

Introduction

The goal of our study was to learn more about the political information seeking behaviors of young people on the verge of participating in their first presidential election. While our initial idea was to study political information seeking of all ages, we chose to narrow down our focus for two reasons. First, it allowed us to produce more meaningful results by controlling for factors such as age and experience. Second, we found in our literature review that this was an area of interest to scholars that could only be studied every four years, in tandem with an election. Considering the serendipitous timing of our study with the drawn-out primary season leading up to the November 2008 presidential elections, this seemed like an excellent opportunity to make a valuable, if modest, contribution. We were particularly motivated by the fact that information sources, especially those in digital media, have changed substantially in the years since the last opportunity for study of youth's pre-presidential-election information seeking, in 2004.

In addition, we felt this age group was particularly interesting from both an academic and applied perspective. From an academic perspective, young people on the verge of their first election are still at a point of forming opinions, and may find themselves pulled by a myriad of information sources and influences. From an applied perspective, a knowledge of sources young people turn to for political information, and an understanding of their behaviors related to political information seeking, could have design implications for groups targeting messages to this audience. In light of the decline of civic interest in young people in recent years (McGregor, 2000, as cited in Wells & Dudash 2007), this knowledge could also have important ramifications for increasing teens' political awareness, savvy and engagement.

Literature Review

While all of the papers we cited in our literature review focused on information seeking behavior of youth, most framed their discussion of these behaviors in light of how different information sources influence and inform young people's political opinions and efficacy. While these aspects of the research were interesting, we concentrated on the non-interpretative portions, which were more relevant to our research goals.

A good place to start is by understanding why young people are motivated to seek political information, since this motivation can influence the sources they choose to seek. Ohr & Schrott (2001) investigated this topic by studying whether general political attentiveness is a determinant of information seeking during a campaign. They first formulated a theoretical model of information seeking, based on research traditions such as the uses and gratifications approach and the rational choice framework. They then tested their model with an empirical analysis of a state election held in Cologne, Germany, by interviewing 339 voters about their motivations for and intensity of information seeking, the sources they used, and their general political attentiveness. Ohr and Schrott found that motivations to seek political information include social expectations to be politically informed, a personal duty to stay politically informed, and the entertainment aspect of politics. The social expectations were shown to exert the greatest influence, with a possible reason being that people wish to gain social recognition by being able to participate in political discussions with peers.

While Ohr & Schrott's (2001) research was informative, Wells & Dudash's 2007 study on youth's political information seeking behavior was more relevant to our topic. They aimed to answer questions such as what media sources youth consult for political

information and which of these sources they perceive as credible. Data was gathered from focus groups at six colleges in three Midwestern states and California, with an average of nine participants each. The researchers found that the young citizens' primary source for political knowledge was discussion or talk (28.5%), followed by the internet (15%) and cable news (14%). Subjects ranked credibility in a binary way (credible or not), and Wells & Dudash's (2007) results show that youth viewed non-commercial, international sources such as NPR or the BBC as most credible, and sources such as cable news as least credible. Additionally, subjects admitted to using entertainment or "soft news" sources such as the Daily Show or Saturday Night Live, but qualified this with an awareness of their dubious credibility. Interestingly, the researchers found that subjects felt that less credible sources could be improved when paired with more credible outlets.

This finding matches that of Jones (2005), who found that young people use the internet to verify and learn more about topics found in other sources, such as cable TV. Jones administered a survey to 19,000 people in the UK by posting it on a website. She found that along with using the internet to verify and investigate topics they heard about in other media, youth also used the internet heavily for "infotainment" (viewing videos or "soft news" sources) and for social networking. Respondents mentioned using online communities or chat groups, revealing that young people prefer more interactive and demographically-tailored news than that offered by conventional mass media.

Jones' inclination to focus on the internet is well founded, considering that in 2004, the Pew Research Center found that young adults use the internet for political information seeking more than any other age group. This focus on the internet has been mirrored by other researchers as well. Tedesco (2007) focused specifically on whether

the interactivity of websites has an effect on youths' perception of their own political efficacy (i.e. their confidence in their own political knowledge and value in the political process). Tedesco's study is unique among all the ones we consulted in that it acknowledges the diverse ways in which youth use the web, rather than lumping them all into one undifferentiated category. These included emailing campaign information, reading about local political activities, visiting candidates' sites, chatting online, and self-publishing on blogs. We were particularly inspired by his nuanced treatment of this medium, and mimicked it in our line of questioning.

