TikTok's Impact On Political Polarization And Extremism Pipelines Among Young Adults In The US

By

Kobain Radzat-Lockwood

University of Colorado, Boulder
Political Science, College of Arts and Sciences
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Thesis Advisor:
Dr. Alexandra Siegel
Department of Political Science

Honors Thesis Committee:
Dr. Jennifer Fitzgerald
Department of Political Science
Dr. Abby Hickcox
Arts and Sciences Honors Program

List Of Figures and Tables

Abstract

This research investigates how political polarization, participation, and ideologies of college-age (18-26) students in the United States are affected by the social media platform TikTok. Preceding studies have found that social media does have the ability to increase political polarization and participation. Studies conducted on specific social media platforms have found mixed results on the ability of said platforms to increase political extremism. Previous research conducted on TikTok specifically has found a relationship between shifting political ideologies and the use of TikTok, however, whether these changes became more or less extreme was unclear in the research. This study was conducted using both data collected from an algorithm audit as well as original survey data. The data shows that TikTok feeds users more political content the more it is interacted with, with Republican content being shown almost 26% more than Democrat content. While the results of the survey suggest that the use of TikTok does have a positive relationship with voter turnout, these results were not statistically significant. However, it appears there is a clear relationship between the two. Additionally, the data indicate a significant correlation between large amounts of time spent on TikTok and holding extreme political beliefs.

Introduction

Is social media reshaping the way we think about politics? Television and the morning paper are not the only way news is being consumed thanks to social media. Social media platforms have allowed individuals of all ages to share their viewpoints with users all over the world in a matter of seconds. In recent years, as the use of social media has grown rapidly and researchers have taken interest in how information is being digested, some researchers argue that social media has affected the way people act politically (Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, 2019, Lelkes et al., 2017). Lelkes et al. found that access to the internet increases partisan hostility. However, Boxell et al. argue that the internet cannot be linked to an increase in polarization (Lelkes et al., 2017, Boxell et al., 2017). With the recent rise of MAGA and fierce quasi-socialists, there is no doubt that, at the very least, people have become more confident talking about their political opinions regardless of affiliation. It is through the internet, specifically social media, that many of these opinions have spread and grown into massive movements. The question arises then, has social media, specifically TikTok, helped push people down the pipeline of extremism? And subsequently, has this affected the increased political polarization seen recently in the US? As the social media space continues to grow and youth spend increasing amounts of time, it is crucial to understand the impact of this new phenomena.

Early literature has been limited to social media sites such as Facebook (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009). More recently, Twitter and Instagram have been investigated, and a few studies have been conducted suggesting that social media can positively affect political polarization (Pew Research Center, 2014. Finkel et al., 2020. Bail et al., 2018. Parmelee & Roman, 2020). One of the most prominent forms of social media sweeping the world currently

is TikTok, a social media app mainly designed to host short videos, spanning topics from dancing to campaigning. TikTok has over 1 billion users monthly, making it one of the largest social media apps in the world (*Thanks a Billion! TikTok Newsroom*, 2021). Recently, political figures, such as congressman Jeff Jackson, have noticed the hold TikTok has on the nation and have begun to use it to communicate directly with their constituents through the app. Due to the relative newness of TikTok, there is very little research that has been done on how it impacts political issues. As of yet, there is no research on the impact TikTok may have on political polarization. As well, no research has been conducted on extremism pipelines within the app. The purpose of this research is to understand where TikTok falls into the issue of political polarization, extremism pipelines, and political participation or what the potential effects this social media app may have on these matters. This work aims to close the gap in understanding between the broader implications of social media, and TikTok specifically, to assist future work in understanding the cultural importance of the app in the political sphere.

Literature Review

This portion of the paper reflects on some key studies that helped guide my research process and understanding. It includes studies conducted on different social media sites, as well as TikTok. These studies help provide a foundation for my research and have influenced my hypotheses.

Political Participation

A common issue with political participation is that young people are eligible to vote but

do not. However, there is hope social media could bring these levels of participation up. Moeller et al (2018) discussed the importance of youth voters and questioned whether youth-related digital news could influence young voters' participation. They found that digital news was a significant and positive factor in youth participation, but that television and print news had no significant effect. They expressed their concern for the lack of youth-related news, as their study found that young people are more likely to participate when they are exposed to it. Mustapha and Omar (2020) go a bit deeper in their recent study on Nigerian youth to determine that online participation is the only thing significantly and positively affected by digital media. And, while offline participation is positively affected, it is not statistically significant.

In the literature, there is some concern of a recent phenomenon called “slacktivism” wherein social media users participate in the least time-consuming way, such as watching a debate. However, this interaction is limited, as it did not lead to offline political participation. Vitak et al. (2011) investigated this issue and found some unsettling results. Using 683 randomly sampled university students' responses, they found that although Facebook users who interacted with political messages were highly likely to politically participate ($p > 0.001$), their method of participation was with “low in resource intensity” in areas that do not have much impact (Vitak et al. 2011).

Political Polarization

Political polarization is on the rise in the US, with a multitude of citizens growing increasingly suspicious of the opposite party each year. A healthy debate between different parties is extremely important to a democracy that wishes to remain healthy, however, over the years, political discussions have swung away from these types of debates and towards a much

darker manifestation. In 1994 only 16% of surveyed Democrats believed Republicans threatened the nation's wellbeing; similarly, 17% of surveyed Republicans thought the same about Democrats. This figure has grown at an alarming rate. As of 2014, 38% of Democrats' report views of Republicans as being very unfavorable and 43% of Republicans expressing a similar sentiment towards Democrats (Pew Research Center, 2014). Many scholars argue that this polarization stems from social media use (Finkel et al., 2020 and Lelkes et al., 2017). As the rate of social media use has increased, so too has polarization within the US.

As described by Finkel et al., a new type of polarization is on the rise. It has been dubbed *political sectarianism*, and "consists of three core ingredients: othering – the tendency to view opposing partisans as essentially different or alien to oneself; aversion – the tendency to dislike and distrust the opposing partisans; and moralization – the tendency to view opposing partisans as iniquitous (Finkel et al., 2020)". The authors dig into the cause and consequences of political sectarianism in this article to understand how polarization has changed in the US over the years. They suggest that one major cause of this type of polarization is the manifestation of "mega-identity," wherein political orientation has shifted away from just policy agreement to demographics such as race, gender, and education (Finkel et al., 2020). Other causes include increasing economic inequality within the US and the subsequent movement towards a much more conservative ideology by the Republican party; this appears to have lead citizens to view both parties as being much more extreme than they might be and politicians to increasingly chase donations from "ideological extreme donors" (Finkel et al., 2020). Lastly, this article suggests that social media has been a large contributor to the increase of political sectarianism. The use of social media algorithms and the idea of 'echo chambers' (where users are only shown content they agree with and only interact with other users that align with their viewpoints) are used by social media companies to increase engagement by

keeping users in a space where their ideas are not challenged, and thus limiting exposure to counter-attitudinal content (Finkel et al., 2020). In the same vein, a study published in 2020 looked at echo chambers specifically on Instagram and found that there was a high level of 'selective avoidance' behavior on the app (Parmelee & Roman, 2020).

Another article explores the ways in which the internet furthers political polarization. Lelkes et al. (2017) found that broadband internet access is related to a much higher amount of partisan media consumption compared to dial-up. Further, a review of studies conducted by the NYU Stern Institute confirmed that social media does increase polarization due to both the problem of echo chambers and algorithms that push like-minded content (Barrett et al., 2021). Algorithms and interaction with them have been a major point of contention within the academic field of social media study. Algorithms work to keep users engaged and interactive with the content. The upside of these programs for their companies is that users are being shown content they like and relate to. Unfortunately, the lack of opposing viewpoints has many researchers interested in how the content can then influence user's perceptions.

Authors such as Barrett et al. (2021), Finkel et al. (2020), and Flaxman et al. (2016) agree that, to some extent, political polarization is the result of echo chambers online. In their study using an internet add-on application allowing the researchers to access web-browser behavior, Flaxman et al. (2016) found that nearly all the participants existed in an echo chamber. This is concerning because social media actively segregates information to provide content the user is more likely to interact with (Flaxman et al., 2016). Congruent with these findings is a study conducted by Ro'ee Levy in 2021 which focused specifically on Facebook. In the author's field study participants opted into news subscriptions based on their treatment group; liberal, conservative. Control groups were created to compare how pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal news affected participants' views of the opposing party (Levy, 2021). There

are a few important takeaways from this study. The first is that Facebook's algorithm shows fewer counter-attitudinal posts to individuals accounts, indicating that the algorithms used by social media are more likely to provide users with content they already agree with. It also also found that exposure to counter-attitudinal news decreased the negative feeling towards opposing parties, suggesting that users who are exposed to information that does not Aline with their beliefs can decrease polarization (Levy, 2021).

In a contrasting study published in 2018 about Twitter, Bail et al. found that exposure to counter-attitudinal political content caused Republicans specifically to become more conservative after the treatment. However, they caution the reader that this result may stem from Republicans being exposed to political information rather than the fact that the messages were from the opposing ideology (Bail et al., 2018).

The effect of echo chambers on political polarization is highly contested within the field, as varying results have been found. Researchers have argued that while political polarization has increased greatly, the main demographic that sees an increase in polarization were those aged 65 and older. This, coupled with the fact that social media use is the least used by this demographic, leads researchers to assume that social media is not a direct cause of polarization (Boxell et al., 2017). Another article suggests that while there has been evidence found that supports the concept of echo chambers, many researchers do not take into account that most US citizens are not informed on politics and do not take active steps to engage in content that contains political information; only 20% of surveyed US adults report getting their news from social media regularly (Guess et al., 2018). This suggests that those who do engage in political content on social media regularly are the type of individuals that purposefully surround themselves with pro-attitudinal content to stay informed with news sources they trust. The same article found that a positive result on echo chambers leading to an increase in political polarization are dependent

on the research methodology. Guess et al. (2018) found that studies using labs and surveys tend to find more evidence for echo chambers and political polarization, while field behavioral data tend to show weaker results. Another argument against this hypothesis is that the study of online behavior may not translate into offline behavior, and, therefore, online news segregation cannot compare to offline behavior. However, a 2011 study focusing on this argument found that while online ideological segregation of news was slightly higher than most offline news, it was lower than segregations of face-to-face interactions, suggesting that online and offline news segregation are comparable (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011).

Other authors suggest that exposure to like-minded media can alleviate polarization. In an online field study published by Donghee Jo in 2017, it was found that consumers are more likely to ingest news media that corroborates their political ideologies because they trust harmonious information. The author proposes that when participants were able to choose which news source they consumed, they learned more, and their political opinions became more moderate. This led the authors to suggest that bringing polarization down might be helped with selective exposure to partisan media (Jo, 2017). When participants were able to choose what information they consumed, it furthered their learning, and as Jo suggested, allowed for a decrease in polarization (2017). The author argues that unfamiliar news media can lead to a reduction in learning and an increase in polarization (Jo, 2017). In a Pew study conducted in 2020, it was found that Americans who consume news mainly from social media are less knowledgeable about politics. Viewing this information with that of Jo (2017): 1) a reduction in learning causes polarization and 2) Americans who consume news through social media are less knowledgeable in politics, it can be inferred that social media use can be associated with the increase in political polarization in the US (Pew Research Center, 2020).

Overall, the results are mixed and dependent on the research methodology. One study

argues that the demographic which has the highest degree of polarization is the same demographic that accesses social media the least and therefore, social media cannot be the cause of political polarization (Boxell et al., 2017). Others argue that social media algorithms push like-minded content, thus creating echo chambers and limiting counter-attitudinal news which increases polarization (Levy, 2021, Flaxman et al., 2016, Barrett et al., 2021, Bail et al., 2018). Further research into specific social media sites will help to bring consensus in the field and is an important focus of this paper's research.

Social Media And Extremism Pipelines

In recent years there has been much discussion surrounding social media and the algorithmic possibility to push users down an alt-right pipeline. With access to the internet comes access to information on just about anything, and it has been questioned whether this has made political extremism easier to fall into. In the previous section, social media algorithms and echo chambers were discussed in the context of political polarization. However, there is academic discourse surrounding the ability of social media algorithms to suggest content that users might not have searched for on their own. The goal of social media companies is to make money by keeping users interacting with their sites. How they do this may differ significantly across platforms, however the end goal remains the same. Whether the algorithms are pushing content that reinforces personal beliefs, or content that is dependent on its shock value, my interest is to understand how algorithms can lead users down pipelines they might not have happened upon independently.

YouTube, a video content-based social media site, has been the object of much research,

as it has a unique algorithm that suggests new video content upon the completion of the previous video, often recommending similar content to the ones already viewed. One study found significant evidence that YouTube's algorithm recommends 'Alt-Lite' (described as a middle group that distances itself from white supremacy ideologies but often stays around the fringes of the topic) content after videos that contain similar content (Ribeiro et al., 2020). The same article argued that there is a significant correlation between users commenting on mild content and the migration of said users into more extreme Alt-Right videos over a short period of time. Alt-right videos had a very high concentration of comments compared to average video content, and the authors believe this to be an indicator of the radicalization pipeline on YouTube (Ribeiro et al., 2020).

Another report published in 2018 by Rebecca Lewis found that YouTube 'influencers' have created a community that, on the surface, might seem to be within the limits of conservatism, however when individuals follow just a small amount of these influences they are very likely to encounter other similar influencers. This demonstrates how easy it is for individuals to find themselves engaging with more extreme influencers, regardless of how many they interact with. Lewis argues that these social networks on YouTube help to normalize extremist viewpoints and coupled with the algorithm's ability to suggest attention-grabbing videos, allows for an Alt-Right pipeline on YouTube (2018). The academia is not in consensus about this notion, however a contrasting study argues against the notion that YouTube's algorithm promotes extremist content. This article found that YouTube's algorithm discourages radical content and instead will suggest videos from mainstream media sources, rather than smaller extremist channels (Ledwich & Zaitsev, 2019). The authors found, surprisingly, that the algorithm suggests less extreme content even after watching videos deemed 'conspiracy' (Ledwich & Zaitsev, 2019). Once again, the academic consensus in this field is not homologous,

prompting this paper's research into algorithms and content suggestions.

A Brief Overview of the Literature on TikTok

TikTok is a video-based social media platform, much like YouTube, that was released in the US in 2018. Since then, the platform has grown astronomically. It is currently the most downloaded smartphone application in 2020 (Guindaudeau et al., 2022). Due to the newness of the app, there has been very little research conducted around it. Importantly, the app is owned by a Chinese company, and data from the company is less accessible as compared to that of Twitter or Facebook data, making this app more difficult to study. Nonetheless, three articles have been selected due to their relevance to the topic. However, a reader would be hard-pressed to find any other studies conducted.

The first study looks at the functionality of TikTok and attempts to understand its popularity. The authors found three very important and distinctive elements that allow the app to stand out against any other social media. The first is that follower count does not matter the way it does on other platforms such as Instagram, where more followers equals more "success." Instead, it found that the number of followers is less likely to predict the success of a video based on views (Guindaudeau et al., 2022). This means that the line between consumer and creator is blurred. The second is that the interaction between consumer and creator is very high. The number of those who create content is nearly as high as those who interact with it. Lastly, the 'virability' of TikTok is unlike any other social media and far greater than its cousin site, YouTube (Guindaudeau et al., 2022). This means that for any creator, regardless of follower count or previous success, the ability to go viral is very achievable.

