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**Social Networking Sites as a New Emerging Form of Political and Social
Participation in the US: Investigating and Assessing**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Master Degree in Civilization

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This research work is dedicated to my parents; my father Mebarek “God’s mercy upon him” and my mother Khemissa Ayad, either for her understanding or giving me the spirit and support when I needed. All the beautiful words are offered to my husband Nour Eddine Rouabhia, my brothers: Abd El Wahid, Zoubir, and Amine, and my sisters Ilhem and Manel.

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand the usage of Social Networking Sites as a new emerging form of Social and political participation in the US. It examines US citizens' day-to-day activities under the Social Networking Sites umbrella, and the relationship between the users.

Furthermore; the reason behind using these sites and the most used websites are being distinguished through this research. Checking if Social Networking Sites have an impact or influence on the ongoing politics in the US society is also being discussed throughout the study; how citizens express their political views using websites like: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn...etc. Additionally, the relationship of the US citizens within each other; their civic participation, is tested through college students' social capital. The need for an adequate investigation of the study's aims lead to some guiding questions: what reasons do US citizens use Social Networking Sites for, in other words what are the most important activities to be done when using Social Networking Sites? How do Social Networking Sites influence the ongoing of political and social atmosphere in the US society? How does the extensive use of these Sites affect college students' social capital including life satisfaction, civic participation, self esteem, and trust? The study analyzes the positive impact of Social Networking Sites on changing the application of variant US political and social governmental issues.

Résumé

Cette étude a pour objet d'éclaircir les différentes utilisations des instruments de communication sociale, afin que ceci aura des nouvelles méthodes de participation politique et social dans la société américaine, la finalité de cette étude c'est les différentes activités qui se font aux outils de communication (site web). En plus, cette étude contient les raisons principaux de l'utilisation du site web ; L'influence du site web sur la vie politique et social dans la société Américaine. Cette étude permet de discuter et d'analyser les relations entre les citoyens Américain avec leur société qui se font à partir de la discussion de la relation des étudiants avec les Sites Web, et son influence sur eux, et aussi pour améliorer leur participation dans la vie sociale quotidienne. Alors que ça ne vient pas sauf s'il ya une confiance bivoque et leur sentiment de joie et de satisfaction dans la vie. Tout cela, nous a poussé pour poser des questions qui ont orienté vers le contenu de cette étude. Quelle est la raison principale en dehors de l'utilisation des Site Web ? D'une autre façon, quelle sont les activités qui font grâce à ses instruments ? Comment influe l'utilisation des Site Web sur le chemin social et politique du gouvernement Américain ? Comment influe l'utilisation du Site Web sur la vie des étudiants universitaires ? Finalement, nous avons étudié l'impact positif que représentent les sites des réseaux sociaux sur le changement de l'application des différents issues sociales et politiques du gouvernement Américain.

المخلص

تهدف هاته الدراسة الى توضيح مختلف الاستعمالات لوسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي باعتبارها طرق جديدة للمشاركة السياسية و الاجتماعية في المجتمع الأمريكي. و تتطرق هاته الدراسة إلى مختلف النشاطات التي تتم عبر وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي و نوع العلاقات التي تنتج بين المستخدمين. زيادة على ذلك تتضمن هاته الدراسة السبب وراء استعمال وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي، مع ذكر الأهم منها. التحقق من تأثير وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي على المجرى السياسي و الاجتماعي داخل المجتمع الأمريكي يتم مناقشته من خلال هاته الدراسة. إضافة إلى ذلك تحليل علاقة المواطنين الأمريكيين فيما بينهم تتم دراسته من خلال مناقشة علاقة طلبة الجامعة بوسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي، ومدى تأثير هاته الأخيرة عليهم من اجل زيادة مشاركتهم في الأعمال الاجتماعية، و ذلك يتم طبعاً من خلال الثقة المتبادلة و مدى شعورهم بالراحة، الفرح والقناعة في حياتهم. كل هذا يدفعنا الى طرح بعض الأسئلة التوجيهية لمعرفة محتوى الدراسة ما هو السبب وراء الاستعمال المكثف لوسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي اي بطريقة أخرى ما هي أهم النشاطات التي يؤديها مستعملي هذه الوسائل ؟ كيف يؤثر استعمال وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي على المسار السياسي و الاجتماعي للحكومة الأمريكية ؟ كيف يؤثر الاستعمال المكثف لوسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي على الحياة الاجتماعية لطلاب الجامعة بما فيها الثقة المتبادلة، المشاركة الاجتماعية في مختلف النشاطات ؟ و أخيراً تتطرق هاته الدراسة إلى تحليل الدور الايجابي لوسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي في التطور السياسي الاجتماعي داخل الحكومة الأمريكية.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

SNS	Social Networking Sites
AMA	Ask Me Anything
GIF	Graphics Interchange Format

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Introduction

The social media file is the main object of the present work, specifically the two items the Social Networking Sites and the US citizens. Either ‘good or bad’ remains the difficult classification task that faces sociologists and communication researchers. Given the fact that the US utilizes of the Social Networking Sites is increasing daily, the debate over the effect and to be effected with these sites on the US citizens becomes the concern of the US political and social discourses.

The focus of this study will be placed on whether or not the Social Networking Sites; such as: Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Nexopia, Bebo, etc, are really used by the US citizens as a tool for the political and the social participation and if their opinions about social and political issues are really taken into consideration by the US government. Moreover, the study investigates and assesses how much the US citizens use the Social Networking Sites in their daily life. In addition, the examination presents the interrelation between the users of those sites and the ongoing of political and social change in the United States. Furthermore, the eager of the US government towards grasping what its citizen is communicating for, is distinguished in through this research.

This dissertation contains three chapters. Titled “US Citizen’s Day-to-Day Activities under the Social Networking Sites’ Umbrella” chapter closely looks into the wide spread of the Social Networking Sites in the American society. Specifically, numbers are covering the fact about the top twenty Social Networking Sites used among the US citizens.

Chapter two, “How Do Social Networking Sites Influence the Political Participation in the US?” highlights the inter-effect of the use of Social Networking Sites among US citizens. Different studies form the investigation sphere of the direct and indirect engagement of the Americans in the political life through those websites. Furthermore, critical analysis about the

implication of the Social Networking Sites on the US politicians and candidates are presented throughout the chapter.

In the last chapter “The Use of Social Networking Sites as a Tool for Social Participation in the US” discussion of the relation between the Americans and the Social Networking Sites moves to the social sector. It analyses the interrelation between the social capital of the young adults and their use of the websites. The analysis goes further to include crucial results of a sum of studies about the possible change of self-identity, self-esteem, socialization and civic participations of college students under the use of the Social Networking Sites in the US.

US citizens are among the first nations that consume Social Networking Sites and the implication of these sites over them is always increasing; this use was just 8% in 2005 then grown up to 35% in August 2008. In 2008, only the US online utilizes were able to own a Facebook account in doing various activities. This number has risen in 2013 to 72%.

Being an active citizen is linked to his extent participation in the political and social life. Online means of social media such as, Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube give citizens the chance to be active and integrate in the civic movements in the US. Political candidates and parties, in their turn, tend to use online platforms; more specifically Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube, in order to build strong ties with the citizens and convince them to vote. Online platforms represent the battlefield where political candidates compete in order to get more voters. Moreover, through these online means citizens can know the candidates and decide which one is the appropriate. Barack Obama won the elections of 2008 and 2012 because he followed a planning based on his implication of online tools.

Different categories make use of online platforms, but those who are really concerned are the younger generation because they take these platforms as a space where they can keep in touch with their confidants and family members. Young people and university students are the

targets in this research since the majority of them have at least one Social Networking Site, and 45% of them use it minimum one time each day.

At the methodological level, different methodologies and analyses are applied in the work. The presentation of historical moments like the creation of some of the Social Networking Sites, voting events, and other incidents related to the subject of the work needed the use of the historical analysis. The use of sociologist's views, quotations, and speeches of a number of the US citizens over their use of the Social Networking Sites and its implications on their lives necessitates the application of the discourse analysis. As the work is based on the empirical study of the interrelation between the Americans and their use of the Social Networking Sites which imposes the adoption of the quantitative approach, graphs, and polls are included in the present dissertation.

The complexity of the assessment of the effect of the Social Networking Sites on the social capital of the Americans requires the use of varied resources to obtain adequate conclusion. Among the main resources the study is enhanced through are tangible reports mainly from *Pew Research Center*, *Pew Research Center Internet, science and Technology*, and *Mass Communication and Society*. Considerable polls are used in the study and taken from *Higher Education Research Institute* and *Politics Fact Sheet*. Further statistical reports of the assessment linked to the theme of the study are devoted from *Pew Internet and American life*.

The marginalization of the classical social media when it comes to communication alerts sociologist's studies to be more based on the invasion of the Social Networking Sites. As a consequence considerable literature has developed to investigate the positive and the negative role of those sites on the political and social life of the US citizens. Miriam J. Metzger together with the other authors try to theorize the interaction between the Social Networking Sites and their utilizes social trust, confidence, and community engagement.

The same interest is assessed by Moira Burke's dissertation which is titled "*Reading, Writing, Relations: The Impact of Social Network Sites on Relationships and Well-Being*". A set of journal articles like: "Using Social Media to Improve Citizens Engagement with Government : Research Brief", "Using Social Network Systems as a Tool for Political Change", and others conclude their studies by confirming the positive effect of the Social Networking Sites on the US citizen's social capital.

Chapter One

US Citizen's Day-to-Day Activities under the Social Networking

Sites' Umbrella

When the internet came years ago, different forms of Social Networking Sites arrived, so people started to create online groups. The web 2.0 represented a modern emerging form of online advance through which users were able to stay in contact with other users. What distinguishes the old online groups from the new ones are the user, his online account, the receiver, the surface, and the kind of connectivity that links between the user's identity in the online profile. However, the most important in the old online groups is just the profile's owner and the one who communicate with him (Lur, et al 2).

SNS users find themselves in front of variant kinds of sites that needs pre-knowledge of its use. Academy, LinkedIn, and Spoke are online sites that are under the category of entering into marketing matters. Friender, MySpace, Freindzy, Meetup, Orkut, Tickle, and Tribe are considered as online sites to make social relationships. Instead of using Ryze to be involved in marketing, users rely on it to organize meetings (Lur, et al 2). Then, it is preferable to clarify the aim of the use of a specific SNS so that its selection gets easy.

Furthermore examples of the interrelation between the type of the SNS and for what it is used are yet needed. LinkedIn; with 20 million members, Plaxa; with 15 million, and Xing; with 4 million, are Social Networking Sites used by business men. There are other platforms which are used by doctors of medicine like Sermo, Care 2, Fixter, Flicker, Library Thing, CareDomain, Dozster and OUTeverywhere. Close people and family members use different sites such as, Classmates.Com, Reunion.Com, FriendsReunited, and MyYearbook in their gatherings. Fund managers are protected by online constructed by the Reuters news agency. A

SmallWorld is a Social Networking Platform created for the international and the well-known jet-set (Fraser and Dutta). Any miss selections of the SNS type will cause a miss lead information.

An SNS user can create a Social Networking account by entering his e-mail address and its pass word, or there is another way that makes the user able to join an online group which is his connection with a person who belongs to a Social Networking Site. The first thing that the new online profile proposes to the user is to pick up among the proposed list what are his favorite films, written books, TV shows, songs and many other things (O'Murchu, et al 2).

Social Networking Sites are categorized under six categories; the first one is the Egocentric Networks that contain sites such as MySpace and Facebook, where the users can connect with friends. Egocentric Networks help the users to be connected with their friends. It represents a space of art and creativity where the users can post, share, like, and comment on songs, videos, pictures...etc.

