al Franken | Up For Reelection | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 18 | 58 | 6 |
| Mitch McConnell | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 5 | Extreme | 3 | 3 | 10 |
| Kay Hagan | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 5 | 39 | 1 |
| Mary Landrieu | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 3 | Moderate | 33 | 8 | 8 |
| Jeanne Shaheen | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 21 | 21 | 0 |
| Mark Begich | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 81 | 18 | 0 |
| Harry Reid | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 5 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Rand Paul | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 20 | 0 | 2 |
| Kelly Ayotte | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Patty Murray | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 4 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chuck Schumer | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 3 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ron Wyden | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chuck Grassley | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 6 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jerry Moran | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 3 | 0 | 0 |

Table 5-5 Senate Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts Continued

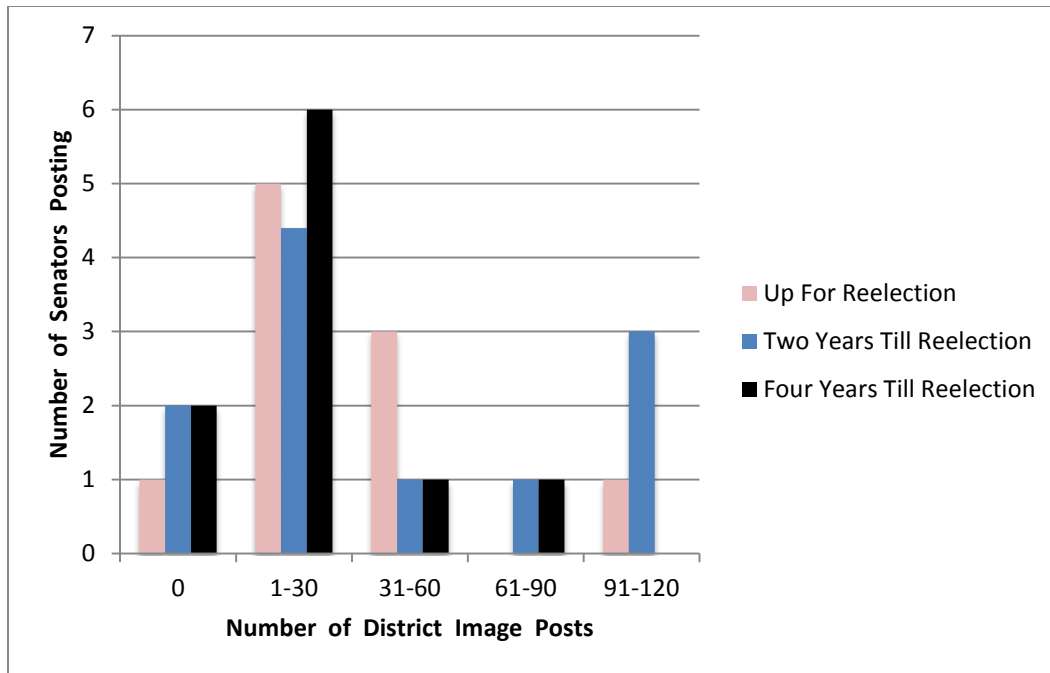
| Name | Election Status | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | Engagement | Volunteer | Fundraising |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Barbara Mikulski | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 5 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lisa Murkowski | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jeff Flake | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sherrod Brown | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 2 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Martin Heinrich | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dean Heller | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Heidi Heitkamp | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Deb Fischer | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sheldon Whitehouse | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| John Brasso | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dianne Feinstein | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kristen Gillibrand | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Senate Official Posts

The government official pages of the Senators reveal a different methodology when posting versus the observed behavior when using their campaign pages. While the Senators' campaign pages revealed some noticeable patterns the activity on their government official pages tend to be more unpredictable. For example, reelection status and seat safety as independent variables do not have any significant relationship with any of the dependent variables as shown in the charts below.

The primary difference among the government official pages is the absence of campaign related content. This is expected as the pages are linked to their government websites and using them is considered a government resource. Thus, comparing hypotheses about campaign content to the campaign pages is not an option. However, the effect of the independent variables on the other types of posting can be compared to the behavior observed above.

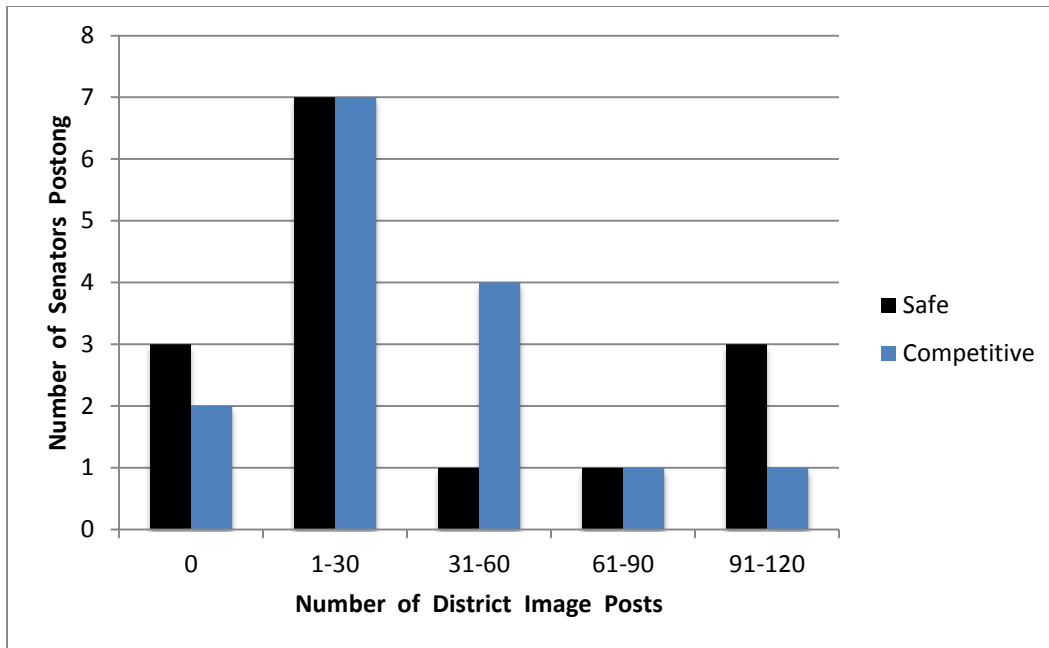
Unlike with the results observed with the campaign pages, district image posts are not affected by election status. The use of these posts by the observed Senators appears to occur randomly. Therefore, the relationship observed in Figure 5-5, where the Senators up for reelection post more district image posts, may have been a spurious one. Demonstrating a connection with your constituents can only be beneficial and even the Senators in safe races appear to share this belief. The Senators that use Facebook and post often are more inclined to include posts about their state.



Not Significant

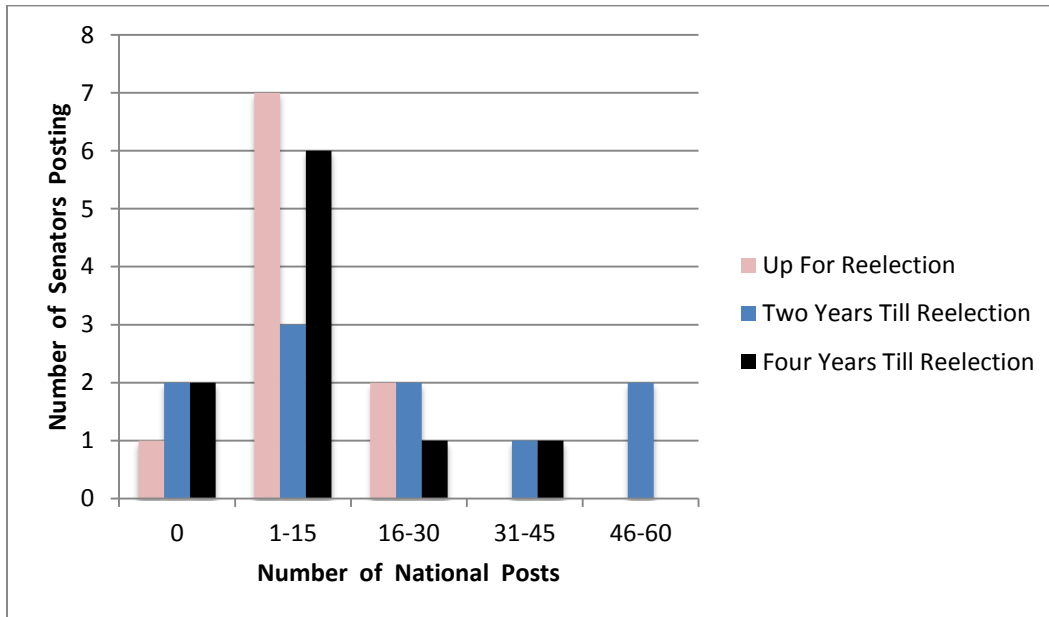
Figure 5-14 Senate Official Page – District Image Posts

Figure 15 displays the number of district image posts compared with the Senators' seat safety status as an independent variable. Much like reelection status, seat safety has no influence over the amount of district image posts a Senator makes. These posts appear to be used among most of the Senators, just at different rates. The hypothesis suggesting competitive races will post more district image posts is not confirmed.



Not Significant

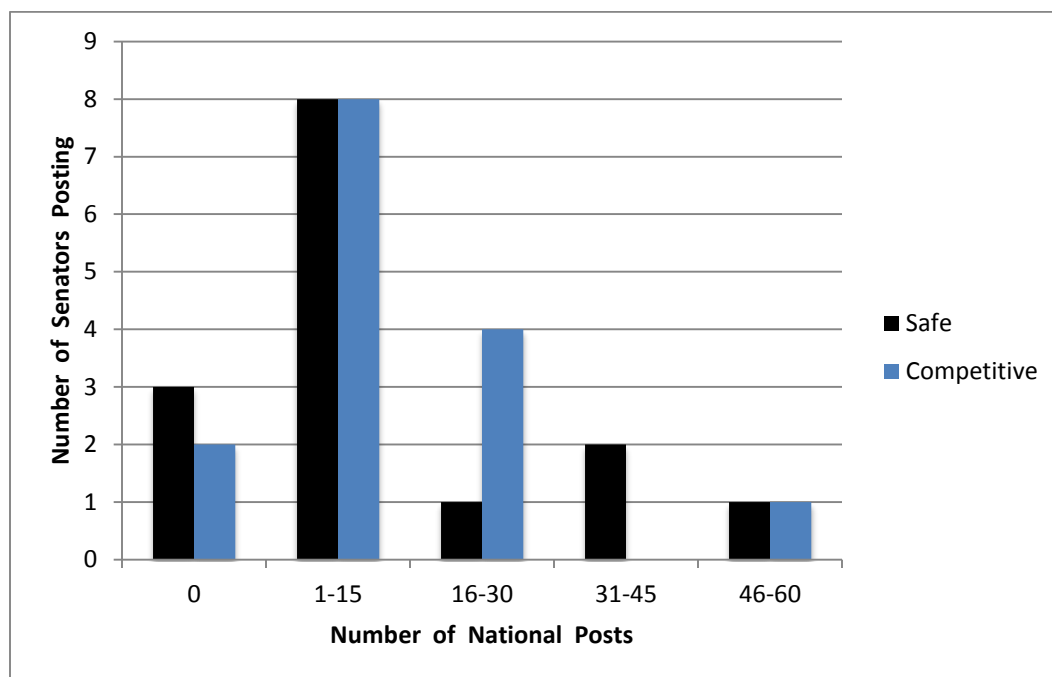
Figure 5-15 Senate Official Page – Seat Safety on District Image Posts



Not Significant

Figure 5-16 Senate Official Page – National Posts

National posts are also unaffected by election status, a prevailing theme for the government official pages of the Senators examined in this study. While election status appeared to be the most significant predictor of how Senators posted on their campaign pages, it is not a determining factor for how they use their designated official pages. This behavior could indicate that the government official pages are operated without election cycles in mind. The Senators could see their official page as a means to connect with their constituents and communicate important issues to them. As these pages are linked to their Senate websites, they may see these pages as more of an extension of that website. It could also mean that Senators, or their staff, are using Facebook without consideration as to what makes an effective strategy on Facebook.