The second article examines TikTok and its effect on political ideologies. Using surveys, the author found that TikTok users between the ages of 18-25 majority shared that since downloading TikTok they have shifted their political ideology “a great deal” or “a lot” (Church, 2022). While the author cautions the reader not to assume TikTok is the causal factor towards the political shift in participants, the study still illustrates an important focus of TikTok's influence on political ideologies. The final research study is a review of the methods used to study TikTok. The authors found that due to the lack of data accessible through the company, along with the newness of the app, there has been little to no congruency between methods used to study the app (Kanthawala et al., 2022).

Guiding Hypotheses

Young voters are among the most important and influential demographic in the political space. TikTok has already drastically changed many industries such as music and Hollywood, so it is logical to assume it holds some power over politics. Rebeiro et. al. (2021) looked specifically at YouTube and found that there is “user radicalization on YouTube” and that there is evidence that YouTube can send users down an alt-right pipeline. If this is possible on a long-form video content social media site, there is likely a connection to the short-form video content found on TikTok. Through a unique feature called the “For You Page” (FYP), TikTok can expose users to a wide variety of videos in a way that no other social media platform can, leading to my exploration into how this broad range of video content might be narrowed down by users' interaction with specific types of videos i.e., more political, or less political depending on the user. Most of these studies had broad age ranges and were conducted when these social

media platforms were brand new, leaving a gap in the knowledge surrounding the younger generation's interactions with the app. Current academic studies are limited and there is very little research done on TikTok, specifically. The guiding questions for this research are: 1) Does TikTok lead to more political polarization? 2) Does online TikTok political interaction correlate with offline political participation? And 3) does TikTok lead users down the path of political extremism?

H1: TikTok's algorithm feeds users like-minded content thus creating an echo chamber and increasing political polarization.

H2: The "For You Page" on TikTok pushes users down particular algorithm-presented videos favoring either party thus allowing for exposure to extremist ideologies and radical political thought.

H3: College-age students who use TikTok are more likely to vote in both midterm and presidential elections.

H4: College-age students using TikTok are likelier to participate in offline political events.

H5: College-age students who spend more than 3 or more hours daily on TikTok will have more extreme political beliefs.

TikTok Algorithm Audit

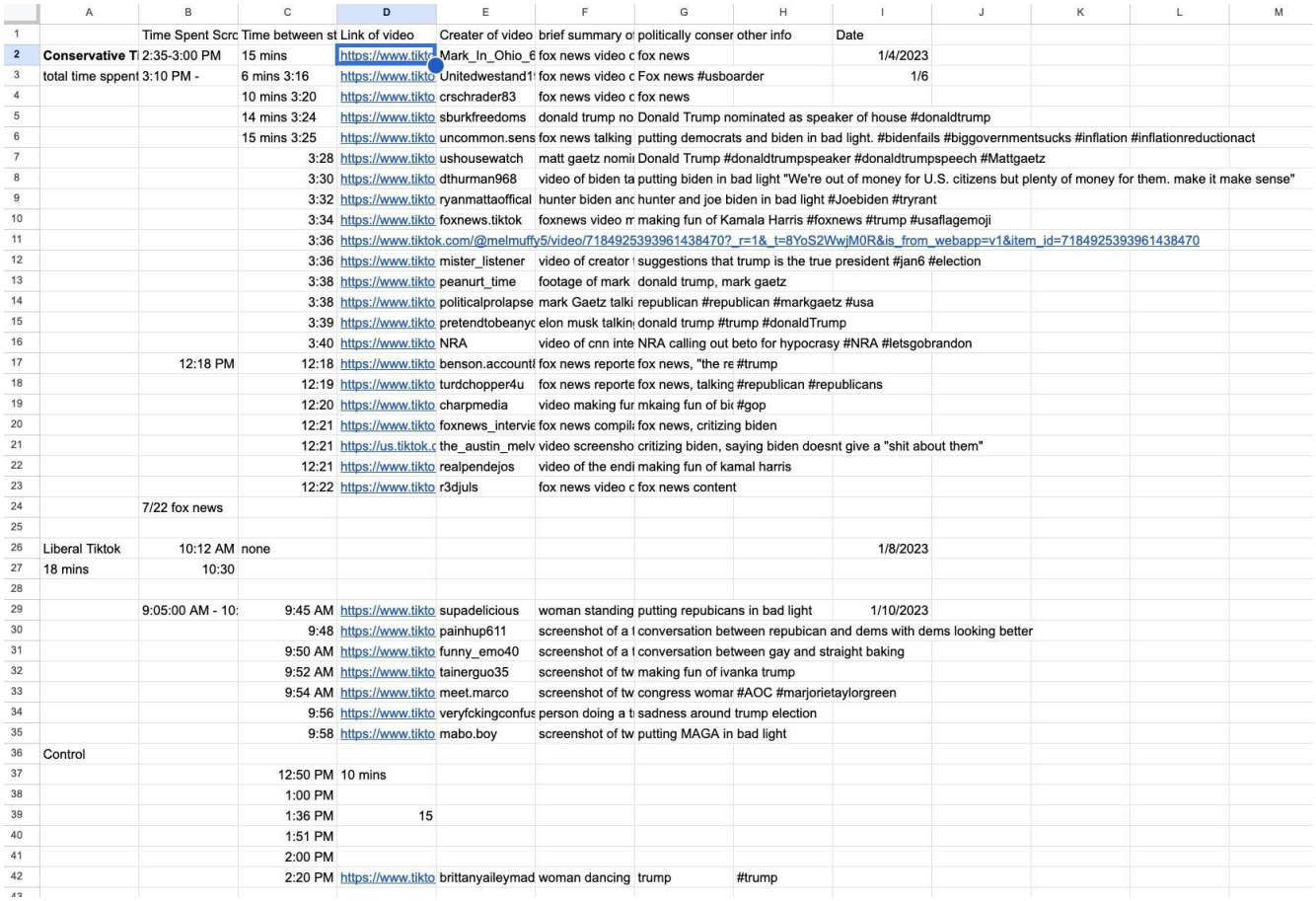
While the core research for this paper surrounds individuals' interactions with TikTok, it is important to begin with brief supplemental information about the TikTok algorithm, and how it may increase polarization and lead users down extremism pipelines, specifically among

college-age students. The college-age demographic is one of the most influential in elections currently, and it is also one of the most influenced by social media (Winograd et al., 2023, *Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States*, 2021). TikTok's unique algorithm can feed users information they might not normally seek out. Using a field technique called an audit study, three TikTok fictious accounts were created. Each of these accounts had a role to play. One account aimed to mimic a person who interacts only with Republican political content, a second aimed to mimic a person interacting with only Democratic political content, and a third aimed to act as a control. This field experiment will attempt to control the environment on TikTok to understand how interacting with certain specific content can alter the type of TikTok videos that are presented to a user.

Methods

To further understand how users might be presented with videos, and how interacting with said content can change how users interact with the app, I first made three separate TikTok accounts, each using a brand-new email, and provided no other information. Throughout the process of collecting this data, I categorized the type of videos consumed and the frequency with which they appeared. After creating a spreadsheet, I inserted time stamps for each video that was interacted with. I then recorded the URL of the TikTok post, the username of the person who posted the video, a brief description of the video, why it was considered political, and the political hashtags that were used in the caption of the video, as seen in Figure 1. By allowing the algorithm to naturally take me in any direction, it mimics how new users interact with the app and provides a basis for my understanding of the algorithm and its potential pipelines.

Figure 1: Screenshot of TikTok Algorithm Audit Recordings



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1		Time Spent Scrc	Time between st	Link of video	Creater of video	brief summary o	politically conser	other info	Date				
2	**Conservative T**	2:35-3:00 PM	15 mins	https://www.tikto	Mark_In_Ohio_6	fox news video c	fox news		1/4/2023				
3	total time sppent	3:10 PM -	6 mins 3:16	https://www.tikto	Unitedwestand1	fox news video c	Fox news #usboarder		1/6				
4			10 mins 3:20	https://www.tikto	crschrader83	fox news video c	fox news						
5			14 mins 3:24	https://www.tikto	sburkfreedoms	donald trump no	Donald Trump nominated as speaker of house #donaldtrump						
6			15 mins 3:25	https://www.tikto	uncommon.sens	fox news talking	putting democrats and biden in bad light. #bidenfails #biggovernmentsucks #inflation #inflationreductionact						
7			3:28	https://www.tikto	ushousewatch	matt gaetz nomi	Donald Trump #donaldtrumpspeaker #donaldtrumpspeech #Mattgaetz						
8			3:30	https://www.tikto	dthurman968	video of biden ta	putting biden in bad light "We're out of money for U.S. citizens but plenty of money for them. make it make sense"						
9			3:32	https://www.tikto	ryanmattaoffical	hunter biden anc	hunter and joe biden in bad light #Joebiden #tryrant						
10			3:34	https://www.tikto	foxnews.tiktok	foxnews video m	making fun of Kamala Harris #foxnews #trump #usaflagemoji						
11			3:36	https://www.tiktok.com/@melmuffy5/video/7184925393961438470?_r=1&_t=8YoS2WwjM0R&is_from_webapp=v1&item_id=7184925393961438470									
12			3:36	https://www.tikto	mister_listener	video of creator	suggestions that trump is the true president #jan6 #election						
13			3:38	https://www.tikto	peanurt_time	footage of mark	donald trump, mark gaetz						
14			3:38	https://www.tikto	politicalprolapse	mark Gaetz talki	republican #republican #markgaetz #usa						
15			3:39	https://www.tikto	pretendtobeanyc	elon musk talkin	donald trump #trump #donaldTrump						
16			3:40	https://www.tikto	NRA	video of cnn inte	NRA calling out beto for hypocrasy #NRA #letsgobrandon						
17		12:18 PM	12:18	https://www.tikto	benson.account	fox news reporte	fox news, "the re #trump						
18			12:19	https://www.tikto	turdchopper4u	fox news reporte	fox news, talking #republican #republicans						
19			12:20	https://www.tikto	charpmedia	video making fur	mkaing fun of bi #gop						
20			12:21	https://www.tikto	foxnews_intervie	fox news compil	fox news, critizing biden						
21			12:21	https://us.tiktok.c	the_austin_melv	video screensho	critizing biden, saying biden doesnt give a "shit about them"						
22			12:21	https://www.tikto	realpendejos	video of the endi	making fun of kamal harris						
23			12:22	https://www.tikto	r3djuls	fox news video c	fox news content						
24		7/22 fox news											
25													
26	Liberal Tiktok	10:12 AM	none						1/8/2023				
27	18 mins	10:30											
28													
29		9:05:00 AM - 10:	9:45 AM	https://www.tikto	supadelicious	woman standing	putting repubicans in bad light		1/10/2023				
30			9:48	https://www.tikto	painhup611	screenshot of a t	conversation between repubican and dems with dems looking better						
31			9:50 AM	https://www.tikto	funny_emo40	screenshot of a t	conversation between gay and straight baking						
32			9:52 AM	https://www.tikto	tainerguo35	screenshot of tw	making fun of ivanka trump						
33			9:54 AM	https://www.tikto	meet.marco	screenshot of tw	congress womar #AOC #marjorietaylorgreen						
34			9:56	https://www.tikto	veryfckingconfus	person doing a ti	sadness around trump election						
35			9:58	https://www.tikto	mabo.boy	screenshot of tw	putting MAGA in bad light						
36	Control												
37			12:50 PM	10 mins									
38			1:00 PM										
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40			1:51 PM										
41			2:00 PM										
42			2:20 PM	https://www.tikto	brittanyaileymad	woman dancing	trump	#trump					

Table 1: Summary of Results of the TikTok Algorithm Audit

	Time Spent	Time Between Start and First Political Video	Number of Videos

Control	1 hour	35 minutes	1
Republican	1 hour	15 minutes	22
Democrat	1 hour	58 minutes	7

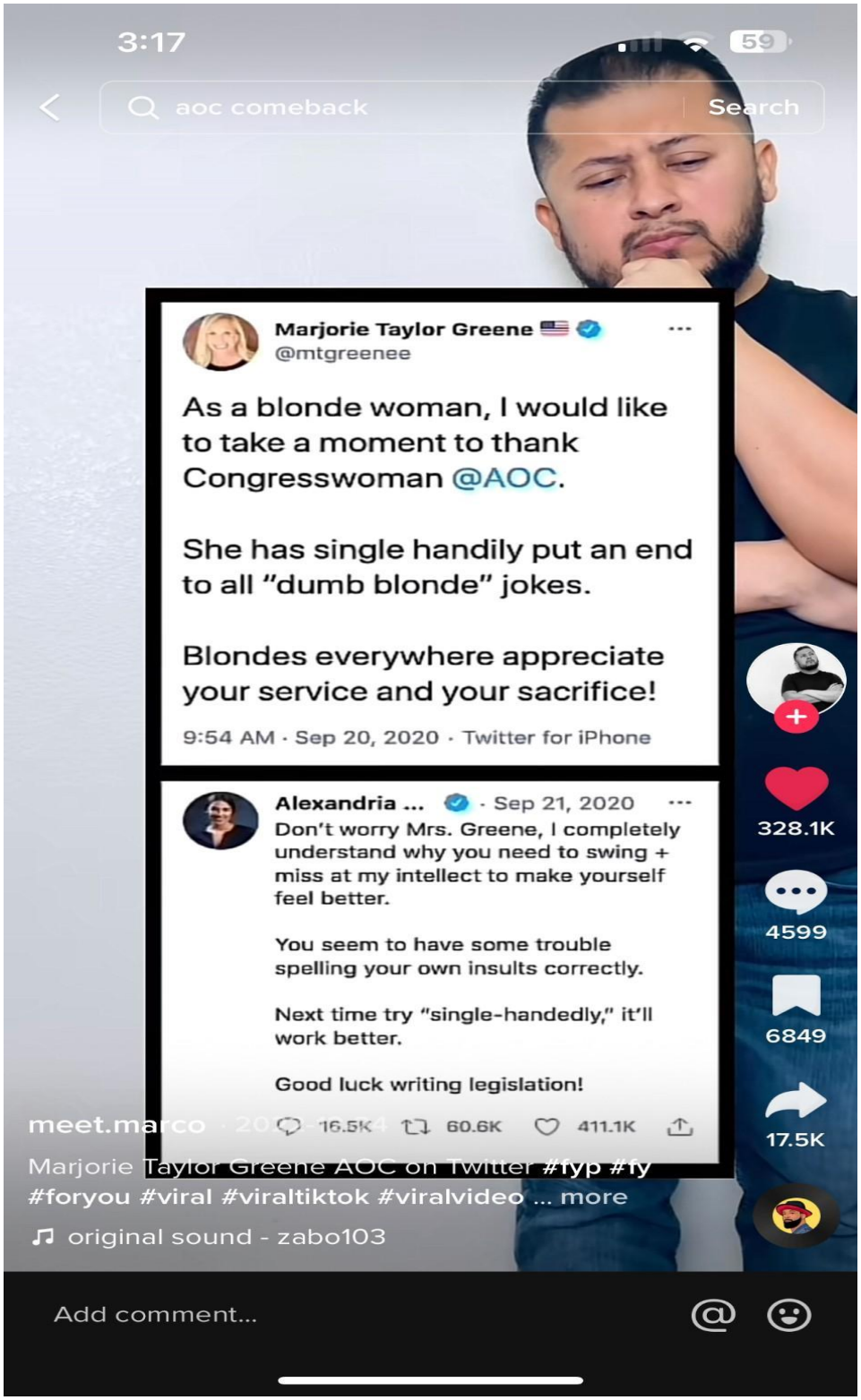
The first account acted as a control whose main purpose was to observe how TikTok's For You Page (FYP) works when users do not interact in any way other than watching the videos, such as liking the video, commenting, saving, or clicking on the profile of the creator. While logged into the control account, I scrolled through the TikTok FYP and noted any political content that arose but did not interact by "liking" the video.