Community Networks is the second category and it contains people who share the same national identity, race, religion, social class, sex...etc. For example: the black Americans have the Black Planet site to communicate with each other. The Opportunistic Networks category is defined as a group of Social Networking Sites through which the users are able to interact with each other to get services like business. Sites for American doctors like Semo and others of stockbrokers are under this category (Fraser and Dutta).

The Fourth category is Passion-Centric Networks and it is constructed for individuals who have the same goal. Passion-Centric Networks is known as "Communities of Interest". Dogster is a Passion Centric Networks' site that includes persons who love dogs. The Fifth category is called Media Sharing Sites and the best example to represent it is YouTube and Flickr. The important characteristics of these sites are the topics and the videos not the

number of the members. In YouTube, there are videos but, in Flickr there are photographs (Fraser and Dutta). The differences within the previous mentioned categories give the user the opportunity to fulfill his social, economic, and political needs.

The most visited Social Networking Sites of today are not the same of years ago. They absolutely have shifted and for sure they will keep changing each year. The very old ones will disappear and the new ones will appear and be the most popular. The era of MySpace has passed, to arrive to a new era dominated by Facebook and many other Smartphone connecting applications (Moreau). The need to be familiar with a sum of the Social Networking Sites demands a specific presentation for the common used ones. The following subtitle embeds the task.

1.1.Top 20 Most Popular Social Networking Sites

1.1.1.Facebook

If someone is not familiar with the word Facebook, then he is considered as a classical person. When the term Facebook is mentioned, the concept of “social media” directly occurs, because it is the first Social Networking Site used by the majority of people (Milanovic). Facebook is the most visited website. In December 2007, Facebook gained 98 million visitor. On January 2008, Facebook marked about 34 million visitors. However; the number of Facebook visitors has been increased to 67 million. They spend about 20minute per day on their Facebook profiles (Valenzuela, et al 6).

Facebook provides many services for its visitors. They can enter personal information like gender, birthday, religion, e-mails, own pictures, favorite movies, music...etc. These services allow Facebook and other sites to attract millions of users especially adults. In addition, “the Wall” is another type of Facebook messaging service, where friends can put their comments.

This messaging service allows users to share views, sentiment, activities... etc. Furthermore, “Facebook Groups” allow many users to join each other for common interests and activities (Valenzuela, et al 6). Among all SNS, Facebook remains the preferred one.

1.1.2. Twitter

The bird is its advertising symbol. Twitter can be defined as a web log service. Its messages are limited to 140 tweets. Twitter of years ago is not the same as Twitter of today. Nowadays individuals criticize it because it tries to imitate Facebook in its functions (Moreau). Like many other applications, Twitter installation in any type of communicating devices necessitates further information about the user. The interrelation between Twitter and the Android application confirms the good access of different Twitter services (“Why is the Twitter...”).

1.1.3. LinkedIn

The classical process of going to the supermarket and buy goods does not exist anymore today. Through the implication of LinkedIn individuals can be integrated in different marketing planes by selling and buying goods online Statistics show that LinkedIn is used by 313 individual in 200 different places over the world. In each second we have two persons who announce his membership to LinkedIn (Milanovic). LinkedIn is much more used by pupils and students who have finished their study in near time.

1.1.4. Google+

It is defined as the result of a combination between Facebook and Twitter. It is supported by Google, the biggest research engine. Through Google+ content can be added, different subjects are tackled using hashtags. Circles are split into groups of close persons. If an SNS user want to have a Google+ account, it will not take much time from him (Milanovic).

1.1.5. YouTube

In 2005 the SNS world witnessed the existence of the website YouTube. Since it affords plenty of videos, this site advertising symbol can be recognized easily by kids. In some parts of the world it is the biggest search engine since it provides people with a huge amount of videos. YouTube gives its users the chance to have common and comment on the videos they watch (Milanovic).

1.1.6. Instagram

Milanovic said that it has the ability to connect between the pictures and the videos in users Smartphone camera and all the other social networking profiles that he owns. Another characteristic that Instagram has is pushing friends to comment on what users have posted (Milanovic). In parallel with the much use of Facebook, the Instagram accelerates its existence among the favorite Social Networking Sites.

1.1.7. MySpace

When a MySpace user account is on, a proposed list of other MySpace users appears to him so that he makes the list of friends. If the one who owns a MySpace profile accepts the invitation of becoming a friend with another, the latter's friends will appear in the first wall so that he adds them and widen his friends list. Users of MySpace have to be aged more than 14 years old in order to have a profile in the web site (Jain). Since a lot of people know MySpace and are aware of its advantages, membership cycle is growing very fast (Cabrera). The recent use of MySpace is devoted to make business and commercials.

1.1.8. Classmates

If anyone wants to talk with persons who were with him in the same class at school, then he will have to join Classmates. Com. Being a member in a Classmates group does not require

the user to pay money, but if he wants to benefit from the best qualities of the service, then an allowance has to be paid (Jain). Randy Conrads generated Classmates in 1995. 90% of American secondary school students -except some who do not use SNS- have a Classmates account. Another interesting characteristic of Classmates is that the new users can read old annals and see pictures that were taken by the famous persons at school (Brown). By using Classmates boards enlarging the space between classmates do not exist through this site.

1.1.9. Pinterest

In the last few years Pinterest has influenced the social media in a noticeable way because it serves as a huge practical thought. Pinterest is much more used by women and through this service people can have in common different photos, originative ideas, or projection photos that others are able to immobilize, preserve, or do again (Milanovic).

1.1.10. Tumblr

It can be identified as a Social Networking Site that is well-known among teenagers and young people. Tumblr shares with Pinterest the same characteristic of the observed content. Through Tumblr blog theme can be customized, what is posted can take different shapes, and users can check what others have posted (Moreau). Reblog and put likes to different posts form the communicating bridge between all Tumblr users.

1.1.11. Vine

It is an application of sharing videos in Smartphone. Vine belongs to the company of Twitter and it is much more used for entertainment. If the Vine user shares with another person a Vine video through a tweet, he will be able to install it online in Twitter and even in a website. Vine is a great application, though the time of its videos cannot pass six seconds (Moreau). Comparably, a lot of Vine skillful users prefer to create a video via Vine

over Instagram.

1.1.12. Snapchat

It is an interesting Social Networking Site to connect between friends from different Places. Through Snapchat pictures are taken, arts and texts are added, then sent to other persons for a specific period of time, after that they will be deleted from the company 'service. In contrast with Instagram, Snapchat provides the user with the ability to share photos but just for seconds (Hasty).

1.1.13. Reddit

It is a page on the internet where a group of people connecting with each other, and discussing the subjects they do prefer, can be found. Simultaneously, those people share links, pictures, and visual animations that correspond to the discussed subjects. Reddit AMAs are the process of making the Reddit users asking famous people different questions (Moreau). If the user's links on Reddit get the higher percentage of votes, they will be on his sub Reddit first page.

1.1.14. Flickr

It is a photo sharing website which is owned by Yahoo. Flickr was created before Pinterest and Instagram, the other famous photo showing service. Through this platform the pictures that the user has taken can be seen by his friends. In addition, comments, and notes are added to the pictures through this website (Spencer). Yahoo provides its users new Smartphone's applications with various characteristics.

1.1.15. Foursquare

Foursquare is an application used to find users' places. It can be used as a means to

discover locations, and a Swarm application to make social relationships. Through Foursquare users can find the places of their friends and organize meetings with them in a given area (Pindoriya). With the launching of Swarm, new opportunities of playing games and gaining awards are introduced.

1.1.16. Kik

It is an application used for sending messages for free by young people. It gives them the chance of chatting in peers or groups using their usernames and not mobile numbers. Pictures, videos, animated GIFs, and written texts are sent to friends using Kik. It is not utilized only for connecting people who the user already know, but also he can connect with them since they share the same interests (Moreau).

1.1.17. Meetup

It is a space where people exchange ideas about what type of music they want to listen, and what they want to do; for instance in their free time. Meetup is all the time open to receive new people so that they can make the friends' circle bigger and discover other interests. To make a difference among the community members is the slogan headed by Meetup users. The use of Meetup strengthen self confidence of its users towards an organized personal life (Burbach).

1.1.18. MyYearbook

It is a Social Networking Site that is based on the money that the user pays to play games, but its first mission is to make people know each other. MyYearbook users are able to exchange presents that will be sold by the site's company later on; this is another way for making money. What is interesting for this company is its charitable work (Jain). For example, in 2010, those who survived from the Haiti seism benefited from the money that

was given to them by the company.

1.1.19. Tagged

Like other many Social Networking Sites, Tagged is launched in order to help people in making social relationships based on their wants. Compared with Facebook and Myspace, Tagged obtains too common similarities with them. If someone wants to be a member in Tagged, then he has just to sign in by entering his e-mail address and the pass word. Or, by a different manner that is based on another member who sends him a request for membership (Chandler). Through the use of Tagged, the list of the friends will get longer in a wink of an eye.

1.1.20. Black Planet

Omar Wasow created a black space site in 1990. The Black Planet site is much more used by black Americans, and it has the basic characteristics of the rest of Social Networking Sites like connecting with other users, listening to songs. Barack Obama relied on this site in order to attract more voters (Watts). A new way towards further open-minded societies is remarked through the use of the Black Planet site.

1.2. Important Proportions about the Americans' Use of Social Networking Sites

The US society has witnessed a new era of technological development, this paved the way for its citizens to be more active on the websites such as Facebook and Twitter. These sites play an important role in the citizens' life, they argue that they cannot complete their tasks if there would be no possibility to go online i.e. when there is no internet, they could not use Social Networking Sites ("Social Networking Fact Sheet").

Using Social Networking Sites becomes very popular especially with the growth of cell

phones as mediums, allowing citizens to use these sites and making it just a “finger tap away”. From time to time, users surf through the net and do their preferred or favorite activities. They can select pictures, videos about a particular topic, and try to post them to be noticed by their friends.

For the majority of US citizens Social Networking Sites become very helpful, especially for managing important issues which are needed to be done in a very short period of time. They stated that nearly all of their day- to-day activities are done online. 40% of them said that Social Networking Sites play a major role in their daily routine (“Social Networking Fact Sheet”). They are used for communicating with friends and families, and getting access to the other cultures especially through Facebook.

As a result, 64% of US citizens declared that their act might be affected if they would no longer use the Social Networking Sites. In another survey that has been conducted by the Pew Research Center, 53% of US citizens said that due to Social Networking Sites they are able to do and manage many of their day –to-day activities rather than using offline ways. They argue that Social Networking Sites pursue the everyday pleasure of life, allow them to check the weather, communicate with different people from all over the world, playing games and getting everyday information (“Social Networking Fact Sheet”). The result of another study that has been conducted by the Pew Research Center shows that 53% of Social Networking Sites users use it to check sports scores, while 50% of them use it to look for phone numbers or personal addresses.

The role and importance of Social Networking Sites for the US citizens in their day-to-day activities differs from one person to another. The nature of the daily activities done in relation to these web sites vary from one group to another, i.e. from women to men, from

adults to old people...etc. This means that US citizens 'usage of Social Networking Sites can differ by gender, age, and many other factors (Lenhart 5). Communicating with families and friends, playing games, checking sports scores, looking for information, can be considered as the common activities shared by nearly all the groups.

In a survey conducted during July 2010, it is found that Americans spent nearly 74 billion minutes on social media using home computers. About 5, 7 billion minutes via mobile web browsers and 40,8 billion minutes via apps, this means that Americans use Social Networking Sites with a total of 121 billion minutes ("Are social networking ...?").

US citizens use Social Networking Sites because they argue that the websites are a source for faster information than any other source of traditional media. These websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn are used by 65% of traditional media reporters as sources for their research. For Twitter, it is used by 52% of US citizens, not only reporters but also it is used by employers to seek and find jobs. 64% of companies use Social Networking Sites to get more efficient capabilities to be used. 52% of job seekers use Facebook as a medium for job search. 38% use LinkedIn and 34% use Twitter ("Are social networking ...?").