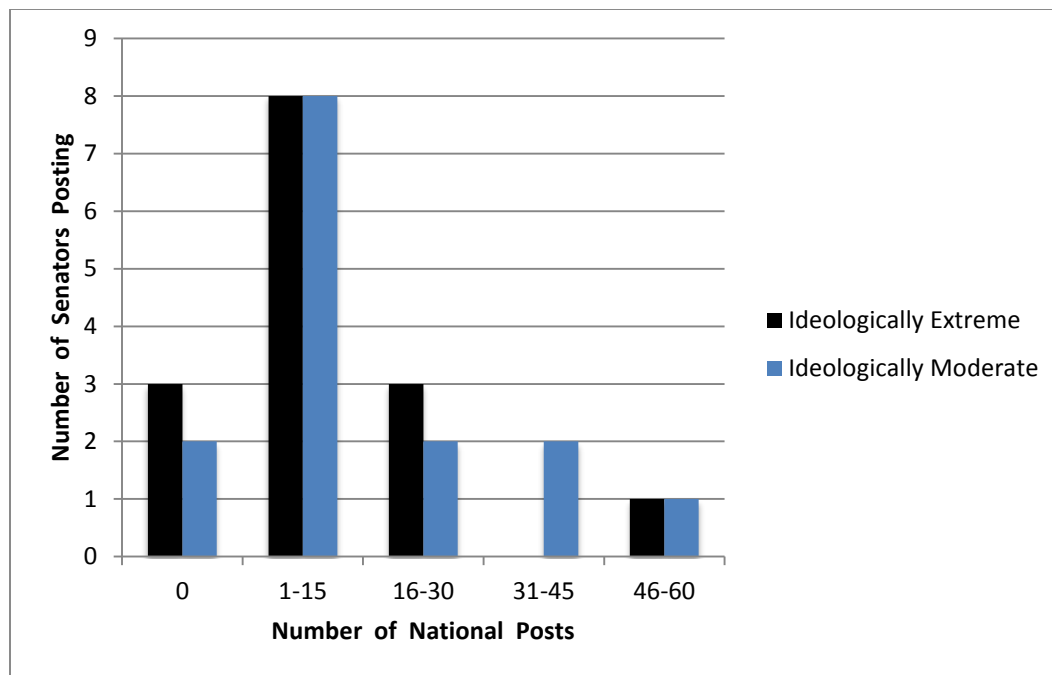


Not Significant

Figure 5-17 Senate Official Page – Seat Safety on National Posts

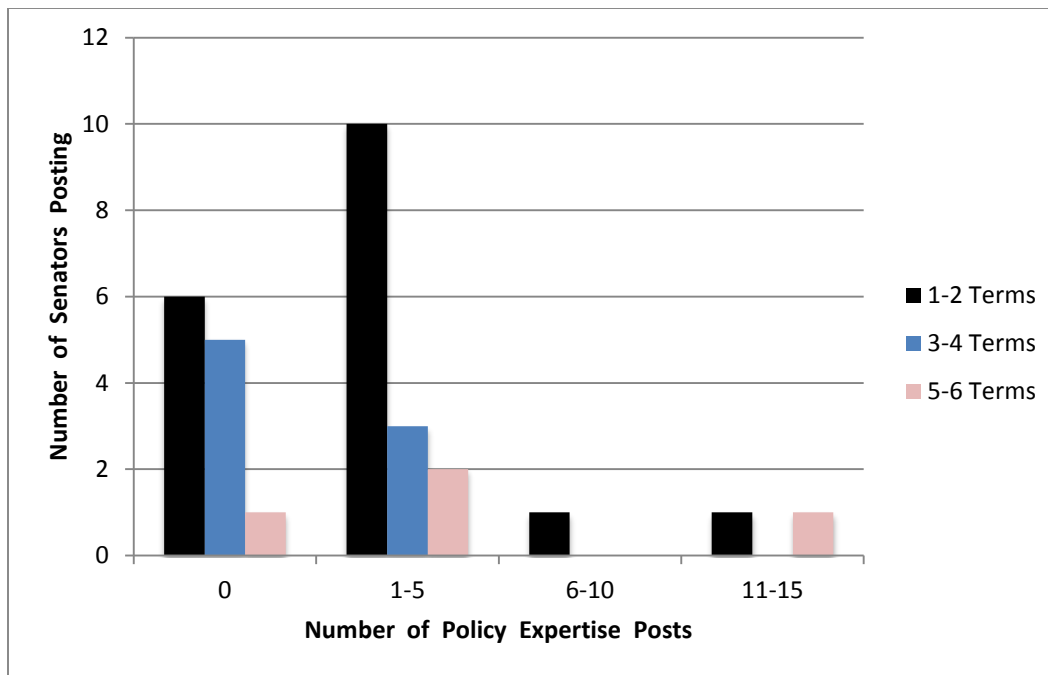
National posts are also used by Senators regardless of their seat safety or their ideological extreme. This behavior is similar to the behavior observed in the campaign

pages. It would make sense, if Facebook were being used methodically, that Senators in safe races would be at a greater liberty to post more over national issues than those in competitive races. Even more surprising is the behavior shown in Figure 18 below. Ideologically extreme members are no more likely to discuss national issues than their more moderate counterparts. Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4, that safe and ideologically extreme Senators will post more national posts, are not confirmed.



Not Significant

Figure 5-18 Senate Official Page – Ideological Extreme on National Posts



Not Significant

Figure 5-19 Senate Official Page – Policy Expertise Posts

Policy expertise posts observed in Figure 19 above are one of the least used types of posts among member of Congress. Particularly surprising is that the more senior members are not the only ones posting about their role in crafting policy solutions. More senior members were thought to post more on their policy expertise as they would have a larger record of crafting and sponsoring public policy solutions. However, this is not the case. Junior Senators appear just as likely to post about their role in legislation, bills they have sponsored, and how they are going to fix a particular problem or issue. The third hypothesis in this study is not confirmed.

The reason more senior members are not the highest posters of policy expertise posts is the nature of posting in Facebook that has become apparent from this study. Posts appear to be made based on real time events in response to a news story or other

event and are also made recently after the Senator has introduced a bill or after it has passed. For example:

“I’m continuing my push for reform and accountability in the federal VA system for our military veterans. My most recent bill will claw back bonuses paid to VA employees who falsely manipulated patient waiting lists so their job performance would look better. VA personnel must be held accountable for their actions, otherwise the current system of mediocrity and failure will remain.”

Posted on September 18, 2014.

- Mitch McConnell

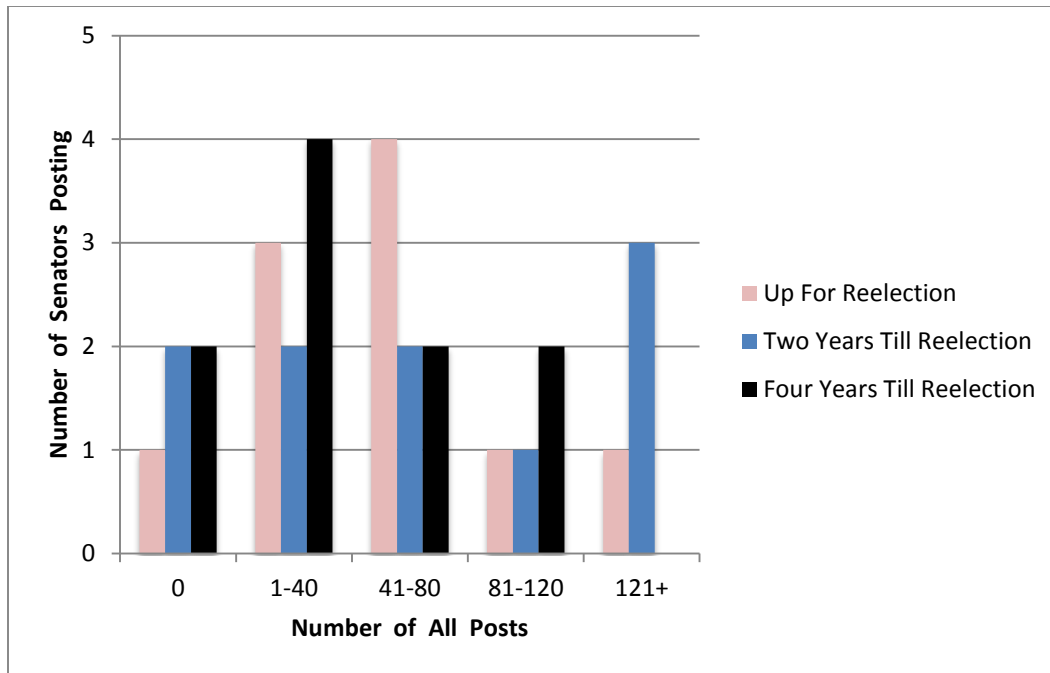
“I am proud to have helped break the gridlock in Washington to make a difference for New Hampshire veterans. This bipartisan bill keeps the promise we make to veterans: that they will be able to receive the care they need.

Read more and join me in thanking our veterans: <http://goo.gl/giOV58>”

Posted on August 1, 2014

- Jeanne Shaheen

The nature of Senators to post in real time, generally in the wake of their bill being passed, may explain the low amount of these posts in general. Typically, a common element in Facebook posting among the members of Congress in all types of posts is that they are made during or shortly after an event has occurred. For this reason, policy expertise posts may depend on when a member’s bills or policy get passed into law.



Not Significant

Figure 5-20 Senate Official Page – Total Number of Posts

Reelection status does not appear to have any effect on the total sum of all posts made by the Senators on their government official pages. Seat safety, likewise, is not shown to be a significant predictor of the frequency of posts made overall. In some instances it appears that those up for reelection and in competitive races may diminish their online presence on the official pages. Hagan, Landrieau, and Shaheen each posted over 200 times on their campaign pages but posted relatively little on their government official pages.