I made the second account to better understand how Republican/conservative content is presented, when the users only interact with conservative content. With this account, I scrolled through the FYP and only "liked" content that had a conservative viewpoint. Figure 1 below shows an example of the type of content that appeared on the Republican account. I considered something to be conservative if it: 1) was from a known conservative news source such as Fox News, 2) was from an account that described itself as a conservative TikTok page, 3) contained content that shed a negative light on the democratic party in any way, 4) contained content posted by conservative politicians, 5) contained content that is tied to conservative viewpoints such as anti-abortion ideology or second amendment rights or, 6) made fun of democrats in any way.

Figure 2: Example of Republican Content on the TikTok For You Page

The third and final account was created to understand how Democrat/liberal content is pushed to users when only liberal content is interacted with. I followed the same methods used for the conservative account and only "liked" content demonstrating democrat and left-leaning ideologies. I considered something to be liberal content if it: 1) was from a known liberal news source such as CNN, 2) was from an account that described itself as a liberal TikTok page, 3) contained content that shed a negative light on the Republican party in any way, 4) contained content by liberal politicians, 5) contained content that is tied to liberal viewpoints such as pro-choice abortion ideology or gun control, or 5) made fun of Republicans in any way. Figure 3 shows an example of this type of content that was interacted with.

Figure 3: Example of Democratic Content on the TikTok For You Page



I spent a total of one hour on each of these accounts across multiple days. For example, on day one using the conservative account I spent a total of 35 minutes on TikTok and on day two spent 20 minutes on TikTok. I did not search for anything, nor did I follow any accounts. I did not comment or click on any of the hashtags or account profiles, to maintain as few biases on the account. All the accounts maintained their auto generated usernames and were not linked to me in any way. TikTok has released very little information on how its algorithm works, but according to a *New York Times* article by Ben Smith, which had access to insider information, the algorithm prioritizes keeping people on the app as long as possible (2021). Watch time, or the amount of time spent watching or rewatching a video is another important factor that can change how an individual's FYP behaves (Smith, 2021). Each video is given a score based on an equation used by the company, those videos with the highest score are pushed to a wider range of users than videos with a lower score (Smith, 2021).

Results

The guiding hypothesis for this audit is that the more each account interacts with its specific content the more that type of content will be pushed onto the FYP. In doing this audit, I found the results to be supportive of H1 and H2. It does appear that TikTok feeds user's like-minded content. With both the Democratic and Republican accounts, the more I interacted with each respective content type, the more that type of content appeared on the FYP. The control account saw only one political video within the hour showing that when political content is not interacted with it is not shown widely on the FYP.

Interestingly, the Republican account pushed more like-minded content within the hour

than either other account. After fifteen minutes, the account saw its first conservative video consisting of a Fox News report. After another six minutes of scrolling the account saw its second conservative video. It took an average of thirteen minutes between the next three videos to see more Republican videos. However, after those first five videos the rest of the account saw almost purely conservative content. The posting of new content averaged 1.5 minutes between each conservative video and decreased to 0.57 seconds between each conservative video by the end of the hour. In total, over the entire hour, the Republican account interacted with 22 individual videos which then created an FYP that was completely saturated with conservative content.

The Democratic account also saw an increase in like-minded content over time, but it was not nearly as quick or as much as the Republican account. It took 58 minutes for the first Democratic video to show up on the FYP, which was a creator showing Republicans in a negative light. After this first interaction, it took an average of 1.86 minutes between each video, with a total of seven videos during the hour. This difference was dramatic, as compared to the Republican account and provides an interesting insight into what types of political content TikTok may be pushing.

Over the hour the control account saw only one slightly Republican-leaning video. This video was seen 45 minutes into the hour and showed a woman wearing a shirt with Donald Trump on it and the caption was #Trump. Over the entire hour, there was no other political content.

Analysis

At the beginning of this research the question was asked: does TikTok lead to more political polarization? The literature indicates a debate on whether different types of social media can cause political polarization. Some researchers argued that Facebook and Twitter cause this polarization ((Levy, 2021, Bail et al., 2018), while others argued that the age group which reports the highest level of political polarization is the one which frequents social media the least (Boxell et al., 2017). The problem of echo chambers is also contested in the field, with some studies finding evidence that political polarization results from echo chambers (Barrett et al., 2021, Finkel et al., 2020, Flaxman et al., 2016) while others arguing this is not the case (Guess et al., 2018). The results of the algorithm audit show that TikTok does feed users like-minded content constantly, prompting echo chambers and possible polarization. The algorithm seems to have the ability to manipulate how much political content is pushed onto the user's FYP. In the case of the Republican account, conservative content almost entirely dominated the feed within a very short amount of time. After the first five videos were "liked," the feed became saturated with conservative narratives. On the other hand, the Democratic account saw much less interaction with liberal content, and it took longer for the feed to become more saturated, but the feed was never filled entirely with liberal content. The control account provided an important baseline that highlighted how important interaction with videos is to the content of a user's FYP. When scrolling on the FYP users need to interact with the content by liking, commenting, or saving, for the algorithm to understand users' preferences. The control account also shows that when there is no interaction on the FYP, political content is not presented often. Users must interact with political content to see it on their FYP.

The hypothesis surrounding this audit suggested that the more each respective content post was interacted with, the more the feed would become saturated, leading to users finding more extreme content the more time they spent on the app. The results of this audit were in

support of the hypothesis: there was indeed more Republican/Democratic content depending on interaction. As seen in Table 1, both accounts saw an increase in their respective political content the more it was interacted with, with the control seeing only one political video the entire time.

This is no surprise, as most social media push content that users seem to enjoy keeping people engaged. The surprising result of this audit shows how much faster Republican content is fed to users as opposed to the Democrat account. Interestingly, the Republican account saw a much larger amount of political content than any other account. This might suggest that TikTok pushes more conservative content than liberal. While TikTok does not indicate any sort of political association, it would be interesting for future research to explore why this might be the case. The main bulk of the videos seen on the Republican account were Fox News clips, and the second largest majority were videos making fun of Democrats or attempting to show them in a negative light. There were no videos from official government personnel, and the only official account that was shown on the FYP was a video from the NRA.

The Democrat account saw drastically fewer videos and, of the seven total videos, five of them attempted to shed a negative light on Republicans. Many of these videos were recycled content from Twitter or clips taken from news reports. There were no official accounts seen and none by government officials. Overall, while H1 and H2 are supported by these findings, it also seems that Republican/conservative content is shown more than Democrat content. The control account supports H1 and H2, showing that when no political videos are interacted with, political content is rarely shown on the FYP.

The results of the algorithm audit show the importance of understanding how social media giants push content, as well as how easy it is for users to fall into extreme echo chambers while on TikTok specifically. During the algorithm audit, the accounts were created and accessed on my personal phone. This means that information could have been acquired about the

accounts' owner, which may have influenced what content was shown on the FYP. The control account did show that there was almost no political content, which could indicate that no data was taken off my personal device to curate a particular FYP feed.

TikTok Survey

To understand how college-age students interact with TikTok and politics, a survey was conducted. The surveys aim to increase understanding around whether there is a relationship between TikTok, polarization, and extremism pipelines. This data will allow me to study how TikTok is correlated with users' political feelings towards others and attempt to measure polarization potentially caused by the app. These questions can uncover how college-age students spend their time on TikTok and how political content is consumed.

Methods

This research was conducted from March 8th to the 21st, 2023 with an original survey.Using an online software called Qualtrics, the survey was sent out to college-age students to understand better how TikTok might influence the respondent's political viewpoints. This survey was shared via email by professors who agreed to host the survey in their classes and through social media. This survey was shared with over 3,000 college students to obtain a sample that mimics the demographics of US college students. Any individual was welcome to participate, however, there were some qualifications required to finish the survey.

To participate in the survey, individuals first had to consent to participate.Individuals also had to have been within the ages of 18 to 26 years, they must have been enrolled in a university, and they must have been US citizens. Individuals who did not qualify for this research were automatically blocked from completing the survey. The first half of the survey questions consisted of demographic questions and were used to compare the data to a nationally representative sample. The second half consisted of questions such as *how often do you access TikTok, how much time do you spend on TikTok per day, do you follow political creators on TikTok (political creators can be defined as candidates, government officials, news reporters who center around politics, and those who make political commentary),* and *have you ever changed your mind about a political issue or candidate based on what you've seen on TikTok?* The full list of questions can be found in Appendix A. These questions are based on the Pew Research Center topline questionnaires in similar research to maintain the best survey structure. 380 individuals began the survey, but only 229 individuals met my inclusion criteria. I first calculated descriptive statistics of my sample and then used bivariate correlations to test my hypotheses.

Demographic Information

Figures 4 and 5 show the demographics of the sample. It is important to note that about 80% of the sample identified themselves as both white and a woman, with only 17% of the samples identifying as male. These demographics are not quite similar to the national representative sample, as 75.8% of Americans identify as white, and 50.5% identify as women (*Quick Facts United States*, 2022). Instead, this data gives an account of a white woman's interaction with TikTok more than any other demographic.

Figure 4: Gender Demographic Results

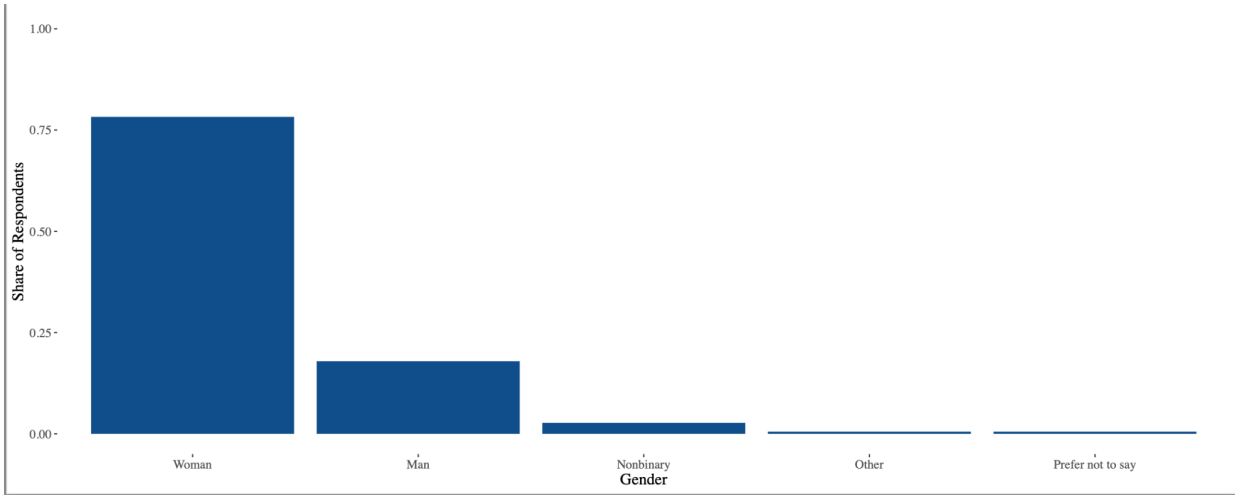
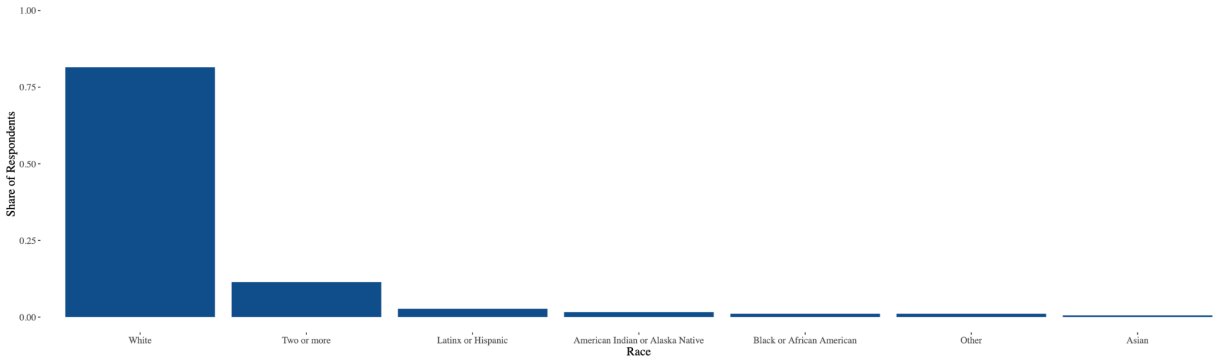


Figure 5: Race Demographic Results



Measures

This survey contained multiple-choice, Likert-style scale on both a 5 and 10-point scale and included drop-down selection questions. Within the Likert-style questions, the points assigned value varied by question. The same version of this survey was offered to all those who qualified. However, students were not required to answer any question they did not feel comfortable with.

TikTok For You Page Content

This survey included questions regarding the type of content respondents have encountered while scrolling through the FYP on TikTok. "How often do you see the following types of content on TikTok? 0 being never and 10 being constantly" prompt the respondents to scale how often they interacted with different categories of content such as political, comedy, and sports. See Appendix A for a full list of the categories. Respondents could scale their responses for each category of content on a scale between zero and ten, zero being never, five being a moderate amount, and ten being constantly.

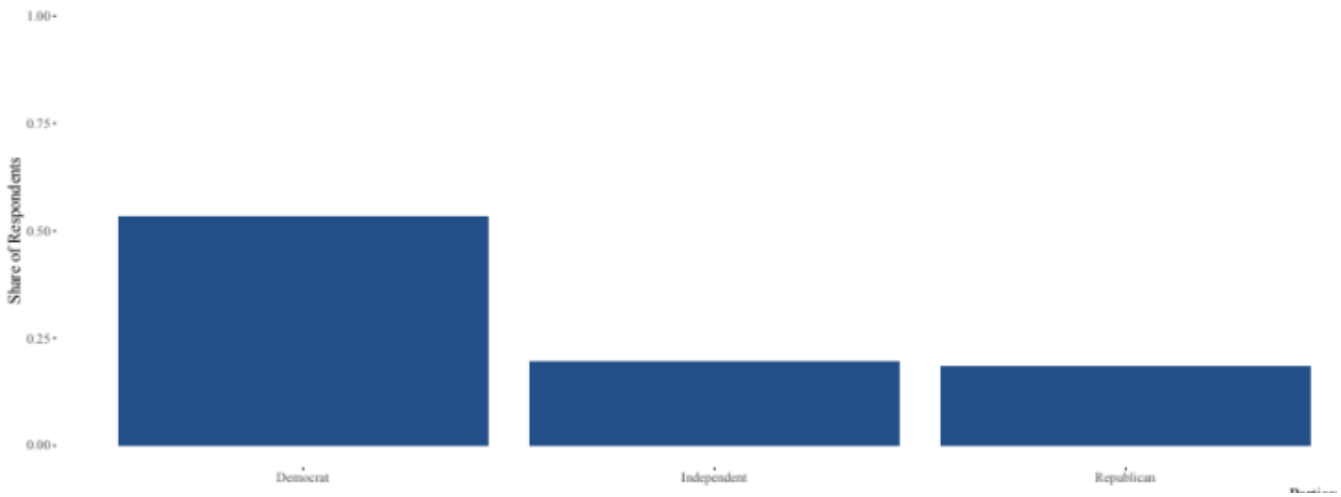
Political Self-Censorship

Two more questions on this survey used the Likert-style scale to understand how respondents self-censor themselves around family and friends as well as online. "How often do you self-censor your political views in person?" and "How often do you self-censor your political views online?" were both asked on a five-point scale. One being never, two being rarely, three being occasionally, four being often, and five being always.

