Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly
90(2) 212–232

DOI: 10.1177/1077699013482906
jmcq.sagepub.com
SAGE

Predicting Dissemination of News Content in Social Media: A Focus on Reception, Friending, and Partisanship

Brian E. Weeks[1] and R. Lance Holbert[1]

Abstract

Social media are an emerging news source, but questions remain regarding how citizens engage news content in this environment. This study focuses on social media news reception and friending a journalist/news organization as predictors of social media news dissemination. Secondary analysis of 2010 Pew data (N = 1,264) reveals reception and friending to be positive predictors of dissemination, and a reception-by-friending interaction is also evident. Partisanship moderates these relationships such that reception is a stronger predictor of dissemination among partisans, while the friending-dissemination link is evident for nonpartisans only. These results provide novel insights into citizens' social media news experiences.

Keywords

social media, social networks, news, reception, dissemination, friending, partisanship

The rise of new communication technologies affords citizens varied and novel opportunities to engage news content. One rapidly emerging news media outlet is social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), which allow consumers to not only receive news from friends, family, and news organizations, but also easily disseminate this media content to their social network. Although the majority of news online is still accessed directly through news websites or through major search engines, social media

[1]Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Corresponding Author:
Brian E. Weeks, School of Communication, Ohio State University, 3016 Derby Hall, 154 N. Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210, USA.
Email: beweeks@gmail.com

are quickly emerging as an important and prominent outlet for news engagement. In fact, news use within social media has grown by over 50% since 2009, such that 9% of all traffic to news websites is now driven by social media, making these sites a leading outlet for citizens to access news. Social media's role in news is likely to continue to grow as both news organizations and sites like Facebook seek to make news use easier for its 850 million users worldwide.[1] What makes social media a unique platform for news is the ability it affords citizens to now act as efficient content distributors, and it is necessary to understand if and when people disseminate news in this digital environment. As Pew notes, "if searching for news was the most important development of the last decade, sharing news may be among the most important of the next."[2]

Despite its rapid growth, news use within social media has only recently received empirical attention.[3] While interest in social media in relation to politics is increasing,[4] the field retains little understanding of how various elements of the social media experience relate to one another in shaping how citizens consume and share today's news. If social media outlets are an increasingly important outlet for news and news media organizations are seeking to establish a presence in social media, then it is essential that the role of journalism in this evolving mediated communication environment be properly explicated and better understood through empirical research.

This study focuses on what predicts dissemination of news content in social media, with specific attention given to the roles of news reception and friending journalists/news organizations within social media. Reception is consumption of news content, akin to traditional exposure,[5] while friending is the act of establishing a formal link between oneself and another entity within a social media environment.[6] Dissemination is sharing news content with a defined set of others (either specific groups within one's social network or the social media public). It is argued that reception and friending serve as positive predictors of social media news dissemination, above and beyond the influence of several non-social media individual-difference variables. In addition, we hypothesize an interaction of reception and friending, thus providing enhanced predictive value and allowing greater understanding of how people engage news in this new media environment.

The role of partisanship is also explored. Political party identification represents "a deep, long-term affective connection between an individual and his/her ideal."[7] It has been argued that partisanship serves as a cognitive framework through which individuals make sense of the political information they encounter.[8] How might engagement with journalists, news organizations, and news products in social media vary between partisans and nonpartisans? More specifically, how do the relationships between social media news reception, friending, and dissemination alter as a result of having or not having a preestablished political affiliation? Addressing these empirical questions provides greater understanding of how different individuals utilize news within social media and brings much needed predictive power to this area of study.

News in Social Media

Social media are digital media or Internet websites that allow users to connect and communicate with each other, as well as exchange and share information.[9] Under the larger umbrella of social media are social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook and Twitter, that provide users an opportunity to create personal profiles and connect with others.[10] These sites have become extremely popular, such that 65% of American adults online now use SNSs.[11] The percentage of adults using social media has doubled since 2008, and the mean user's age shifted from thirty-three to thirty-eight between 2008 and 2010, indicating that young adults are not the only demographic using these sites.[12]

In recent years, social media have become important outlets for news and political information.[13] The role of news within social media is especially important because these sites provide users with a different experience than traditional mass media, such as newspapers, television, and radio. The traditional mass communication experience is a one-way, top-down, sender-driven, time-specific activity; news seekers are mere consumers who receive only the information provided by news organizations, have little choice over content, and for the most part consume content at a time that is predetermined.[14] In addition, sharing content (e.g., cutting an article out of the newspaper for a friend) or controlling the time of consumption (e.g., recording a program on a DVR) are somewhat onerous acts with traditional mass media. With social media, however, users maintain much more control over their information environment. Consumers can actively participate by selecting the content they wish to consume at a time that is convenient to them, and also quickly disseminate news to numerous others.[15] The ease with which social media news consumers can share information with others sets it apart from the traditional mass communication experience. This distinction exemplifies the nature of social media, and, most importantly for the current research, the understanding that these sites allow for both reception and dissemination of news.

News reception on SNSs can happen in several ways. First, participants can sign up to have headlines from mainstream news organizations sent to their social media pages. Second, news organizations and political groups maintain pages within SNSs and users can seek out and consume news through these pages. Third, a member of one's social network can link a news item to another member's page for consumption. Finally, a user can encounter a news item posted to another user or group's page when browsing an SNS.

Like reception, dissemination occurs in multiple ways. Social media users can attach links to news stories on their page so that all who view their profile can see the stories. Similarly, users can place news links on group sites for all members of the group to consume. Finally, users can single out members of their social network and attach links to relevant or interesting news stories on their individual pages.

Reception and Social Media News Dissemination

Although social media are now an important source of news for many citizens, the empirical study of how people engage this content is in its infancy. Scholars have only recently begun to explore the uses, gratifications, and effects of news within social media. Much of the extant work in this area examines audience characteristics and highlights various demographic and personality variables related to social media news use. For instance, young adults and women are likely to use social media for news.[16] News consumption within social media is also related to civic participation and both online and offline political participation, suggesting that news use on SNSs can potentially spur political action.[17] Analyses of gratifications sought through social media news use suggest that people share news within social media to socialize, maintain social status, and seek information.[18] This research certainly begins to illustrate the characteristics of the social media news audience, as well as some of the potential consequences of its use. However, there remains a need to examine the *processes* of news use within the medium. In particular, it is crucial to explore the nature of the relationship between reception and dissemination of news within social media.