The number of users or visitors is not the same for all the website i.e. the usage of these sites differs from one citizen to another, because adults do not use them like old people. The situation remains the same for men and women. Social networking sites 'usage has been developed, with a notable growth in the number of users among the different groups. In his study, Andrew Perrin states that Adults aged from 18 to 29 are considered as the more addicted to Social Networking Sites rather than old people. 90% is the total of adults using social networking sites. Facebook is the most preferred website for adults. They use it to create relationships, connect with friends, families and relatives.

In February 2005, the total percentage of adult's users of SNS is just 8%. This indicates the growth in using Social Networking Sites (Brenner, Aaron). About 18% of adults are using Twitter from time to time. 71% use Facebook, in addition to, 26% use Instagram, 28% use Pinterest, 28% use Linked In, and 23% use Twitter. These web sites are used by adults to develop biographical profile, communicate with friends and strangers, do their research, share thoughts, music, links... etc ("Background : Are social networking...?").

Moving to the sites' usage by gender, Social Networking Sites attract more female users rather than men. Females are indicated as the most Social Networking Sites users especially for Pinterest which " holds particular appeal to female users" (qtd. in Lunden). Women want to share and discuss more personal subjects, they are seeking to build more relationships since they are more expressive than men. The latter are always seeking for specific information to influence others such as the making of projects (Vermeren). For business reasons, males become very popular with the use of these sites rather than females.

E- mail in general is the most preferred website for women, it is considered as a source to create relationships with friends and families. According to a study entitled "Tracking Online Life How Women Use the Internet to Cultivate Relationships with Family and Friends", 57% of females stated that e-mail is very useful for them to make connection and communication, only 44% of men assert that, in addition 56% of women declared that they would miss e-mail if they are going to give up, but, only 43% of men confirmed that (18).

However, according to another source which is the Pew Research Center, women and men are in comparable percentage concerning the use of Social Networking Sites. Both of them use these sites as a way to do many activities. The difference between them existed in

specific platforms i.e. in terms of the activities they do and the websites they use from time to time. For example: Pinterest, Facebook, and Instagram attract more female users rather than male. The latter are visitors of online discussion forums such as Reddit and Digg or Slashdot. For the other websites such as Twitter and Tumbler, they attract similar numbers (Anderson).

Pinterest attracts 44% of women and just 16% of men. The same for Facebook and Instagram, where 77% of women are users of Facebook, and 31% of them are users of Instagram, whereas men represent two thirds of Facebook users, and 24% of Instagram users (Anderson). Iris Vermern' study shows that women spend about 10 minutes in front of their mobiles using Social Networking Sites, in compared to less than 7 minutes for men. Women dominate most of the Websites; for example Twitter female users represent 22%, where as men represent 15%. These women users post at least two times on Facebook Walls having more friends than men.

Concerning the activities, men visit Reddit, Dig, or Slashdot in order to leave or read comments. In their turn, Women use Facebook, and Twitter to connect with friends and families, supported Monica Anderson in the report "Men Catch Up with Women on Overall Social Media Use". Moreover; the usage of the websites can differ according to household income. Researchers found that households earning less than 30,000\$ represent 4% of the US population; unlike those who earn 75,000\$, they represent 12%. Nowadays, those with the highest income represent 78% in compared to 56% of those with lower income (Perrin 8).

Social Networking Sites usage by urban and rural areas is also tackled by researchers. They found that US citizens living in rural areas are less likely to use SNS than those who live in suburban and urban societies. The rural users represent 58%, however; suburban users are 68%. In addition to 64% of users in urban communities (Perrin 3). More specifically, how

some Social Networking Sites are used by the US citizens is discussed in the following subtitles.

1.2.1. Facebook

Among the American adults who use the internet there are 71% who use Facebook during 2013. 56% of internet users who are 65 years-old and more use Facebook. This percentage is 35% in 2012 and increased in 2013 to arrive to 45%. These numbers clarify the image that females use Facebook more than males. Facebook is the most used social platform in the American society and 56% is a high percentage showing that more than the half of Americans are influenced by this site (Duggan, et al).

Duggan, together with the other writers reported that Facebook users say that 155 is the number of their friends, and 50 is the number of the ‘real friends’. 91% among those who utilize the platform say that they have a friendship with present-day friends. 87% represents Facebook utilizes who use the site to connect with friends of the secondary school or the university, whereas 58% refers to the ones who use the page to talk to their friends ‘office (Duggan, et al).

Furthermore, 45% of the American facebookers claimed that they make use of Facebook to stay in touch with their parents, in return 43% utilize it to communicate with their kids. 39% say that they use Facebook to connect with individuals they have never seen in their life, however; 36% surf on Facebook to make relationships with persons who live near their houses (Duggan, et al; “Average Number of Facebook...”). Facebook helps the Americans to widen their friends’ circle and have different social relationships.

1.2.2. Twitter

Among the American adult internet users there are 23% who utilize Twitter, but this

proportion is estimated only 18% in August 2013. 19% represents those who make use of Twitter among the whole American population. People under the age of 50 years old prefer to use Twitter. The male gender, the white race, persons who are 65 years-old and more, home individuals who get each year \$ 50,000 or more, students who receive an academic degree upon their completion of their study, and those who live in urban areas, use a lot this platform in comparison with the last part of 2013 (Duggan, et al; “Number of Monthly...”). In front of the large scale of the facebookers in the US, Twitter fights its existence among the SNS users in the land.

1.2.3. Instagram

The percentage of those who used to check their Instagram profile among American adult internet users in the last part of 2013 is 17%, but this figure arrives to 26% in 2016. The year of 2013 witnessed a decrease in the proportion of persons who were between the period of adolescence and youth with only 37%. In contrast, by 2016 the percentage arrives to 53%. Speaking about gender use, female likes to utilize Instagram. For minority use of Instagram, Latinos, and African Americans enjoy the website services (Duggan, et al).

1.2.4. Pinterest

The gender control Pinterest is the female one; with 42% and only 13% of the hard sex makes use of this platform, though the percentage of men who are interested in this site has developed from 8% in 2013 to 13% in 2014. In August 2013, there were 21% Pinterest users among American adults who use the internet. In 2014, the percentage moved upward to 28% (Smith “By the Numbers”).

1.2.5. LinkedIn

There are 28% of American adult internet utilizes who make use of this platform and 23%

represents the percentage of all US citizens who have an access to it. LinkedIn is use by graduated students with 50%. In addition, the site is much widely interested by rich people. From 30 to 64 years-old is the preferred age category that likes this platform (“Percentage of US Internet...”).

Users of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter are asked by the American Pew Research Center if they spend time on each platform every day, every week, or less often. 70% of Facebook users visit the site every day; with 45% who check it many times in one day. 17% spend time on it every week, and 12% use it frequently. However; the percentage of Instagram users who make use of this SNS every day notice a decrease with just 49%. There is 24% of American online users who log on the site each week, and 26% of the same category do that more rarely. 50% of Facebook users post photos, videos, or status or comment on what others have posted while the rest spend their time checking or watching what is proposed (Duggan,et al). These percentages answered positively for the question if the spend time using the SNS related to the type of the used one.

Duggan with other writers clarified that the daily user ship of Twitter witnesses a decrease with 46% in August 2013 and 36% this year. Among the Pintrest utilizes, there are 52% who use it less often, 29% make use of it every week, and just 13% check it daily (7% log on the site different times a day). LinkedIn is checked by 13% of its users every day; with 7% who logg on the site many times in just one day. In 2013, there was 34% of LinkedIn users who check their profile each week, however; this number arrived to 34% in 2014 (Duggan, et al). In comparison with 2015, there are more users who use it less frequently in 2016. Previous statistics are presented in the following figures.

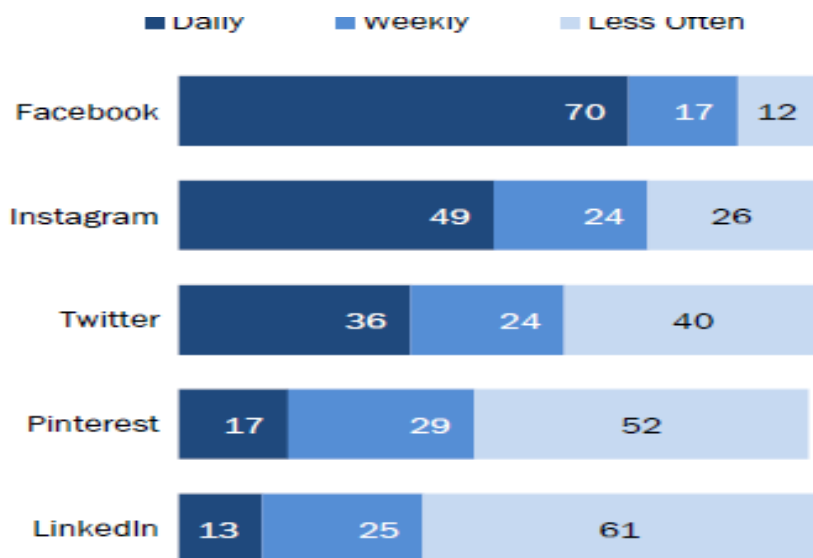


Fig.1. Frequency of Using Social Networking Sites by the US Citizens, by *Pew Research Center Internet, science and Technology.*

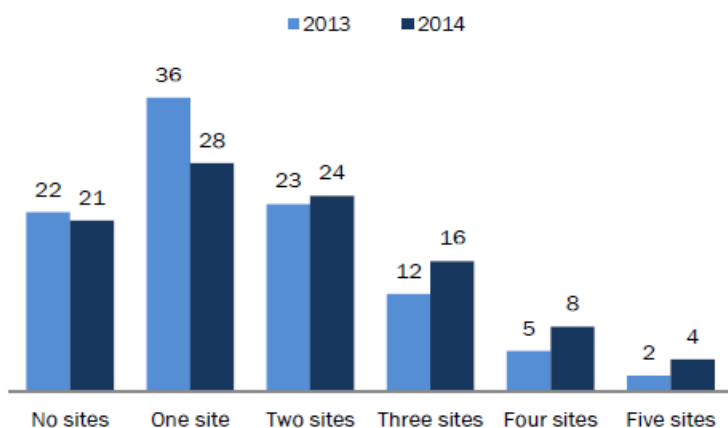


Fig.2. Multiplicity of Using Social Networking Sites by US Citizens, by *Pew Research Center Internet, science and Technology.*

The above figures investigate both the frequency and the multiplicity of the use of SNS among the US citizens. The total number that represents those online users who use two or three sites at once is 52%. This percentage was less in 2013 with only 42%. Among those who have only one site there are 79% use Facebook. 86% of LinkedIn users say they have a

Facebook profile and 94% of Instagram utilizes have an access to this site too. In comparison with the 2015, there are more Facebook users who have an access to other platforms. For Instagram, it is visited by 58% of Twitter users (Duggan et al). This shows that online users have an access to many sites and not just one.

Chapter Two

How Do Social Networking Sites Influence the Political Participation in the US?

In the US community Social Networking Sites are used as a way or a source to participate in the political life of the country for both citizens and political figures. Citizens use Social Networking Sites in order to do many political activities like tackling different political issues obtaining information about the political campaigning, and influencing other online users to vote. For political leaders or candidates in the United States, Social Networking Sites are very important to make a change, to know about the citizens' reactions and views, or to gain a lot of supporters. Seekers for information using the internet will be much more integrated in social and political matters (Bimber, et al; "political and civic engagement...").