Table 5-6 Senate Official District Image, National, And Totals Posts

| Name | Election Status | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------|---------------------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Jeff Sessions | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 3 | 14 | 47 |
| Susan Collins | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Moderate | 25 | 11 | 44 |
| Dick Durbin | Up For Reelection | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 4 | 11 | 17 |
| Tim Scott | Up For Reelection | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 48 | 11 | 102 |
| Al Franken | Up For Reelection | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mitch McConnell | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 5 | Extreme | 37 | 20 | 76 |
| Kay Hagan | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 8 | 6 | 27 |
| Mary Landrieu | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 3 | Moderate | 22 | 9 | 34 |
| Jeanne Shaheen | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 31 | 12 | 45 |
| Mark Begich | Up For Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 91 | 16 | 127 |
| Harry Reid | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 5 | Extreme | 12 | 18 | 37 |
| Rand Paul | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 10 | 49 | 78 |
| Kelly Ayotte | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 53 | 7 | 73 |
| Patty Murray | Two Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 4 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chuck Schumer | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 3 | Moderate | 69 | 10 | 94 |
| Ron Wyden | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chuck Grassley | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 6 | Moderate | 118 | 55 | 179 |

Table 5-7 Senate Official District Image, National, And Totals Posts Continued

| Name | Election Status | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|--------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Jerry Moran | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 116 | 44 | 146 |
| Barbara Mikulski | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 5 | Moderate | 24 | 11 | 35 |
| Lisa Murkowski | Two Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 114 | 24 | 148 |
| Jeff Flake | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 3 | 13 | 24 |
| Sherrod Brown | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 2 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Martin Heinrich | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 56 | 28 | 94 |
| Dean Heller | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 9 | 4 | 17 |
| Heidi Heitkamp | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 75 | 12 | 120 |
| Deb Fischer | Three Years Until Reelection | Competitive | 1 | Extreme | 27 | 7 | 49 |
| Sheldon Whitehouse | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 12 | 12 | 24 |
| John Brasso | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 4 | 3 | 14 |
| Dianne Feinstein | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 17 | 32 | 53 |
| Kristen Gillibrand | Three Years Until Reelection | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Posting on government official pages appears scattered and with no better explanation than that some Senators are using Facebook and others are neglecting it. Senators such as Mark Begich, Chuck Grassley, Jerry Moran, and Heidi Heitkamp who post over 100 times during the three-month period tend to keep the focus on their own states (district image posts). Other Senators such as Kristen Gillibrand, Ron Wyden, and Al Franken do not use an official page at all. Others such as Sheldon Whitehouse and Harry Reid designate an official page yet barely use it over the three-month period. The amount of social media options now available may be overwhelming some offices. Not only do the staff of MCs need to keep up with two Facebook pages, they are having to maintain two different Twitter feeds, an entirely different form of social media all together. With Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr, Google+, Tumblr, and many more social networking options appearing each day the options to communicate directly to ones constituents and bypass the traditional media have never been greater. However, doing so takes a more extensive communication team than what has been traditionally used and where some offices have adapted quickly to this new technology others still lack behind (Johnson 2004).

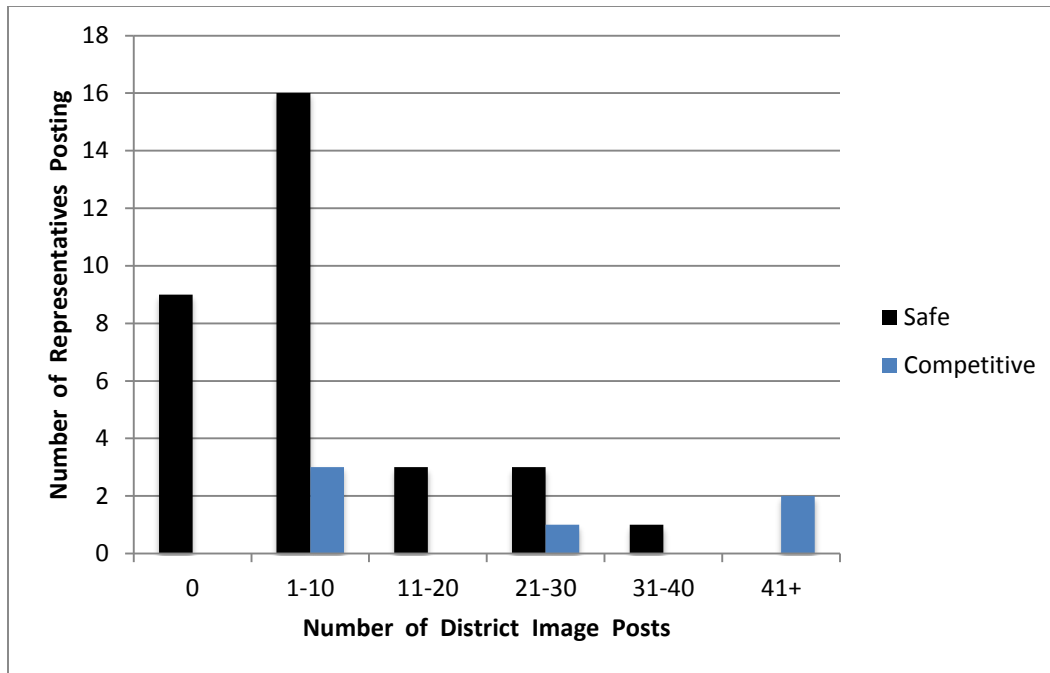
While the size of communications staffs have increased, understanding of social media appears to be lagging behind. Why would Chuck Grassley and Jerry Moran, Senators two years away from reelection, post more often than Kay Hagan and Mary Landrieu, two Senators up for reelection in highly competitive races in 2014? With no independent variables having any noticeable effect on Facebook activity it looks as though Senators are still experimenting with the technology or have yet to recognize it as a valuable resource.

House Campaign Posts

For House members, the significant relationships are almost nonexistent. One reason why it is difficult to find any reliable predictors to determine members' Facebook usage is a small n size. There were few races marked as competitive by Cook Political Report in 2014. Also, there were few polls published covering the races of House members. In addition, the dependent variables often lack a large enough n size for any statistical test. In many instances, certain posts are only used by two or three members. For example, Carol Shea-Poter was the only member who posted any significant amount of negative posts (69 total) on her campaign page. Tom Marino posted 10 negative posts on his campaign page and six other members only posted less than five negative posts. This holds true for other forms of posting such as posts discussing national issues and campaign posts.

In the instances that the dependent variables have a sufficient n size, such as total number of posts made, there is no significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Members in safe races are not shown to post any differently than members in competitive races. The same holds true for political party and ideological extreme.

Another obvious difference among House members is that all member are up for reelection and thus reelection status is not factor considered here. As shown below, this noticeably alters the behavior of House members when using their campaign page.



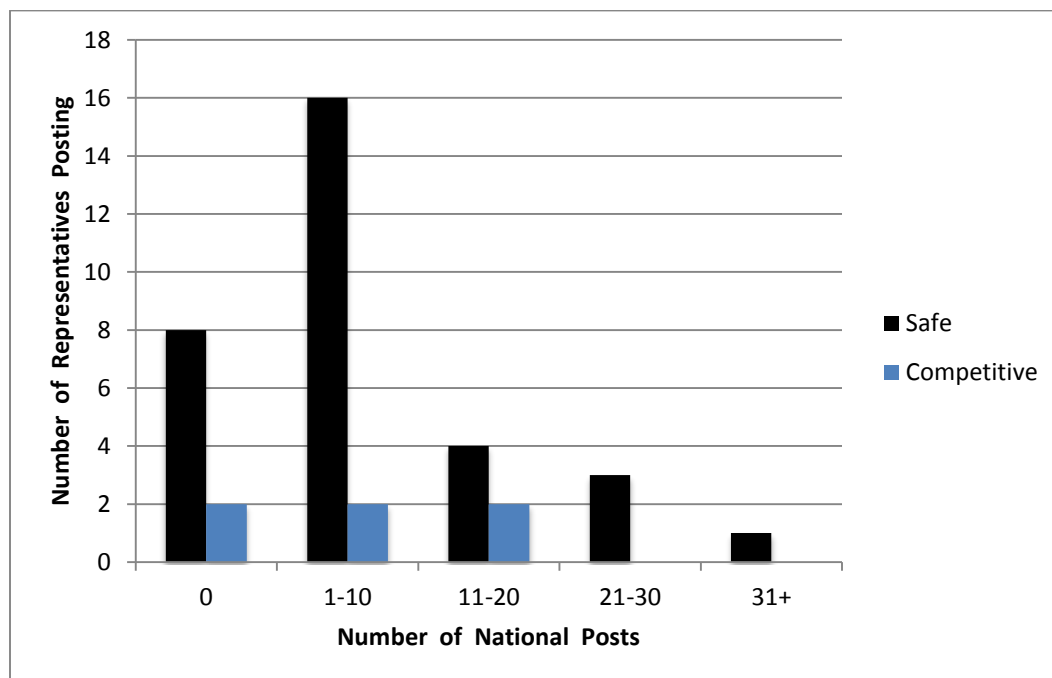
p < .05

Figure 5-21 House Campaign Page – District Image Posts

While election status is not a consideration for House members it was still expected that there would be a correlation between seat safety and the posting behavior. While there is a smaller sample size of competitive seats to observe in the House sample, it is not any less than the sample of Senators up for reelection and in competitive races observed in the above section. For this reason, it is expected that similar behavior will be exhibited by House members in competitive races.

While there is no significant relationship observed in Figure 5-21, it does mirror the behavior the Senators displayed with their campaign pages. Seat safety does not show any impact on how often a members uses district image posts on their campaign page. The noticeable difference among Senators is that those up for reelection tend to post more district image posts. However, this was expected to be a spurious relationship as the Senators up for reelection posted more often in general. It is surprising that most

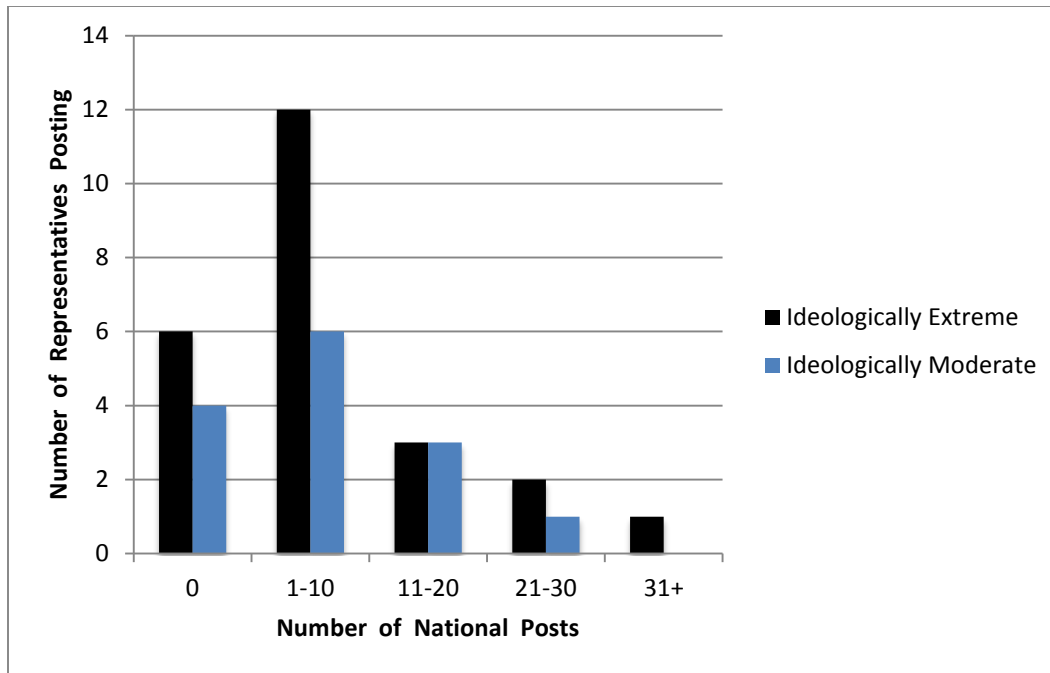
of the House members post relatively few district image posts. Nine chose not to post any while only ten posted more than 11 of these posts. Number of terms served, seat safety, party, ideological extreme, or any of the independent variables failed to reveal any relationship that could offer any explanation for how the members are posting. The only explanation, being much the same with Senators, is that some members post more often than others. Hypothesis 1, asserting competitive races will post more district image posts is unconfirmed.