It is argued that "the most likely 'effect' of communication . . . is further communication."[19] Such is the basis for inquiry into the relationship between exposure to mass media and interpersonal discussion and information sharing.[20] Theoretically, why does mass media exposure lead to information sharing? Interacting with others, either through discussions or sharing information, helps fulfill several core human motivations, including the need for social interaction, the need to be accurate, and the need to feel good about oneself.[21] Talking to or sharing information with others gratifies these needs by reassuring people that their attitudes or beliefs are correct, helps people clarify their opinions, and gives them an opportunity to work out their personal positions relative to media content.[22] In theory, if people encounter a piece of news that is personally meaningful, they will look to share or talk about it with others, through either conversation[23] or the use of communication technologies.[24] Information sharing is especially likely in situations where people have strong social networks[25] and when the content is interesting, helpful, or emotionally arousing.[26] Much as exposure to news through traditional media stimulates interpersonal discussions, and consuming online news influences mediated interpersonal interactions, reception of news via social media should lead to dissemination of content in this mediated environment. The more frequently people receive news via social media, the more likely they are to disseminate it within that same environment.

H1: Social media news reception retains a positive, linear relationship with social media news dissemination.

Friending and Social Media News Dissemination

News organizations and journalists have established a strong presence on SNSs, maintaining Facebook and Twitter accounts and using social media to drive traffic to their

main websites.[27] News organizations' prominent standing on SNSs provides news consumers new ways to connect with journalists.[28] Social media users are now able to "friend," "like," or "follow" news organizations and journalists with whom they wish to establish a connection and interact.[29]

Friending is a connection strategy within SNSs that allows site users to establish formal links with other users. When two users form this relationship, they join each other's network, allowing for more access to profile information and more ways to communicate with one another.[30] When a user friends a journalist or news organization, he or she receives updates and information (including news stories) from that organization. Users can also comment on news stories from that organization and interact with journalists.[31]

The literature on SNSs and interpersonal communication points to a variety of incentives for friending other individuals, such as maintaining relationships with friends and family and projecting a certain identity to their social network.[32] But one of the most important reasons users establish these connections is because they are interested in gathering information and learning about others.[33] This is true not only in interpersonal contexts, but also in political ones—information seeking was a primary reason citizens interacted with presidential candidates' SNSs during the 2008 primary elections.[34] This motivation to gather information through friending signifies that a person is interested in another's activities.[35] Likewise, friending a news organization within the social media environment is a behavioral manifestation of interest in the information the organization produces. If people friend the *New York Times*, they do so in part because they are interested in the news the paper produces. This is important because interest should affect how people engage news products. In particular, interest should increase information sharing.

Recent studies have established this link between interest and information dissemination online. For example, interest in news topics was found to be one of the most important factors in whether a news article went viral.[36] Similarly, social media users interested in politics are more likely to share or post information about politics.[37] Because friending demonstrates interest, those who establish this relationship with news organizations should be more actively engaged with the information provided and be more likely to disseminate content from that news outlet.

H2: Social media news friending retains a positive, linear relationship with social media news dissemination.

In addition to a main effect, friending a news organization should also moderate the relationship between reception and dissemination of news via social media. It is expected that reception of news through social media will be positively related to dissemination; the more news people receive, the more likely they are to share it with others. However, this relationship should be even stronger for those individuals who have friended a news organization, given that friending is also expected to increase the likelihood of dissemination.

H3: Social media news friending is a contributory condition moderator of the relationship between social media news reception and dissemination in that the reception-dissemination relationship is stronger for those who have friended a journalist/news organization.

Partisanship as Moderator

Citizens who affiliate with a political party choose to align themselves with a particular way of approaching the major issues of the day.[38] It is argued that partisanship allows people to use heuristic cues to quickly gain meaning of political information they receive.[39] Although varied interpretations of the same message may exist between individuals who identify with different political parties,[40] it is important to stress that one benefit of partisanship identification is the establishment of a cognitive/emotional base from which to interpret new political information. Indeed, it has long been argued that political campaigns serve to activate partisan mobilization.[41] Although it is clear that political actions based purely on partisan concerns can run counter to some of our democratic ideals,[42] there is strong empirical evidence that political party identification serves as a positive predictor of a wide range of political behaviors.[43]

Of interest to this study is the role of partisanship in the relationship between social media news reception and dissemination. The act of disseminating news content within social media is a political behavior. Compared to nonpartisans, partisans, whether self-described Democrats or Republicans, have a cognitive/emotional base that allows them to assign meaning to political information they receive through news.[44] As a result, partisans should have a greater likelihood of "mobilizing" (i.e., disseminating) the news content they receive through social media. Thus, the positive predictive value of social media news reception for social media news dissemination should be stronger for partisans than nonpartisans.

H4: Partisanship (i.e., partisans/nonpartisans) serves as a contributory condition moderator of the relationship between social media news reception and dissemination in that the reception-dissemination relationship will be stronger for partisans.

The act of friending a journalist or news organization in social media is akin to identifying with a third party that takes part in political-related activities (i.e., the coverage of politics). A question that must be addressed concerning the role of news in social media is, "What does the act of friending news organizations in social media do for partisans versus nonpartisans?" Partisans have pre-established cognitive-emotional bonds with political entities that exist outside of social media, while nonpartisans do not retain such affiliations. This differentiation in political identification outside of social media may allow for friending journalists/news organizations, which serves as another type of identification, to function in distinct ways for partisans versus nonpartisans. As a result, the following is queried:

RQ: What is the role of partisanship in the relationship between social media news friending and dissemination?

Method

Survey Data

This study utilizes data collected by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.[45] Telephone survey interviews were conducted via random-digit dialing between June 8 and June 28, 2010. A national sample of 3,006 adults in the United States completed the survey (2,005 on landline telephones, with 1,001 on cellular phones).[46] Survey Sample International provided the samples. The combined sample is weighted to match demographic parameters from the March 2009 U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of landline and cellular phone usage. Our analyses focus only on respondents (N = 1,264) who answered "yes" to the following question: "Have you ever created your own profile on any social networking site like MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn, or haven't you done this?"