1.1. US citizens' Political Engagement through Social Networking Sites

For citizens, Social Networking Sites are very important in the political life. Each group has specific reasons for using these sites in politics. Raini and Smith research conducts that 36% of US users of Social Networking Sites state that these sites are necessary to be updated about political changes. 26% of them say that Social Networking Sites are "very important" to get involved in the political life which is very interesting for them. However; 25% of users assert that SNS are a good opportunity to make political debates and discussions. The same percentage of users state that Social Networking Sites are very important in finding other people who share the same opinion concerning a political issue (2).

In general, the US citizens, in which most of them are adults, use Social Networking Sites to get some information about the campaign and the candidates, in order to decide

whether to get involved in the election as a supporter or not. In addition, US citizens get online in order to see how their friends and families are getting involved in the election dates. Moreover, the political postings of the candidates, and news about what is currently happening alongside the campaign, are the most important concerns of adult users of Social Networking Sites during the election (“Political and Civic...”).

Among the 80% of the Americans who use the internet, 66% engage themselves in a social networking platform like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or Google+. They use these sites to participate in different political matters in a way or another (Rainie). 38% of American adults who use Social Networking Sites put a like to a content that has a relation with a political issue and posted by different Social Networking Sites’ users. 35% is the total number of American Social Networking Sites’ users who give a support to other Americans to go for election. 34% is the percentage of Social Networking Sites’ users who post ideas and leave comments on specific political problems. There are American Social Networking Sites’ users who take what is posted about a particular political matter posting it again and the proportion that represents these citizens is 33% (Smith).

31% of Social Networking Sites ‘users see many political issues as very interesting, thus they support others to act upon them. Political articles and stories are posted by 28% of Social Networking Sites users who are interesting in given political problems. 21% of these users are members of organized political groups and 20% are fans of particular public and political personalities (Smith). Generally speaking, 66% is a high percentage of Social Networking Sites’ users who make use of their SNS to participate in political actions in a way or another.

In a survey that has been conducted to see US citizens’ engagement in politics through Social Networking Sites. 33% of respondents say that they “very often” use Social

Networking Sites to discuss with their families and friends different political issues 34% of them state that they “sometimes” use SNS for political reasons. 20% are “rarely ‘using the websites, and only 12% of users notice that they “never” use them for politics (Rainie, Smith 3). Through these findings, it is obvious that Social Networking Sites have an impact on the political life of the US citizens.

Rainie and Smith explain that among those Americans who utilize the Social Networking Sites, there are 47% who put a ‘like’ to comments and contents about politics posted by another person. Moreover, 38% of these users have responded to others’ political posts and status by commenting positively. In addition, 16% represents those users who have friends and follow the persons who share their political views. In fact, more Americans are exploiting the social networking means to engage in supporting political contents. 66% of Social Networking Sites users have claimed that 80% of the time they ignore political contents they are against and 28% have said they usually react by writing a comment or posting something, however, 5% let it to the situation of the case.

More specifically, the younger electors use some means of social media to let the others know which president they have selected. In fact, 22% of these voters have talked to others through Social Networking Sites about their preferable candidate whom they vote for (Rainie, Smith). Moreover, 25% of Barack Obama’s followers have posted on a given social networking platform that they have chosen him to be the American president, and 20% of Mitt Romney supporters have done the same process (Rainie). This indicates that social media means such as Facebook and Twitter allow American online users to let others know to which party they belong and which candidate they prefer. In general, Social Networking Sites help them to be engaged in the political process.

45% of voters who owned Smartphones, used to read comments or news about their candidates on their web sites. About 18% of them used Social Networking Sites to leave comments concerning the general atmosphere of the campaign (“Politics Fact Sheet”). These mediums made the process of being active on the Social Networking Sites more easier, faster and cheaper.

There is no doubt that Social Networking Sites have a greater impact on changing the US citizens’ views, as well as constructing either positive or negative opinion towards a political issue. “Birds of feather flock together” idiom is not correct when it comes to friendship under the political use of the SNS. Friends cannot always agree on a given point. About 25% of Social Networking Sites’ users state that they always agree with their friends’ postings. However, the vast majority (73%) notice “only sometimes” or “never” agree with them over political postings (“Political and Civic...”).

Citizens are motivated by each other. If anyone sees his friends using Social Networking Sites, such as Facebook to vote, he is going to do the same (“Are Social Networking... ?”). They can get ready and direct information from the president of the United States (72). As it is marked by Shapiro “that such advances could allow every one to become not just a citizen, but a citizen’ governor” (qtd. in Backer). The influence of Social Networking Sites depends on citizens’ wants to participate in the political life (Backer 72). They become very active with the development of these sites which gave them more opportunities to make political discussions.

Many US citizens have become more active in the political scene after being engaged through Social Networking Sites. Some studies found that 25% of Social Networking Sites users state that these websites help them to be more active-politically speaking. Due to the

posts they get through these sites. About 16% of users remark that Social Networking Sites have a greater impact on changing their views concerning a political issue. However; only 9% of them regard that Social Networking Sites are less important, they become less attracted or involved in the political issues (2).

Actively, the US citizens used either to read postings or post on websites about political issues because they find them very useful to do their activities. Moreover, the users note that most of their friends' political posts are similar to their points of views. But, if these citizens do not agree with the friend's political ideas, the use of Social Networking Sites can diverge the political beliefs towards unification (4). US citizens encounter different political issues. They add that Social Networking Sites are the best way to know about other' beliefs and views (with 38%). 18% of them reveal that they may disagree with their friends, because of having different views, and they can simply block and hide them (Rainie, Smith 6).

With the great use of Social Networking Sites a new direction of online political participation is introduced. Online users push their friends to select a given candidate or propose a political content for other users. Online users can be members of some groups that discuss political issues and check each time what political figures post. Unlike 2008 (with only 11%), 2012 witnessed a growth in the percentage of those who post political information in their social networking information for other users to check (with 28%) (Smith).

In the election of 2006, there were 26 million Americans (19% of internet users or 13% of the whole population, up from 18 years old) who made use of the internet in order to get news about different political subjects, whereas in 2004, these users were just 21 million and just 11 million in 2002 (Takaragwa and Carty 75). After four years, 15 million is a great number for

the Americans to obtain political information using the net, thus more people are turning to Social Networking Sites as a new emerging tool for the political engagement.

The fact of making online dialogues with other friends about political interests or reading publications posted by organized groups and famous persons can push Social Networking Sites' users to know more about politics and be integrated in the political space. Due to the political publications posted by already known persons or those who are not online close friends, 43% of online utilizes claim that they have made a decision to know better about specific political matters. Moreover 18% is the total number of online users who have make a decision to act upon a given political issue (Smith). This action is influenced by what is written by their actual friends or the publications posted by important figures and organized groups. The previous notable proportions show how important is SNS for US citizens to learn about politics and take real actions concerning different political matters.

Rainie and Smith convey that some people consider politics a great significant issue, thus they make their decisions to block or hide some online friends because they do not like their political posts. Indeed, 10% of Social Networking Sites' users have blocked, or hidden someone on the site because he posts oftentimes about political subjects. Moreover, 9% of these users have done this process because the ones they have cut relationship with have posted something about politics that they disagree with.

The writers add, 8% of SNS users block others who have argued about political issues on the site with the user or someone the user knows. Beside, 5% do so because the ones they stop connecting with have posted political content the user feels it would make other friends feel bad. Finally, 4% of these users have done this with some friends because the later are against what the former have posted.

Many studies have been developed under the sake of investigating the use of the online websites in the electoral processes. In a study that was conducted by Pew Research Center Internet, Science and Technology about November's election of 2010, they found that US citizens use Facebook to vote. 57% of them use it to convince others to participate in the election and 43% state that they are going to do so ("Are Social Networking Sites...?"; Smith "The Internet and...").

Another example of using Social Networking Sites in the political life is in the US' presidential election of 2012, in which 22% of the US citizens explain how they use Social Networking Sites such as Facebook and Twitter to vote, whereas 30% of the whole population say that they are encouraged to vote through those sites. About 20% of US citizens assert that they tried to push or convince the rest to use SNS, because they facilitate this process of voting and making a political change or progress without costing them (Hwang 21). The convergence of the SNS in the electoral dates introduces a new era of digital elections.

Through the use of online sites, 12% of online utilizes had make a nominee in the general election of 2008 an online friend, whereas this percentage increased after 4 years to arrive at 20%. In 2012, 21% of online users were members of web-based gatherings that focused on political matters, but this percentage in 2008 was only 13% (Smith). This indicates how huge is the raise of using Social Networking Sites to participate in the political sphere for the American citizens who like to go through the net.

Fernandes, and other writers found that students who supported the nominees of the presidential election of 2008 made use of Facebook in order to share views about politics through the conversations they had done ("Political and Civic..."). Among US citizens

users of Social Networking Sites, younger people aged from 18 to 29 are more likely to be indicated as the most Social Networking Site users, and think that websites are really important than old people (2). However, it was found that 66% of adults are Social Networking Sites' users to participate in the political life (Rainie, Smith 5). They represent nearly half of US population using Sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+.

For all most all Americans, Social Networking Sites play a major role in shaping the political life especially for citizens aged from 18 to 29 years old. This group represents 37% of the whole population. They stated that they gain useful information about the political campaigns of their country. So, they can vote and take their decisions freely. Then, they post it through Social Networking Sites ("Are Social Networking...").

Senior; people who had not the opportunity to join the university, and those who get low wages are different categories of people who use Social Networking Sites to be engaged in politics. In general, the process of using SNS is well-spread among young people and college students. 13% represents the total number of individuals who are 65 years-old and more and make use of online sites for the purpose of integrating in the political domain, however; the younger generation (18 to 24 years-old) is more active when it comes to this online operation (Smith).

College students consist the future of the US society. Giving interest for the engagement of this category is the ultimate task for government members. In figure 1 (the following one) different concerns of students in which they use the Social Networking Sites, are explained. Keeping up with friends and family represents 95% of the target use of SNS by students. 79% is the percentage of students who prefer to use the SNS to be informed with organization's events and activities. Politically speaking, 63% of college students intend to

receive information about political and civic affairs (Hart Research Association 26).

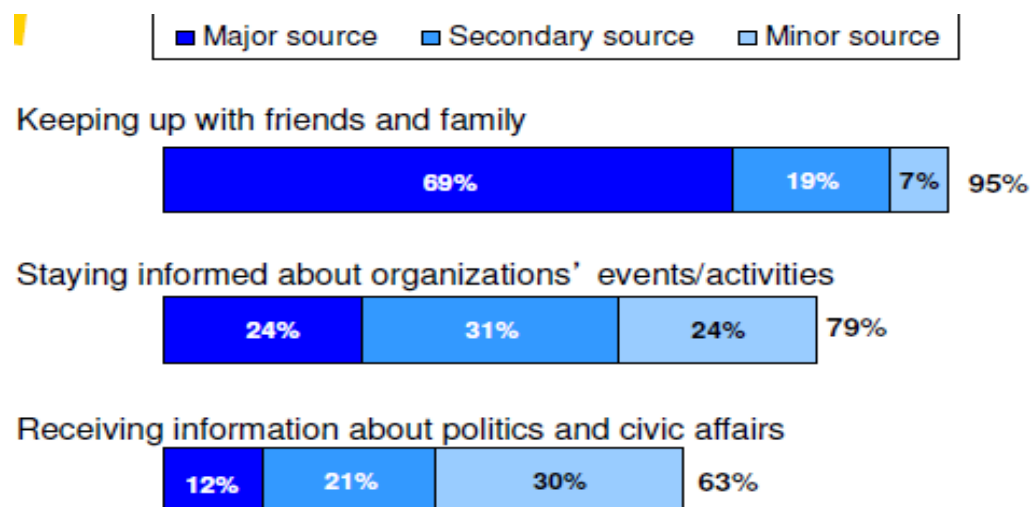


Fig.1. How much do college students use of Social Networking Sites for each of these issues?, by *The Panetta Institute For Public Policy*.