Not a significant measure

Figure 5-22 House Campaign Page – Seat Safety on National Posts

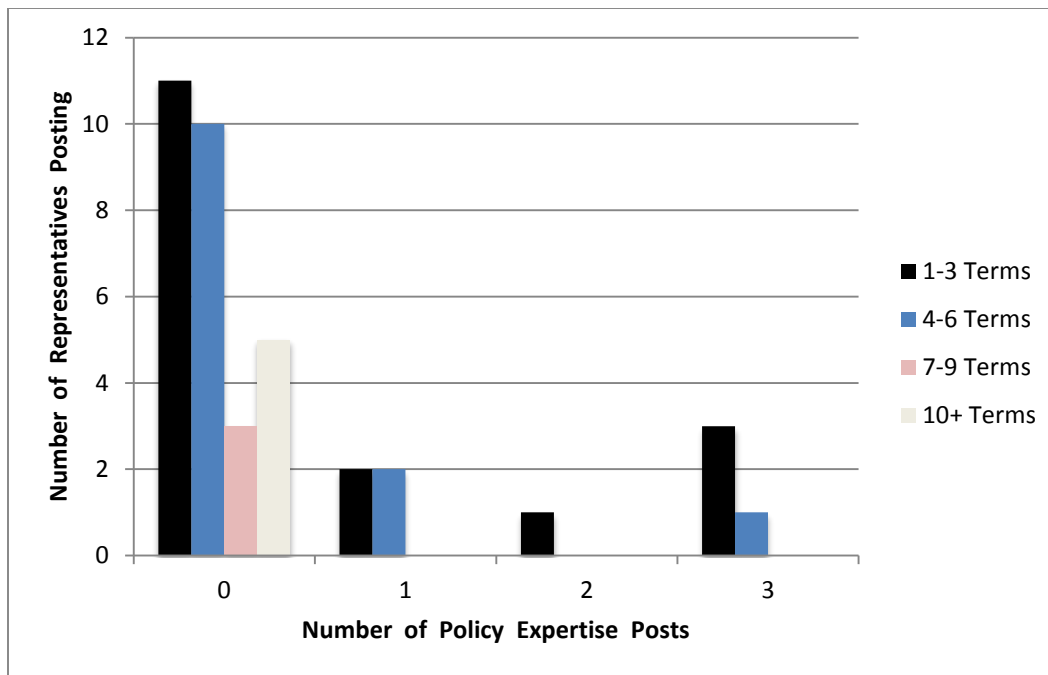
Figure 5-22 shows little evidence to confirm Hypothesis 2, which asserts that those in safe races will post more over nation issues. While the four highest commenters of national issues are in safe races, the majority of those in safe races do post overwhelmingly more national posts than those in competitive races. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is not confirmed.



Not a significant measure

Figure 5-23 House Campaign Page – Ideological Extreme on National Posts

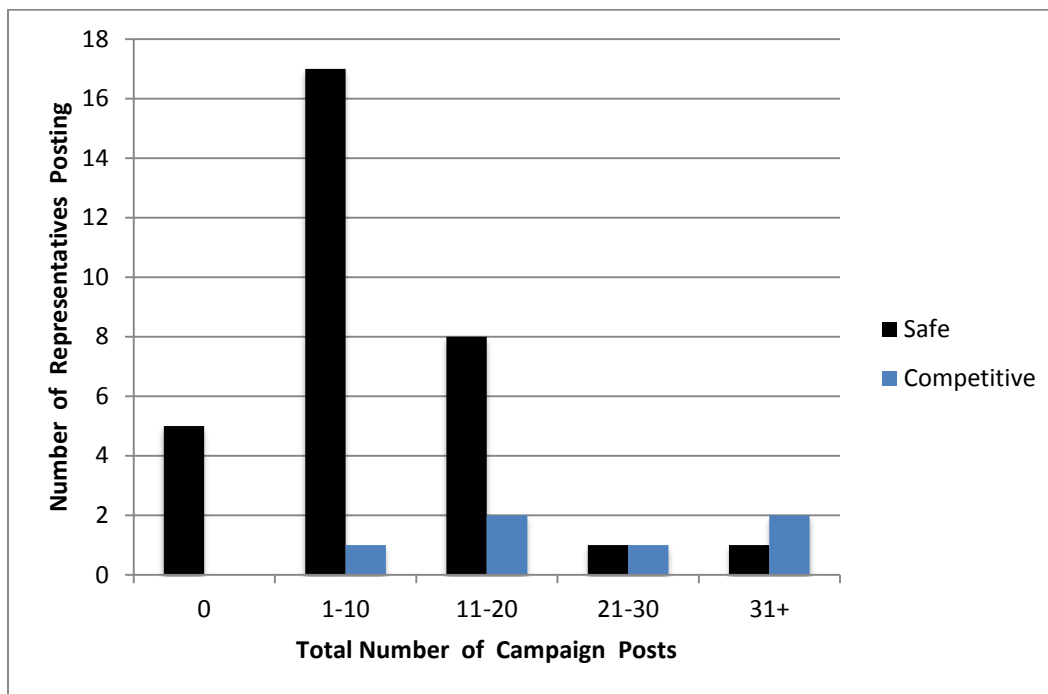
House members appear to have mirrored behavior to Senators up for reelection when using their campaign pages. Much like Figure 10, there is no observable dichotomy between ideologically extreme and ideologically moderate members when it comes to national posts. They actually appear to make these posts at around the same levels. Hypothesis 4 is not confirmed. This is again surprising as ideologically extreme members are more likely to run and campaign on their position of national issues.



Not Significant

Figure 5-24 House Campaign Page – Policy Expertise Posts

While both Senators and House members tend to post few policy expertise posts, House members appear to do so even less than their counterparts. Only nine House members make references to their expertise over given issues throughout the three-month period. The hypothesis is that more senior members, being more secure in their seat and focusing more on public policy in the later stages of their career (Fenno 1978) would post more about their activities in Congress. The highest posters are, however, the more junior members of the House. The third hypothesis of this study is not confirmed. This observation follows the trend seen by the Senators above. The policy expertise posts are centered on current events and are posted at most a few days after the bill leaves committee or is passed. While the hypothesis is not confirmed, it does reveal an interesting behavior trend on how members of Congress use Facebook.

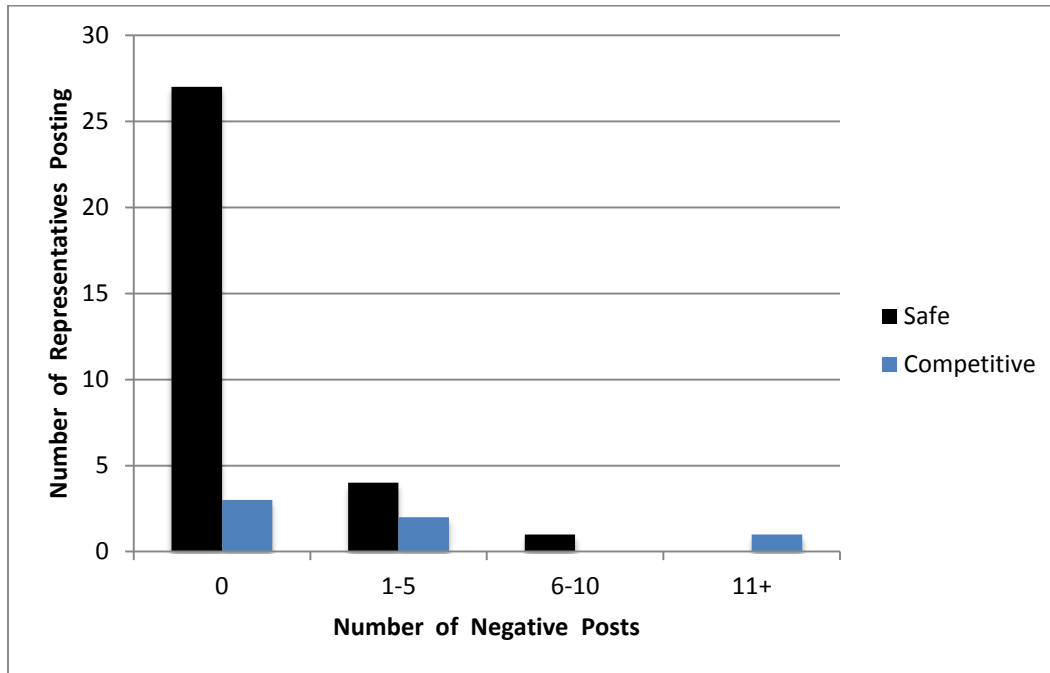


$p < .05$

Figure 5-25 House Campaign Page – Seat Safety on Campaign Posts

The behavior displayed in Figure 5-25 is surprising for two reasons. This behavior differs from the behavior displayed by Senators. First, the Senators in competitive races all posted over 50 campaign posts. When combined with their negative ads their campaign activity on their pages were in the hundreds per Senator observed. The competitive House members post relatively few amounts of campaign posts by comparisons. While the low number of posting by those in safe races is expected, there are House members in competitive races that make below 20 campaign posts. Second, there are House members in safe races that post on par with their competitive counterparts. All but one of the Senators in safe races did not post on par with any of the competitive Senators in terms of campaign posting. Still, there is some statistical significance shown that suggests House members in competitive races are

more likely to use campaign posts than those in safe races. Thus, Hypothesis 7 is confirmed, though not with the confidence it was when observing the posting of Senators.