Endogenous Measures

Social media news variables. To assess *social media news reception*, respondents were asked, "How often, if ever, do you get news or news headlines through social networking sites?" *Social media news dissemination* was measured using the following question: "How often, if ever, do you post news or news headlines on social networking sites?" Both variables were assessed on 4-point scales ranging from 1 (*regularly*) to 4 (*never*) that were recoded so more frequent use scored higher. Social media news reception occurred more frequently (M = 2.16, SD = 1.09) than did dissemination (M = 1.62, SD = 0.88), $t(1, 258) = 18.82$, $p < .001$. *Social media news friending* was operationalized with a single dichotomized (yes/no) response to the following query: "Do you use social networking to follow any news organizations or journalists as a fan or friend, or not?" Of the 1,264 respondents with social network accounts, 200 (15.8%) answered yes.

Partisanship. Respondents were asked, "In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?" The variable was reconstructed to form a single two-group variable (partisan, nonpartisan), with those who indicated being a Democrat or Republican defined as partisans (n = 738, 58.4%) and everyone else as nonpartisans (n = 526).

Exogenous Measures

Demographics. Five demographic variables were included in the analyses: *gender* (female coded as 1; 42.4% males and 57.6% females), *race* (Caucasian coded as 1;

23.9% nonwhite and 76.1% white), *age* ($M = 40.5$, $SD = 15.83$), *level of education* (assessed on a 7-point scale, with the mean falling between some college and bachelor's degree), and *annual income* (measured on a 9-point scale, with the mean falling between $40,000 to under $50,000 and $50,000 to under $75,000).[47]

Political individual-differences. A series of politics-based controls was introduced to create a strict test of whether the SNS-centered relationships are meaningful beyond people's real-world levels of political engagement.[48] It is common to introduce variables of this kind to ensure that the communication-centered relationships of interest are not due to a series of politically oriented third variables.[49] We have introduced four politics variables that span the hierarchy of effects from interest (i.e., news interest) to behavior (i.e., voting).

News interest was measured using the following question: "How much do you enjoy keeping up with the news?" Responses ranged from 1 (*a lot*) to 4 (*not at all*) and were recoded so that greater interest corresponded to the higher score ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.82$). A *public affairs knowledge* index summed the number of correct responses each participant gave to a series of four multiple-choice items asking about political figures and current events ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .65$). *Political ideology* was measured by asking, "In general, would you describe your political views as . . ." with responses on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very conservative*) to 5 (*very liberal*). Responses were recoded so that conservatism was on the higher end of the scale. The mean ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.94$) places the sample most closely to the median position of (moderate). We also included a dichotomous measure of whether the respondent was *registered to vote* (83.3% stated in the affirmative, $n = 1,053$).

News media use. The SNS-based news relationships of focus in this study likely do not function in a vacuum relative to other types of news and public affairs media engagement,[50] so we introduced a series of exogenous news use variables to account for this influence on the hypothesized relationships. Exposure measures associated with television (broadcast and cable), newspaper, radio, and the Internet are thus included in this study.

A mix of traditional and nontraditional media use variables were assessed. Unless otherwise noted, all responses to questions regarding news use were measured on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*regularly*) to 4 (*never*), recoded so that greater use scored higher. The traditional news use variables included *daily newspaper* ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.11$), *radio shows about public issues and politics* ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.14$), and *network television news* use, which was measured by combining responses to multiple questions. Approximately half the sample was asked the extent to which they watched "national nightly news on CBS, ABC, or NBC?" The other half of the sample was asked three individual items tapping how often they consumed national news on each of these networks. Responses to the three individual network items were combined to form a single national network news consumption score for the second half of the sample. The network news consumption levels for the two sample halves were then combined to form a single national network TV news use variable ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.00$).

In addition, separate three-item indices for *MSNBC* and *Fox News* were included. The MSNBC index consists of exposure to three distinct programs: *Hardball with Chris Matthews, Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, and *The Rachel Maddow Show*. Responses ranged on a recoded 1 to 4 scale ranging from (*never*) to (*regularly*), and the index proved to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$; $M = 1.42$, $SD = 0.65$). The Fox News index used measures of exposure to *The O'Reilly Factor, Glenn Beck*, and *Sean Hannity* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$; $M = 1.62$, $SD = 0.84$).

Two Internet-based news variables were also included as exogenous predictors: *web engine news search* and *e-mail news activity*. Respondents were asked, "Have you ever used search engines such as Google, Yahoo or Bing to search for news on a particular subject you are interested in? How often do you do this . . . ?" Responses were provided on a 6-point scale from 1 (*yes, every day*) to 6 (*no, never done this*), and were recoded so that greater search activity scored higher ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.52$). E-mail news activity is a two-item additive index that parallels the social media reception and dissemination items (1-4 scaling) outlined above ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 0.87$; zero-order $r = .46$, $p < .001$).

Communication technology. Finally, we included an exogenous estimate of overall technological engagement to account for (1) a baseline of technological engagement[51] and (2) the degree to which people are mobile (e.g., access Internet via cell phone, use of laptop) with their web activities.[52] Two communication technology variables were introduced as predictors of the endogenous social media news items: *cell phone activity* and *computer access*. Cellular phone activity is a three-item additive index consisting of yes/no responses to the following questions beginning with the stem "Do you ever use a cell phone to": (1) "Send or receive text messages or not?" (2) "Send or receive email or not?" and (3) "Access the Internet or not?" The index results in a 4-point (0-3) scale ranging from *do not engage in any of these activities* to *engage in all of these activities*, that is reliable (Kuder-Richardson$_{20} = .74$), and has a wide range ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.12$). Computer access is a two-item additive index consisting of yes/no responses to two questions: (1) "Do you have a desktop computer or not?" and (2) "Do you have a laptop computer or not?" A majority of respondents ($n = 747$, 59%) had both types of computers.

Analysis

First, a pair of all-entry, ordinary least squares multiple regression equations was constructed to assess the predictive value of the demographic, political individual-difference, news media use, and communication technology variables for social media news reception and dissemination. In addition, the same set of predictors was inserted into a binary logistic regression equation for the third social media news variable, friending.

Second, structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized first to address **H1** to **H3**. The endogenous portion of the model consists of four variables: social media news reception, social media news friending, a reception-by-friending interaction

term, and social media news dissemination as the criterion variable. Direct paths were specified from the first three of these variables to the criterion variable (i.e., **H1-H3**). All exogenous variables that proved to be statistically significant predictors ($p < .05$) of at least one of the three social media news dependent variables from the first analysis stage were included in the structural equation model. This confirmatory model established exogenous-to-endogenous paths based on the initial regression results (i.e., establishment of paths for all statistically significant predictors at the $p < .05$ alpha level).