Tedesco's experiment was conducted with 171 subjects, each of whom was exposed to one of two conditions while web surfing: either being presented with many opportunities for interactivity such as sending messages, taking quizzes, and commenting on blog entries, or only having one-way information transfer, such as reading website content. Tedesco found that while all exposure to political information, both interactive and not, resulted in a higher sense of political efficacy, only the interactivity condition resulted in a significant increase between the pre-test and post-test state.

Finally, we were curious to compare politically-focused information seeking behavior with general information seeking behavior among youth. For this, we consulted Agosto & Hughes-Hassell's 2005 paper examining the everyday information seeking behavior of urban youth. The authors sought to catalog both the types of information urban youth were looking for, as well as the media and interpersonal sources they consulted. They collected data from 27 teens between ages 14 and 17 via surveys, activity logs, journals, photographic tours and interviews. The researchers found that their interview subjects' top four topics of everyday information seeking were schoolwork,

time/date, social life/leisure activities, and weather. Their preferred source for this information was people, with friends and family most consulted, followed by school employees, and finally adult mentors. People as a source was followed by cell phones, then television and finally the internet. Agosto & Hughes-Hassell's findings for urban youth were in keeping with previous researchers' findings for suburban and rural youth (Shenton & Dixon, 2003).

Methods

Recruitment

To collect our data, we set out to recruit four politically interested young people who would be voting in their first election. We began by piloting our study with a college sophomore who was a personal contact, and then used two sources to find additional interview subjects. First, we solicited teachers at two local high schools to point us toward students who planned to vote in the November election. When this method did not quickly generate leads, we placed an ad in the classified section of the Michigan Daily newspaper. In both cases, we offered an incentive of ten dollars for a one-hour interview. Our ad ran for one week in mid-March, and was not as successful as we had hoped, resulting in only one response. After emailing with this student and finding they were not planning on voting in November, we chose not to include them as a subject.

Luckily, at this time we began getting emails from students at local high schools who were interested in participating in our study. We sent them screening emails to determine that they met our age and voting criteria, and then set up interviews on campus, either in West Hall or the Duderstadt Center, at times that were convenient for

them. Since there is no one place where political information seeking is done, we felt that a quiet location on campus was a suitable interview environment. Finally, because each high school student was under 18, we sent them a consent form to be signed by their parents, and asked them to bring this form to the interview.

Interview Procedure

Each interview lasted approximately one hour, and was recorded using a digital audio recorder placed on the table near the participant. We explained the purpose of our study to the participant, and reiterated that the recording and the information they shared with us would remain anonymous. We then began the interview with several simple questions about their background, such as their age and interest in politics, to put them at ease and establish rapport. Our goal with these initial questions was to find out about their general political position and current involvement in politics, as well as the history that led to them becoming interested. (For a complete list of our questions, see Appendix 1).

We then moved on to asking about their specific information seeking behaviors. We began by asking the general question, "Where do you get your information about politics?" to learn about their dominant sources and habits. We then focused the conversation by asking about their use of other sources, beginning with a list of non-internet sources such as public radio, local TV news, newspapers, magazines, and entertainment shows like *The Daily Show*. For each source, we asked about frequency of use, the perceived value of the information they obtained from it, and the credibility they assigned to it. In some cases, we also asked about their motivations for using that source,

how they found out about it, and whether they shared it with others.

At this point, we also asked about the role that parents and friends played in providing information about politics. We asked about whether they discussed political topics with their parents and what they gained from this. We also asked about conversations with friends, focusing on what sorts of things they talked about, and how they shared political information they had found elsewhere.

The final section of our interview centered around internet sources, since this was one of our primary areas of interest based on our literature review. We asked each participant about many types of internet use, such as reading newspaper websites, reading and commenting on blogs, reading, commenting and posting within social networks, watching and posting to video websites, receiving, sending and forwarding email, instant messaging, reading and posting to online message boards, visiting and interacting with candidates' websites, and taking online polls and quizzes. For each source, we asked about the frequency of use, value, and credibility as we had for non-internet sources, as well as touching on passive vs. interactive or contributory use.

While overall we tried to stick to our interview script, we were flexible in discussing topics out of order if the participant brought up a new idea. This kept the interview informal, and was not a problem, as we could still lead the conversation back to the topics we were interested in.