Not Significant

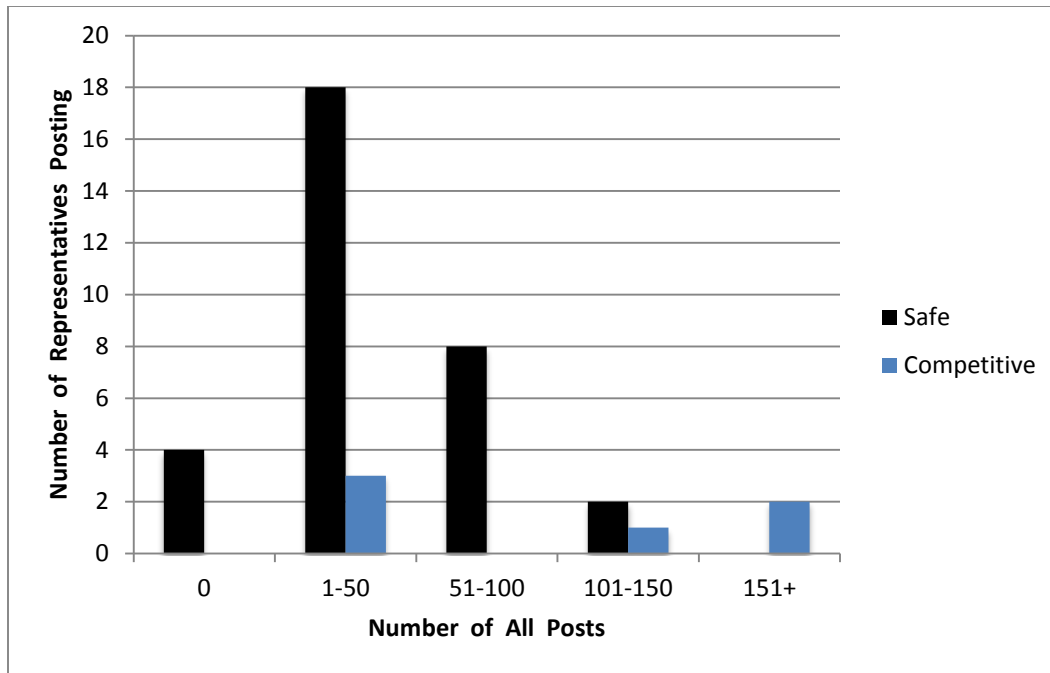
Figure 5-26 House Campaign Page – Seat Safety on Negative Posts

It was found that Senators in competitive races do post more negative posts than those in safe races, but do so at unpredictable rates. Most of the Senators in competitive races posted over 30 negative ads on their campaign pages with Mark Begich being the exception. For House members, Negative posting is not used as often. Only one person, Carol Shea-Porter, uses it at a level similar to Senators by posting 69 negative against her opponent. The next highest poster of negative ads is Tom Marino, posting 10 negative ads. After that, only 6 other members use negative ads during the three-month period and they do so sparingly, not posting more than five of them.

Half of those observed in competitive races decided not to post negative ads. While the highest poster of negative ads, Carol Shea-Porter, was likely in the most

competitive race among the House members it does not provide a strong basis to confirm the hypothesis tested here. This is especially true as the second highest poster is in a safe race. While the hypothesis is not confirmed, it appears that House members are more hesitant to post negative ads online versus Senators. This is particularly surprising, considering that House members face a constant reelection cycle versus the six-year terms of Senators. Because of the frequency of campaigning it would make sense that House members would be using new technological advances such as Facebook more effectively, or at least on par, with their Senate counterparts. While an argument could be made that House members are purposively avoiding negative posts in favor of another campaign strategy, the data shown in Figure 27 suggests differently.

Figure 5-27 shows the total sum of all posts made by House members on their campaign pages over the observed three-month period. The hypothesis that House members in competitive races would post more often than those in safe races is confirmed, but only barely. Half of those in competitive races post fewer than 50 times during the three-month period. Likewise, there are House members in comparatively safe seats that post far more than 50 times during the three-month period. Still, there is some observed significance in the above figure and members in competitive races are slightly more likely to use their campaign page than those in safe races. Furthermore, as shown in the table below, House members differ greatly in the types of posts they use. One example already discussed is Carol Shea-Porter being the sole House member to tap into Facebook for negative ad posting. Another example is the use of Facebook for fundraising purposes by relatively few members, most notably Barbara Lee and Raul Grijalva, both members in safe races. This behavior suggests that many House members are still not certain how to use Facebook effectively while others may be uncertain whether it is all that important towards winning election.



P < .05

Figure 5-27 House Campaign Page – Total Number of Posts

Table 5-8 House Campaign District Image, National, And Totals Posts

| Name | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| David Valadao | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 3 | 0 | 45 |
| Ed Perlmutter | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 22 | 6 | 85 |
| Paul Ryan | Safe | 8 | Extreme | 5 | 3 | 41 |
| Pete Visclosky | Safe | 15 | Extreme | 6 | 1 | 25 |
| Richard Hudson | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 11 | 28 | 69 |
| Patrick Murphy | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 43 | 5 | 121 |
| Tom Marino | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 40 | 22 | 117 |
| Tim Bishop | Competitive | 6 | Extreme | 9 | 7 | 46 |
| Cathy Rodgers | Safe | 5 | Moderate | 21 | 4 | 64 |
| Julia Brownley | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 5 | 0 | 15 |
| Jackie Walorskie | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 29 | 15 | 178 |
| Betty McCollum | Safe | 7 | Extreme | 4 | 3 | 26 |
| Marsha Blackburn | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 10 | 1 | 23 |
| Debbie Schultz | Safe | 5 | Extreme | 5 | 15 | 91 |
| Carol Shea-Porter | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 54 | 15 | 200 |
| Niki Tsongas | Competitive | 4 | Extreme | 26 | 2 | 57 |
| Andre Carson | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 10 | 1 | 40 |
| Keith Ellison | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 13 | 11 | 126 |
| Steven Horsford | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 5 | 16 | 70 |
| David Scott | Safe | 6 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Marc Veasey | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 2 | 3 | 23 |
| Hakeem Jeffries | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Chaka Fattah | Safe | 10 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Barbara Lee | Safe | 8 | Extreme | 0 | 41 | 85 |
| Karen Bass | Safe | 2 | Extreme | 0 | 4 | 16 |
| Joyce Beatty | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 3 | 1 | 27 |
| Gwen Moore | Safe | 5 | Extreme | 1 | 8 | 35 |

Table 5-9 House Campaign District Image, National, And Totals Posts Continued

| Name | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Sheila Jackson | Safe | 10 | Extreme | 4 | 3 | 13 |
| Terri Sewell | Safe | 2 | Extreme | 12 | 2 | 40 |
| Yvette Clark | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Raul Grijalva | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 1 | 26 | 74 |
| Raul Labrador | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 8 | 1 | 21 |
| Mario Diaz-Balart | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 4 | 0 | 9 |
| Albio Sires | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jaime Herrera | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 8 | 14 | 44 |
| Grace Napolitano | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ileana Ros-Lehtinen | Safe | 13 | Moderate | 1 | 3 | 16 |
| Nydia Velasquez | Safe | 11 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 5-10 House Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts

| Name | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | Engage | Volunteer | Fund. |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| David Valadao | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| Ed Perlmuter | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 6 | 13 | 0 |
| Paul Ryan | Safe | 8 | Extreme | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Pete Visclosky | Safe | 15 | Extreme | 1 | 7 | 0 |
| Richard Hudson | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Patrick Murphy | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 15 | 10 | 0 |
| Tom Marino | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 12 | 3 | 1 |
| Tim Bishop | Competitive | 6 | Extreme | 1 | 7 | 0 |
| Cathy Rodgers | Safe | 5 | Moderate | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| Julia Brownley | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Jackie Wal. | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 16 | 52 | 5 |
| Betty McCollum | Safe | 7 | Extreme | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Marsha Blackburn | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 2 | 3 | 0 |

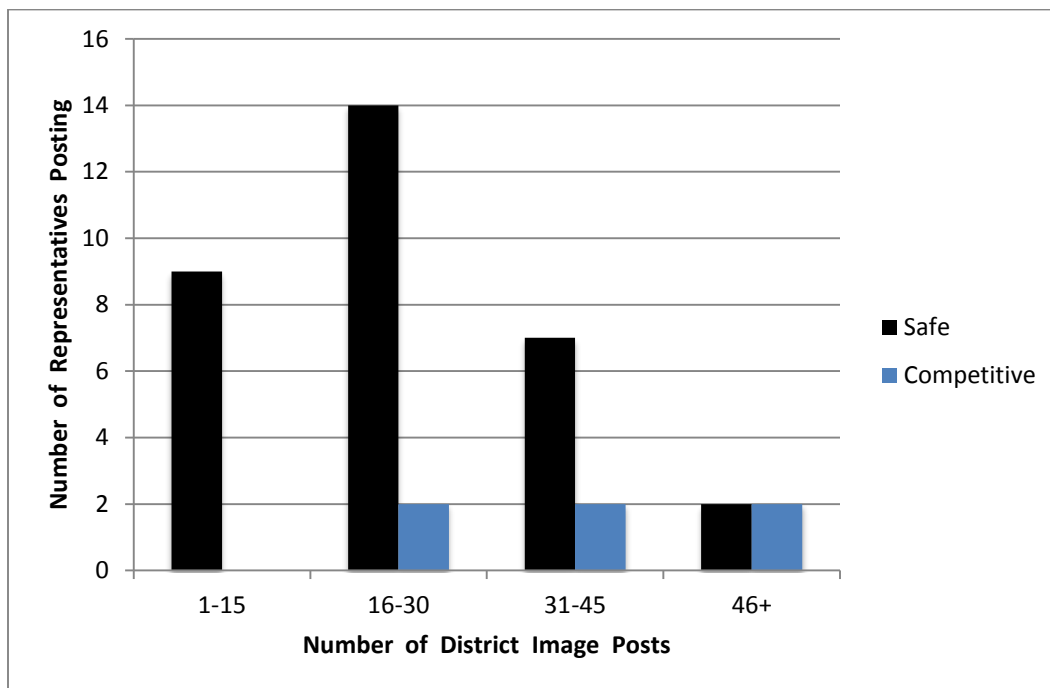
Table 5-11 House Campaign Engagement, Volunteer, and Fundraising Posts Continued

| Name | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | Engage | Volunteer | Fund. |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| Debbie Schultz | Safe | 5 | Extreme | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Carol Shea-Porter | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 4 | 18 | 0 |
| Niki Tsongas | Competitive | 4 | Extreme | 7 | 17 | 0 |
| Andre Carson | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 0 | 16 | 0 |
| Keith Ellison | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 13 | 28 | 11 |
| Steven Horsford | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 3 | 13 | 1 |
| David Scott | Safe | 6 | Moderate | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Marc Veasey | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Hakeem Jeffries | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chaka Fattah | Safe | 10 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Barbara Lee | Safe | 8 | Extreme | 0 | 1 | 22 |
| Karen Bass | Safe | 2 | Extreme | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Joyce Beatty | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Gwen Moore | Safe | 5 | Extreme | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Sheila Jackson | Safe | 10 | Extreme | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Terri Sewell | Safe | 2 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Yvette Clark | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Raul Grijalva | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 1 | 6 | 17 |
| Raul Labrador | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| Mario Diaz-Balart | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Albio Sires | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jaime Herrera | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Grace Napolitano | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ileana Ros-Lehtinen | Safe | 13 | Moderate | 0 | 0 | 0 |