Next, the same structural equation model was assessed via a two-group approach (partisans/nonpartisans). The unconstrained two-group model is used as a baseline from which to judge the fit of alternative models.[53] We constructed two alternative models to address **H4** and our lone research question, respectively. A single equality constraint was inserted in each alternative model. First, the path leading from reception to dissemination was defined as equal for partisans and nonpartisans (i.e., testing **H4**). Second, the path leading from friending to dissemination was set to equal between the two groups (i.e., assessment of **RQ**).

The introduction of a single equality constraint in each alternative model frees up one degree of freedom compared to the unconstrained model. The chi-square distributed test statistic for the alternative models is compared to the unconstrained model through a difference in chi-square test.[54] The critical chi-square value ($df = 1$) at the $p < .05$ alpha level is 3.84. If either alternative model with a single equality constraint produces a chi-square distributed test statistic of 3.84 or higher, this signals that the equality constraint represents a poorer fit with the data. In short, there is a difference between groups for the particular path being assessed for equality. Such a result would indicate that the group variable (partisans/nonpartisans) serves as a moderator of the path of interest.

Results

Predicting Social Media News Activity

Reception. There are five statistically significant predictors of social media news reception (see Table 1): gender (females coded as 1), $\beta = .10$, $p < .001$; age, $\beta = -.19$, $p < .001$; web engine news search, $\beta = .09$, $p < .01$; e-mail news activity, $\beta = .26$, $p < .001$; and cell phone activity, $\beta = .07$, $p < .05$. The equation accounts for 15.0% of the variance in social media news reception.

Dissemination. There are seven statistically significant predictors of social media news dissemination (see Table 1): age, $\beta = -.18$, $p < .001$; income, $\beta = -.08$, $p < .01$; political ideology (conservative coded high), $\beta = -.07$, $p < .05$; voter registration, $\beta = .05$, $p < .05$; political talk radio, $\beta = .06$, $p < .05$; web engine news search, $\beta = .12$, $p < .001$; and e-mail news activity, $\beta = .30$, $p < .001$. This equation accounts for 19.2% of the variance in social media news dissemination.[55]

Table 1. Predicting Social Media News Reception and Dissemination—Ordinary Least Squares Regression.

	Reception	Dissemination
Gender (female coded as 1)	.10***	–.01
Race (Caucasian coded as 1)	.01	.01
Age	–.19***	–.18***
Education	–.01	.00
Income	–.04	–.08**
Public affairs knowledge	–.03	.02
News interest	.03	.04
Political ideology (conservative)	.02	–.07*
Voter registration	–.02	.05*
Network TV news use	.02	.02
Daily newspaper use	.04	.02
Talk radio use	.03	.06*
MSNBC	.04	.05
Fox News	.03	.03
Web engine news search	.09**	.12***
E-mail news activity	.26***	.30***
Cell phone activity	.07*	.04
Computer access	–.02	.02

Standardized β estimates are reported. Reception: n = 1,211, R^2% = 15.0, $p < .001$; Dissemination: n = 1,214, R^2% = 19.2, $p < .001$.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Friending. There are five statistically significant predictors of social media news friending (see Table 2): gender (females coded as 1), unstandardized logistic $B = .53$ ($SE = .18$), $p < .01$; age, unstandardized logistic $B = –.03$ ($SE = .01$), $p < .001$; Fox News, unstandardized logistic $B = .24$ ($SE = .11$), $p < .05$; e-mail news activity, unstandardized logistic $B = .42$ ($SE = .10$), $p < .001$; and public affairs knowledge, unstandardized logistic $B = .18$ ($SE = .11$), $p < .05$. The Nagelkerke R^2 for this equation is 14.1%.

Structural Equation Model (H1-H3)

Model fit. The hypothesized model fits the data well (see Table 3, Figure 1). Holbert and Stephenson indicate the confirmatory fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) are solid assessments of model fit.[56] We have also included estimates of the normed fit index (NFI) and the incremental fit index (IFI). The cutoff value indicating strong fit for the CFI, NFI, and IFI fit statistics is .95 or greater and .06 or less for the RMSEA. The CFI and IFI estimates for this model are .99, the NFI is .98, and the RMSEA is .03 (90% CI = .02-.04). For purposes of model comparison, the χ^2 distributed test statistic is 56.774 ($df = 27$, n = 1,211). The model accounts for 32.5% of the variance in social media news dissemination.

Table 2. Predicting Social Media News Friending—Logistic Regression.

	Friending		
	B	*SE*	Wald
Gender (female coded as 1)	.53	.18	8.20**
Race (Caucasian coded as 1)	.10	.20	0.26
Age	–.03	.01	20.65***
Education	–.02	.07	0.11
Income	–.08	.04	3.26
Public affairs knowledge	.18	.08	5.11*
News interest	.25	.14	3.24
Political ideology (conservative)	–.04	.10	0.14
Voter registration	.10	.26	0.16
Network TV news use	.09	.08	1.10
Daily newspaper use	.15	.09	3.06
Talk radio use	.13	.08	2.67
MSNBC	.11	.13	0.68
Fox News	.24	.11	4.49*
Web engine news search	.13	.06	4.27
E-mail news activity	.42	.10	16.42***
Cell phone activity	.06	.08	0.42
Computer access	.09	.17	0.30

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. $n = 1{,}215$, Nagelkerke $R^2\% = 14.1$, $p < .001$; -2 Log Likelihood = 949.732.

Endogenous-to-endogenous paths. Given the confirmatory nature of the model in relation to the exogenous-to-endogenous paths, we focus our SEM results summary solely on the endogenous-to-endogenous paths that test **H1** to **H3**. The exogenous-to-endogenous paths in the structural equation model reflect the regression estimates offered in Tables 1 and 2. The path from social media news reception to social media news dissemination was positive and statistically significant, $\beta = .34$, $p < .001$. This finding confirms **H1**. In fact, reception is a stronger predictor of dissemination than any of the variables assessed in the initial regression equation.