Summary of Participants

While we had hoped to end up with four high school students as our interview subjects, the fourth interview fell through and was unable to be rescheduled. As such, we

decided to include our pilot subject as part of the study. Though the pilot participant was slightly older (19 vs. 17 years old), she had many of the same characteristics of our other study participants. She had not yet voted in a presidential election, and had been living at home with her parents until a just a few months prior. In addition, her gender balanced our sample evenly (2 males, 2 females). For these reasons, we felt that her presence would be valuable in the study, and that she fit satisfactorily with our target demographic. A detailed description of our participants can be found below.

Participant	Gender	Age	Political Affiliation	Personal Characteristics
U01	F	19, college sophomore	Strong Democrat, leaning toward Obama but not an active supporter	Independent, opinionated, journalist, interested in effects of the media on public opinion, seeks political gossip, loves to debate with friends
U02	M	17, high school senior	Does not feel affiliated with any one party or candidate	Close to family, planning to join Air Force, interest in politics tied to military interests, somewhat cynical about politics, prefers not to debate or get into heated discussions with others
U03	F	17, high school senior	Democrat, leaning toward Obama but feels torn because of multiple identities as both a woman and African-American	Intelligent, mature, planning to be an engineer, feels different from friends who are uninterested in politics, sees political interest as personal and not something to share with others
U04	M	17, high school senior	Strong Ron Paul supporter, but does not believe in two-party system of defining self as one party or the other	Active information seeker, strongly aligned with candidate, active participant in political events, purposeful influencer of friends, acquaintances, and strangers

Findings

Finding #1: Our subjects consult a main, trusted source for political summary, and then use internet search engines to explore topics of interest in more depth.

While we asked our subjects in detail about many specific media sources, we also gave them a chance to identify their primary sources for political information seeking.

Across three of the four subjects, we found a distinct pattern. Each had a trusted source, usually a mainstream media outlet that they characterized as largely credible, where they found headlines or topics of interest. They returned to this source frequently, from once a day or several times a week. They then augmented this source, which gave them factual, summary information, with the use of an online search engine (usually Google). They used the search engine to explore topics of interest identified by the primary source further in-depth.

The primary sources ranged from local news shows on national channels, to cable news, either on TV or online (in our cases, CNN) to international news sources such as the BBC. Each user mentioned starting with these trusted sources, and then using Google as a supplement. For example:

U02: Um, well like, Fox 2 News. That's where I hear about most of it, and then I use Google, just type in key words to see what comes up. And then I go to certain, like the, uh, sites that come up... [Fox 2 News] is good to hear just the primarily aspects of it, and then go and do more in depth research on Google.

U03: My favorites, or the most dependable, are the CNN channel where they have the debates and different things...

Interviewer: So you like that the best? And then the internet is just kind of a supplement?

U03: Yeah, or if I've missed something, or I need more information.

Finding #2: Our subjects are very open to serendipitous information encountering in multiple media, and use internet search engines to expand their general knowledge.

While our interviewees were heavily dependent on their suite of trusted sources, they were also very open to serendipitous information finding and the breadth of political knowledge it provided. These serendipitous sources ranged widely in context and media type, from newspapers in hallways, to posts on social networks. For example:

U01: ... once again like, my parents always had the TV playing, so if I walked by and something was on it, I'd like stop and watch it for a couple minutes...

U02: No, [the Flying Squadron Online Forum] is for the Air Force stuff, because I'm kind of nervous about ROTC next year, so they have a lot of information about it there, about what to expect and what kind of stuff you need to do, so that's my primary motivation. But they have other stuff too, so you just keep poking around, to see what you can find.

U04: I don't read any like political magazines at all, but I'll like, I'll, if I, pick up, again at work, I'll pick up a magazine, and if it does have an article about something going on in the government, or a political race, I'll read it.

Our subjects would then follow up on topics of interest discovered serendipitously with internet searches. These searches were primarily focused on exploration: our subjects followed links or searched topics of interest, often with the goal of getting a sense of the broader range of perspectives on an particular issue.

Finding #3: Our subjects are aware of bias and opinion in information sources, and use search engines to help them cross-reference sources to verify credibility.

We found that our interviewees were highly aware the possible biases and opinions influencing the credibility of certain sources of political information. This varied

from person to person, depending on their level of involvement in politics and own personal biases toward or against certain types of media. However, all of our subjects used the internet to help them cross-reference sources, in an effort to determine its credibility and accuracy. For example:

Interviewer: Yeah, could you talk about your process of what you do when you're verifying information and how you do that online?