Results

The results of the survey show that more than half of the respondents identified as Democrat (54.15%), as seen in Figure 6. The second largest group identified as Independent (19.21%). The percent of people identifying as Republican (17.90%) was similar to those identifying as Independent. About 4% of respondents were not sure how they identified. 2.62% identified with parties not listed, and about 2% of the respondents preferred not to reveal their political identities. About 78% of the respondents indicated they had voted in the last presidential election. 21% did not vote, and less than 1% preferred not to say whether they had or not. The full list of these results can be found in Appendix B.

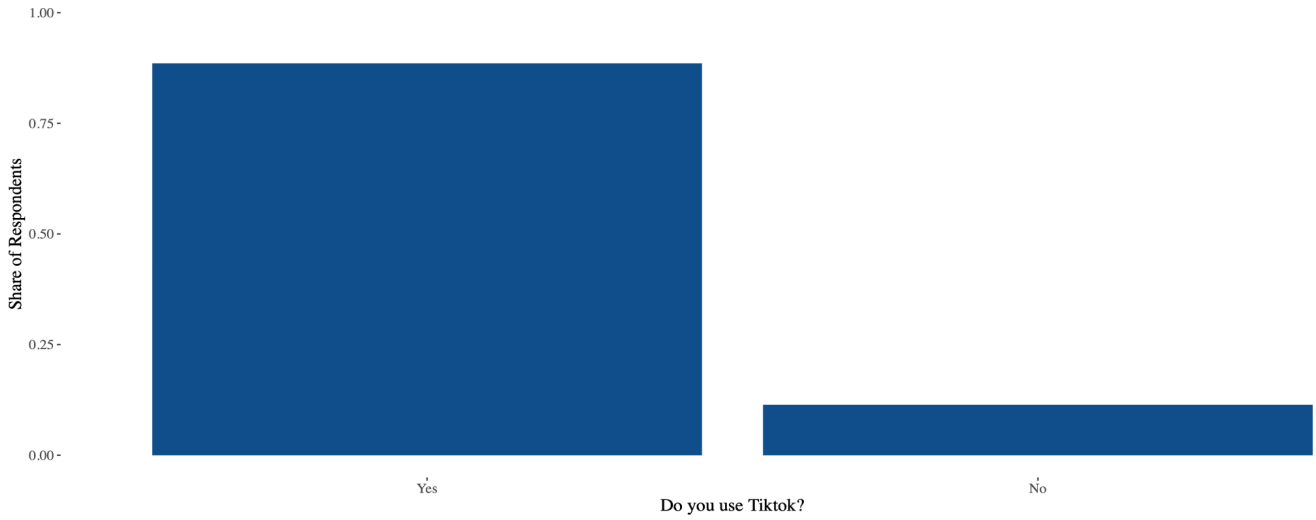
Figure 6: Respondents Partisanship Demographics



Generally, all the respondents indicated they used TikTok (89.95%) and 36% indicated they spend 1 to 2 hours daily on the app. A little over 27% of respondents use TikTok for 2 to 3

hours daily, while about 9% spend 3 to 4 hours and about 7% spend over 4 hours on the app. About 18% indicated they spent less than an hour daily on TikTok. See Appendix B for the full results.

Figure 7: Percentage of Respondents Who Indicated they Used TikTok



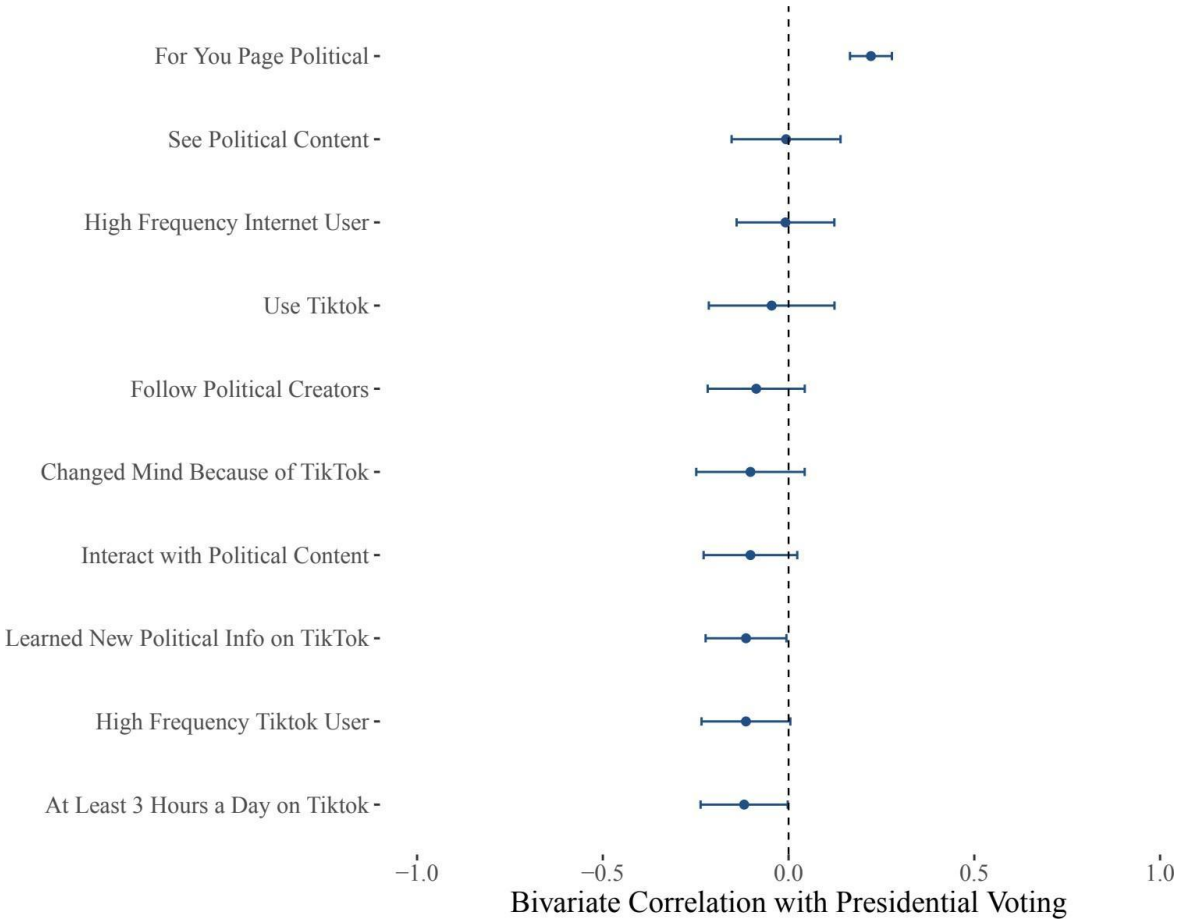
Over half of the respondents indicated that their FYP was mostly political content and that this content aligned their political viewpoints. About 30% of the respondents indicated that the video content they experienced on TikTok was more extreme than their personal viewpoints. Only about 10% of the respondents indicated they saw less extreme content than their personal political ideologies. (See Appendix B).

Testing H3 and H4

Figure 8 shows the bivariate correlations between those who indicated they voted in the

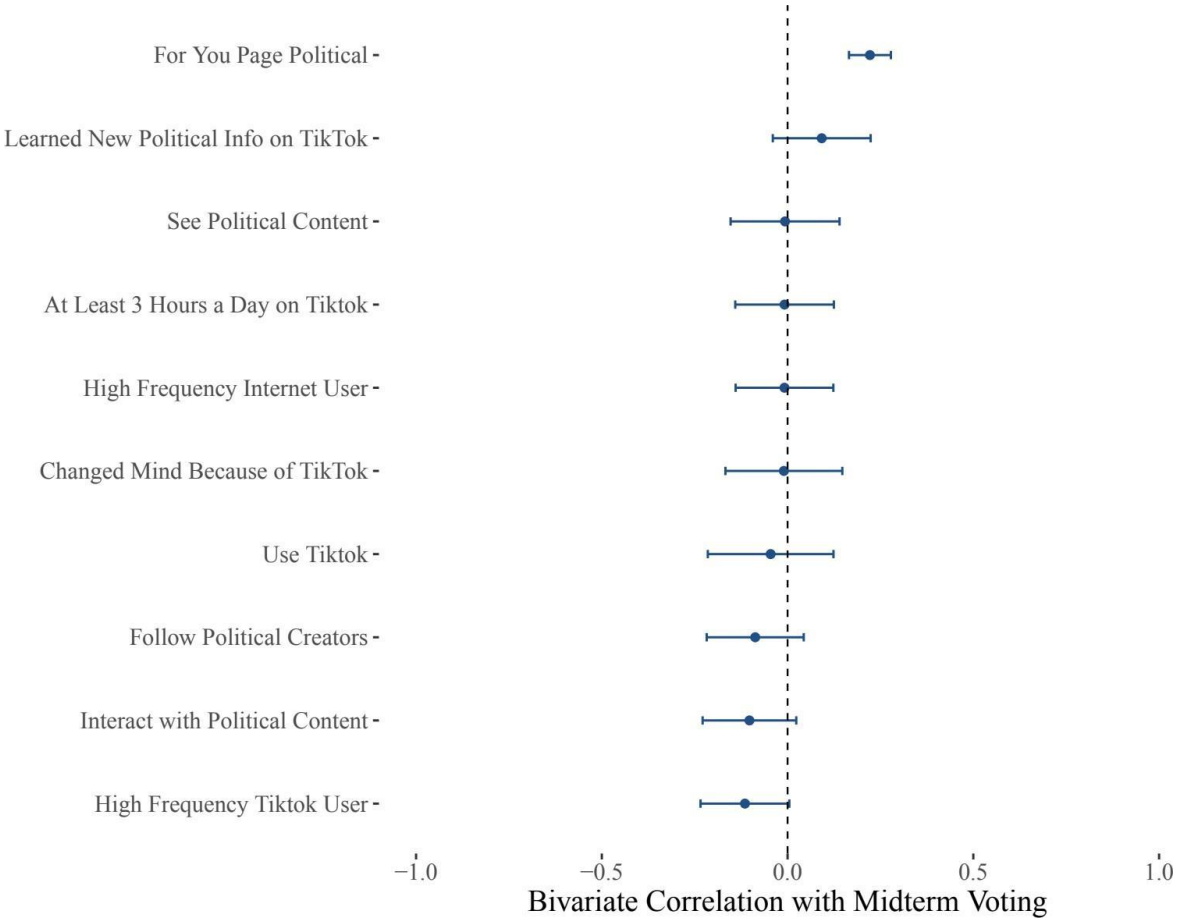
most recent presidential election, and how they interacted on TikTok. As indicated below, those who voted had a statistically significant positive relationship with their FYP containing political content at the 0.05 level.

Figure 8: Bivariate Correlations between TikTok Use and Voting in the 2020 Presidential Elections



The other statistically significant result showed that those who learned new political information on TikTok, those who were considered highly frequent TikTok users, and those who spent at least 3 hours daily on TikTok were negatively associated with voting in the presidential elections. These bivariate relationships were statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Figure 9: Bivariate Correlations between TikTok Use and Votes in the 2022 Midterm Elections



Interestingly, those who indicated they voted in the midterm elections had similar results as those who indicated they voted in the presidential election. As seen in Figure 9, there was a positive correlation between those who voted in the midterm and saw political content on the FYP. This relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. While following political creators and interacting with political content on TikTok showed a negative correlation with voting the most recent midterm, these bivariate correlations are not statistically significant.

Figure 10: Bivariate Correlations between TikTok Use and Offline Political Participation

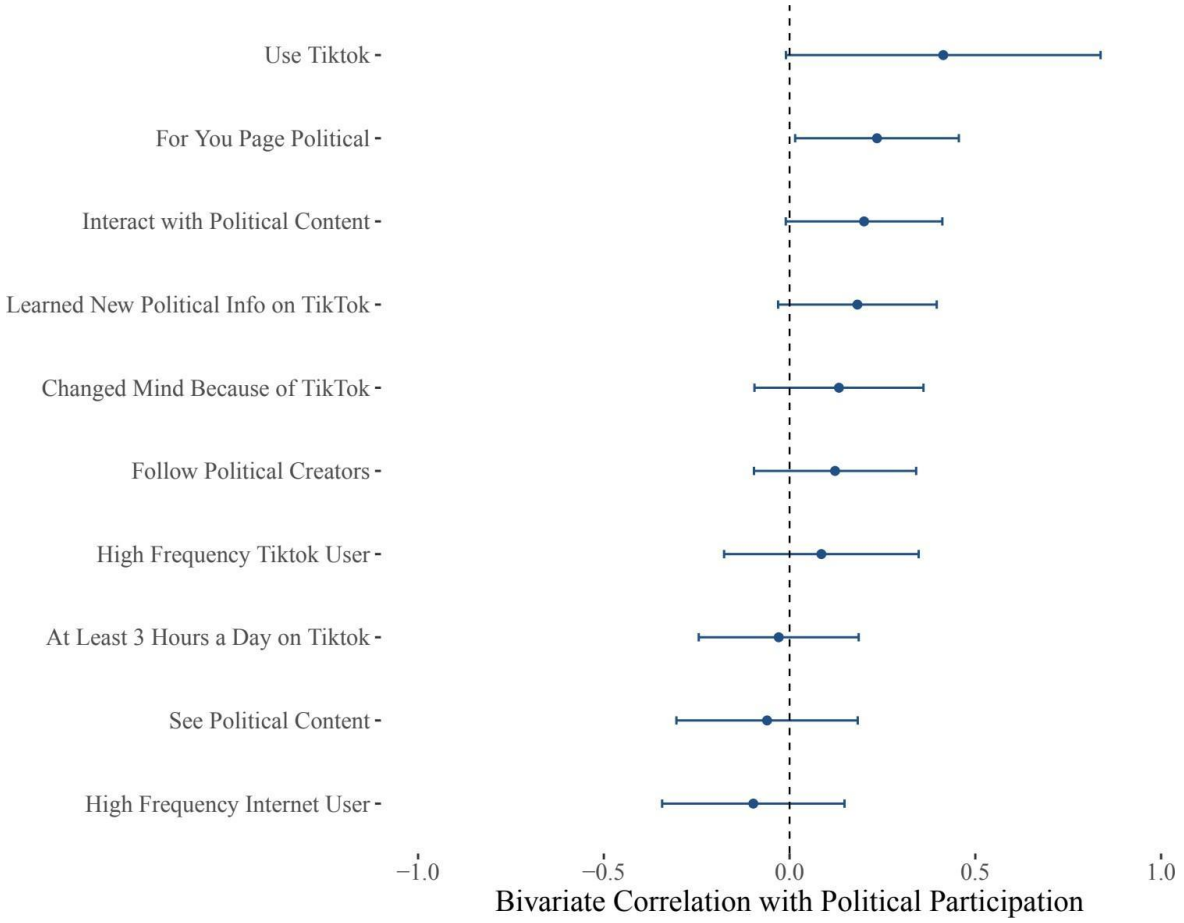
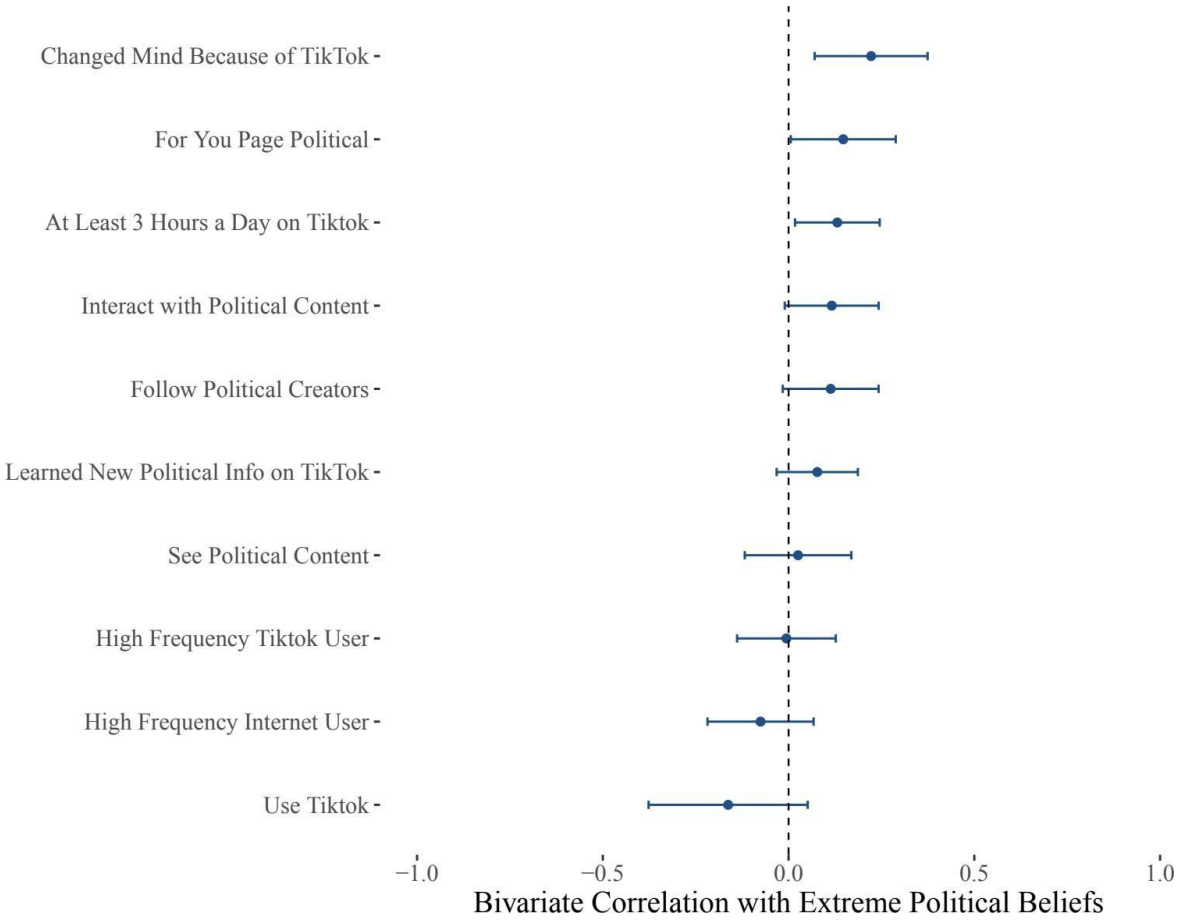