House Official Posts

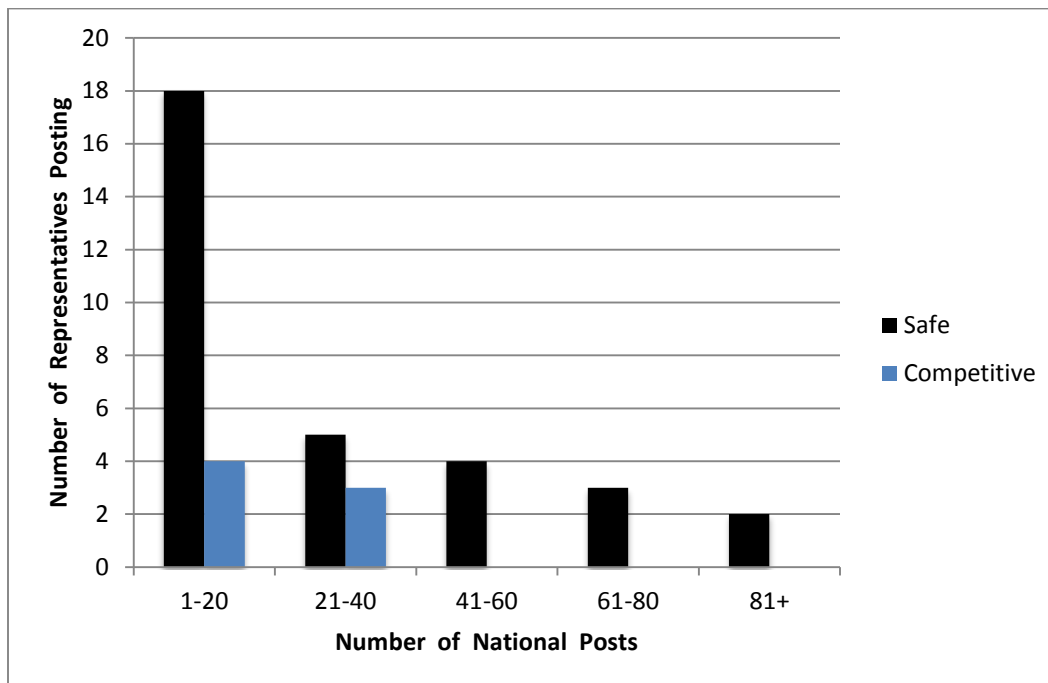
| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|------|----|---------|---|---|---|
| Nydia Velasquez | Safe | 11 | Extreme | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|-----------------|------|----|---------|---|---|---|

The official pages of House member yield much the same results as shown with the official pages of Senators. Figure 5-28, shown below, display district image posts made by senators in safe and competitive races. Much like with those in the Senate, there does not appear to be much of a difference between those in safe and competitive races. No statistical significance is observed, and there is no observable pattern among the two groups.



Not Significant

Figure 5-28 House Official Page – Seat Safety on District Image Posts



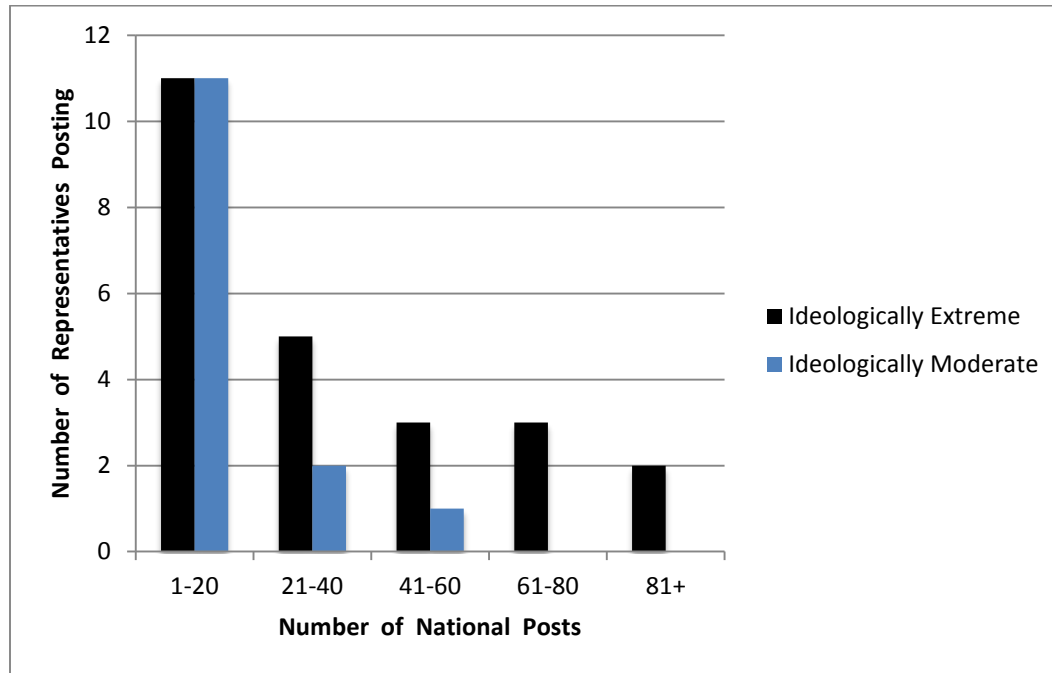
Not Significant

Figure 5-29 House Official Page – Seat Safety on National Posts

For national posts, safe and competitive races do reveal a slight pattern of what was expected among House members in safe races. As shown in Figure 5-29, those in competitive races do not post over 40 national posts during the three-month period while some members in safe races post at higher rates. However, as a majority of those in safe races tend to post around the same amounts of national posts as those in competitive races, there is not a strong enough basis to confirm the hypothesis.

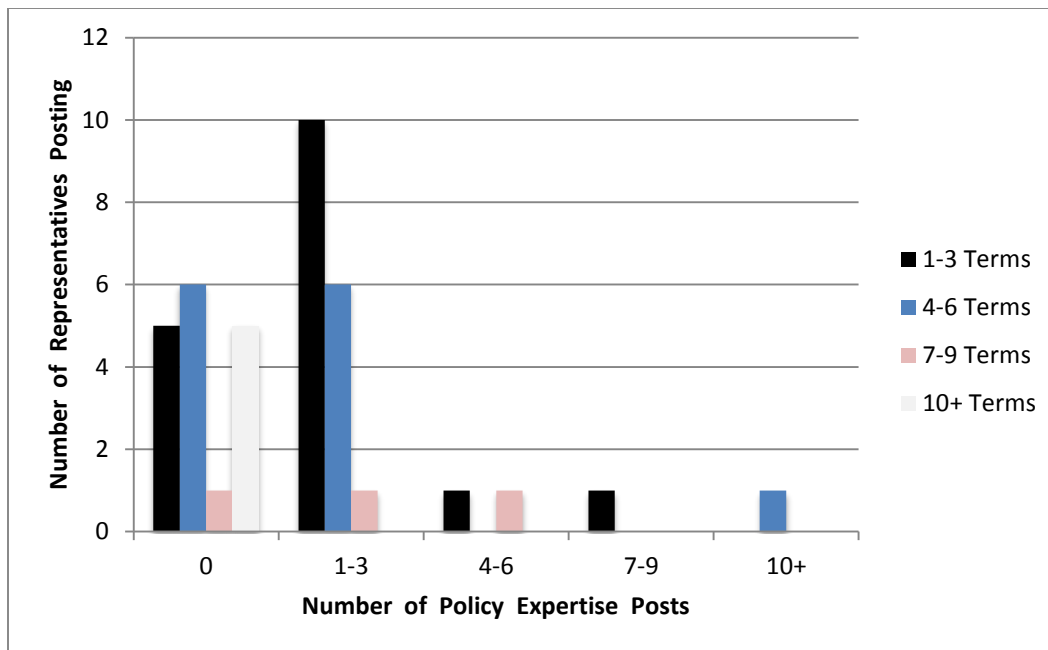
A member's position on the ideological spectrum has a similar relationship to national posting. As shown in Figure 30, behavior in posting national posts is largely the same for ideologically extreme and moderate House members. The members who posted the largest amount of national posts were ideologically extreme in respect to their own political parties. However, the majority of ideologically extreme members post at

similar levels as the more moderate members. Due to the lack of any statistical significance the hypothesis is not confirmed.



Not Significant

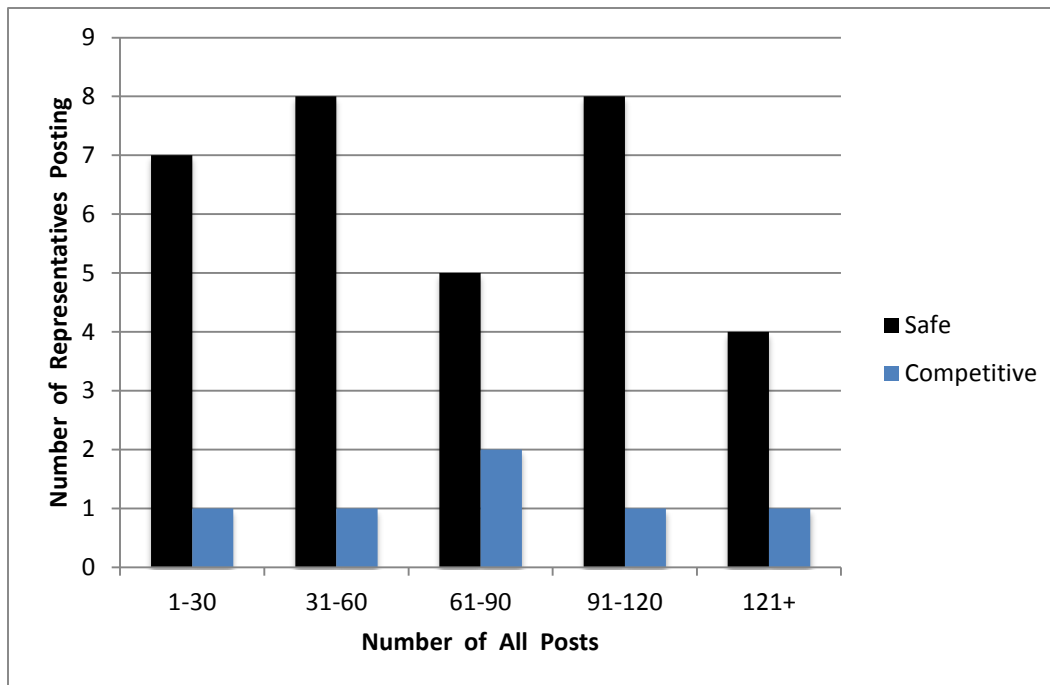
Figure 5-30 House Official Page – Ideological Extreme on National Posts



Not Significant

Figure 5-31 House Official Page – Terms on Policy Expertise Posts

The pattern observed among the Senators' official pages is much the same for House members' official pages in regards to policy expertise posts, as observed in the figure above. Continuing the same line of unconfirmed hypotheses, more senior members in the House are not more likely to post over their policy expertise. In fact, the most senior House members, those serving over ten terms, have not made any remarks about their policy expertise during the three-month period. As observed in the above sections, even the junior House members are likely to post about their policy expertise. Though it does remain a relatively low used form of posting as compared to other higher forms of posting such as district image posting. The hypothesis is unconfirmed. However, this does provide evidence to suggest the ongoing theory of a learning curve in this study as some members post and some do not. It also suggests that members post in a reactive manner to current events rather than posting over past events.