College students turn outs during the election dates are a terrible nightmare for candidates. This nightmare is getting worse since college students are mastering the digital world of information. For them it is needless to spend time on watching the campaign races on T.V. In contrast, a single click on the button enables the student to be active in the movement of any election race. Emily Dunn; a junior at the College of William and Mary, supports that turn outs of college students are more influenced by the Social Networking Sites than the traditional means of communication (Kennedy).

Hongwei Chris Yang and Jean L. DeHart are sociologists who tend to assess the interaction between college students political participation in the 2012 presidential elections through the use of the Social Networking Sites. 4,556 US college students have been surveyed after the elections. Results of the study has astonished the presidential candidates after the

election date. 89.7% of the total number of the surveyed students have an online political participation (9).

2.2. Social Networking Sites' Implication by US Politicians and Candidates

TV channels, radio, journals, and magazines are used to cover the political news of any electoral campaign. Today, the wide spread of the online news information dominate the means of US citizens to be updated with the ongoing of the political life. The internet or the Social Networking Sites exceeds TV channels attraction for citizens' civic participation. The following figure clarifies the distinct use of US adults for the internet as a source for their election news from 1996 to 2008.

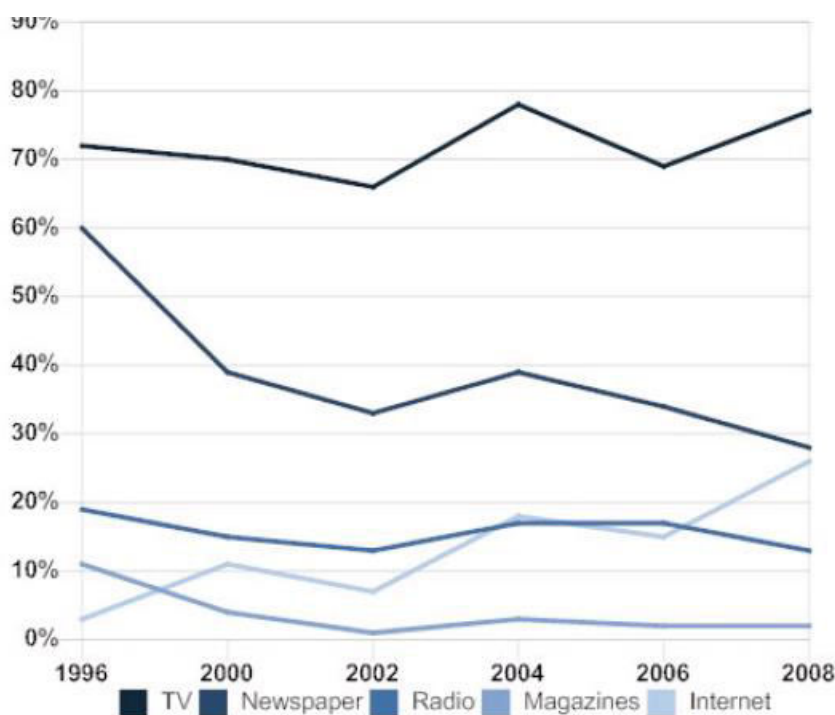


Fig.2. Major sources of election news, by *Pew Internet and American Life Report*.

In 1996, more than 70% of US adults (aged from 18 to 50) depict their source of election news to TV channels. In the same year, the same category does not ever give attention to the

existence of the internet (<0%). 60% represents the percentage of adults using newspaper to be informed of the election environment of 1996. If the use of TV remains noticeable in 2008 with (<70%), the internet use has jumped to 30% from a non existence to a competing means of communication (Smith 52).

Social Networking Sites are not used by the US citizens only, but also are considered as useful tools for candidates and the Government as a whole to stay in touch with its citizens. As an example, on June 12, 2009, the White House declared via its blog that it was joining Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Flickr as a way “to create...unprecedented opportunity to connect you to your Government in order to obtain information and services, and to participate in policy making” (qtd in. “Are Social...?”).

The previous quotation expresses the government’s will to share decisions with the citizens in order to know about their opinions concerning the US policy. So that, it can prevent a possible prediction of coup d’état from taking place, engaging the citizens in the decision making, and allowing them to be aware about what is happening around. It is considered as a continuation of president Obama’s speech or will stating that “reform our government so that it is more efficient, more transparent, and more creative” (qtd in. “Are Social...?”). This transparency and creativity can be realized through using SNS to keep the government in touch with its citizens or the vice versa.

Edgerly, et al explain that the terminologies of “campaigning online”, “digital election campaigns”, “Facebook election”, “digital politics”, and “e-democracy” are new ones and they are produced to define politics of the present day. Campaign online sites begin to be significant during 1994 when senator Diane Feinstein was reelected. In 1996, though using Social Networking Sites was a new method for political campaigns, the nominees of the two

parties utilized them. The mid-term election of 1998 witnessed a growth in using SNS a percentage of 50% for the senate nominees who adopted a new method of campaigning by using different types of online tools. During the election of 2000, all types of election digital campaigns were there (82-83).

In addition to getting news about candidates, and making activities for free, a new characteristic of giving money to candidates was introduced in the election of 2000. Social Networking Sites started to go side by side with political campaigns during the mid-term election of 2006 (Edgerly, et al 88). Electors and traditional media were following the content of these campaigns on these sites, but there was a lack from candidates in adapting this new method to manage their campaigns.

During the mid-term election of 2006 campaigns organizers relied more on YouTube to upload videos that support the main party candidate and attack the opposition party candidate. When the election of 2008 ended, Obama reached two million supporters on his official Facebook page, whereas 600,000 supported his competitor McCain (Edgerly, et al 89). Obama succeeded in this election because he used these online platforms to tell people about his personal life like his preferable singer and hobbies.

The United States is the first state to use Social Networking Sites, especially during the election of 2008. In an article titled "Using Social Network System as a Tool for Political Change" Jihan K. together with other writers investigate president Barak Obama use of certain websites to mobilize voters and gain their support. Facebook, Twitter, *barak obama.com*, MySpace, E-mails, iphone application, the Obama-Biden Transition Project (*change.gov*) are the most important sites used by president Obama for his campaign in the election of 2012 (1145).

The availability of technology such as Smartphones, made it easy for president Obama to win the election of 2012. He used Social Networking Sites during the election's period in a very intelligent way, concentrating on influencing the youth since he knows the power they have to effect their families, friends, or peers political ideologies (1145). So, the president Obama tried to exploit Social Networking Sites effectively, unlike his competitors

Obama's continuation to use Social Networking Sites in politics gave him a new victory during 2012. He encouraged the use of technology in politics. Social Networking Sites represent the way Obama used to communicate with his fans, asking them for support. The ignorance of other politicians about the importance of Social Networking Sites in politics, paved the way for president Obama to win the presidential election (Jihan K, et al 1145). Social Networking Sites become very popular for US' candidates, because their words, messages, future projects are published or posted through SNS.

During the election of 2008 Obama's videos on YouTube were viewed by 97 million and visited by 78 million, whereas just 25 million viewed McCain' videos and only two million visited them. These numbers indicate that among the main factors that helped Obama to win is his use of Social Networking Sites. Thanks to the new online methods adapted by the campaigns in the election of 2008, electors, more specifically the younger ones, now are able to exchange points of view about politics (Edgerly, et al 90-91).

During 2012, Social Networking Sites paved the way to the US' candidates for competition. For a second time, president Barak Obama was among the candidates; who had maintained MySpace and Pinterest accounts. During this election, Obama's competitor Romney gave attention to social media, unlike McCain. This helped him to make some good results, yet, there still a gap between him and president Obama, because SNS were not the

core strategy for Romney's campaign (Jihan K, et al 1147). Some predictions stated that SNS' use by politicians and candidates will be increased, especially after the victory of Obama in the election of 2012.

Social Networking Sites became very popular at that time, especially Twitter which is used by US federal cabinet and 84% of the other state 'governors. Religious governors too are part of this process, they were very active on the website, representing about 40% such as Dalai and Pope ("Are Social... ?"). When president Obama won the election of 2012, his pictures were posted on Twitter.

The medium of voting in the election of 2012 differs from one to another, 27% of voters use Cell phones, about 19% use text messaging related to the campaign. 45% of voters owned Smartphones, they use these phones to read comments on the websites about their candidates. About 18% of them use Social Networking Sites to leave comments concerning the general atmosphere of the campaign (" Political and Civic Engagement...").

Some statistics about Social Networking Sites are obtained by the Pew Research Center's Project and the Associated Press. From the one hand statistics show that the number of the registered Facebook users has been increased between the years 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2012, from 1 million registered users to 12 million, 100 million, and 1 billion user, respectively (Jihan K, et al1144). From the other, Twitter as an important Social Networking Site marked the same numbers with 500 million by the election of 2012.

Social Networking Sites provide a lot of information about the political stream. Their use has been emerged especially after 2008. Facebook is regarded as the most used Social Networking Site. It provides the political candidates with occasions to get access and communicate with as much citizens as possible. Through reading their comments or wall

posts, candidates form a better understanding of US citizens opinions about specific issues.

Getting a good result in different electoral manifestations from using the SNS encouraged politicians to use the Social Networking Sites as a tool for their political campaigns. The websites spread a huge amount of information to the larger audience about politics easily, so that it would allow for gaining more votes (Markoff). The government is transparent; means that there is a way through which its citizens can influence the policy makers. Twitter as a Social Networking Site allows citizens to know how the government makes decisions and it forms a tool through which these citizens can influence the decision-making process.

These facts, can be considered as a prove that Social Networking Sites are really important for political change. It can be viewed as another channel between candidates, politicians, fans, voters or supporters. This image will be further clarified through the following figures.

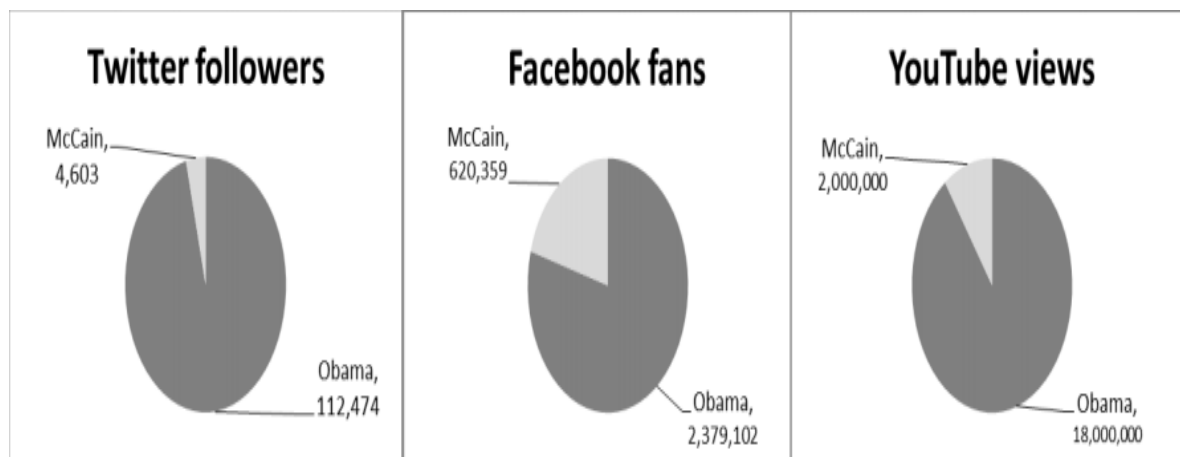


Fig.3. How each candidate use social media in the 2008 US presidential election, by

academicJournals.

