

Turn Out the Vote: How Musicians Mobilize on Social Media

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Graduate Program in Arts Administration, Education and Policy

The Ohio State University

2023

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Abstract

This research aims to connect the studies of arts engagement to civic engagement and investigate social media's role in elections. A mixed methods approach is used in this research. The quantitative portion is conducted as a survey of the Ohio State University student body, while the qualitative portion analyzes select musicians' Instagram posts to examine the relationship between musicians' postings and their effects on voting in 2022. Through these two methods, the question of musicians' social media use impacting voter turnout in the 2022 midterm elections can be answered. Also, this work explores if musicians posting on social media can be viewed as a method of voter engagement. There was a total of seventy-seven (77) survey participants and a selection of seven (7) musicians' Instagram posts. The findings suggest that musicians' postings may contribute to an increase in voter turnout, and their posts may be a viable method of voter engagement. There would need to be continued research into this intersection of artists' posting on social media and voter turnout to better determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between musicians' posting and voter turnout in an election cycle.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my Advisor, Dr. Rachel Skaggs, for supporting my endeavors in this research and providing me guidance during this process. Thank you to Dr. Christine Ballengee Morris for her support and wealth of knowledge in and outside of the classroom, and for her insightful questions.

Thank you to the Ohio State University participants for sharing their time to participate in this study. There has been wonderful insight and how this study can continue and grow.

Thank you to my family, partner, and peers. The support is unconditional in ways that I will always appreciate.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Existing research has shown that there are relationships between the arts and politics, and social media and voting. The relationship between the arts and politics stems from art coinciding with social movements, and how arts participation encourages civic engagement (Rabkin, 2017). Social media and voting have an established relationship as well, with more recent research demonstrating how social media hosts political information and has become a resource for individuals to gain knowledge about elections and candidates (Rohlinger & Earl, 2017). The research in these respective fields has shown how the arts lead to civic engagement and how social media impacts recent elections, but there is a gap in combining how artists, like musicians, use social media to impact elections.

The right to vote in the United States has been political, where voting began with only wealthy, white, land-owning men. There were civic rights movements to give populations like African Americans and women the right to vote much later in American history (“The Right to Vote”, 2023). Now, voting eligibility is given to American citizens over the age of 18, and the focus is on motivating people to vote (“Who Can and Can’t Vote”, 2023). With the rise of social media, there are efforts to mobilize people to vote on social media platforms like Instagram. Various people are posting to attempt to mobilize people to vote. These groups range from musicians, actors, personal friends and

family, and candidates themselves. Musicians use social media to either promote themselves, their music, or bring awareness to issues they care about (“Social Media’s Critical Role”, 2021). As musicians post online more frequently about social issues in the United States, there are more potential voters who see those posts.

As I browse my own social media platforms, I have noticed a pattern of increased social media posts about voter turnout and social issues from various musicians and actors. I remember seeing rock bands like Death Cab for Cutie and Franz Ferdinand collaborating on an entire album and promoting that album on Instagram that was to compel their fan base to listen to the album and vote against Donald Trump in 2016 (Death Cab for Cutie, 2016). I also recall Taylor Swift posting her first political Instagram post in 2018, telling her Tennessee fan base to vote against Marsha Blackburn in the 2018 midterm elections (Taylor Swift, 2018). These posts were formative in my Instagram feed as that is when I started to notice musicians and actors post more political leaning posts and speak about issues happening in the United States on platforms that engage with their audiences directly. These posts are especially prominent around election years as many musicians and actors are trying to get out the vote to their audiences. Also, I noticed various literature about voting behaviors and voter motivations in social media, but a lack in the crossover with artists despite artists’ prominence. With the 2022 midterm elections occurring during the design of this research study, it motivated me to focus on the 2022 midterms and the question whether musicians using social media were able to impact voter turnout.