Figure 10 shows the relationship between offline political participation and TikTok use. Respondents who indicated they saw political content on the FYP are positively associated with participating in political actions such as voting or attending a protest at a statistically significant level of 0.05. Using TikTok and interacting with political content on TikTok are both positively correlated with offline political participation; however, these results are only marginally significant at the 0.05 level. The rest of the relationships seen in Figure 10 are not significant and cannot provide evidence of a relationship between the bivariate correlations.

Testing H5

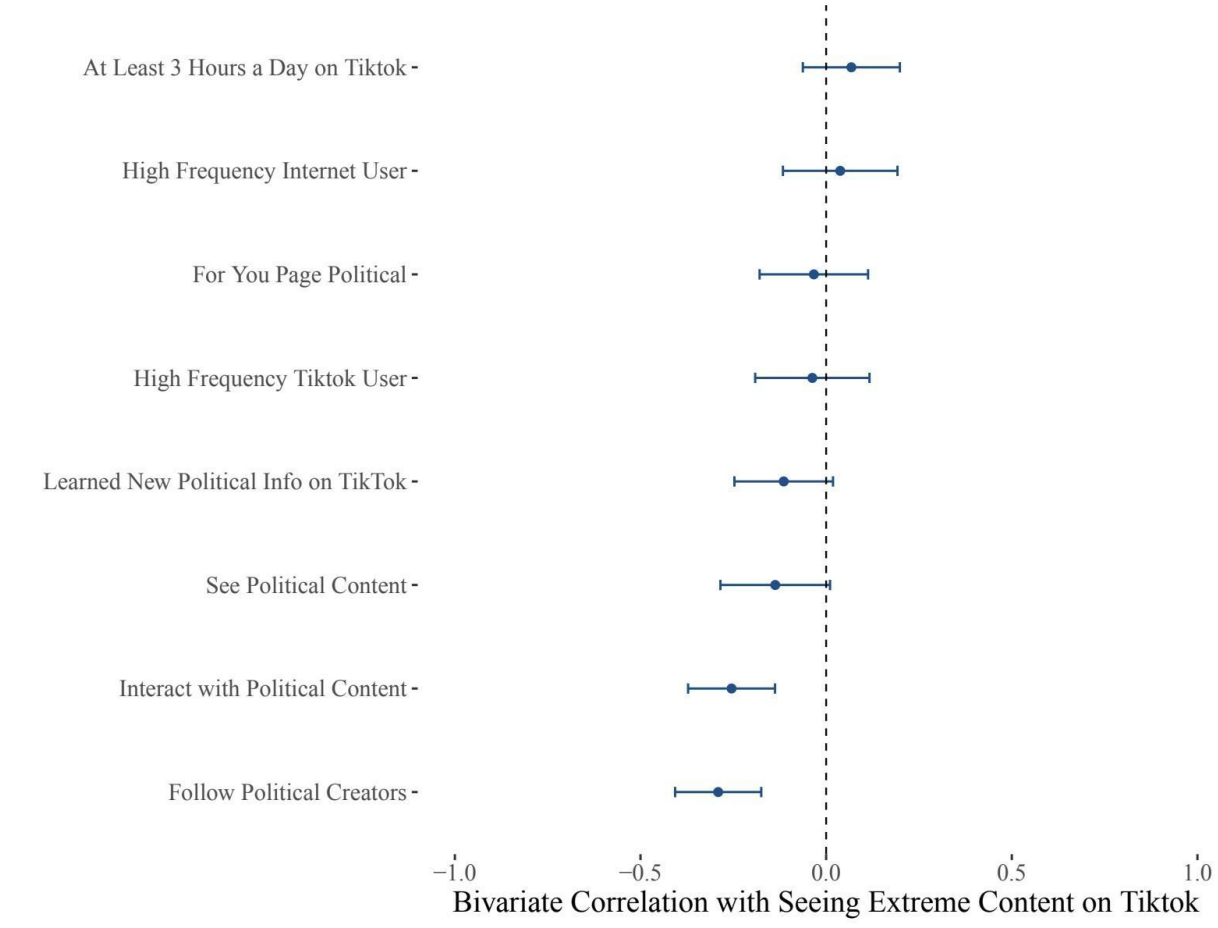
Figure 11: Bivariate Correlations between TikTok Use and Extreme Political Beliefs



Respondents who reported they changed their mind because of content they saw on the FYP on TikTok show a positive correlation with having extreme political beliefs. Spending at least 3 hours a day on TikTok and reporting an FYP that contains political content is also positively correlated with holding extreme political beliefs. As seen in Figure 11, all these results are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Interestingly, interacting with political content on

TikTok, following political creators, and learning new political information on TikTok does provide evidence of a positive relationship with holding extreme political beliefs. However, these results are not statistically significant. There were no other significant findings in these results.

Figure 12: Bivariate Correlations between TikTok Use and Seeing Extreme Political Content on TikTok



As seen in Figure 12, there is a statistically significant negative relationship with respondents indicating they saw extreme political content on their FYP and interacting with

political content and following political creators on TikTok. Seeing political content on the FYP showed a marginally significant negative correlation with seeing extreme content on the FYP on TikTok. Those who indicated they were both high-frequency internet users and spent at least 3 hours on TikTok daily had a slight positive correlation with seeing extreme content on TikTok, though these results are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. For full regression tables and estimates, see Appendix B

Analysis

The results stemming from the descriptive survey data provided interesting results in regard to H3, H4, and H5. The research questions guiding this study attempt to fill a gap in the existing literature surrounding the topic of specific social media applications and political participation and ideologies. In general, the results provide suggestive evidence that supports two of the three hypotheses.

H3: College-age students who use TikTok are more likely to vote in both midterm and presidential elections.

Does online TikTok political interaction correlate with offline political participation? The research questions lead me to hypothesize that the use of TikTok results in offline political participation, and a great deal of time spent on TikTok leads college-age students to become more extreme in their political viewpoints. The academic field argues that some social media use results in offline participation due to their mobilization abilities (Gil de Zuniga, 2012). However, others argue that "slacktivism" has resulted in youth, in particular, becoming less politically

engaged. I expected to find similar results as those found for social media on a broader scale. The results of the survey provide significant evidence of a positive correlation between voter turnout in both midterm and presidential elections and seeing political content on the FYP. As seen in Figures 8, 9 and 10, there was some suggestive evidence that seeing political content on the FYP correlates with voter turnout, but the explicit use of TikTok does not. The results of this survey data cannot show why this is the case. However, the data does provide evidence of a relationship between voting and political content on the FYP. While this suggests that using TikTok would indicate a similar result, i.e., TikTok would be necessary to view political content on the FYP, the data does not support this fact. Due to the small sample size, this could mean that almost everyone who indicated they saw political content on the FYP also voted, which would explain why these results were significant. While most respondents indicated they used TikTok and voted, the tests ran showed there is not a correlation between the two.

There are two important reasons why they could be. First, because such a large percentage of respondents indicated they use TikTok (almost 90%) and voted in the presidential election (78%), there might not be enough data to indicate whether it has any effect. If there were more respondents that did not use TikTok there would have been more data to compare the use of TikTok and voter turnout. Secondly, the last presidential election took place in 2020, 3 years before this survey was released. Respondents could have downloaded TikTok *after* they voted, which could explain why there was no relationship between the two variables.

The results of the survey provide inconclusive evidence that the use of TikTok indicates any type of relationship with voter turnout. Though the data does indicate that political content seen on the FYP is correlated with voter turnout, we cannot say that the data supports H3. A larger sample size that includes more individuals who do not use TikTok would be useful to test this hypothesis in the future.

H4: College-age students using TikTok are likelier to participate in offline political events.

Similarly to H3, this hypothesis was a result of the existing literature. Previous studies show that social media is a very good tool for political mobilization, and I was interested to see whether this carried over to TikTok specifically. The results show that TikTok use is positively associated with offline political participation. However, these results were not quite statistically significant. The reason behind this could be similar to that explained in the previous section. Almost all the respondents reported using TikTok, which makes it difficult to test the relationship between those who use TikTok and those who do not. Those who indicated they say political content on their FYP did have a positive, and statistically significant, correlation with offline political participation. While it cannot be assumed that seeing political content on the FYP causes people to get offline and participate in political events, there is a significant relationship between the two variables.

Seeing political calls to action on TikTok might cause people to act more frequently than those who do not see political content on their FYP, which could be an explanation for this result. Similarly, many protests and petitions are created and organized on social media and TikTok, and with geolocation (the ability for applications to track the physical location of users using cell towers and other software and hardware), local events can be shown on the FYP (Brussels Privacy Hub, 2018). Individuals might take note of a particular protest or petition that they saw on TikTok and choose to participate, while their non-TikTok-using counterparts might not have access to the same information.

The results of the survey data show that there is a positive relationship between TikTok use and offline political participation, however, it is not statistically significant. Therefore, H4

must be rejected. Nevertheless, the evidence provides a positive correlation, and with further testing of a larger sample size, the results could become significant.

The data does show the importance of understanding how political content on TikTok can lead to offline political action. Future research should be conducted to understand further how TikTok can help with political mobilization and offline action. With a larger sample size with broader demographics, the results might give more conclusive and comprehensive evidence to this question.

H5: College-age students who spend 3 or more hours daily on TikTok will have more extreme political beliefs.

I asked if TikTok leads users down the path of political extremism. There was some debate within the field on whether social media can increase political extremism, with some arguing that YouTube specifically can lead users down a politically extreme pipeline (Lewis, 2018) while others find that YouTube actually discourages politically extreme content (Ledwich & Zaitsev, 2019). TikTok is very similar to YouTube in the way that they both use video-based content. However, TikTok uses more short-form video content which leads to this hypothesis.

The results of my survey, as seen in figures 11 and 12, show that spending a large amount of time on TikTok does have positive correlations with extreme political beliefs and, therefore, the data suggest that TikTok can lead users down a path of political extremism. The survey data also indicates that having both political content on the FYP and reporting to have changed one's mind is positively and statistically significantly associated with extreme political beliefs. This means that individuals who changed their minds based on political content they saw on TikTok are positively associated with those who hold more extreme political viewpoints. However, it is

important to note that respondents were not asked if TikTok caused them to change their minds to a less or more extreme view of a certain issue. Nevertheless, the fact that holding extreme beliefs *and* reporting a change of mind have any relationship at all indicates that TikTok could be correlated with an increased degree of extremism in political ideology.

Spending at least 3 hours daily on TikTok showed a positive relationship with holding extreme political beliefs and these results were statistically significant. This suggests that spending a large amount of time on TikTok might lead to users becoming more extreme in their viewpoints. The issue of confirmation bias comes into play in this scenario because users with extreme political viewpoints could be seeking out similar content, helping to maintain their own opinions. Respondents might be looking for extreme content on TikTok, which could mean that TikTok itself is not the causal reason why their beliefs are extreme or become more extreme.

To begin to assess the direction of this relationship, I also investigated the relationship between TikTok use and exposure to extreme content on the app itself. Spending at least 3 hours on TikTok resulted in an association with seeing extreme content on the FYP; these results were not statistically significant. There was a negative relationship between interacting with political content and following political creators and exposure to extreme political content on TikTok. This suggests that spending at least 3 hours on TikTok is more likely the reason why respondents were exposed to extreme content rather than users seeking out extreme political content that matches one's pre-existing political viewpoints. Again, my observational survey data cannot test the causal relationship between these variables, however, the results do provide suggestive evidence in support of H5.

Researchers should understand the implications of these results, as I have found that TikTok does expose users to extreme content, and this might have a causal relationship, though my data cannot confirm this. This may mean that users' political identities can be changed by the

content they see on TikTok, and that change could be towards extremism. Future research should attempt to understand if there is a causal relationship between TikTok and political extremism.

There are a few limitations to this survey data. The results of the survey show that the data represents a major white, woman-identifying, democratic interaction with TikTok and therefore this research cannot assume the results would be the same with a nationally representative population of college students. Due to time constraints during this research, only 229 survey responses that met my inclusion criteria were recorded. The hypothesis would be better tested with a larger sample to obtain more statistical power. All the data analysis was working with observational data therefore the causal effects of the different types of TikTok use on the outcomes I examined cannot be measured. While the possibility of desirability bias might come into play, as I did ask users about the extremity of their political ideologies, the questions were worded in a way to mitigate this issue. Lastly, the survey did not ask when respondents had downloaded TikTok which would have helped me to further understand how TikTok relates to voter turnout.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to understand the relationships between TikTok and political behaviors. Using descriptive survey data, my research fills the gap in the existing literature and aids researchers in better understanding the political implications of TikTok on the behavior of young adults specifically. As the application continues to grow in monthly users, the way TikTok shapes political participation, polarization, and ideologies is important to understand. This study investigated the relationship between TikTok use in young adults and political ideologies,

participation, and polarization. Two means of descriptive data were collected, one through an algorithm audit and the other through an original survey distributed to college students aged 18 to 26. The algorithm audit provided evidence that TikTok feeds users content that they regularly interact with. This has the potential to create echo chambers and possibly increase the level of polarization in the US. One of the most interesting discoveries found while conducting this audit shows that Republican content was encountered at a much higher rate than any other content. While this data cannot prove why this is happening, it does provide new and important information in the field regarding TikTok and political content.