U02: I just type it into Google and see what comes up, then read the whole article, then maybe read another article about the same thing and then see what kind of, what items correspond with each other, and see what's going on.

Interviewer: OK, so you go to CNN.com and... do you, like scan the... political headlines?

U04: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK, and then like, you see something that looks interesting then?

U04: I'll read it, and skim it, and then if I think that anything sound, er looks possibly wrong with it, I'll go to another website to see if they have the same thing to say. I try not to read as much written by the Associated Press, because I think if we get all of our information from one spot, we're only seeing one side of the story.

Finding #4: Our subjects are motivated to seek information by a sense of duty as a citizen and the desire to be able to discuss political issues with others.

Our interviewees expressed two strong motivations for seeking information. First, they felt that it was their duty as citizens to participate in the democratic process. This feeling was particularly acute in light of the approaching presidential election, which is the first our subjects will have been able to vote in.

U02: Because that's kind of what America is. It's kind of like a government that runs on the people's voice, and if the people don't have voices, then it's kind of defeats the purpose of it. So, might as well go and do what people are fighting for.

U03: I think it's our responsibility to know what's going on, to be conscientious of what's going on around you, you know, different matters that we are a part of, such as the war, you know, I think those are all important, because even though we don't directly see it in our face every day, it is something that affects us, and we're paying for it, and we should always be mindful of it, and um, kind of work

with it, to you know, to come out on top.

The second strong motivator for our interviewees was the desire to be able to talk cogently with parents, friends, coworkers, teachers and other about political issues. The discussions cited ranged from casual conversations to inquiries for more information to political campaigning. For example:

Interviewer: Participation.... OK. So this may be kind of hard to answer specifically, but do you have motivations for being politically... informing yourself about politics?

U02: It's nice to know what's going on for when people start talking about it, you don't sound like an idiot.

U03: [My government teacher] like puts it in real terms so I understand it, cause like a lot of the stuff they talk about I don't really understand, but I try to follow it, so I can get as much information as I can to describe it to him, so that he can therefore explain it back to me.

U04: I want to be able to back up everything that I say with facts vs. what other people say. So, yeah, I would say that because I'm excited about informing people and influencing people that I like to be well-informed on all the issues.

Finding #5: Government education strongly influences the methods our subjects use to find political information.

Government classes seemed to be where some of our subjects learn how to conduct political information seeking. They often shared their own personal methods with us, then later revealed that they learned of the sources or methods by doing assignments for their classes. For example:

U02: Yeah, when I took my government class, we had to do current events, and a lot of times, I would just go and find current events related to what was happening in the military overseas in Iraq, stuff like that... like for this school project, what I do is I go to Yahoo.com and they have that little ticker bar that goes down, then I just scroll down looking for interesting articles and clicked on those and the links would send me all over the place too, like different sites... because we had to do current events every Friday, like do a two page write-up on them.

U03: Well, like, when I was in African American Studies, our teacher encouraged us to read the newspaper and watch the news everyday because she quizzed us on everything that was in the news, so, we had to really keep up on it, so...

Finding #6: Some of our subjects look more strongly to a trusted, authoritative, older person for information than to their parents or friends.

Two of our interviewees cited a trusted, older, authoritative source for political information and inspiration. These sources were not parents, but rather a figure that was outside of the interviewee's circle of family or same-aged peers. For example:

Interviewer: So, I'm interested in some of the things, how your conversations with your government teacher, what they're like. Like, what might a typical conversation be like?

U02: They're cool. They're normal. They're not like all tense and, it's pretty laid back and he just gives information without being too biased about it, and he's just like, open about it, and he tells the facts, and like, he tells, he also tells his opinion, but he's not like, "You need to believe this, you need to understand that this is why this is happening." If I have a question, he'll listen for the question, and then he'll answer it.

Interviewer: So what about your friends? You talked about this one friend in particular. It sounds like he's kind of the most influential on your political opinion?

U04: I...well, uh, at least for this race, he is. His name is [omitted], he, he's 19 now... and he um, he found out through websites and reading on his own, and then I guess his um, dad somehow got a book by Ron Paul, and he read it, and he just liked what he say, so he started getting, er finding more information about him, and then he tried, er, started telling us about him, about his different views and things like that.

While teens did mention discussing politics with parents to varying degrees, they did not cite them as primary sources of political information. In fact, often they seemed inclined to form opinions independent of their parents' leanings. Finally, many of the teens we talked with did not feel confidence in their friends as sources of political information. In fact, many cited their peers as less aware of and less interested in politics

than they were.