To conduct this research, I have used a mixed methods approach. The quantitative methods were implemented by distributing surveys to Ohio State campus students and inquiring about their social media use, voting history, and their engagement with musicians on social media. This method also granted me a way to analyze their responses subjectively and objectively. By asking participants if they felt they were influenced to vote from four methods of voter engagement: television ads, online ads, musicians on social media, and actors on social media, I am able to see their subjective opinion. To objectively analyze their responses, I view the intersection between participants who are registered to vote across the four voter engagement methods and participants who voted in 2022 across the four voter engagement methods. The qualitative methods come from word mapping and analyzing sentiments from Instagram comments posted by musicians. The word map shows the frequency of specific words, and the sentiment analysis describes the overall tones of comment sections. I hypothesize that musicians that posted on social media during the 2022 midterm elections impacted voter turnout and use these two methods to adjudicate that hypothesis. The research questions ask:

1. Do musicians' posts on social media impact voter turnout in the 2022 midterm elections?
 - a. I hypothesize that musicians who posted on social media did impact voter turnout in the 2022 midterm elections.
2. How does that method of voter engagement compare to others, such as television ads, online ads, and actors on social media?

- a. I hypothesize that musicians who posted on social media impacted voter turnout at a similar level as actors who posted on social media, but less so than television ads or online ads.

The objectives of my research are to discover if musicians posting on social media is an effective method of voter engagement and if that appeals to the young adult voting demographic. The study's findings have the potential to reveal voter motivation among young adults and if that motivation comes from musicians on social media.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The literature review covers three key subsections that give further information to my research study, examining whether musicians impact voter turnout through social media. The first subsection describes topics that relate to how engaging in the arts leads to civic engagement in a person's community. This type of artistic engagement includes arts in a social setting (like classes, galleries) and people engaging with celebrities who create. The second subsection describes the motivations and influences on why people vote. This includes demographic factors, the definition of voter turnout, and other psychological factors that impact an individual's decision. The third subsection ties together the first and second subjects through a social media lens. This area describes how social media has acted as a catalyst to change peoples' behaviors and how social media impacts modern elections. All three subjects are key to provide further information about my research question, whether musicians influence voter turnout through social media.

Subsection 1: Engagement in the Arts & Civic Engagement

The scholarly understanding of the role of art in society stems from Adorno's aesthetics theory, based on how art serves a social situation to find a solution to an artist's problem (Hamilton, 2017). The role of art in society, for instance, could be to create

momentum for social movements. People were more likely to care about the social movements of the mid-1900's, as compared to other time periods in the United States, due to the increase of art movements that coincided with political movements, such as American Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art (Hefka, 2020). Those art movements demonstrated new perspectives for people to connect, and were promoted through traditional media sources, such as television, radio, and newspapers, for people to access the art. Also, the arts' role in society as a function is through the level of funding and support which it receives from that society. Some of the arts are funded in the United States through direct public funding, such as through the federal arts agency, National Endowment for the Arts, and state, regional and local arts agencies. There are also other sources of public funding that are direct and indirect through other federal agencies and programs that fund the arts, such as the National Endowment for Humanities and the National Park Service ("National Endowment for the Arts", 2012). There are characteristics associated with strong opposition or support for public art funded by the government. These include political ideology, ability to donate to the arts individually, region, and demographics (such as gender, race, income, education, and religion) (Brooks, 2001). These factors determined that individuals with higher incomes are less likely to oppose funding for the arts, self-described conservatives opposed arts funding, and self-described liberals supported arts funding. There were also relationships between men and opposing arts funding, private donations to the arts showed some support for arts funding as did living in the Midwest (Brooks, 2001). These relationships are important to note as they describe the factors of people who are more likely to oppose

arts funding and who would support arts funding. Demographics and political factors further determine approval for governmental funding for the arts (Jacobsmeier, 2020). Trends indicate that Republicans were in favor of less governmental funding for the arts as opposed to Democrats who do support governmental funding for the arts. There are trends that also indicate higher educational attainment and participation in arts activities support government funding for the arts (Jacobsmeier, 2020).