While this study was not able to confidently prove there was a relationship between TikTok use and voter turnout, it was able to state with significant confidence that those who see political content on the FYP are positively related to voter turnout. Even with a small sample size, these findings are statistically significant, which should indicate the importance of this research. Researchers and politicians alike should not turn a blind eye to the effects of TikTok on the young adult population and their voting habits. This study was able to show that using TikTok for large amounts of time daily, specifically 3 hours or more, has a positive relationship with holding extreme political beliefs. While spending this amount of time on TikTok does not confidently prove that users were exposed to extreme political content, the evidence suggests a positive correlation. With a larger sample size, future results might show just how significantly the time spent on TikTok can affect users' political ideologies.

Despite its limitations, this study provides evidence that TikTok influences young adults' experiences with politics, both through political participation and personal ideologies.
It emphasizes the need for more studies concerning TikTok and its political implications. Future studies with larger and more nationally representative sample sizes will provide further insight into the evidence found here. As TikTok continues to grow in popularity, the importance of

studying this social media cannot be understated. There is clear evidence that even at a small level TikTok is associated with voter turnout and extreme ideologies, therefore further exploring these relationships and their casualties would be beneficial.

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Appendix A

- Are you currently enrolled in college/university?
- What year in college are you?
- What category does your major fall into?
- How old are you?
- How do you identify?
- Please select your race
- Are you a US citizen?
- Where is your home located?
- Are you an international student?
- What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Do you have access to a device that connects to the internet?
- How often do you access the internet?
- Do you have Social Media platforms downloaded on your devices?
- Do you have TikTok downloaded on your devices?
- If yes, how often do you access TikTok?
- How much time do you spend on TikTok?
- Which of these main categories of TikTok videos do you interact with the most?
- Do you follow political creators on TikTok (political creators can be defined as candidates, government officials, news reporters who center around politics, and those who make political commentary)?
- How much of your "For You Page" contains political content as defined above?

- How often do you see the following types of content on TikTok? 0 being never and 10 being constantly.
    - News articles about social or political issues
    - Funny or parody videos that reference political or social issues
    - Petitions to raise awareness or encourage political or social change
    - Political memes
    - Campaign advertisements
- Did you vote in the last presidential election?
- In Politics today how would you identify?
- In Politics today what do you consider yourself?
- Do you feel well-represented by current political parties?
- Do you feel like your political viewpoints are:
    - Less extreme than the political party I identify with
    - Similar to the political party I identify with
    - More extreme than the political party I identify with
- Have you learned new information about politics from TikTok?
- Have you ever changed your mind about a political issue or candidate based on what you've seen on TikTok?
- Has TikTok content ever influenced you to participate in a political event? (Fundraising, voting, march/protest etc.)?
- How often do you make political decisions based on content seen on TikTok (i.e. choosing to vote for a candidate because they posted a TikTok that you liked or related to)?
- The political content I see on TikTok is often:

    - Less extreme than my political viewpoints
    - Similar to my political viewpoints
    - More extreme than my political viewpoints
- Have you ever participated in a political event (fundraising, voting, march/protest etc)?
- How frequently do you converse with friends or family about politics?
- Did you vote in the most recent midterm elections?
- How did you vote?
- How often do you self-censor your political views In person? 1=never

  2=rarely 3=occasionally 4=often 5=very often
- How often do you self-censor your political views Online? 1=never

  2=rarely 3=occasionally 4=often 5=very often
- Have you seen content on TikTok from any of these groups?