Social media news friending is also a positive and statistically significant predictor of dissemination, $\beta = .09$, $p < .05$. Friending a journalist or news organization within social media increases the likelihood of disseminating news. This finding confirms **H2**. In addition, the interaction of social media news reception-by-social media news friending is a positive and statistically significant predictor of dissemination, $\beta = .09$, $p < .05$. The positive value of this interaction term signals friending as a contributory condition moderator.[57] Friending a journalist or news organization in social media works in tandem with social media news reception to increase the likelihood of social media news dissemination. This finding supports **H3**.

Table 3. Exogenous-to-Endogenous Path Estimates: One-Group and Two-Group Structural Equation Models.

	Reception			Friending			Dissemination		
	All	Partisans	Nonpartisans	All	Partisans	Nonpartisans	All	Partisans	Nonpartisans
Gender (female coded as 1)	.09***	.13***	.03	.04*	.05	.03	—	—	—
Age	–.18***	–.17***	–.20***	–.11***	–.11***	–.12***	–.10***	–.10**	–.12**
Income	—	—	—	—	—	—	–.05	–.04	–.04
Public affairs knowledge	—	—	—	.04	.04	.03	—	—	—
Ideology (conservative)	—	—	—	—	—	—	–.07**	–.06**	–.10**
Voter registration	—	—	—	—	—	—	.06*	.04	.07
Talk radio use	—	—	—	—	—	—	.05*	.08*	.02
Fox News	—	—	—	.07**	.05**	.11***	—	—	—
Web engine news search	.08**	.13***	.01	—	—	—	.08***	.05	.11**
E-mail news activity	.26***	.27***	.26***	.11**	.12***	.10**	.22***	.22***	.22***
Cell phone activity	.06**	.05	.07	—	—	—	—	—	—

Standardized path estimates (γ) are reported. All $n = 1{,}239$; partisans $n = 720$; nonpartisans $n = 519$.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

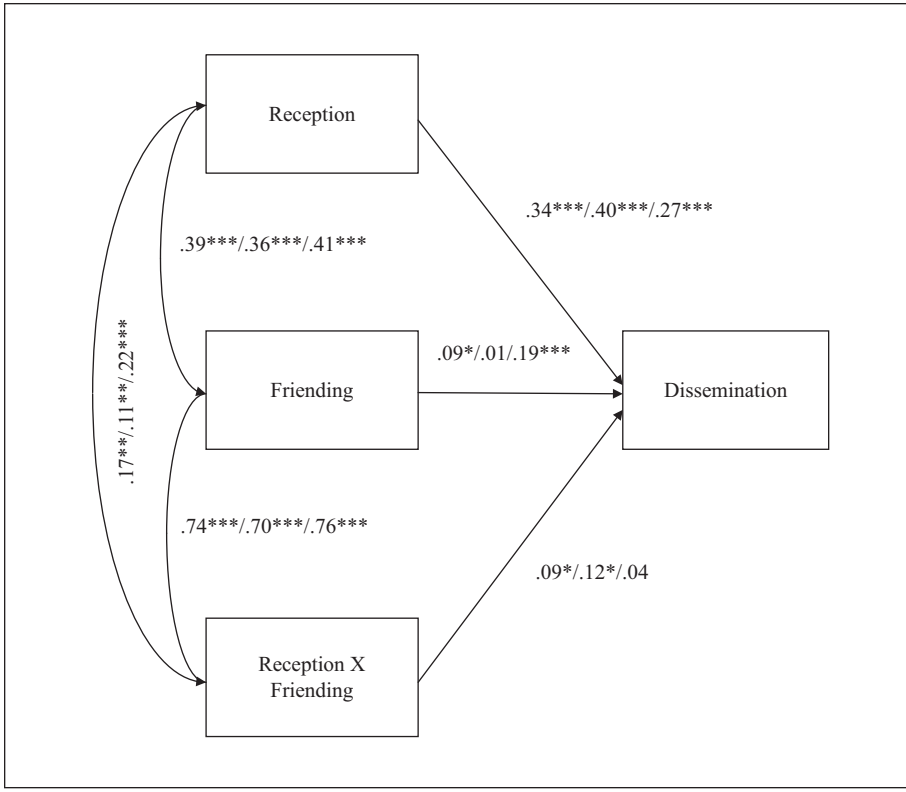

Figure 1. Endogenous path estimates: One-group and two-group structural equation models.
Standardized path estimates (γ) are reported (all [*n* = 1,239]/partisans [*n* = 720]/nonpartisans [*n* = 519]).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Two-Group Structural Equation Model (H4, RQ)

Model fit. The two-group model (partisan/nonpartisan) also fits the data very well: CFI = .99; IFI = .99; NFI = .98; RMSEA = .022 (90% CI = .013-.031). For purposes of model comparison, the χ^2 distributed test statistic is 88.033 ($df = 54$, $n = 1{,}211$). The partisan model results in 34% of the variance accounted for in social media news dissemination. The nonpartisan model produced a squared multiple correlation estimate of 31.8%.

Focus was given to two paths in this model: (1) the path from social media news reception to dissemination (i.e., **H4**) and (2) the path from social media news friending to dissemination (i.e., **RQ**). In particular, attention is given to potential within-path differences between partisans and nonpartisans (see Figure 1). The reception-to-dissemination path in the partisan model is strong ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$). In addition, this path is positive and statistically significant in the nonpartisan group as well ($\beta = .27$,

$p < .001$). However, the beta weight in the latter of the two groups is noticeably lower and is proven to be so in a statistically significant fashion when comparing this alternative model to the unconstrained two-group model. The $\chi^2(df = 55)$ is 93.496 for this constrained model, and this results in a $\Delta\chi^2(df = 1) = 5.463$, $p < .02$. This alternative model does not fit the data as well as the unconstrained model. Partisanship therefore serves as a contributory condition moderator of the reception-dissemination relationship. This finding confirms **H4**. There is a statistically significant and positive relationship between reception and dissemination for both groups, but the relationship is much stronger for partisans.

As for the friending-to-dissemination path between the two groups, the difference is even more pronounced. This path was found to be positive and statistically significant in the initial one-group model, but this relationship does not hold for partisans ($\beta = .01$, *ns*). However, this path remains quite strong in the nonpartisan group ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$). As with the first equality-constrained alternative model, this second alternative model (also containing a single equality constraint) was found to be a poorer fit with the data, $\chi^2(df = 55) = 94.193$. The comparison of the unconstrained model and this latter constrained model results in a $\Delta\chi^2(df = 1) = 6.19$, $p < .02$. The poor fit of the alternative signals a difference in path estimates between the two groups. While the reception-to-dissemination path was strongest among partisans, the friending-to-dissemination path is evident for nonpartisans only.