The role of art in society also supports social connectedness. In the United Kingdom, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers discovered that arts and cultural engagement online created social opportunities and feelings of commonality and belonging. Using arts as a vehicle to connect with others during a time of social distancing showed the importance of accessible arts for communities. Arts' use in society brings people together, connecting people with common interests and feeling part of a collective experience (Perkins, et. al., 2022). It is propelled by the theory of collective effervescence which states that through moments in societal life, a group of individuals that make up a society come together to perform a shared experience (Durkheim, 1915). Through this collective effervescence, people who experience the arts together share that collective experience. Across these studies, there are common themes. These commonalities demonstrate how art evokes a reaction to the society it serves. Whether it is through governmental funding or through emotional connectedness, art has a role in society to evoke a response from individuals and community groups alike to engage in a type of change. With those themes in mind, the topic of arts' role in society

refers to my research question as it pertains to how people view art in modern society in relation to how it solicits a response from people politically.

Art also impacts people's critical thinking skills, which leads to decision-making, wherein the art engaged in affects people's learning and comprehension processes (Tyler & Likova, 2012). Critical thinking is described as the process of actively conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, and evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, or reflection as a guide to belief and action ("What is Critical Thinking?", 2003). Critical thinking is important to the voting process as it guides a persons' decision-making process to vote. With the arts, visual art enhances the learning process, where art practices have demonstrated that those who had art education in some forms have enhanced their learning (scientifically and socially) (Tyler & Likova, 2012). Visual art learning focuses on cognitive and motor functions, as well as abstract ideas like ambiguity and uncertainty. This type of teaching helps students in other academic disciplines. For instance, drawing processes may enhance writing skills and understanding ambiguities and contradictions may help in navigating scientific fields (Tyler & Likova, 2012). The use of field trips to art museums in American public education improves on students' critical thinking skills about art. Engaging in art at the K-12 level allows for an increase in other skills such as observation and attention to detail, and these skills are transferrable to other disciplines (Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014). Music education in school settings also has strong trends towards critical thinking, where music is taught in open learning environments with no correct answer and students reflect on their own experiences to relate to that environment (Kokkidou, 2012). The

open approach to education promotes critical thinking and links to engagement in music at some level. Having arts education as a part of a person's learning process, art influences people's critical thinking through educational settings that transfer to other disciplines of education and other areas of a person's life as well. The topic of critical thinking provides a background for individual choice, about voting, and how art may shape a person's decision-making process. It is important for voters to be critical thinkers as that type of thinking determines a belief or action through different means of analysis on candidates and issues presented on the ballots.

Though art can shape critical thinking skills, it also can be used by governments to promote propaganda pieces to its citizens to believe in a particular value or ideology. Firstly, posters during wartime had an appeal to patriotism of citizens which were used by governments to convince citizens to be completely loyal to the state and convey national archetypes of representatives of the nation. The effect of posters was positive in how people reacted to war efforts on the home front (Chambers, 1983). Totalitarian and democratic propaganda were both used to reinforce power structures in place. Art used for these propaganda pieces were to appear positive and celebrating culture but have hidden messaging of the state (Staal, 2014). Since the posters, propaganda from the 1940's to the 1970's has seen a shift where the propaganda has taken place in the media. Television creates a contrived "reality" and "intimacy", and newspapers were no longer competing in a local market as the chain of control expands. The integration of all communications media in 1979 was focused on profits and sensationalism (Lee, 1979). These studies demonstrated how art is used as propaganda, both historically and

currently. Art used by the state affects how citizens react to their domestic politics. As this relates to my research, musicians' posts on social media could be viewed as propaganda by politicians. There are different campaigns that have used musicians to push a social issue or cause. For example, MTV's Rock the Vote collaborated with musicians to promote voter turnout. This is impactful as these connect musicians to their audiences to decide to vote.