Appendix B

Figure 13B: Bivariate Correlation With Political Participation

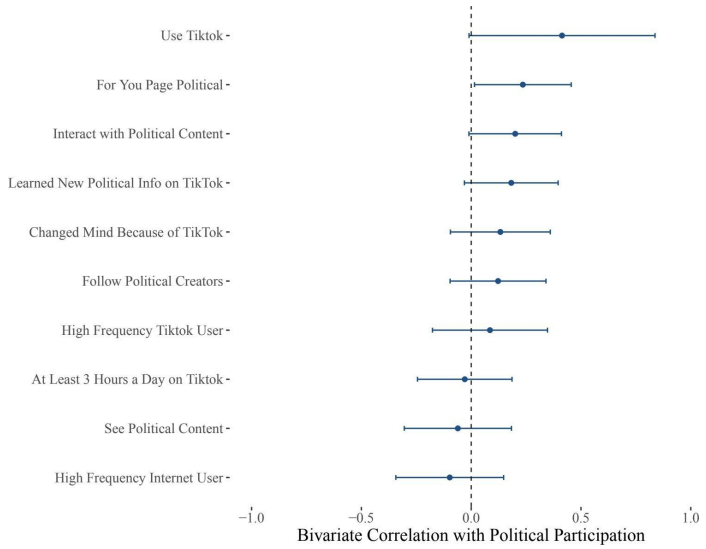

Figure 14B: Bivariate Correlation With Democratic Partisanship

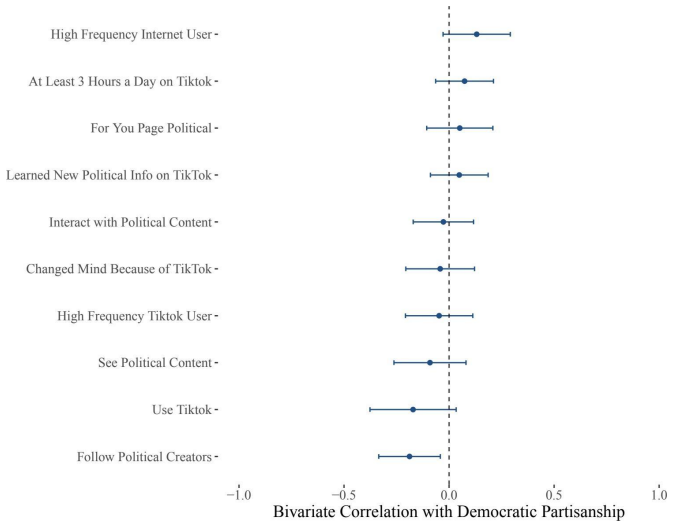

Figure 15B: Bivariate Correlation With Frequent Political Conversations

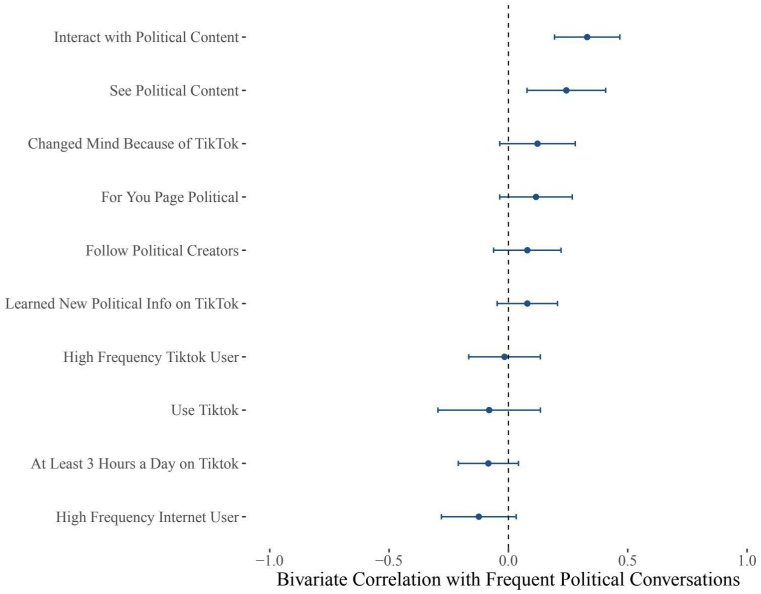

Figure 16B: Bivariate Correlation with Republican Partisanship

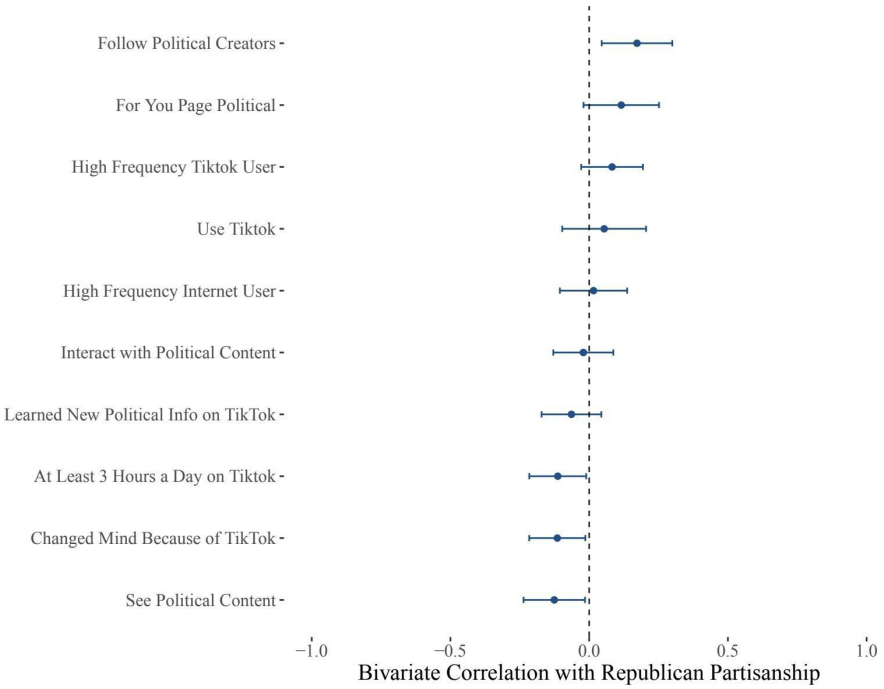

Figure 17B: Bivariate Correlation with Unrepresented Political Beliefs

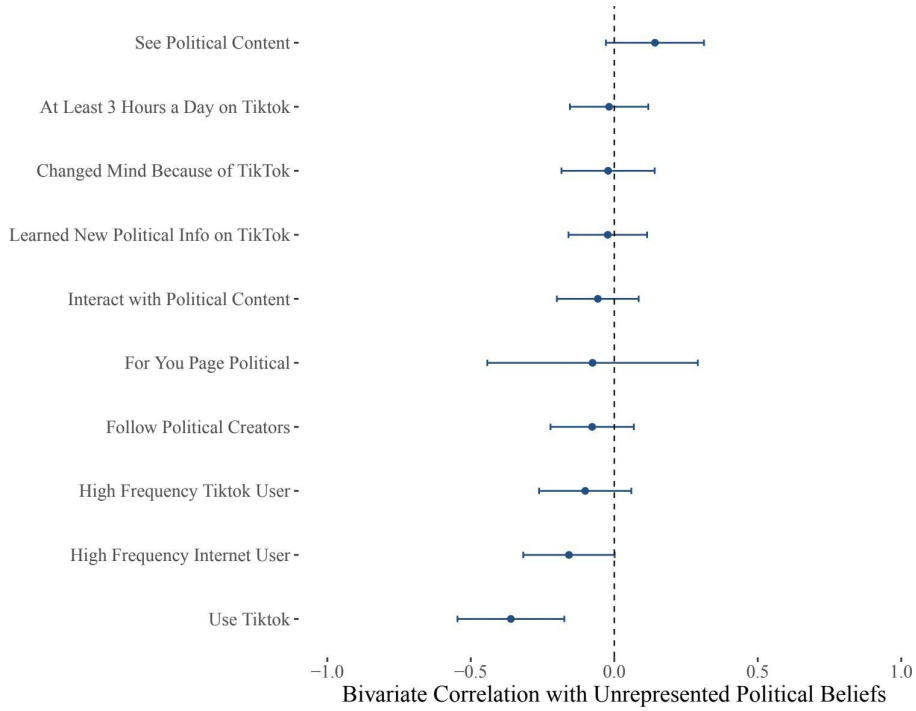

Figure 18B: Percentage of TikTok Content Interacted With

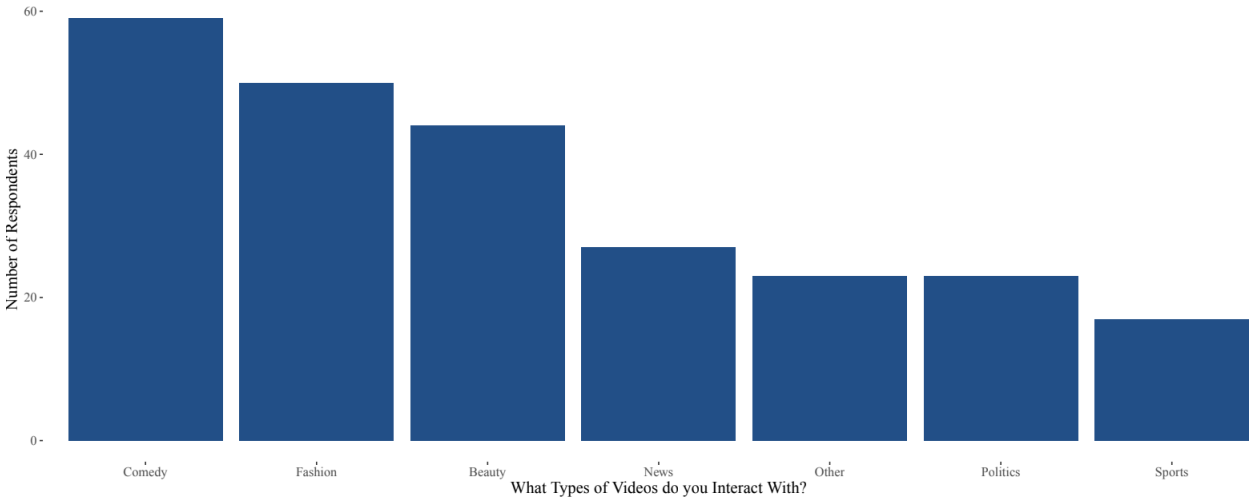

Figure 19B: Percentage of Internet Use

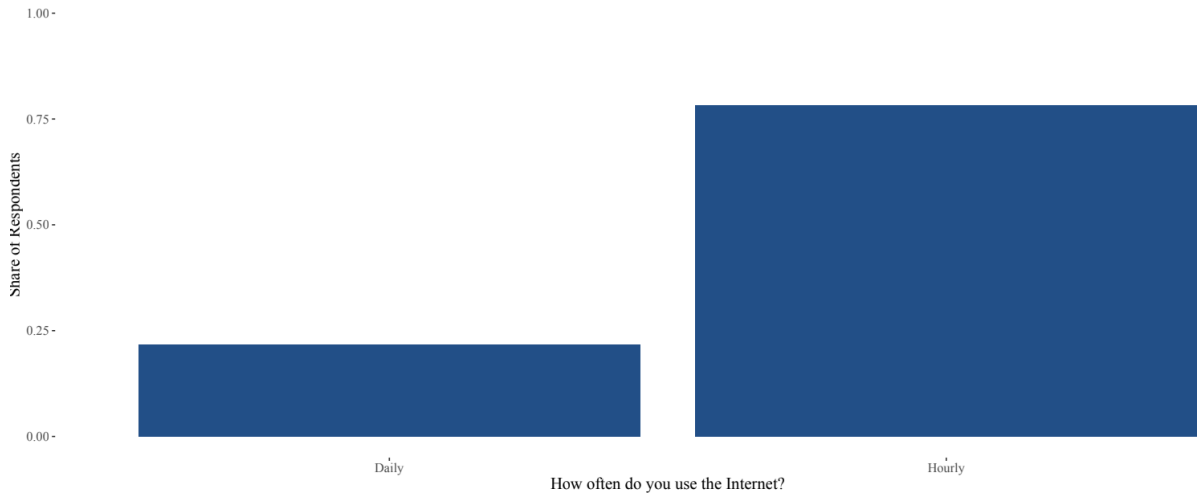

Figure 20B: Percentages of Respondent's Majors

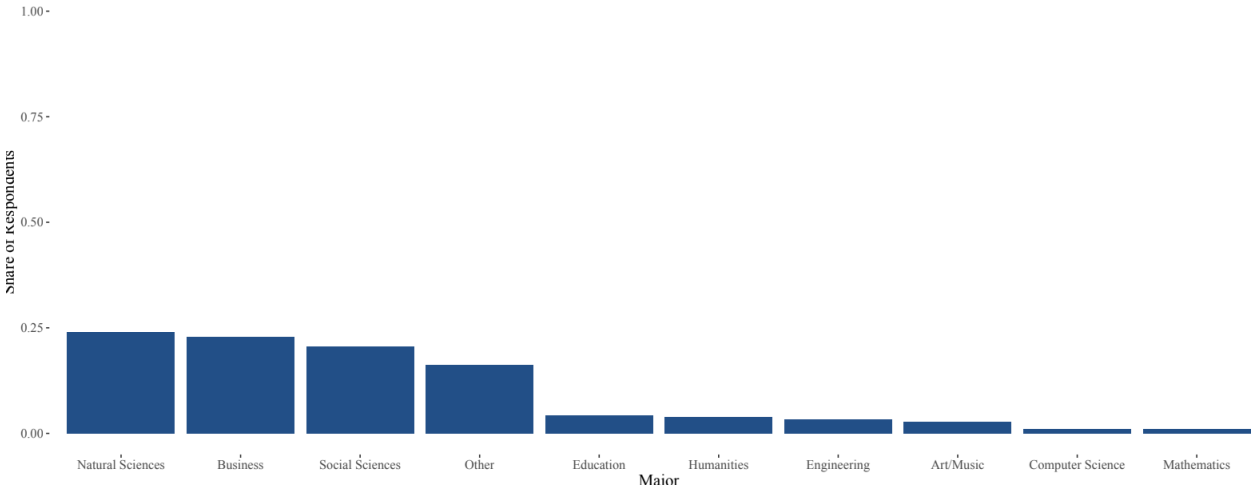

Figure 21B: How TikTok Content Compares to Respondent's Political Viewpoints

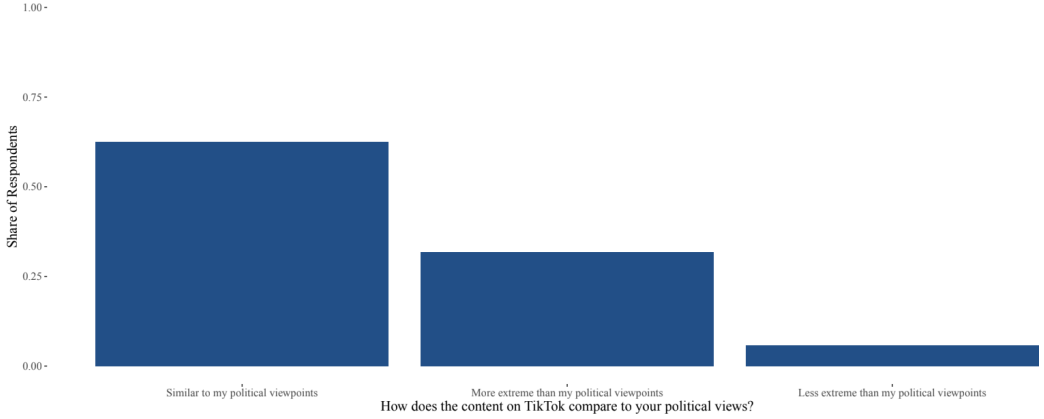

Figure 22B: Content Interacted with on TikTok

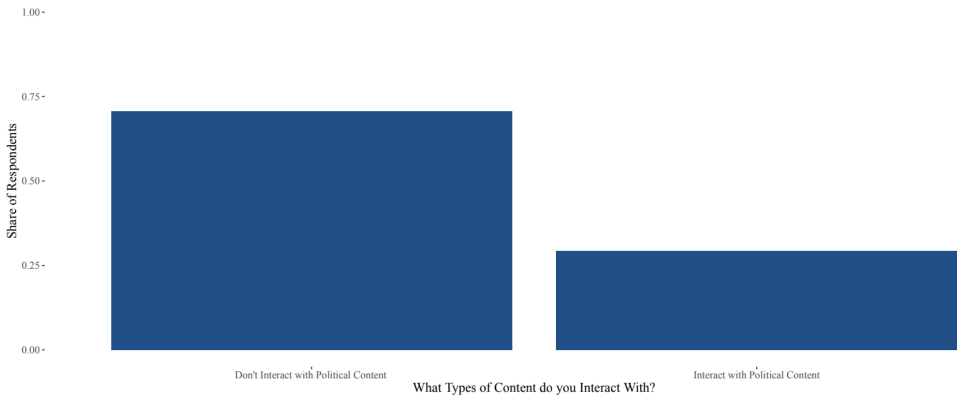

Figure 23B: Frequency of TikTok Use

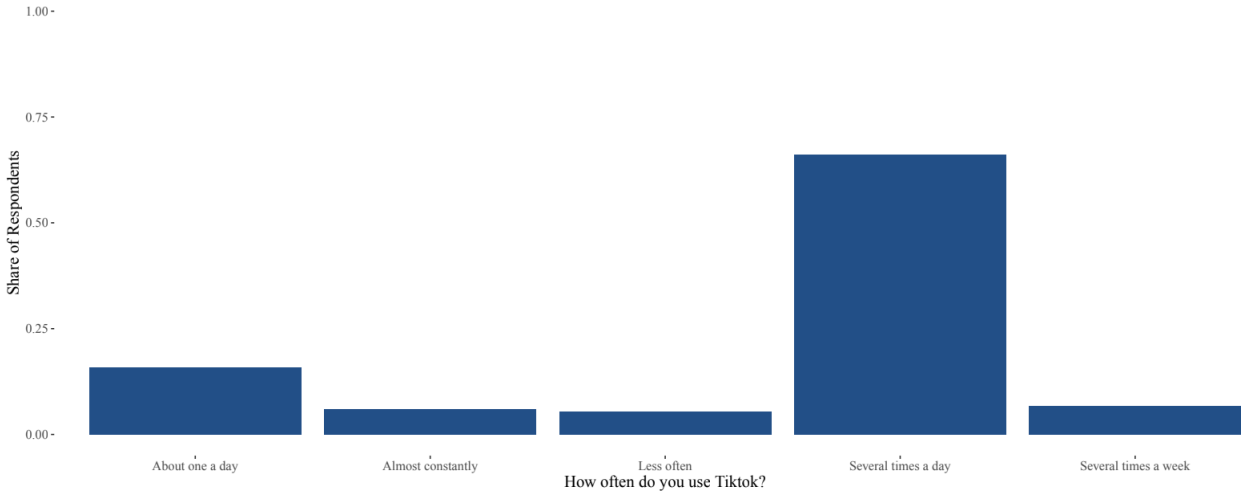

Figure 24B: Percentage of Respondents who Follow Political Creators on TikTok

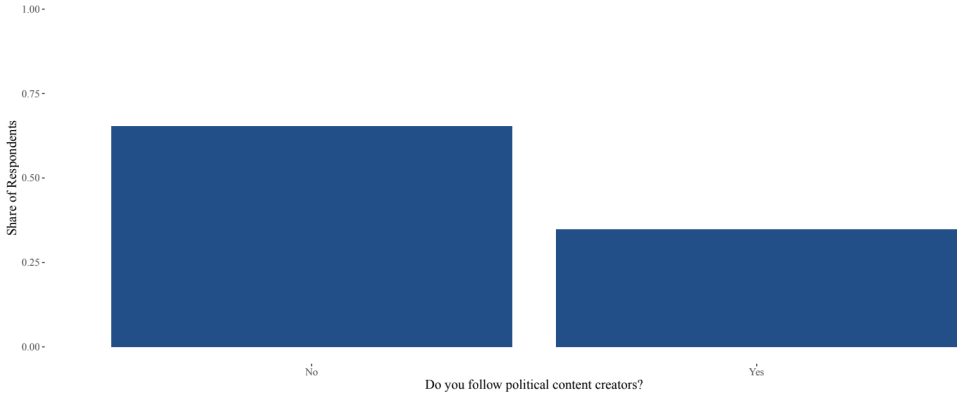

Figure 25B: Percentage of TikTok FYP that Contains Political Content

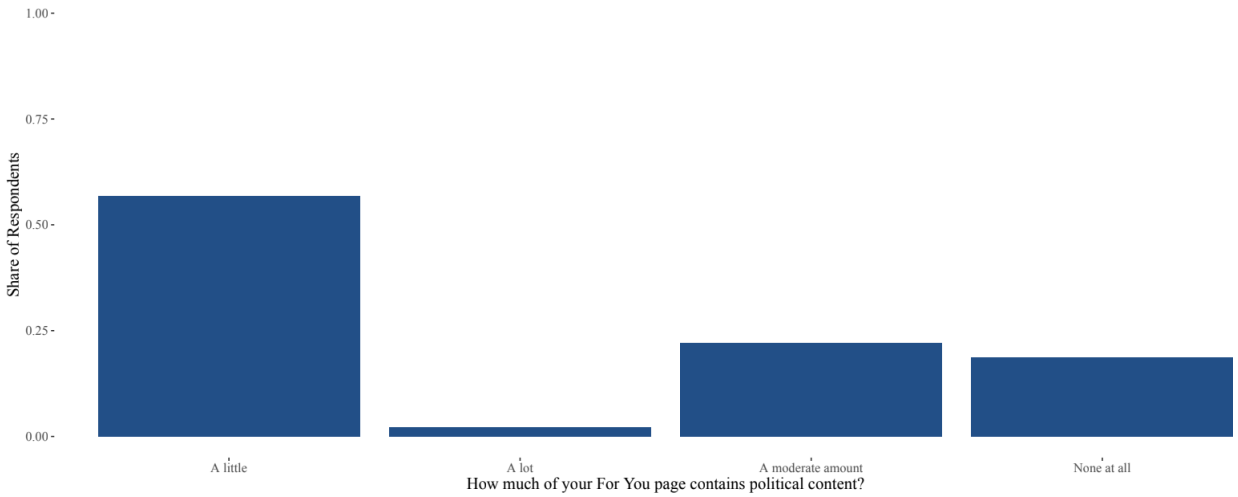

Figure 26B: Percentage of Respondents who Use TikTok

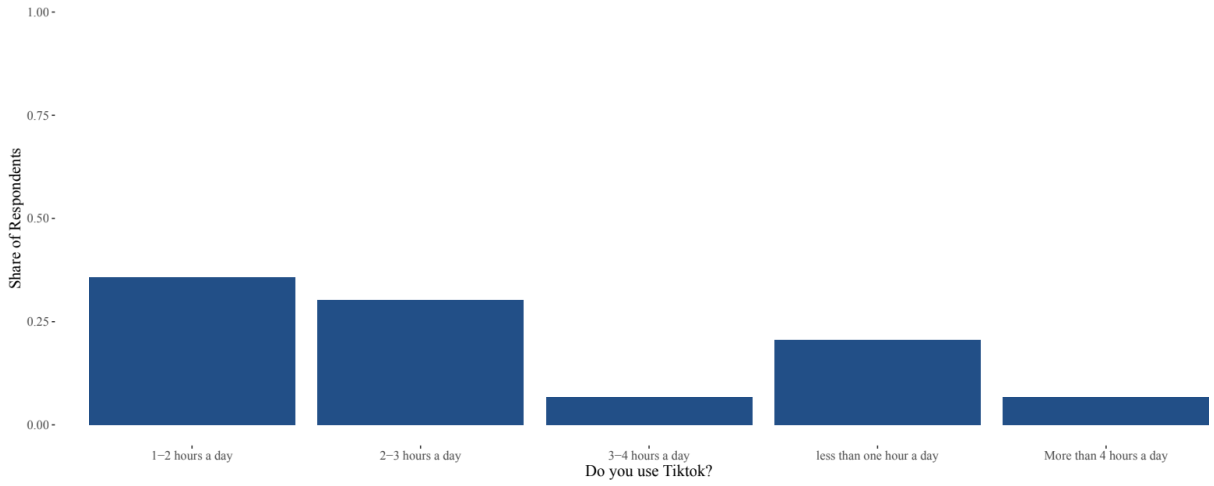

Figure 27B: Percentage of Respondents who Voted in the Midterm Election

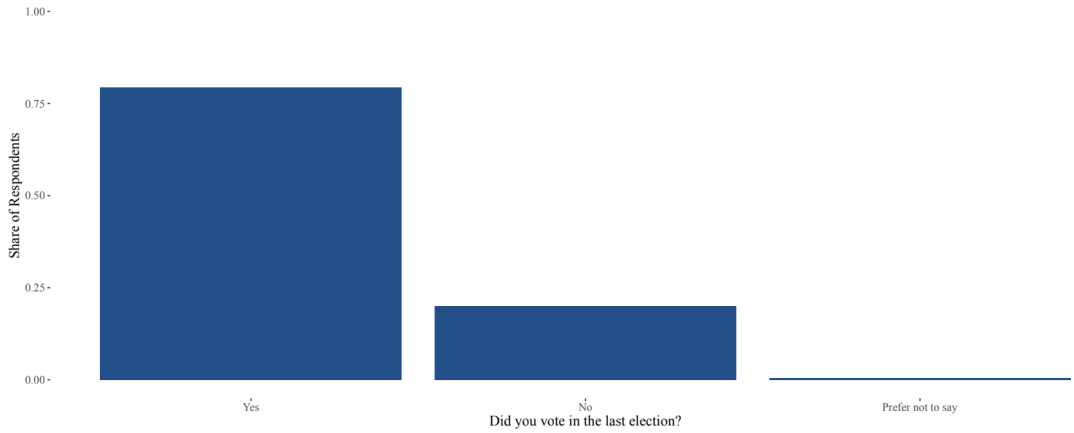

Figure 28B: Respondents Year in College

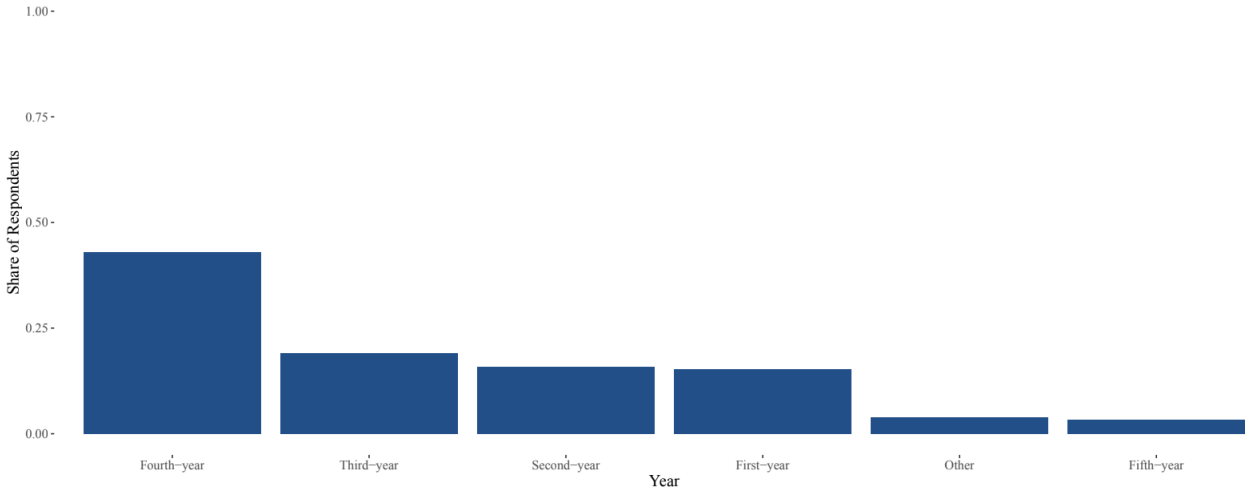

Table 2B: Content Type

46	Sports
117	Beauty
132	Fashion
155	Comedy
74	News
67	Politics
54	Other

Table 3B: Gender

Man	0.171806167
Nonbinary	0.022026432
Other	0.004405286
Prefer not to say	0.004405286
Woman	0.797356828