Discussion

From the beginning of our study, our intent was to gain insight into how and where youth were getting their political information, especially on the internet. We expected to find that interactive features on the internet such as social networks, blogs, and videos, had gained acceptance and were important sources for youth. This was based on the increasing use of the internet indicated by the Pew Study (Pew, 2004) and findings on the influence and preference of interactivity by youth (Tedesco, 2007, Jones, 2005). However, our interviews bore out a more nuanced picture. While our subjects did use the internet extensively, they used it not as a primary source of political information, as Wells & Dudash (2007) found, but rather in a complimentary role to their main, credible touchstone political information source. Like Jones' (2005) subjects, our interviewees use the internet to verify and learn more about topics found from other sources, such as cable TV. In specific, our subjects used the Google search engine as a way to explore further topics of interest identified in their primary, trusted source.

However, in contrast to Tedesco's (2007) and Jones' (2005) studies, we found that our users were not attracted to interactive or contributory media as a primary source of political information. In fact, they characterized media such as blogs or posts in online discussion forums as being tinged by opinion and bias and therefore not credible. Yet this did not deter their use of this media; instead, this awareness of bias and agenda simply helped them form appropriate use patterns. Our users consulted these media in a more exploratory way, and felt comfortable with their ability to notice and think critically about the bias therein. They described reading message boards, social network posts,

blogs and other websites for non-political reasons, but then serendipitously encountering a piece of political information that interested them. This usually came in the form of a link, which our subjects would often follow. If the article, video or other media behind that link interested them enough, they would then go to Google to search the subject, in this case not as much to explore it in more depth, but rather to verify its credibility against more trusted sources. This pattern of behavior strikes us as being very similar to Jones' (2005) finding that youth use the web for "infotainment," where information seeking is less directed, and more leisurely and recreational.

On issues of credibility, the findings of our study were largely similar to Wells & Dudash's (2007) findings. Like them, we found that while subjects did not view TV news as entirely credible, they felt its credibility could be improved when verified with information gathered from other sources. However, Wells & Dudash (2007) did not determine which sources were used to verify weaker media; an important contribution of our study is the finding that the internet, specifically search engines such as Google, seems to be the dominant source for verifying and gathering more information. Our study further corroborated Wells & Dudash's (2007) finding that youth consider international or independent media as more credible than commercial or U.S. media. Though our subjects heavily consulted mainstream, U.S. media sources, they all expressed the opinion that non-mainstream or international sources, such as the BBC and NPR, had less bias when reporting on U.S. political topics because the topic affected them less or they were less motivated by commercial interests. While this claim may be dubious, it still had an influence on our subjects across the board.

An interesting departure of our findings from previous research is that we did not

find peers and family to be significant sources of information for most of our subjects. Previous research found that youth cite political talk with peers and family as a primary source of their knowledge, higher than Internet or TV (Wells & Dudash, 2007). The reason for the difference in our results may be that we asked specifically if these conversations with friends and family resulted in them gaining knowledge or information, while other researchers may have asked the question differently, or simply assumed all conversations to be a source of information.

Indeed, the question of parents and peers as a source of information may be a hard question for teens to answer accurately, since the exact nature of influence is often hard to detect, especially from within a relationship. For example, all of our subjects had conversations with friends and family about political topics on an occasional to regular basis, often inspired by knowledge gained from classes or from media sources. Our guess is that while our subjects probably are gaining some information from these conversations, they may not always realize this or characterize it as such.

While our interviewees eschewed parents and friends as an information source, they all mentioned the influence of both government classes in school and older, authoritative sources such as teachers and older friends as sources of knowledge and information about politics. This finding is interesting, because these sources have not been mentioned in any of the previous research we reviewed, with the exception of Agosto & Hughes-Hassell's (2005) study, which revealed the importance of adult mentors as general information sources to urban youth. We feel that further research on non-family and friend sources could help determine how influential and important these sources really are.

Not surprisingly, we found that political information seeking among young people contrasts greatly with general everyday information seeking patterns as characterized by Agosto & Hughes-Hassell (2005). While their subjects heavily used other people and cell phones, our subjects largely rejected people as a source of information in favor of less subjective sources such as TV news and informational websites. This can be readily explained, however, by the dramatic difference in subject matter of informational inquiry between the two studies. While Agosto & Hughes-Hassell's subjects were looking for casual, uncomplicated information such as gossip, the time of day, and the weather, which could be easily gleaned from convenient sources, our subjects were focused on more complicated, factual information whose relevance was tied closely to the credibility of its origin, and which required consideration and critical thinking to parse and understand.