In turn, politicians have used songs as part of their political campaigns with and without musician's approval. The role of art through music in political campaigns is to use popular music to push political messaging, even when the music may not align with the message. For instance, the use of "Born in the U.S.A." by Bruce Springsteen has been used by right-wing candidates despite the song's original context and Springsteen's own political beliefs (Terry, 2020). Springsteen considers "Born in the U.S.A." as a protest song against the Vietnam War. Since Ronald Reagan's campaign in 1984, some right-wing candidates used the song in way that Springsteen views as misconstrued (Terry, 2020). This also goes for the misuse legally by political candidates. Springsteen has denied multiple candidates' use of his song, but they continue to play the music at their campaign rallies. The role of art, through music, in the campaign setting shows how music can be misconstrued and misused by political candidates. It refers to my research on if musicians' politics affect the use of their music, and if that affects their audiences' politics.

Subsection 2: Why People Vote

In the United States, a person is eligible to vote in federal, state, and local elections if they are a U.S. citizen, meeting the state's residency requirements, if they are eighteen years old on or before Election Day, and are registered to vote by state voter registration deadlines ("Who Can and Can't Vote", 2023). This has changed over time and the right to vote has been political, where white, wealthy, land-owning men were the only voters. Many populations in the United States created civic rights movements to gain the right to vote and bring down socio-economic barriers to vote ("The Right to Vote", 2023). Today, there is a more widespread ability to vote but the problem lies in mobilizing people to vote. The barriers to voter registration are the first area that should be explored before discussing the reasons why people vote. Barriers to voter registration show why people do not vote, and how that hinders voter turnout in the United States. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 aimed to lower additional registration barriers. It did so but did not produce broad changes in the demographic profile of registered citizens, and the voluntary system of voting shows that some people choose to not register but can be motivated to vote by political mobilization (Rugeley, 2009). Between registration and voting, registration is the more difficult of the two steps in beginning to mobilize voters. That stems from individual motivation, which affects voter turnout. More importantly, the barriers around registration are included in the individual motivation as the materials needed to register to vote target low-income populations in the United States (Timpone, 1998). Due to this target, barriers to vote for people come from class bias in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The states have the power to reduce

class bias in turnout through allowing citizens to register closer to election day to have greater parity across the classes in their voting rates, compared to states that do not. States that did not adopt easier laws before TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) welfare rules show favoritism of wealthy voters compared to low-income voters (Avery & Peffley, 2005). The common theme across the literature in this area include the barriers of voting and voter registration, in which the barriers give another perspective to reasons why people may not vote, and how media access makes the registration process easier or harder with information from musicians on social media.

Demographic factors also contribute to voter turnout. These factors include socioeconomic environment, age, and education are influential to who decides to vote (Blais, 2000). Population sizes, as elections are happening within a certain time period, are targeted with different campaign content. Location determines the type of content the individual receives (Geys, 2005). Likewise with geographical location, the websites, MySpace and YouTube, show that the demographics of those audiences are of the voting age population and can be reached by candidates and their campaign ads (Gueorguieva, 2008). Demographics of those sites also show that the 35 and older segment of the U.S. population (half or more of the users) are more politically active than the younger voting age population (Gueorguieva, 2008). Also, voters use a candidate's gender and race as an informational voting cue based on belief stereotypes. The informational voting cues determine how people view a candidate for low-information elections. Stereotypes are reinforced and have significant effects on voting behavior (McDermott, 1998). The commonalities across these articles demonstrate how demographics impact voting

behavior, and how people react to different campaign content. In the case of my research, musicians posting on social networking sites show the different campaign content to different demographics. A musician's personal demographic characteristics could be similar to their audiences, therefore furthering promotion to vote to their shared demographic base.