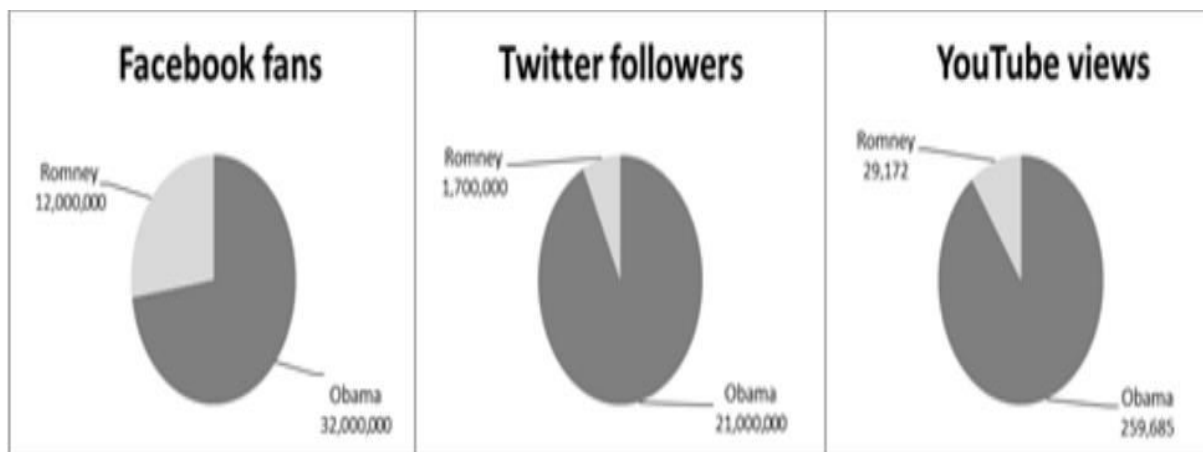


Fig.4. How each competitor in the 2012 presidential election used social media, by *academicJournals*.

Figure1 and 2 above, represent the most used Social Networking Site in the presidential election of 2008 as well as in 2012, and how it is used by each candidate. There is no doubt that president Obama is the first candidate who has more Twitter followers than McCain, and Romney i.e. he has 112. 474, compared with 4.603 in 2008 for McCain, 1.700.000 for Romney in 2012. However; in 2008 Obama has got 2.379.102 Facebook Fans, unlike McCain who has 620. 359 Facebook Fans, and 12,000,000 for Romney during 2012, with 32.000.000 for Obama. Romney has given some attention to Social Networking Sites.

As it was mentioned by many researchers, all types of media are very important to make a change in the society-politically speaking- especially Social Networking Sites . Therefore, this change can occur only when there is an active participation by citizens, of course through making some sacrifices and risks (Toivo 5). Solo and Ashu had expressed that it is obvious that in three elections of the senate campaigns, YouTube played a major role for candidates to be supported by people through its videos that convey a content which is different from the

rest of the media means (174).

In addition, during the election of 2000 YouTube was considered as an assistant for competitors to upload videos so that users can see and comment on them (84). Candidates during the election of 2012 were able to gain more support from citizens because of their videos on YouTube. Electors now can make a contact with campaign candidates through the implication of online videos (Edgerly, et al 82).

It is known that Facebook is used to get friends, but during the election of 2008 it was transformed into a space to talk about politics. Indeed, 1.000 Facebook group pages were developed to be up to date with all the news of Obama and John McCain (79). Telling people about what a facebook user think about political issues, and getting news about his preferable nominee can be achieved through what is called "Facebook groups" (Woolley, et al. 86). The different websites represent the relationship between the future leaders and their supporters, especially via Facebook (Vitak 34). Through it, the Government's leaders can encourage citizens to participate in the political life using different websites.

The proportion of Facebook supporters of a particular nominee displays his success or failure in the election. In other words, if the candidate has a lot of support on Facebook, he will be a president, but if he has not, he will not be (Edgerly, et al 92). In order to succeed, candidate should dominate both Social Networking Sites and old media like the television and newspapers.

The struggle over the use of SNS between candidates in elections is on the top level. Facebook was used first by the republican candidate Mitt Romney, unlike other candidates who used MySpace account to get more voters online (Goodman). After president Obama declared himself as an American candidate for presidential elections in 2008, during a short

period he received 62.000 supporter (Backer 74). Other voters created a specific group for Obama named “students for Obama”.

Twitter users can be acquainted with the recent events posted by their preferable candidates and get their questions responded on by these candidates, and if the candidates respond on their followers questions without ignoring them, they will have more supporters.

Unlike in other countries like England and Danmark, the percentage of the parliament members who have a Twitter account in the US is higher, and it is between 25% and 30% (Goldbeck+, et al; Lassen, and Brow). Goldbeck+, and the other writers notice that the tweets created by political figures have six functions, the first one is called “direct communication”. It refers to tweets that includes @ and is directed to concerned users. The second function is called the “personal message”, means tweets that are characterized by feelings. The third function is called “information”, and the fourth one is “question action”. Tweets that allow followers to know the politicians and the institutional activities are considered as the fifth function, and the sixth function of these tweets is to raise money (Goldbeck+, et al). All the six functions melt together to shape a well balanced interaction between politicians, the Social Networking Sites, and the US citizens.

Chapter Three

The Use of Social Networking Sites as a Tool for Social Participation in the US

The internet in its first years was criticized by a lot of scholars; they said that the new forms of technology, including the internet, are a space where young people try to escape from the reality. Researchers go further in their studies hypothesizing that using Social Networking Sites isolate people from each other. Not just like that, the wide spread of the Social Networking Sites threatens the social stability of the whole US community since the world wide web forms the universe a small village.

Moira Burke and other researchers have an opposite point of view for the use of SNS. They conduct that the use of the Social Networking Sites does not harm the goodness of the individual's social capital (5). The latter is defined as: "Social capital involves networks, social trust, civic engagement, political participation, membership in groups and associations, volunteering, confidence in political institutions, life satisfaction and a variety of other concepts" (Valenzuela, et al 7).

Some researchers tend to give a psychological explanation to the term social capital. Scheufele and Shah divided the term it into three types: feeling happy, content, and living in a better social life is under the intrapersonal type. Feeling confident on the other people is under the interpersonal type. Tackling social and political issues, being a member in a charitable organization, and voting comes under the behavioral domain type (Valenzuela, et al 8). Young people of any nation form the future of it. In its turn the US government seeks to be aware of the movement between the three dimensions intrapersonal, interpersonal, and behavioral concepts of its young adults under the daily use of the Social Networking Sites. Since the social stability of the US society is directly linked with goodness of the young

individual's social capital, the US government remains controlling the use of the Social Networking Sites by its young people with a critical eye.

Integrating with each other through Facebook, indicates that the users are trusting each other and constructing a solid social life that is based on the strong ties that exist between the members of the society. A person, who is satisfied in his life, is a person who feels delightful. He is the first among the others to feel confident on other people and construct different types of social scheme through various means including online platforms such as Facebook and MySpace (Farrugia 11). Facebook's implication by the young people helps in fostering the norms of social participation, a concept included in social capital. University students who suffer from moral problems like self dissatisfaction and lost confidence may make use of social networking websites to get rid of these problems and be integrated in the public life (Eke, et al).

The interrelation between the effect of the use of the Social Networking Sites and the social capital of young adults in the United States -with a specific focus on the college students- remains under ambiguity. The latter is presented, investigated, tested, and clarified through the following subtitles.

3.1.The Use of Social Networking Sites by Americans in Relation to their Social Capital

The ones whom can be trusted more are those who share with solid relationships, however; those whom cannot be trusted are not close friends. Types of online tools like the Social Networking Sites are considered as a motivator for online users to feel more confident and make relationships. The latter is the definition of friendship - under this digital use- which has reformulated its ways people make, communicate with, and manage their friends. The following paragraphs present different numbers and statistics in an attempt to enrich the

answer of the question: is the use of the Social Networking Sites affect the Americans social capital?

Through Social Networking Sites people are able to know each other without organizing meetings because these sites force its users to fill in the personal information like the name and the age. Facebook as the most popular Social Networking Site is launched for the purpose of making friends (Burke 11). Facebook allows its users to go on social relationships with many other users, but not all these relations are true.

The degree of interaction between Facebook' users depend on the type of relationship they have. Checking the exclusive news of a user of Facebook' friends strengthen his relationship with him. Leaving comments on friend's wall informs him about the users emotions like writing "happy birthday dear", and chatting with him via messenger is another method to maintain solid relationships (Burke 14).

Knowledge of the SNS users is getting larger through the enrichments he obtains from the "salad bowl" of the friend's list. The amount of interaction between US Facebook' users who live near each other makes them have more solid connections. Some people fear from making relationships, thus they select carefully the ones who deserves to be their close friends from the beginning since they believe that not all of them remain (Urist).

Telling the Social Networking Site' partner personal details about the target's life makes him become his confident, and even if relationship with him is not deep, together the user and his SNS friend are considered as one team. Like sentiments are burned when the SNS friends check and view different posts in those sites. Despite that transmitting what is happening in an SNS user's family in community newsletters makes a great number of friends be updated and sympathetic to him, but intimate relationships cannot be structured.

Sociologists clarify that US citizen's socialization is deeply linked with either the way to have or the number of a citizen's friends. Directly after the SNS user's partner accepts his request of friendship, the profile's photo of that partner shows up to him. When both users of Facebook become online friends, automatically the list of common friends occurs to them. Pressing the "like" button for a status written by a Facebook's friend or commenting on it is considered as a direct, one-on-one communication that encourages both sides to communicate online in an indirect way and build a more solid relation (Zhang, et al). There are online jesters that are viewed as less important than others. For example liking what someone posts on Facebook or Google + is considered as less important than leaving a long message or writing something on the other user's wall. Unlike the second, the first obstructs the process of maintaining strong ties.

News feed is a feature related to Facebook in which you can learn about what all your Facebook friends post in recent time like: pictures, videos, and statuses. Being up to date with the news feed is an indirect contact between Facebook users and this process is called "passive consumption". A Facebook user broadcasts something in his wall. By doing so he transmits something that attracts him to the public like sharing a picture. Sharing a picture by the Facebook user does not mean that he addresses a concerned person that is why broadcasting does not help him to make strong ties with his online friends (Urist; Burke 46).

The wall and online profile are important features in Facebook that helps in maintaining solid connection between its users. Furthermore, type of the relationship between friends in this site can be determined through the facebook user's wall. When the user's online partner views his online profile for the first time, he decides what kind of relationship is going to occur; if partner likes what is in the user's profile, the first is going to make the second a close friend and the vice versa (Urist). Writing something on the user's Facebook wall by his Facebook friend indicates the love and sincere feelings expressed to him.

Facebook' users receive much more help from their online friends than other users. Out of 100, there are 75 persons who display to the Facebook' user that they are sympathizing with him by giving an appropriate proposal to improve his complex situation. 76 persons show that he is their comrade by organizing off line promenade. Whereas, 75 persons elucidate that they are physically ready to help their friend by looking after him when he get flu (4).

Who are forming the Facebook users' list of friends? Different categories from the surrounding people are forming the list. Hampton's study- together with the other writers- on investigating the Social Networking Sites and humans lives spell out that 22 % from the list of the friends, is the percentage of a Facebook user classmates of the secondary school, 12% includes his large household, 9% represents his faculty mates, 8% shows that he keeps company with his houshold's members, 7% displays that he does not ignore those who go on charitable activities, and finally 2% represents his online friends who live next to him (4).

A MySpace' user respects the beliefs of his online friends and do not show any objection. For example, if his online friend encourages gay marriage, he cannot bloc him. Facebook as the first used Social Networking Site, is a means of socializing American citizens ; 22% of Facebook' users are attracted by what their online friends write, so they leave different comments to make these friends know their opinion about what they have written (Hampton, et al 4- 35). The youth are more likely to leave comments on their friend's status (23%). Women are skilful Facebook commenter's (25%), whereas the majority of men do not prefer to leave comments (Smith, "Why Americans Use..." 4).