Finally, our study confirmed several of the findings of Ohr & Schrott (2001). Like their participants, all of our subjects mentioned that the ability to discuss political topics with others was a primary motivation for learning about politics. In addition, many expressed that they felt it was their duty as a citizen to stay informed and participate in civic discourse and action. Finally, while it did not occur across all of our subjects, two seemed to be inspired to seek political information by the pleasure and entertainment they got from learning, sharing and considering the topics they investigated.

Conclusion

Several interesting lessons can be learned from this study, which both extend

previous research on youth and politics and suggest areas for future research. First, our results added to the existing research on the political information seeking of young people. Our interviewees' motivations to learn about politics, specifically to be able to talk with others and out of a sense of civic duty, corroborated those of Ohr & Schrott (2001). Our subjects' behavior reflected the patterns found by Jones (2005) of consulting a main source for headlines, and using the internet to drill deeper. We also found that our subjects encountered political information serendipitously while surfing the web for entertainment, similar again to Jones' (2005) findings. Our subjects corroborated some of Wells & Dudash's (2007) findings, such as the perception of international media as credible, but also cast doubt on their assertion that talk is the primary source of political information for this group. Finally, our study offers an interesting, context-specific comparison of political information seeking behavior to the general information seeking behavior covered by Agosto & Hughes-Hassell (2005).

In addition, our study suggests areas for further research. Past studies on the internet's role in youth's political information seeking have tended to generalize websites based on features such as interactivity (Tedesco, 2007), or treat it as a single source, lumping all websites into a one category (Wells & Dudash, 2007). However, we found that different types of websites and web content, with differing levels of bias, interactivity and relevance, were seen as having varying levels of utility, credibility and trustworthiness to our interviewees. Moving away from treating the internet as an undifferentiated source, and moving toward understanding the individual roles of a wide variety of internet media would be a fruitful line of inquiry. Second, we feel that research specifically into the role of search engines in youth's political information seeking would

be useful. Search engines were an important resource for our interviewees to expand the depth and breadth of their knowledge, however they revealed little about their perceptions of the credibility or potential bias behind search results. Exploring this issue further could lead to informative conclusions for media-literacy educators.

Overall, we were impressed with how serious and committed our subjects were to informing themselves about politics. This gives us hope that concerns about the young becoming civically inactive are unfounded. Further research in this area will only help, by shedding more light on the behaviors of youth and finding new ways to facilitate the information strategies they employ.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Background and current status

Major themes here: To find out about their general political position and involvement at the current time, and the history that led to it.

1. How old are you?
2. How long have been interested in politics?
3. How interested would you say you are about politics in general?
 - a. Has this increased because of the current presidential race?
4. How would you say you first became interested or started paying attention to politics?
5. What do you consider your political affiliation to be?
 - a. How strongly do you feel affiliated with this party?
6. Do you participate in political groups at school, or outside of school?
7. What are your motivations for being politically informed?
8. Do you find yourself intentionally seeking out political information, or simply running across it while doing other things?
9. Are you planning on voting in the election this November?
 - a. Why or why not?
10. How much have you been following the current presidential race?

Political Information seeking

Major themes here: To ask about multiple sources, and for each get a sense of frequency, value, credibility, and for online sources, interactivity.

Where do you get your information about politics?

Ask for each medium:

- motivations for using different media
- how did you find out about it?
- how credible do you find it?
- how much does this influence your opinions?
- how informative is this source?
- do you talk with your friends about this source?
- do you share these sources with others?

List of non-internet media:

newspaper

public radio

commercial radio

watch "soft news" (daily show, leno)

talk to parents

talk to friends

- Are you the one starting the conversation, or are they?
- What sort of things do you talk about?
- Do your friends influence your political opinions?

cable news shows
local/network news shows
magazines
morning shows

List of internet activities:

newspaper websites
news aggregators
blogs, reading
blogs, commenting
social networks, reading
social networks, posting/writing
social networks, participating
 - joining groups
 - taking polls
 - writing posts
video websites, watching
video websites, posting
emailing information to others
receiving emails from others
 - Have you gotten any email forwards about any of the candidates?
 - How credible did you view this information?
listserves
taking polls or surveys
visiting candidate's sites
 - Have you explored any of the social features of these websites?
chat rooms, message boards
post/edit on wikis
post photos
IM