Discussion

The rapid growth of news use within social media, the increased presence of the journalists and news organizations on these sites, as well as the ability these sites afford users to act as influential content distributors have made it imperative that journalism scholars better understand how citizens engage news within social media. The present study examined a series of predictors of social media news dissemination, a novel and important aspect of the social media news experience. Particular attention was paid to the roles news reception and friending a journalist/news organization play in contributing to social media news dissemination.

The results of this study suggest that both reception and friending are highly predictive of dissemination of news within social media. In addition, friending further heightens the reception–dissemination relationship, as indicated by the contributory condition moderation. However, the main effects of reception and friending were contingent on political partisanship. That is, the relationship between reception and dissemination was significantly stronger for partisans than for nonpartisans. The opposite pattern was found for the friending-dissemination relationship—the strength of the association between friending and disseminating news was significantly greater for nonpartisans than for partisans.

Theoretically, it is not surprising that reception of news is the strongest predictor of dissemination. The more people consume news within social media, the more likely they will share that news with others. To date, this association has not been empirically tested, however. It has been argued that the most likely effect of communication is

more communication,[58] and much research confirms that exposure to news can lead to conversations[59] or online discussions and information sharing.[60] The present study extends this line of research to social media, and our results are consistent with these prior theoretical inquiries—consuming news within social media increases dissemination, much as news use in offline and other online contexts increases discussion and information sharing.

Friending is an integral part of social media sites such as Facebook, and our results indicate it influences how people engage news in this medium. More than a superficial gesture, friending journalists/news organizations is related to more active engagement with news content. Friending signifies that one is interested in the news product, and interest has been shown in other studies to lead to enhanced activity within social media sites.[61] There are numerous reasons friending or following a journalist would increase dissemination, and future research should seek to establish which news outlets people friend and to whom they disseminate that information. We see four possible scenarios for dissemination of news content that should be explored in future work. People can follow news organizations they either (1) agree or disagree with and disseminate information from those news outlets to a friend who holds (2) consonant or dissonant political views from one's own. These scenarios reflect a basic 2 (news outlet; consonant, dissonant) × 2 (friend; consonant, dissonant) matrix. On one hand, if people send information from a consonant SNS news source to a consonant friend, they are seeking to *reinforce* someone's attitudes. Comparatively, information from a dissonant SNS news source sent to a consonant friend might be intended to raise *alarm*. On the other hand, information from a consonant SNS news source sent to a dissonant friend might be intended to *persuade*, while news from a dissonant SNS news source disseminated to a dissonant friend might be an attempt to register personal *protest* with the content. These four possibilities could be explored through an experimental design and would aid in our understanding of how and why people disseminate news within social media.

Political partisanship revealed itself to be an important moderator in the social media news dynamic in two ways. First, the strength of the reception-dissemination relationship was significantly stronger for partisans than for nonpartisans. Partisans are more active than nonpartisans across a range of civic behaviors,[62] and the evidence here extends the notion of active partisans to the realm of social media. Sharing news (which often focuses on political matters) is an online example of political mobilization and one that partisans engage in more frequently.

Partisanship also affected the friending-dissemination dynamic. Here nonpartisans, rather than partisans, who established a connection with a news organization were more likely to disseminate news. Nonpartisans have not established an identification with a political party outside of social media, but can still choose to create a formal link (i.e., identify with) a journalist or news organization within social media. Friending a journalist or news organization predicts the dissemination of news content only for those individuals who do not retain strong political affiliations outside of social media. The act of friending for partisans does little to aid the dissemination of news content.

For partisans, it is all about news reception, not news friending, when predicting dissemination.

It is noteworthy that virtually none of the traditional news outlets predicted social media news reception, friending, or dissemination. Instead, Internet-based news activities such as seeking news through search engines and using e-mail for news predicted social media news engagement. Age held significant predictive value, as younger respondents were more likely to engage in these activities.[63] Despite evidence that older Americans are increasingly turning to social media, the results here suggest social media news users are young, technologically literate, and get most of their news online. It remains to be seen if this pattern holds true as more people use social media and the range of activities they offer.

This work has limitations that warrant discussion. As with any secondary data analysis, researchers are confined to the initial questions asked. In the present research, both reception and dissemination of news in social media were tapped through single-item measures. While not inherently problematic, single-item measures can raise questions about whether a concept is captured clearly. The reception item is one such instance in that it could actually measure information seeking. Regardless of whether the item taps active information seeking or passive exposure, it remains a worthy measure of reception because it assesses how often people are exposed to news within social media.

Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the data, which precludes conclusions about causality in the reception-dissemination relationship. It is plausible that dissemination could lead to reception in some instances: for example, individuals who want to thwart the influence of what they see as a biased mainstream media.[64] A longitudinal design would help establish certainty in the causal nature of this relationship, but the data at hand do not afford this luxury.