In a survey that was conducted online in order to measure how much Americans are influenced by emerging online tools, 77% of the subjects state that they use their online profiles in order to check what the recent news feed are and reply on their online friends' messages. 75% notice that they visit their online platforms in order to check the comments

and the posts left by their online friends. 66% explain that they tend to do so in order to visit and view their friends' profiles, and finally 54% clarify that they prefer to leave comments and post for their friends to read (Subrahmanyam, et al 422).

The majority of the subjects prefer to check what others have posted and commented on their profile's wall, then their next preferable online behavior is to view what others have posted, visit others' profiles, write, and read messages. 81% of the SNS users who are far from their friend and cannot see them, express that they create online profiles such as Facebook for the purpose of staying in contact with these friends. 48% tend to do so in order not to lose the harmony that exist between the members of the same household and the kindred.

In addition, 35% say that online tools allow SNS users to manage for meetings with confidants they meet daily. 29% consider the new emerging online tools such as Facebook and MySpace as means through which they construct novel relationships (Subrahmanyam, et al 426-427). Young people prefer to hang out with their friends outside, to meet them where they study, after that, they see that the other suitable space would be through online tools like Facebook, and MySpace.

Pressing the bottom "like" can be done every day by 26% of those who make use of Facebook, and 44% of those who still young and 12% of old people. Unlike males, the fair sex is always interesting in pressing the bottom "like". The secret talk between the addresser and the addressee is considered as a sign of maintaining solid relationships, and it is highly achieved in Facebook with a percentage of 82%. Old people are more likely to chat secretly than the youth (Smith, "Why Americans Use..." 4).

Spending a lot of time using the Social Networking Sites influences the passive connection that is built between the user and his friends. Americans who have one or many

online profiles like Facebook are lucky because these tools help them to go on various relationships with different kinds of people, and 636 represents the total number of these relations. Surfing on the net over and over daily makes the citizen widen his dealings, with a rate of 732 dealing, however; doing so just one day daily makes him go on 717 social connection (Hampton 23).

Due to the implication of online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn, maintaining solid relations has increased from just 1.93 online talks in 2008 to 2.16 one in 2010. 2010 witnesses a growth in having more online relationships with a total number of 2 actual friends, unlike 2008 that did not contribute in socializing online utilizes. Having an access to online channels is a peculiarity; 14% of online utilizes are much more integrated in their society than those who are not online utilizes (Pew Research Center).

It is not true that Facebook is just a virtual site; in contrast, it makes people more close to each others. 89% of them have the opportunity to see each other many times in their lives, however; just 7% do this just one time, whereas, only 3% do not come together any time. Unlike 2008, 2010 half of old and young online users transmit ordinary online talk to a source of strong ties. LinkedIn' utilizes tend to have friends who come from different backgrounds than MySpace, Twitter, and Facebook's utilizes (Hampton 28).

46% of Americans who have an access to the internet, more specifically those who have a Facebook account, do not doubt that their online friends may trick them, however, just 27% of those who do not have this access do that (Smith, "Why Americans Use..." 4. Those who have an online account, more specifically MySpace, are more likely to participate in charitable works than those who do not have.

The "laten interaction" is another measurement of how US citizens communicate through the SNS. In order to know how an individual patronize the people that he knows, just check

his social networking profiles. Online profiles like Facebook make researchers know the degree of closeness that exists between the users. There are some Social Networking Sites' users who peek to other users' profiles without cutting a dash. For example, you cannot discover that Facebook user has visited your profile and this process is called "latent interaction" (Metzger 6). Checking someone's profile secretly, means checking his personality through what he posts and this constructs trust between some users.

If the online user knows that a lot of people are looking at his profile secretly, he will get more confidence. What distinguishes Renren from Facebook is that in the former the owner cannot hide his list of friends, and the other users are exposed to what is in his profile. Unlike in Facebook, in Renren the user can know who visits his profile. According to a study conducted to see how much is the latent interaction is used in Renren, the majority of the users prefer to visit other users' profiles without leaving any trace because their name to be used can be realized by the Renren' owner. The majority of Renren' users leave traces on just 5% of their friends' profile (Metzger 7-12). Compared with just having a look on Renren user, the act of exchanging comment recommended by Facebook strengthen the communicating skill demanded for the socialization of US citizens.

US teenagers tend to use the new and emerging digital tools of communications like Social Networking Sites more than other categories of people. Either constructing new social relations or maintaining the old ones is the aim wished by teenagers. On the one hand, the latter respond immediately to the online messages sent to them by friends from the real world in order to talk about what is happening in their high school (Common Sense Media Research). In the other, discussions in the unreal world (Social Networking Sites) are not isolated from those that appear in the real world; in contrast, online discussions are constructed by online users in order to be integrated in the real life (Subrahmanyam, et al

421). These discussions increase the talent of communicating which in turn raises a considerable level of well-being among teenagers.

If females tend to create online accounts in order to chat with their school friend, neighborhoods, and many other people whom they meet in the real world, males are SNS users for the purpose of attracting and dating girls (421). Communicating via Social Networking Sites by young people, specially students of the university, is set for the purpose of staying in contact with old friends, maintaining the solid social relationships, and strengthening the fragile ones (Subrahmanyam, et al 421-422). The variation of the purpose behind the use of SNS does not prohibit either age or gender from continuing their social interaction.

79% of people who have an online relationship were able to meet outside the cyberspace, and 29% of them were able to open the cam and talk. 73% of individuals who have an online platform like Facebook make the people whom they know in the real world their friends in the virtual world, and just 11% believe that they do not accept any one to be among their friends' list, unless they do receive a demand of online friendship. 68% of the subjects say that the online confidants whom they love the most are their preferable friends in the real world. 73% of the subjects declare that the implication of online tools does not form an obstacle that hinder the process of making social relationships. 20% express that they help them to strengthen intimacy, and only 2,5% who are not in favor of these tools (Subrahmanyam, et al 429 430).

To stick to the original identity is a real challenge facing the SNS users. Reading others' comments or postings and receiving feedback help users to feel that they are part of their society, and keep them always in touch within others. Sponcil and Gitimu focus their study over the possibility of the existence of an influence between the intermediates Social

Networking Sites and younger adult's attitudes especially their identity formation. Posting personal information about themselves like names, pictures, hobbies and other information they want, can help them to express their view points, and how others should perceive them. They present themselves as they want through their personal profiles. The age between 18 and 25 is the age of adulthood, the time when young adults start to build an identity for their own. They tried to construct a strong self-esteem through attractive personal profiles (5-6).

3.2. Communication and Self-esteem or Identity Formation among US College Students

This part examines the impact of Social Networking Sites on college students' social capital. Also, it focuses on the different uses of Social Networking Sites i.e. to see the difference between males and females, and which group is going to use Social Networking Sites more. These students are using Social Networking Sites for the maintenance of relationships, communicate, reading and sending messages, updates...etc. They use it as a part of their classroom sessions (Tham and Niaz 1).

In an era where the dominant feature of life is technology and electronic devices, it is a must for students of universities to be updated with the changes of life. After high school, students go directly to the university, the new environment makes them consume a lot of technological aspects; the majority of them (94%) have a social networking profile that enables to do many academic activities. A great number of college freshmen accomplish between 1 and 5 hours each week in a cybercafé or at home to check their online profiles.

Furthermore, 9% of students postpone that they accomplish 10 hours each week in doing so, staying 6 hours or more inside the classroom is done by 91% of university fresher.

Hanging out and communicating with confidants is done by 75%. Preparing the lesson at

home is done by 62% (“College Freshmen and...” 1). The main purpose of using Social Networking Sites by students of universities is to be socially integrated and not to enjoy playing, add more people to the list of friends, or join online communities to discuss given topics.

Social Networking Sites are used in order to obtain relationships with others. To confirm that, a study was conducted during 2010 by Lenhart Smith and Zickuhr, choosing college students as a sample. Results distinguish that 72% of these students do have a Social Networking Site’s profile. In addition to 45% of them are online users of Social Networking Sites as a way to communicate with their friends, families, and sometimes strangers.

College students interaction through Social Networking Sites have been a subject of study for many researchers such as Sponcil and Gitimu. The latter find that e-mail is the first preferred sort of media. All kinds of contact are made through e-mail, in addition to Chat and Instant messaging. 49 from 51 participants have reported that they interact through Social Networking Sites at least twice or three times a week (4).

Pempek, Yermolayeva and Cahvert are sociologists who take the interaction between SNS and students as a topic matter for their studies. 30 minutes per day is the amount of time spent by university students using online tools. For Facebook, students spend about 47 minutes from 9 p.m to 12 a.m. Younger students are using Facebook to connect with other students from high school and communicate with their friends.

Male and female students differ in the average of using Social Networking Sites, as well as in the activities done online. Women; who have more Facebook account than men, are considered more likely to use Social Networking Sites than men students. As an example, college women use Social Networking Sites three or more times than men (Sponcil and

Gitimu 4).

The previous paragraphs tend to clarify the image of how many students are actually engaged in the SNS use, how much time students spend in using SNS, and student's gender acquisition of SNS platforms. The interaction between those crucial players in the college daily life has a deep influence on his social capital. The latter is defined by "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (qtd. in Portes). In other words, social capital networks together with shared norms, values and understanding that facilitates co-operation among groups.

What is important is that the most of college students use Facebook in order to communicate with the existing friends and is not used to meet new people. In addition, Social Networking Sites' users are concerned with expressing their feelings, gossiping, interacting with others...etc. They are more attracted to "friends grooming" than non-users, who are not concerned with such activities.

Since the social interaction is the base for mastering the communicating skills that in turn effect the community engagement of student's social capital, researchers make a study to see the role of Social Networking Sites especially Facebook in student's communication attitudes. They found that there are many shy students who cannot communicate or interact face-to-face. So, Facebook or any other website facilitates interaction for them. Shy students argue that Facebook can provide high quality of friendship rather than face-to-face interaction (5).

According to their study, Megan Sponcil and Perscilla Gitimu found that 99% of college students were using Facebook, and 90% of them were using e-mail. Facebook was on the top

of Social Networking Sites concerning its use and it was the most updated website in addition to Twitter. These Sites were used by college students for entertainment, communication, especially for those students who did not have time to meet face-to-face because of work. So, computer and Social Networking Sites facilitated their communication and interaction (5- 9).

It is obvious after the different studies made on college students, that posting on Facebook walls and status updates are the most important ways used by college students to communicate. Most of the time college students are using Social Networking Sites to keep in touch with their friends and family (431). Others state that they use Social Networking Sites to meet new friends, reading or writing comments, and looking for others' profiles to see what is special about them. Also, Wall postings are used by students to see their works while interacting with each other, looking for the different events concerning their friends' life, so that they can integrate with them.

Most of the students stated that comments are really important, it helps them to find solutions for many problems. Fifth of the offline users; non-users, reported that they feel that they are out of the circle since they do not have personal profiles (Steinfeld, et al 431). Social Networking Sites can be considered as a way to encourage connection between peers and create the opportunity for them to support each other. Such sites are beneficial for college students in reducing time use and effort, for example they can keep in touch with one another without being obliged to wait for the campus arrival. Also, sites like Facebook encourage students to go beyond the family relation i.e. knowing strangers and interact socially with them (2).

In addition, college students can interact with each other for social issues through Social Networking Sites. The latter, are very important in enhancing culture and let students be more

open to others' cultures (2). This helps them to know more about the other students in the university, which create happiness and satisfaction, and provide a family atmosphere among them. So that, study can be more enjoyable for them (DeAndrea, et al. 2). In addition, the university students' use of Social Networking Sites provides them more opportunities to connect either with each other or with their institution and instructors.