Not Significant

Figure 5-32 House Official Page – Seat Safety on Total Number of Posts

The growing amount of evidence for the learning curve theory is compounded in Figure 5-32 above. The hypothesis that competitive members would post more during the three-month period is not confirmed. House members in competitive and safe races post similar amounts of posting overall. They are evenly dispersed with some of the highest and lower posters being composed of members in safe and competitive races.

There does not appear to be any underlying reason for why House members are using their official pages. It may be for communication purposes and used by some members to keep their constituents updated on their activities and beliefs. There is a distinction between the campaign and official pages as far as both House and Senate members go. Both members use their campaign pages for tactics beyond negative ads and campaign posts. Some employ other types of posting such as engagement posts, volunteer posts, and fundraising posts. This style of posting is sporadic among the

members and not commonly employed. With such a small n size with these behaviors there is no way to test for significance. As can be viewed in Table 4 in the above section, a handful of House members use Facebook for fundraising, recruiting volunteers, and posting their schedules to engage their constituents. Government official pages, meanwhile, are typically only used for District Image posts with some members posting over national issues or posting in a non-campaign style (i.e. no fundraising or GOTV efforts).

Table 5-12 House Official District Image, National, and Total Posts

| Name | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| David Valadao | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 18 | 1 | 28 |
| Ed Perlmutter | Safe | 4 | Moderate | 18 | 1 | 28 |
| Paul Ryan | Safe | 8 | Extreme | 41 | 17 | 68 |
| Pete Visclosky | Safe | 15 | Extreme | 29 | 3 | 42 |
| Richard Hudson | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 32 | 31 | 98 |
| Patrick Murphy | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 91 | 18 | 122 |
| Tom Marino | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 15 | 16 | 49 |
| Tim Bishop | Competitive | 6 | Extreme | 31 | 23 | 80 |
| Cathy Rodgers | Safe | 5 | Moderate | 37 | 21 | 81 |
| Julia Brownley | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 37 | 33 | 75 |
| Jackie Walorskie | Competitive | 1 | Moderate | 93 | 6 | 120 |
| Betty McCollum | Safe | 7 | Extreme | 14 | 16 | 32 |
| Marsha Blackburn | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 29 | 72 | 131 |
| Debbie Schultz | Safe | 5 | Extreme | 39 | 39 | 91 |
| Carol Shea-Porter | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 30 | 13 | 48 |
| Niki Tsongas | Competitive | 4 | Extreme | 93 | 55 | 158 |
| Andre Carson | Safe | 3 | Extreme | 27 | 14 | 67 |
| Keith Ellison | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 16 | 22 | 50 |

Table 5-13 House Official District Image, National, and Total Posts

| Name | Safety | Terms | Ideological Leaning | District Image | National | Posts |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Steven Horsford | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 9 | 11 | 30 |
| David Scott | Safe | 6 | Moderate | 26 | 11 | 47 |
| Marc Veasey | Safe | 1 | Moderate | 32 | 15 | 91 |
| Hakeem Jeffries | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 24 | 13 | 45 |
| Chaka Fattah | Safe | 10 | Extreme | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Barbara Lee | Safe | 8 | Extreme | 19 | 46 | 77 |
| Karen Bass | Safe | 2 | Extreme | 28 | 55 | 91 |
| Joyce Beatty | Safe | 1 | Extreme | 41 | 108 | 182 |
| Gwen Moore | Safe | 5 | Extreme | 18 | 63 | 108 |
| Sheila Jackson | Safe | 10 | Extreme | 12 | 13 | 30 |
| Terri Sewell | Safe | 2 | Extreme | 25 | 64 | 120 |
| Yvette Clark | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 28 | 113 | 174 |
| Raul Grijalva | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 25 | 37 | 76 |
| Raul Labrador | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 21 | 12 | 43 |
| Mario Diaz-Balart | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 50 | 16 | 93 |
| Albio Sires | Safe | 4 | Extreme | 12 | 13 | 43 |
| Jaime Herrera | Safe | 2 | Moderate | 5 | 8 | 19 |
| Grace Napolitano | Safe | 6 | Extreme | 10 | 1 | 14 |
| Ileana Ros-Lehtinen | Safe | 13 | Moderate | 44 | 57 | 118 |
| Nydia Velasquez | Safe | 11 | Extreme | 5 | 2 | 10 |

Chapter 6

Regression Tables

The most notable findings are summarized in the multiple regression tables below. The most notable observations from the multiple regression tables is the rationalistic behavior identified by MCs on their campaign pages and the apparent lack of any methodology employed on their designated government official pages. Members of Congress, particularly those in contentious elections, use Facebook more consistently than those in safe races or, in the case of Senators, those not up for reelections. These posts are typically focused on turning out participation at GOTV rallies or about political ads (both positive and negative). Tables 6-1, 6-2 and 6-33 below show how Senators react when up for reelection and when in contentious elections.

Senators up for reelection, in terms of sheer volume of all Facebook posts, post at a much higher rate than those not up for reelection. Many Senators not up for reelection go so far as to deactivate their campaign pages or post few, if any, posts throughout the observed time period. These Senators primarily post gotv efforts or political advertisements (campaign posts) or negative attack ads, as Table 6-2 and Table 6-3 show. Negative ads are used significantly less than positive ads, suggesting a reluctance to use them. Senators in safe races, meanwhile, have a lower usage of campaign and negative posts. A similar pattern is observed among House members.

Table 6-1 Senate Total Posts

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | .813 ^a | .661 | .636 | 57.537 | .661 | 26.353 | 2 | 27 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Safe, Reelect

Table 6-2 Senate Total Posts Continued

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 | (Constant) | 42.683 | 16.609 | | 2.570 | .016 | 8.604 | 76.763 |
| | Reelect | 154.750 | 22.284 | .778 | 6.944 | .000 | 109.027 | 200.473 |
| | Safe | -44.467 | 21.009 | -.237 | -2.117 | .044 | -87.575 | -1.359 |

a. Dependent Variable: Posts

Table 6-3 Senate Campaign Posts

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | .850 ^a | .722 | .702 | 16.651 | .722 | 35.096 | 2 | 27 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Safe, Reelect

Table 6-4 Senate Campaign Posts Continued

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 | (Constant) | 10.733 | 4.807 | | 2.233 | .034 | .871 | 20.596 |
| | Reelect | 51.200 | 6.449 | .805 | 7.939 | .000 | 37.968 | 64.432 |
| | Safe | -16.267 | 6.080 | -.271 | -2.675 | .013 | -28.742 | -3.791 |

a. Dependent Variable: Campaign

Table 6-5 Senate Negative Posts

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | .736 ^a | .542 | .508 | 10.516 | .542 | 16.001 | 2 | 27 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Safe, Reelect

Table 6-6 Senate Negative Posts Continued

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 | (Constant) | 5.633 | 3.036 | | 1.856 | .074 | -.596 | 11.862 |
| | Reelect | 19.700 | 4.073 | .630 | 4.837 | .000 | 11.343 | 28.057 |
| | Safe | -11.267 | 3.840 | -.382 | -2.934 | .007 | -19.146 | -3.388 |

a. Dependent Variable: Negative

As mentioned in the above chapter, the most notable difference in the Senate and House members are that members in the House are constantly up for reelection. Thus, for the multiple regressions below, reelection status is not one of the independent variables. Another notable difference in the multiple regressions for the House members is the low Adjusted R Square. This may be due to the low sample size of House members in competitive races to compare with those in safe races. This aside, there is statistical significance for House members when using their campaigns pages.

Similar to the behavior observed with the Senators, House members in competitive races post more in terms of campaign style posts and tend to use their pages more often than those in safe races. However, this effect is not as great as observed in the Senate. Unlike the Senators, there is no statistical significance observed for House members and the usage of Negative posts. Not surprising, as only one member actually engaged in posting Negative ads on their campaign page. This suggests that Negative ads may be a last resort method on Facebook or reserved for only the most visible and contentious of congressional races.

Unlike with the Campaign pages, Senators and House members show no statistical significance in the usage of their designated government official pages. This is further discussed in the following chapter.

Table 6-7 House Total Posts

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | .485 ^a | .235 | .191 | 43.605 | .235 | 5.375 | 2 | 35 | .009 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Extreme, Competitive

Table 6-8 House Total Posts Continued

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 | (Constant) | 48.655 | 13.926 | | 3.494 | .001 | 20.383 | 76.927 |
| | Competitive | 54.367 | 21.347 | .414 | 2.547 | .015 | 11.030 | 97.703 |
| | Extreme | -13.128 | 16.137 | -.132 | -.814 | .421 | -45.888 | 19.631 |

a. Dependent Variable: Posts

Table 6-9 House Campaign Posts

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | .482 ^a | .232 | .188 | 9.677 | .232 | 5.291 | 2 | 35 | .010 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Extreme, Competitive

Table 6-10 House Campaign Post Continued

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 | (Constant) | 10.919 | 3.090 | | 3.533 | .001 | 4.645 | 17.193 |
| | Competitive | 11.628 | 4.737 | .400 | 2.455 | .019 | 2.011 | 21.245 |
| | Extreme | -3.278 | 3.581 | -.149 | -.915 | .366 | -10.548 | 3.992 |

a. Dependent Variable: Campaign

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The bivariate analysis in Chapter 5 revealed that Seat Safety and Ideological extreme are the key independent variables in predicting how Representatives post on Facebook while election status and seat safety are the main independent variables in the Senate. MCs tend to use Facebook as a real-time communication medium. This is to say that while MCs may specify their voting record or clarify their role in attaining federal funds for their district in mailers they tend not to do this on Facebook unless the bill was recently passed into law. The multiple regression tables show that the campaign pages are used as a resource primarily by members in contentious races. There exists a clear pattern among Senators up for reelection and in competitive races and their usage of campaign and negative posts. Senators not up for reelection tend to write few posts and to remain inactive on their pages all together. Furthermore, the campaign pages are used primarily for campaign and negative posts. The hypothesis that MCs in competitive races would post more on Facebook, and use more campaign content, was confirmed, but only in regards to their campaign pages. No statistical significance is shown in regards to how the MCs use their designated government official pages. This is surprising as even the MCs using their campaign pages do not have a statistically significant lower usage of their government official pages. While MCs cannot use their official pages for campaign related posts, they can use it to post about their trips to their district and to keep their constituents updated on their work in Congress. Despite this, none of the independent variables show any observable behavior patterns.