This study expands our understanding of specific processes by which citizens engage in the social media news experience. It has been argued that before researchers can fully understand the impact and effects of a given medium, we must first obtain a sense of how the various attributes within that medium relate to one another.[65] This study examines the relationships among social media news reception, friending, and dissemination, as well as some factors (e.g., partisanship) that may influence the strength of these associations. In doing so, it lays the foundation for more research in this area and provides a better understanding of how citizens engage news in this ever-growing medium.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Navigating News Online: Facebook Is Becoming Increasingly Important," May 9, 2011, accessed June 21, 2012, http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/facebook_becoming_increasingly_important; Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Major Trends: The State of the News Media 2012," March 19, 2012, accessed June 21, 2012, http://stateofthemedia.org/2012/overview-4/major-trends/; Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Digital: News Gains Audience but Loses Ground in Chase for Revenue," March 19, 2012, accessed August 1, 2012, http://stateofthemedia.org/2012/digital-news-gains-audience-but-loses-more-ground-in-chase-for-revenue/.
2. Pew, "Navigating News Online."
3. Homero Gil de Zuniga, Nakwon Jung, and Sebastian Valenzuela, "Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation," *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* 17 (April 2012): 319-36; Carroll J. Glynn, Michael E. Huge, and Lindsay H. Hoffman, "All the News That's Fit to Post: A Profile of News Use on Social Networking Sites," *Computers in Human Behavior* 28 (January 2012): 113-19; Chei Sian Lee and Long Ma, "News Sharing in Social Media: The Effect of Gratifications and Prior Experience," *Computers in Human Behavior* 28 (March 2012): 331-39.
4. Thomas J. Johnson and David D. Perlmutter, "Introduction: The Facebook Election," *Mass Communication & Society* 13 (November 2010): 554-59; Clay Shirky, "The Political Power of Social Media," *Foreign Affairs* 90 (January/February 2011): 28-41.
5. William P. Eveland Jr., Myiah J. Hutchens, and Fei Shen, "Exposure, Attention, or 'Use' of News? Assessing Aspects of the Reliability and Validity of a Central Concept in Political Communication Research," *Communication Methods and Measures* 3 (December 2009): 223-44.
6. danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (October 2007): 210-30.
7. R. Lance Holbert, "Debate Viewing as Mediator and Partisan Reinforcement in the Relationship between News Use and Vote Choice," *Journal of Communication* 55 (March 2005): 85-102, 89.
8. See Larry M. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996," *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (January 2000): 35-50.
9. Teresa Correa, Amber Willard Hinsley, and Homero Gil de Zuniga, "Who Interacts on the Web? The Intersection of Users' Personality and Social Media Use," *Computers in Human Behavior* 26 (March 2010): 247-53.
10. boyd and Ellison, "Social Network Sites."
11. Mary Madden and Kathryn Zickuhr, "65% of Online Adults Use Social Networking Sites," Pew Internet & American Life Project, August 26, 2011, accessed June 21, 2012, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Social-Networking-Sites/Overview.aspx.
12. Keith N. Hampton, Lauren Sessions Goulet, Lee Rainie, and Kristen Purcell, "Social Networking Sites and Our Lives," Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, June 16, 2011, accessed June 21, 2012, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Technology-and-social-networks.aspx.
13. Andrew Kohut, Carroll Doherty, Michael Dimock, Scott Keeter, and Tom Rosenstiel, "Ideological News Sources: Who Watches Them and Why: Americans Spending More Time Following the News," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, September 12, 2010, accessed June 21, 2012, http://people-press.org/report/652/; Mary Madden, "Older

Adults and Social Media," Pew Internet & American Life Project, August 27, 2010, accessed June 21, 2012, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Older-Adults-and-Social-Media.aspx.

14. Steven H. Chaffee and Miriam J. Metzger, "The End of Mass Communication?," *Mass Communication & Society* 4 (4, 2001): 365-79.
15. Guosong Shao, "Understanding the Appeal of User-Generated Media: A Uses and Gratification Perspective," *Internet Research* 19 (1, 2009): 7-25.
16. Glynn, Huge, and Hoffman, "All the News That's Fit to Post."
17. Gil de Zuniga, Jung, and Valenzuela, "Social Media Use for News."
18. Lee and Ma, "News Sharing in Social Media."
19. Steven H. Chaffee, "Mass Media and Interpersonal Channels: Competitive, Convergent, or Complementary?," in *Inter/media: Interpersonal Communication in a Media World*, 3rd ed., ed. Gary Gumpert and Robert Cathcart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 62-80, 76.
20. See Brian G. Southwell and Marco C. Yzer, "The Roles of Interpersonal Communication in Mass Media Campaigns," *Communication Yearbook* 31 (2007): 420-62.
21. Jonah A. Berger and Katherine L. Milkman, "What Makes Online Content Viral?," *Journal of Marketing Research* 49 (April 2012): 192-205; Brian G. Southwell and Marco C. Yzer, "When (and Why) Interpersonal Talk Matters for Campaigns," *Communication Theory* 19 (February 2009): 1-8.
22. Josh Compton and Michael Pfau, "Spreading Inoculation: Inoculation, Resistance to Influence, and Word-of-Mouth Communication," *Communication Theory* 19 (February 2009): 9-28.
23. Brian G. Southwell and Alicia Torres, "Connecting Interpersonal and Mass Communication: Science News Exposure, Perceived Ability to Understand Science, and Conversation," *Communication Monographs* 73 (3, 2006): 334-50.
24. Jaeho Cho, Dhavan V. Shah, Jack M. McLeod, Douglas M. McLeod, Rosanne M. Scholl, and Melissa R. Gotlieb, "Campaigns, Reflection, and Deliberation: Advancing an O-S-R-O-R Model of Communication Effects," *Communication Theory* 19 (February 2009): 66-88; Dhavan V. Shah, Jaeho Cho, Seungahn Nah, Melissa R. Gotlieb, Hyunseo Hwang, Nam-Jin Lee, Rosanne M. Scholl, and Douglas M. McLeod, "Campaign Ads, Online Messaging, and Participation: Extending the Communication Mediation Model," *Journal of Communication* 57 (December 2007): 676-703; Dhavan V. Shah, Jaeho Cho, William P. Eveland, Jr., and Nojin Kwak, "Information and Expression in a Digital Age: Modeling Internet Effects on Civic Participation," *Communication Research* 32 (October 2005): 531-65.
25. Brian G. Southwell, Jonathan S. Slater, Alexander J. Rothman, Laura M. Friedenberg, Tiffany R. Allison, and Christina L. Nelson, "The Availability of Community Ties Predicts Likelihood of Peer Referral for Mammography: Geographic Constraints on Viral Marketing," *Social Science & Medicine* 71 (November 2010): 1627-35.
26. Berger and Milkman, "What Makes Online Content Viral?"
27. Pew, "Navigating News Online"; Pew, "Major Trends"; Pew, "Digital."
28. Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, "How Mainstream Media Use Twitter: Content Analysis Shows an Evolving Relationship," November 14, 2011, accessed June 21, 2012, http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/how_mainstream_media_outlets_use_twitter.
29. Though the term for this relationship differs for each of the individual social networking sites, the concept is generally referred to as "friending." See boyd and Ellison, "Social Network Sites."