In order to maintain connection among college students, and to enhance their relationship with neighborhoods Spartan Connect was created for them. Similar to Facebook, Spartan Connect site allows students to make their personal profiles, adding photos, videos about their residence, hometown, and other personal information such as the age, the year of study...etc ("Spartan Secure"). Through this site the interaction between students becomes easier, and students can know each other before their first meeting in the campus.

Usually black Americans, first year graduates are the first category to be online utilizes (1). The implication of Social Networking Sites by first year graduates does not isolate them from their first task (study), and from being integrated in the companionable life (2). 42% of freshmen use at least one of their online tools such as Facebook to stay in contact with the members of their household, 84% do such activity with confidants who study in the same university, 32% prefer to do this with confidants who used to study in the same secondary school, and 40% choose other confidants ("College Freshmen and..." 2).

Social Networking Sites have an impact on student's social capital, researchers identified two kinds of this relation between websites and students' social capital. "Bonding social capital" is the first kind (21). It stands for bonding student's social capital from close friends and family at the level of feelings and emotions. For example: when students are in need of money or they have something they need to tell it to someone, they need to go to friends or

family.

The second kind is “bridging social capital”. This kind of relationship is characterized by weak ties. Students may have close relationships with some friends or family members but in difficult situations things appear differently. This kind of people cannot help others too much when they are facing problems such as money’s loan (Ellison 21-22). Not all close people are present when they are needed, is a category of relationships formed through the use of SNS.

Bridging social capital can be realized through weak ties, which can connect individuals in different places and from distinct situations, however; weak ties cannot bond social capital, only between close friends, since emotional support can exist only between close friends (Valenzuela, Park and Kee 880). Students who are users of Facebook, are the more likely to receive more social capital. Social Networking Sites help students to develop different skills such as building relationships with others, making a well developed society, and these are the results of a successful person.

Moreover, Social Networking Sites help students to keep in touch with close friends as well as with others, this is due to the services they provide such as reminding them about birthdays. In this case students will send congratulates to their friends even if they are not close friends. Thus, Social Networking Sites have an important role in supporting past and present relationships (Ellison 26). For future relations, Social Networking Sites provide more opportunities for college students to maintain new relationships and new friends, especially Facebook which gives them suggestions all the time about new friends.

Trust is an important aspect of the social capital that enhances the process of college students’ socialization. The high levels of trust between students and members of their society ensure students participation in the civic actions in order to build a strong society (876). The

online sites promote communication and encourage interaction among students (879). With traditional media like watching T.V, students cannot communicate within each other.

However; the new digital ones like SNS allows them to interact and participate in their public life. Through these sites students can see different videos about US' crimes which would have a positive effect in making these adults be against through establishing online organization for this purpose (Valenzuela, Park, and Kee 876-879-880).

Through "news feed" and "mini feed" services, Facebook can promote social capital. "News feed" refer to the last updates of friends. "Mini feed" is like "news feed" but differs only in that it is about one individual's profile (882). Facebook helps students to be arranged in groups having the same concerns or interests. They can post videos, photos, music, games...etc, which can make fan. All these through the new service of Facebook which is "the wall", it provides a new kind of entertainment for students to change from their daily routine. Social Networking Sites provide students with this sense of belonging to the society and integrating with others (882).

Facebook use is more linked to life satisfaction than social trust, researchers argued that the intensity of Facebook use does not isolate students from the rest of the society (Valenzuela, Park, and Kee 892-893). In contrast, the spirit of changing 'likes', charring different publications in Facebook with others increase the sense of satisfaction among students that in turn increases their socialization in the USA.

Preserving self identity is another challenge to student's much use of the Social Networking Sites. For students, SNS provide a new opportunity for them in order to influence and be influenced, in other words they can communicate with others, express their views and get feedback either from friends or strangers who are very far or both at once. This

feedback can have a role in students' identity formation. They can understand well what they want and who they are (Sponcil and Gitimu 2).

Feedback which students can get from their friends can help them foster and explore their identity and build a strong self-esteem. College students have a lot of things to be done on Social Networking Sites (Sponcil and Gitimu 2-3). They communicate, interact, leave feedback, organize works, share and practice different activities, in addition to websites' services provided for them such as creating own profiles, publishing videos, pictures online, get feedback from their friends...etc.

80% of college students are at the same age. They are Facebook users with an average of 358 Facebook friends. Other studies identify about 200 Facebook friends. College students want to be the most popular through the number of friends they have. However; not all the students have the same attitudes. Students are asked if they have some older friends such as parents. Some students said yes, others stated that their life should be far away from their parents' life. They need to have their own privacy. Researchers conclude that, their private life could be affected as well as their self-concept if they include their parents as friends (Sponcil and Gitimu 6).

Receiving support from the society can improve self-concept of college students. Through comments on walls about pictures they post- positive comments - students feel that they are the center of attention and their meaning of the self would be increased, they would become more confident (Sponcil and Gitimu 9-10). Communication through Social Networking Sites has a greater influence on students' self-esteem due to positive feedback from friends

Social capital is the result of the benefits individuals get from their interaction with other people. Social capital and Facebook use are related to each other and the medium is self-

esteem, since Facebook is so beneficial especially for students with lower self-esteem as it is stated by Angie Zuo (7). Students can build a better psychology through Social Networking Sites i.e. this relationship that was built among friends could influence the emergence of their identity, in addition to their romantic relation.

The relation between Social Networking Sites and social capital is examined through Facebook, since it is the most used website among college students 'campuses. Social Networking Sites lead people to build positive relations with others, being engaged in social works like working for the betterment of people' health, participate in academic developmental work. These are the component of social capital. The latter can be seen at two levels, the first one is the community level i.e. the ability to organize collective works. The second one is the individual level; here the individual builds his/her relationships with others and on that basis he/she can get information or gain support from them.

At the individual level, social capital can be "bonded" i.e. a relation with family or friends or can be "bridged" i.e. communicating with people who do not share with you a strong relationship. Angie Zuo in his study state that social capital is related to psychological well-being like self-esteem and life satisfaction, here they call for the need to a family which has an important role in the maintenance of them; in addition to other close relations (7). Researchers argue that Social Networking Sites use have a positive impact on students' well-being and their psychology. They find that college students who have experienced depression, loneliness and other psychological problems, have witnessed a decrease in these problems (Steinfeld, Ellison, and Lampe 436). In addition, they become more active concerning participating in public life; they become more confident after having discussions with experienced doctors online.

Researchers have tested the relation between students' psychological well-being and the extensive use of Social Networking Sites. They find that the more they use these sites the more they communicate with friends, their life satisfaction, and happiness (436). Facebook is important for bridging social capital especially for low self-esteem students, because they can express themselves freely and choose the way they want others to perceive them. Through interaction with friends and feedback they would become more confident (Steinfeld, Ellison and Lampe 436-437) .

As it is stated by Ellison, face to face interaction is made most of the time between friends. These friends are chosen depending on some specific base. Anxious students sometimes cannot be chosen as friends, since they refuse to communicate or interact with others (Steinfeld, Ellison and Lampe 441). In this case, Facebook provides the occasion for this category of students to be more socially engaged, and they will get rid of all these barriers.

The feeling of belonging becomes very popular among students due to the websites, and whenever this feeling is present among students, they will have the sense of social integration and acceptance from others, which resulted in higher self-esteem. Less connected students, and less Social Networking Sites' users are the ones who felt less satisfied, less happy and have the feeling of closeness or loneliness. Self-belief or confidence is related to indicating higher goals, and being motivated in different civic activities (DeAndrea, et al 2).

To sum up, the implication of the use of Social Networking Sites among college students can be witnessed at two levels. The first one is at the individual level. Higher percentages of self-confidence, self-esteem, and satisfaction are maintained through the use of SNS. The second effect is at the social level. The interaction among the SNS users forms a strong base

for their communication. The latter can shape the networking decisions; which are formulated upon a unified slogan “common interest”, that in turn widen the sphere of student’s social capital. Then student freely and positively participate in different civic manifestations in the US society.

Conclusion

The investigation presented in the present study has painted a clear picture about the use of Social Networking Sites by the US citizens in the political and the social life. This research has provided different important statistics that confirm that the US citizens are really relying on new and emerging forms of political and social participation such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, and many other forms of Social Networking Sites.

The first chapter put lights on the US citizens' activities under the Social Networking Sites' umbrella. The first part of this chapter has provided brief definitions about the top 20 most popular Social Networking Sites used by the Americans, starting by Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube in the top five. The list is continued its presentation to mention: Kik, Meetup, MyYearbook, Tagged, and BlackPlanet as the online sites that are classified in the last part of the most significant Social Networking Sites.

The second part of the first chapter takes into consideration some important proportions that indicate that the US citizens are big users of Social Networking Sites and that they really rely on them to do many activities. Through this part, the majority of US citizens state that nearly all of their day-to-day activities are done online and 40% of them say that Social Networking Sites play a major role in their daily routine.

Another statistic that indicates how big is the use of SNS, is that Americans use these sites with a total of 121 billion minutes. Facebook is used by 71% of the American (adults) internet users, and by 56% of American (old), internet users. 23% represents the percentage of the American internet users of Twitter. In 2014, Instagram is used by 53% of American internet users and Pinterest is used by 28% of them.

According to many studies conducted by the Pew Research Center, US citizens rely a lot

on Social Networking Sites to do many activities such as, communicating with friends, members of the family, and people from all over the world, checking the weather, and getting every day information.

Important statistics are tackled in chapter two to confirm that Social Networking Sites are really used by US citizens and politicians to discuss different political matters and be integrated in the political life. First, US citizens use Social Networking Sites to know what is happening in the political scene. In the election of 2012, online platforms are used by 22% of the US citizens in voting process. In the election of 2006, 26 million Americans make use of the internet to get news about different political subjects. US citizens get online to see how their friends and families are getting involved, to check the political posting of the candidates, and to take a look about what is happening in the political campaign.

Through the second part of the second chapter, it is found that Social Networking Sites are not used by citizens only, but also are considered as useful tools for candidates and the government as a whole to stay in touch with its citizens. For political leaders, Social Networking Sites are very important to make a change to know about the citizens' reaction and views and gain more support. Obama has won the election of 2008 and 2012 because he has used the SNS to mobilize voters and gain their support.

The third chapter focuses on the use of Social Networking Sites by the Americans for the purpose of being integrated in their society. The studies that are used in this chapter confirmed that the implication of Social Networking Sites does not harm the goodness of the individual's social capital. In contrast, it helps them to trust each other and construct a solid social life.

The first part of this chapter highlights the use of online tools by Americans in relation to

their social capital. Due to the use of these tools maintaining solid relations has increased from just 1.93 online talk in 2008 to 2.16 in to 2.16 one in 2010. 2010 has witnessed a growth in having more online relationships with a total number of 2 actual friends, unlike 2008 that has not contributed in socializing online utilizes. 14% of online utilizes are much more integrated in their society than those who are not online utilizes. 12% of those who reply on their online messages directly, have more online friends than others who do not and those who do not have an access to the internet.

The second part of the chapter takes into consideration communication and self-esteem or identity formation among US college students, and through different studies assessed, American university students are influenced by the Social Networking Sites. These students use online tools in order to obtain relationships with others. To confirm that, a study has conducted during 2010 by Lenhart, Smith and Zickuhr, choosing college students as a sample. They have found that 72% of these students do have Social Networking Site profile. In addition, they have found that 45% of online students communicate with their friends, families, and sometimes strangers using online tools.

Too much use of SNS by US college students may affect their identity since the interaction occurs globally with variant culture, identities, and religions. Thus a risk of an identity reformulation is possible. Furthermore, levels of feelings like happiness, confidence, and self-esteem are converged together to strengthen the common networking decisions among college students to obtain a positive social capital in the US.

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