Table 4B: Internet Use

Daily	0.209607
Hourly	0.790393

Table 5B: Majors

Art/Music	0.048034934
Business	0.248908297
Computer Science	0.008733624
Education	0.043668122
Engineering	0.034934498
Humanities	0.030567686
Mathematics	0.008733624
Natural Sciences	0.227074236
Other	0.165938865
Social Sciences	0.183406114

Table 6B: Partisanship

Democrat	0.54148472
Independent	0.19213974
Not sure	0.04366812
Other	0.02620087
Prefer not to say	0.01746725
Republican	0.17903930

Table 7B: Political Content

Don't Interact with Political Content	0.7074236
Interact with Political Content	0.2925764

Table 8B: Political Creators

No	0.7
Yes	0.3

Table 9B: Political FYP

A little	0.6199095
A lot	0.0361991
A moderate amount	0.1945701
None at all	0.1493213

Table 10B: Race

American Indian or Alaska Native	0.013100437
Asian	0.004366812
Black or African American	0.008733624
Latinx or Hispanic	0.039301310
Other	0.008733624
Two or more	0.117903930
White	0.807860262

Table 11B: Bivariate Correlation Table Voting Presidential

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	-0.102693603	0.06396196	-1.60554192	1.097710e-01	-0.2287317	0.023344472	226	vote_numeric
Follow Political Creators	-0.087084149	0.06625259	-1.31442626	1.901573e-01	-0.2177005	0.043532203	207	vote_numeric
For You Page Political	0.221698113	0.02859656	7.75261442	3.398705e-13	0.1653370	0.278059236	218	vote_numeric
Use Tiktok	-0.045599152	0.08584968	-0.53115108	5.958357e-01	-0.2147673	0.123569041	226	vote_numeric
See Political Content	-0.006769826	0.07421787	-0.09121558	9.274391e-01	-0.1533788	0.139839196	155	vote_numeric
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	-0.114574713	0.05518011	-2.07637716	3.907623e-02	-0.2233526	-0.005796801	210	vote_numeric
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	-0.102606068	0.07404025	-1.38581467	1.672459e-01	-0.2485476	0.043335507	214	vote_numeric
High Frequency Tiktok User	-0.114777070	0.06061543	-1.89352882	5.969597e-02	-0.2342867	0.004732531	205	vote_numeric
High Frequency Internet User	-0.008333333	0.06676324	-0.12481920	9.007776e-01	-0.1398914	0.123224706	226	vote_numeric
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	-0.119565217	0.05948779	-2.00991185	4.575130e-02	-0.2368516	-0.002278879	205	vote_numeric

Table 12B: Bivariate Correlation Voting Midterm

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	0.161654874	0.06352829	2.5446125	1.162212e-02	0.03645610	0.28685365	221	vote_midterms
Follow Political Creators	0.027281170	0.07301933	0.3736157	7.090801e-01	-0.11669241	0.17125475	203	vote_midterms
For You Page Political	0.336538462	0.03284279	10.2469508	2.740266e-20	0.27179994	0.40127698	213	vote_midterms
Use Tiktok	-0.201944821	0.08202017	-2.4621362	1.457625e-02	-0.36358658	-0.04030307	221	vote_midterms
See Political Content	-0.040740741	0.08499165	-0.4793499	6.323832e-01	-0.20866714	0.12718566	151	vote_midterms
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	0.091917743	0.06680748	1.3758601	1.703589e-01	-0.03979631	0.22363180	206	vote_midterms
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	-0.009980040	0.07980321	-0.1250581	9.005972e-01	-0.16729809	0.14733801	210	vote_midterms
High Frequency Internet User	-0.060595238	0.07399478	-0.8189123	4.137186e-01	-0.20642092	0.08523044	221	vote_midterms
High Frequency Tiktok User	0.079738562	0.07956228	1.0022156	3.174445e-01	-0.07714525	0.23662238	201	vote_midterms
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	-0.008161259	0.06730479	-0.1212582	9.036077e-01	-0.14087530	0.12455279	201	vote_midterms

Table 13B: Bivariate Correlation Extreme Political Beliefs

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	0.116117526	0.06416043	1.8097997	0.071667136	-0.010317718	0.24255277	224	political_beliefs_extreme
Follow Political Creators	0.113300493	0.06544099	1.7313383	0.084888617	-0.015719472	0.24232046	206	political_beliefs_extreme
For You Page Political	0.147058824	0.07167779	2.0516650	0.041402985	0.005785024	0.28833262	217	political_beliefs_extreme
Use Tiktok	-0.162655971	0.10867545	-1.4967131	0.135875608	-0.376813010	0.05150107	224	political_beliefs_extreme
See Political Content	0.025462963	0.07262550	0.3506064	0.726362797	-0.118007844	0.16893377	154	political_beliefs_extreme
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	0.077209302	0.05544708	1.3924865	0.165254818	-0.032097923	0.18651653	209	political_beliefs_extreme
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	0.222264438	0.07710242	2.8827167	0.004346691	0.070282931	0.37424594	213	political_beliefs_extreme
High Frequency Tiktok User	-0.005801688	0.06736396	-0.0861245	0.931451915	-0.138620576	0.12701720	204	political_beliefs_extreme
High Frequency Internet User	-0.075478426	0.07247365	-1.0414603	0.298784735	-0.218295795	0.06733894	224	political_beliefs_extreme
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	0.131226054	0.05780769	2.2700448	0.024250008	0.017248883	0.24520322	204	political_beliefs_extreme

Table 14B: Bivariate Correlation on Unrepresented Political Beliefs

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	-0.05739819	0.07235182	-0.7933207	0.428419438	-0.1999652	0.085168859	227	unrepresented
Follow Political Creators	-0.07709751	0.07367550	-1.0464469	0.296569251	-0.2223439	0.068148937	208	unrepresented
For You Page Political	-0.07570423	0.18614490	-0.4066951	0.684629093	-0.4425689	0.291160459	219	unrepresented
Use Tiktok	-0.36027860	0.09446360	-3.8139409	0.000176297	-0.5464162	-0.174140949	227	unrepresented
See Political Content	0.14166667	0.08651038	1.6375685	0.103527317	-0.0292162	0.312549533	156	unrepresented
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	-0.02254545	0.06948851	-0.3244487	0.745919809	-0.1595261	0.114435212	211	unrepresented
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	-0.02152691	0.08232213	-0.2614960	0.793960369	-0.1837887	0.140734886	215	unrepresented
High Frequency Internet User	-0.15791897	0.08080457	-1.9543322	0.051889857	-0.31 -0.1837887	0.001303967	227	unrepresented
High Frequency Tiktok User	-0.10126582	0.08141917	-1.2437590	0.215001738	-0.2617875	0.059255862	206	unrepresented
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	-0.01799100	0.06925832	-0.2597667	0.795303170	-0.1545370	0.118554999	206	unrepresented

Table 15B: Bivariate Correlations Political Events

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	0.20047909	0.1069187	1.8750605	0.06206836	-0.010201007	0.4111592	227	political_event
Follow Political Creators	0.12244898	0.1107111	1.1060226	0.26999430	-0.095810712	0.3407087	208	political_event
For You Page Political	0.23529412	0.1117748	2.1050734	0.03642473	0.015002190	0.4555860	219	political_event
Use Tiktok	0.41367666	0.2149289	1.9247140	0.05551509	-0.009834187	0.8371875	227	political_event
See Political Content	-0.06060606	0.1235135	-0.4906836	0.62433974	-0.304580772	0.1833687	156	political_event
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	0.18254545	0.1083323	1.6850505	0.09345722	-0.031006895	0.3960978	211	political_event
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	0.13291615	0.1153981	1.1518055	0.25068021	-0.094540305	0.3603726	215	political_event
High Frequency Tiktok User	0.08556962	0.1328249	0.6442290	0.52014362	-0.176300774	0.3474400	206	political_event
High Frequency Internet User	-0.09760589	0.1245610	-0.7835991	0.43409218	-0.343049546	0.1478378	227	political_event
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	-0.02923538	0.1091991	-0.2677254	0.78917853	-0.244526540	0.1860558	206	political_event

Table 16B: Bivariate Correlations Frequent Political Conversation

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	0.33001658	0.06942672	4.7534521	3.550860e-06	0.19321335	0.46681982	227	political_conversation_often
Follow Political Creators	0.07936508	0.07166918	1.1073809	2.694083e-01	-0.06192603	0.22065618	208	political_conversation_often
For You Page Political	0.11568627	0.07714294	1.4996352	1.351491e-01	-0.03635131	0.26772386	219	political_conversation_often
Use Tiktok	-0.08062474	0.10895538	-0.7399794	4.600771e-01	-0.29531799	0.13406852	227	political_conversation_often
See Political Content	0.24280303	0.08346161	2.9091584	4.153739e-03	0.07794236	0.40766370	156	political_conversation_often
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	0.07927273	0.06418205	1.2351230	2.181583e-01	-0.04724747	0.20579292	211	political_conversation_often
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	0.12190238	0.08021528	1.5196902	1.300581e-01	-0.03620669	0.28001144	215	political_conversation_often
High Frequency Tiktok User	-0.01620253	0.07607877	-0.2129705	8.315606e-01	-0.16619538	0.13379031	206	political_conversation_often
High Frequency Internet User	-0.12384899	0.07950984	-1.5576562	1.207078e-01	-0.28052070	0.03282272	227	political_conversation_often
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	-0.08395802	0.06390148	-1.3138666	1.903524e-01	-0.20994277	0.04202673	206	political_conversation_often

Table 17B: Bivariate Correlations Democrat

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	-0.02699466	0.07292416	-0.3701744	0.71159769	-0.17068948	0.11670017	227	democrat
Follow Political Creators	-0.18820862	0.07431936	-2.5324305	0.01206566	-0.33472438	-0.04169285	208	democrat
For You Page Political	0.05098039	0.07989526	0.6380903	0.52408154	-0.10648161	0.20844240	219	democrat
Use Tiktok	-0.17138033	0.10411669	-1.6460409	0.10113914	-0.37653909	0.03377843	227	democrat
See Political Content	-0.09090909	0.08681536	-1.0471545	0.29664805	-0.26239438	0.08057620	156	democrat
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	0.04863636	0.06970779	0.6977178	0.48612183	-0.08877655	0.18604928	211	democ
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	-0.04230288	0.08303630	-0.5094504	0.61095905	-0.20597234	0.12136659	215	democrat
High Frequency Tiktok User	-0.04734177	0.08136281	-0.5818601	0.56129715	-0.20775236	0.11306881	206	democrat
High Frequency Internet User	0.13156077	0.08123072	1.6195939	0.10670795	-0.02850188	0.29162343	227	democrat
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	0.07383808	0.06981246	1.0576633	0.29144765	-0.06380045	0.21147661	206	democrat

Table 18B: Bivariate Correlations Republican

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	-0.02100608	0.05492150	-0.3824746	0.70246722	-0.12922723	0.08721507	227	republican
Follow Political Creators	0.17233560	0.06456127	2.6693341	0.00820010	0.04505727	0.29961393	208	republican
For You Page Political	0.11568627	0.06909130	1.6743971	0.09548003	-0.02048269	0.25185523	219	republican
Use Tiktok	0.05403124	0.07674223	0.7040613	0.48211621	-0.09718699	0.20524947	227	republican
See Political Content	-0.12575758	0.05605773	-2.2433584	0.02628192	-0.23648771	-0.01502745	156	republican
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	-0.06390909	0.05463857	-1.1696700	0.24345336	-0.17161649	0.04379831	211	republican
Changed Mind Because of TikTok	-0.11489362	0.05137534	-2.2363572	0.02635542	-0.21615745	-0.01362978	215	republican
High Frequency Tiktok User	0.08253165	0.05642557	1.4626640	0.14508332	-0.02871399	0.19377728	206	republican
High Frequency Internet User	0.01565378	0.06150856	0.2544975	0.79934163	-0.10554697	0.13685452	227	republican
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	-0.11319340	0.05205472	-2.1745080	0.03080635	-0.21582171	-0.01056510	206	republican

Table 19B: Bivariate Correlations Extreme Political Content on TikTok

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	df	outcome
Interact with Political Content	-0.25471978	0.05940612	-4.2877697	2.720483e-05	-0.37180969	-0.13762986	216	tiktok_extreme_dummy
Follow Political Creators	-0.29082409	0.05886934	-4.9401622	1.607155e-06	-0.40688443	-0.17476375	207	tiktok_extreme_dummy
For You Page Political	-0.03315508	0.07412638	-0.4472777	6.551269e-01	-0.17926642	0.11295626	214	tiktok_extreme_dummy
See Political Content	-0.13712121	0.07472360	-1.8350455	6.840351e-02	-0.28472181	0.01047939	156	tiktok_extreme_dummy
Learned New Political Info on TikTok	-0.11429382	0.06735172	-1.6969694	9.120549e-02	-0.24707710	0.01848946	207	tiktok_extreme_dummy
High Frequency Tiktok User	-0.03721519	0.07806641	-0.4767119	6.340725e-01	-0.19112676	0.11669638	206	tiktok_extreme_dummy
High Frequency Internet User	0.03787879	0.07826544	0.4839785	6.288915e-01	-0.11638297	0.19214055	216	tiktok_extreme_dummy
At Least 3 Hours a Day on Tiktok	0.06784108	0.06627482	1.0236327	3.072093e-01	-0.06282283	0.19850499	206	tiktok_extreme_dummy

Table 20B: States

California	0.251101322
Colorado	0.506607930
Georgia	0.013215859
Idaho	0.013215859
Illinois	0.026431718
Kansas	0.008810573
Maryland	0.008810573
Massachusetts	0.017621145
Michigan	0.013215859
Minnesota	0.008810573
Nevada	0.017621145
New Hampshire	0.017621145
New Jersey	0.008810573
New Mexico	0.013215859
New York	0.008810573
Ohio	0.008810573
Pennsylvania	0.008810573
Texas	0.013215859
Utah	0.008810573
Vermont	0.004405286
Virginia	0.004405286
Washington	0.017621145

Table 21B: TiTok Extreme Content

Less extreme than my political viewpoints	0.0733945
More extreme than my political viewpoints	0.3256881
Similar to my political viewpoints	0.6009174

Table 22B: TiTok Frequency

About one a day	0.13461538
Almost constantly	0.07692308
Less often	0.04326923
Several times a day	0.68269231
Several times a week	0.06250000

Table 23B: Time Spent on TikTok

1-2 hours a day	0.37500000
2-3 hours a day	0.27884615
3-4 hours a day	0.09134615
less than one hour a day	0.18269231
More than 4 hours a day	0.07211538

Table 24B: TikTok Use

No	0.1004367
Yes	0.8995633

Table 25B: Voting In Presidential Election

No	0.213973799
Prefer not to say	0.004366812
Yes	0.781659389

Table 26B: Year

Fifth-year	0.02620087
First-year	0.14847162
Fourth-year	0.45414847
Other	0.03056769
Second-year	0.13537118
Third-year	0.20524017