There are a few limitations of this study that should be mentioned. While the observations made were interesting, the timeline that the Facebook pages' were examined was limited to the general election. The behavior examined in this study may

differ during the primary elections. Furthermore, it is impossible for this study to say how effective the different types of postings are at increasing an MC's vote share. It is also difficult to assess how the MCs control the message on Facebook, which staff members run their page, and how they decide what makes an effective post.

Despite this study's limitations, there is quite a bit of evidence in the literature to suggest that Facebook is an effective and useful resource for political candidates (Slotnick 2009). Fundraising, for example, is shown to be highly effective in the online environment. During the 2008 election, both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton raised immense sums of money online. Out of the \$32 million President Obama raised in January 2008, \$28 million was generated through his online fundraising efforts (Melber 2008). Hillary Clinton had similar success in her online campaign efforts. In February of the same year, she has managed to raise an average of \$1 million dollars a day (Marre 2008). Despite the notable success of money raising efforts of the two contesters for the 2008 Democratic nominee for President, members of Congress are rarely seen asking for money on their campaign pages. A small handful of House members make fundraising posts and an even smaller number of Senators make these posts.

This sporadic behavior in posts that could prove beneficial demonstrates a lack of understanding of Facebook among the members of Congress. Not only is there an observable difference in posting strategies employed by the members, but there is also uncertainty for some members on the rules governing the use of Facebook. Mary Landrieu, for example, cut her posting on Facebook on September 3rd due to a perceived inability to use the forum during an election cycle. Landrieu posted that:

"Effective today: Electronic communication may not be initiated by my official Facebook page for the 60-day period before a primary/general election. This is

pursuant to Senate policy, and a full outline of rules for internet usage leading up to a federal election can be referenced here:

<http://www.senate.gov/usage/internetpolicy.htm>”

Posted on September 3, 2014

However, Landrieu was the only member to cut her office Facebook communications for this reason. Other Senators, the ones that used Facebook, continued their posting all the way up to November 4th on Election Day. Landrieu may have thought it was better to play it safe and not use Facebook during this period. However, it is apparent that the vagueness of the rules, along with the new technology, creates a confusion as to what is allowed and what is effective for their goals.

It is surprising that members of Congress are still developing their use of Facebook. An online presence is fairly low cost and becoming increasingly beneficial. This learning curve that members of Congress seem to be suffering from may stem from the new strategies that must be used with social media sites such as Facebook. For example, traditional television ads are shown to be ineffective on social media sites. Videos that gain popularity online are generally done with a comedic spin or reveal a new and unexpected side to the candidate (Panagopoulos 2009).

The behavior shown in this study begins to make sense when it is looked at with the uncertainty that members are facing. Political ads online, while cheaper to make, need to use a completely different style online. In addition to this realm of uncertainty there is a world of unknown risks. Negative posts may have a lower use due to the possible risk of an online backlash going viral. When a video is uploaded online it is difficult, if not impossible, to get back. It may be that Mark Begich, as well as most of the House members, neglected to use negative ads on their accounts due to the possibility it could go viral and cause a backlash against him.

Another possibility is that, despite Facebook and other social media forums being free, there is an associated cost to using this technology effectively. For example, the staff member, or members, designated to tailor the message and manage the page. It makes sense then that members in safe races would not want to bother using staff resources to maintain their campaign page if they feel no real threat. This also might explain why Senators, with higher financed and more visible campaigns, posted far more than House members on their campaign pages.

Future studies may seek to answer questions such as costs associated with social media use. How much time does it take staff to craft a message specifically tailored to the social media sites and how many staffers does it require to manage. Some campaigns, for example Hillary For President 2016 campaign has job postings on their website specifically for social media strategists which require a skill set of tailoring short messages for various social media forums. One explanation for the discrepancies noticed among MCs that appear randomly throughout the data may be correlated with campaign finances and expenditures.

Another topic to be explored in the future is how much prior attention is needed for Facebook to be effective. For example, do MCs need to have a national recognition or large following to be effective? Fundraising, for example, may not yield enough money to be worth the time if the member lacks a certain number of followers. This opens up other questions as to how effective Facebook is at political mobilization. It is likely that some posts are more effective at turning out voters than others. It has already been discovered that a political advertisement is likely to get more views if it has a comical spin or personal up close view of the candidate (Malecha and Reagan 2012). However, the effectiveness of these ads and their wording has yet to be researched.

While the data in this study suggests MCs do see Facebook as a resource worth using, it is evident that there are some differences among the MCs as to what constitutes using the social media effectively. This may be due to the relatively new technology still being experimented with or some campaigns spending more on media staffers to handle the pages. While the reason for the discrepancies cannot be explained within the parameters of this study, the utilization of Facebook by MCs will likely lead to a greater understanding of the social media forum. With future research exploring Facebook and social media forums as a tool for reelection members of Congress will likely be working towards overcoming the learning curve many in Congress appear to suffer from.

Appendix A
List of Members of Congress

Table A-1 Sample of Representatives

| Name | Gender | Region | Party | Ideological Extreme | Terms | Seat Safety |
|-------------------|--------|---------|-------|------------------------|-------|-------------|
| David Valadao | Male | West | Rep | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Ed Perlmutter | Male | West | Dem | Moderate | 4 | Safe |
| Paul Ryan | Male | Midwest | Rep | Extreme | 8 | Safe |
| Pete Visclosky | Male | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 15 | Safe |
| Richard Hudson | Male | South | Rep | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| Patrick Murphy | Male | South | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Tom Marino | Male | North | Rep | Moderate | 2 | Safe |
| Tim Bishop | Male | North | Dem | Extreme | 6 | Competitive |
| Cathy Rodgers | Female | West | Rep | Moderate | 5 | Safe |
| Julia Brownley | Female | West | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Jackie Walorskie | Female | Midwest | Rep | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Betty McCollum | Female | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 7 | Safe |
| Marsha Blackburn | Female | South | Rep | Extreme | 6 | Safe |
| Debbie Shultz | Female | South | Dem | Extreme | 5 | Safe |
| Carol Shea-Porter | Female | North | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Nikki Tsongas | Female | North | Dem | Extreme | 4 | Safe |
| Andre Carson | Male | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 3 | Safe |
| Keith Ellison | Male | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 4 | Safe |
| Steven Horsford | Male | West | Dem | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| David Scott | Male | South | Dem | Moderate | 6 | Safe |
| Marc Veasey | Male | South | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Safe |
| Hakeem Jeffries | Male | North | Dem | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| Chaka Fattah | Male | North | Dem | Extreme | 10 | Safe |
| Barbara Lee | Female | West | Dem | Extreme | 8 | Safe |
| Karen Bass | Female | West | Dem | Extreme | 2 | Safe |

Table A-2 Sample of Representatives Cont.

| Name | Gender | Region | Party | Ideological Extreme | Terms | Seat Safety |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|-------|------------------------|-------|-------------|
| Joyce Beatty | Female | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| Gwen Moore | Female | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 5 | Safe |
| Sheila Jackson | Female | South | Dem | Extreme | 10 | Safe |
| Terri Sewell | Female | South | Dem | Extreme | 2 | Safe |
| Yvette Clarke | Female | North | Dem | Extreme | 4 | Safe |
| Raul Grijalva | Male | West | Dem | Extreme | 6 | Safe |
| Raul Labrador | Male | West | Rep | Moderate | 2 | Safe |
| Mario Diaz- Balart | Male | South | Rep | Moderate | 2 | Safe |
| Albio Sirez | Male | North | Dem | Extreme | 4 | Safe |
| Jaime Herrera | Female | West | Rep | Moderate | 2 | Safe |
| Grace Napolitano | Female | West | Dem | Extreme | 6 | Safe |
| Ileana Ros- Lehtinen | Female | South | Rep | Moderate | 13 | Safe |
| Nydia Velasquez | Female | North | Dem | Extreme | 11 | Safe |

Table A-3 Sample of Senators

| Name | Gender | Region | Party | Ideological Extreme | Terms | Seat Safety |
|------------------|--------|---------|-------|------------------------|-------|-------------|
| Mitch McConnell | Male | South | Rep | Extreme | 5 | Competitive |
| Mark Begich | Male | West | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Al Franken | Male | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| Dick Durbin | Male | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 3 | Safe |
| Jeff Sessions | Male | South | Rep | Extreme | 3 | Safe |
| Tim Scott | Male | South | Rep | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| Susan Collins | Female | North | Rep | Moderate | 3 | Safe |
| Kay Hagan | Female | South | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Mary Landrieu | Female | South | Dem | Moderate | 3 | Competitive |
| Jeanne Shaheen | Female | North | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Harry Reid | Male | West | Dem | Extreme | 5 | Competitive |
| Rand Paul | Male | South | Rep | Extreme | 1 | Competitive |
| Chuck Schumer | Male | North | Dem | Extreme | 3 | Safe |
| Ron Wyden | Male | West | Dem | Moderate | 4 | Safe |
| Chuck Grassley | Male | Midwest | Rep | Extreme | 6 | Safe |
| Jerry Moran | Male | Midwest | Rep | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| Barbara Mikulski | Female | South | Dem | Extreme | 5 | Safe |
| Lisa Murkowski | Female | Midwest | Rep | Moderate | 2 | Safe |
| Kelly Ayotte | Female | North | Rep | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Patty Murray | Female | North | Dem | Extreme | 4 | Competitive |
| Jeff Flake | Male | West | Rep | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Sherrod Brown | Male | Midwest | Dem | Extreme | 2 | Competitive |

Table A-4 Sample of Senators Cont.

| Name | Gender | Region | Party | Ideological Extreme | Terms | Seat Safety |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|-------|------------------------|-------|-------------|
| Martin Heinrich | Male | West | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Dean Heller | Male | West | Rep | Extreme | 1 | Competitive |
| Sheldon Whitehouse | Male | North | Dem | Extreme | 2 | Safe |
| John Barasso | Male | West | Rep | Extreme | 2 | Safe |
| Dianne Feinstein | Female | West | Dem | Extreme | 4 | Safe |
| Kristen Gillibrand | Female | North | Dem | Extreme | 1 | Safe |
| Heidi Heitkamp | Female | Midwest | Dem | Moderate | 1 | Competitive |
| Deb Fischer | Female | Midwest | Rep | Extreme | 1 | Competitive |

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Biographical Information

Lucas Lothamer is a political scientist with an interest in social media, mass media effects, public opinion, and campaigns and elections. He has authored a conference paper examining the effects of political actions and popular culture on attitudes towards gay marriage in America. In 2013, he traveled to Washington, D.C to intern for the National Association of Community Health Centers. While working for NACHC, he studied the process of federal policymaking with an emphasis on the committee system in Congress.

Lothamer has earned his BA and MA in political science. He has worked for the Tarrant County Democratic Party as a precinct chair. Currently, he plans to pursue work as a social media strategist for the 2016 campaign cycle. After working with campaigns for a few years, he plans on pursuing doctoral studies and become a professor of political science.