30. Nicole B. Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe, "Connection Strategies: Social Capital Implications of Facebook-Enabled Communication Practices," *New Media & Society* 13 (September 2011): 873-92.
31. Pew, "Digital."
32. See danah m. boyd, "Friends, Friendsters, and Myspace Top 8: Writing Community into Being on Social Network Sites," *First Monday* 11 (December 2006), accessed March 22, 2013, http://www.firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1418/1336.
33. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, "Connection Strategies."
34. Monica Ancu and Raluca Cozma, "Myspace Politics: Uses and Gratifications of Befriending Candidates," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 53 (December 2009): 567-83.
35. There are several reasons consumers may be interested in a news product. For example, people might be interested in a particular piece of news because they agree with it, because they disagree with it, or because they value its neutrality. The present study does not seek to differentiate among each of these sources of interest.
36. Berger and Milkman, "What Makes Online Content Viral?"
37. Jessica Vitak, Paul Zube, Andrew Smock, Caleb T. Carr, Nicole Ellison, and Cliff Lampe, "It's Complicated: Facebook Users' Political Participation in the 2008 Election," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 14 (March 2011): 107-14.
38. Marc J. Hetherington, "Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization," *American Political Science Review* 95 (September 2001): 619-31.
39. Wendy M. Rahn, "The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates," *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (May 1993): 472-96.
40. Rune Slothuus and Claes H. de Vreese, "Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Issue Framing Effects," *Journal of Politics* 72 (July 2010): 630-45.
41. Thomas M. Holbrook and Scott D. McClurg, "The Mobilization of Core Supporters: Campaigns, Turnout, and the Electoral Composition in United States Presidential Elections," *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (October 2005): 689-703.
42. Russell J. Dalton, "Partisan Mobilization, Cognitive Mobilization and the Changing American Electorate," *Electoral Studies* 26 (June 2007): 274-86.
43. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior."
44. Nicholas A. Valentino, Matthew N. Beckman, and Thomas A. Buhr, "A Spiral of Cynicism for Some: The Contingent Effects of Campaign News Frames on Participation and Confidence in Government," *Political Communication* 18 (4, 2001): 347-67.
45. Kohut et al., "Ideological News Sources."
46. Pew did not provide the response rate for this survey.
47. The demographics for the Pew survey data used in this study closely resemble those from the most recent U.S. census in 2010. According to U.S. census data, 50.8% of the U.S. population is female, the median age is 37.2, and 74.8% of the population is Caucasian. See http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1&prodType=table.
48. Larry M. Bartels, "Issue Voting under Uncertainty: An Empirical Test," *American Journal of Political Science* 30 (November 1986): 709-28; John Zaller, "Political Awareness, Elite Opinion Leadership, and the Mass Survey Response," *Social Cognition: Thinking about Politics: Comparisons of Experts and Novices* 8 (1, 1990): 125-53.
49. E.g., Diana C. Mutz and Paul S. Martin, "Facilitating Communication across Lines of Political Difference: The Role of Mass Media," *American Political Science Review* 95 (March 2001): 97-114.
50. See Dhavan V. Shah, Nojin Kwak, and R. Lance Holbert, "'Connecting' and 'Disconnecting' with Civic Life: The Effects of Internet Use on the Production of Social Capital," *Political*

Communication 18 (2, 2001): 141-62, for an example of introducing traditional news use measures as controls to assessing Internet influence.

51. Bruce Bimber, "Information and Political Engagement in America: The Search for Effects of Information Technology at the Individual Level," *Political Research Quarterly* 54 (March 2001): 53-67.
52. Kenichi Ishii, "Implications for Mobility: The Uses of Personal Communication Media in Everyday Life," *Journal of Communication* 56 (June 2006): 346-65.
53. Rex B. Kline, *Principles and Practices of Structural Equation Modeling*, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford, 2011).
54. Randall E. Schumacker, "Latent Variable Interaction Modeling," *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 9 (1, 2002): 4-54.
55. We report the R^2 value rather than the adjusted R^2 for each of the models. It is recommended that tests using structural equation modeling (SEM) report the variance accounted for by the model. We therefore offer the R^2 for the ordinary least squares, logistic, and SEM models to maintain consistency in our reporting. See R. Lance Holbert and Michael T. Stephenson, "Structural Equation Modeling in the Communication Sciences, 1995-2000," *Human Communication Research* 28 (October 2002): 531-51.
56. R. Lance Holbert and Michael T. Stephenson, "Commentary on the Uses and Misuses of Structural Equation Modeling in Communication Research," in *The Sage Handbook of Advanced Data Analysis Methods for Communication Research*, ed. Andrew F. Hayes, Michael D. Slater, and Leslie B. Snyder (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 185-218; Holbert and Stephenson, "Structural Equation Modeling in the Communication Sciences."
57. See William P. Eveland, Jr., "Interactions and Nonlinearity in Mass Communication: Connecting Theory and Methodology," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (June 1997): 400-416.
58. Chaffee, "Mass Media and Interpersonal Channels"; Southwell and Yzer, "Roles of Interpersonal Communication."
59. Southwell and Torres, "Connecting Interpersonal and Mass Communication."
60. Berger and Milkman, "What Makes Online Content Viral?"; Cho et al., "Campaigns, Reflection, and Deliberation."; Shah et al., "Campaign Ads, Online Messaging, and Participation"; Shah et al., "Information and Expression in a Digital Age."
61. Ancu and Cozma, "Myspace Politics"; Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, "Connection Strategies."
62. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior."
63. Glynn, Huge, and Hoffman, "All the News That's Fit to Post."
64. Yariv Tsfati, "Online News Exposure and Trust in the Mainstream Media: Exploring Possible Associations," *American Behavioral Scientist* 54 (September 2010): 22-42; Yariv Tsfati and Joseph N. Cappella, "Do People Watch What They Do Not Trust? Exploring the Association between News Media Skepticism and Exposure," *Communication Research* 30 (October 2003): 504-29.
65. William P. Eveland, Jr., "A 'Mix of Attributes' Approach to the Study of Media Effects and New Communication Technologies," *Journal of Communication* 53 (September 2003): 395-410; Joseph B. Walther, Geri Gay, and Jeffrey T. Hancock, "How Do Communication and Technology Scholars Study the Internet?," *Journal of Communication* 55 (September 2005): 632-57.

Author Biographies

Brian E. Weeks is a doctoral candidate in the School of Communication at Ohio State University.

R. Lance Holbert is an associate professor the School of Communication at Ohio State University.