A person's voter turnout behavior is a function of their motivation to vote, ability to vote, and the difficulty of the act of voting. This describes the motivation and the access to voting and how individuals psychologically decide to vote (Harder & Krosnick, 2008). Subtle linguistic cues in media regarding voting behavior can cause people to affirm their personal political beliefs (Bryan, Walton, Rogers, & Dweck, 2011). Based on how a message is presented to an individual, their political ideology may shape how they understand a particular message. Undecided individuals' implicit attitudes also demonstrate explicit voting behavior through automatic preferences, selective attention, and perception. These psychological behaviors are remembered through the voters' motivations and preexisting preferences (Acuri, Castelli, Galdi, Zogmaister, & Amadori, 2008). In practice, this demonstrates that individuals have automatic reactions towards political candidates that guide their interpretation of information before voting. Social psychological theories show that motivation, persuasion, and cognition are present in campaign content as well and has compelled people to vote. Messaging effects are used to encourage voting, such as messages about civic duty. Messages that use social pressures affect people to vote and form habitual voting (Green, McGrath, & Aronow, 2013). An example of this is by telling people how they should vote, it can affect voter

preference but has little effect on turnout. Encouragement to vote does boost turnout. Across these research fields, studies describe the details in which individual behavior impacts the decision to vote, and how people can be pressured to vote. Psychological behaviors better indicate individuals' voting motivations and preexisting preferences as they view musicians' social media postings.

Subsection 3: Social Media as a Catalyst

Artists use social media for a variety of reasons: to connect with their audience more directly, to promote their art on a virtual space, build their brand, to collaborate with other artists at a global level, or to bring awareness to social issues that they care about ("Social Media's Critical Role", 2021) Not all artists always run their own social media accounts. Some may be run by a personal media manager or a public relations worker. Social media for artists has mainly been a place of business, where artists can link to their art, music, or performances and their audiences can quickly purchase or view what the artist is creating. With the use of social media, there is a trend in which the more a person engages in art, the more likely they are to participate in political processes, such as voting (Nichols, 2009). For instance, there are correlations between arts participation and the motivations and practices of civic engagement. These are consistent through art making experiences, such as audience members attending a live performance (Rabkin, 2017). Specifically, artists who seek to move audiences emotionally about civic issues are likely to change those audience members. Likewise, arts experiences during adolescence are influential for young people to be more willing to participate in their local

community. Communities that invest in arts education for students see the benefits of civic engagement as arts and cultural programming create authentic local experiences and contribute to overall community experience (Jacoby, 2019). Arts engagement for students increases their lifelong engaged citizenship. With lifelong engaged citizenship, there is the idea of “culture jamming”. “Culture jamming” is a shared learning environment among artists and activists that demonstrates increased awareness of social issues in politics. Having that shared space through this metaphor “jams” the flow of saturated media to discuss current events. The use of culture jamming increases adult education through arts participation tied to civic engagement (Sandlin & Milam, 2008). Across the studies, there is the theme of how arts participation at different ages (adolescence, young adults, older adults) shows a trend towards civic engagement and participation in local communities. This directly ties to my research question as arts participation shows how arts engagement can be linked to civic engagement, which includes voter turnout.

Through online simulation platforms, political candidates have used virtual spaces as a means of voter engagement. Second Life is a computer program platform where people use avatars that are parallel to the real-life world. The purpose of Second Life is for participants to actively co-create in a world that produces a meaningful experience (Baldwin & Achterberg, 2013). In this way, participants build a sense of belonging in the communities that they create alongside other players in this online space. Second Life has been used to form communities around a political candidate and mobilize grassroots efforts for that candidate (CBS Interactive, 2007). Barack Obama, John Edwards, John

McCain, and Hillary Clinton had campaign headquarters in Second Life (Brogan, 2016). People have also used Second Life to congregate, discuss the candidates, and watch the results of the 2008 presidential election (Lang, 2008). Online simulation platforms like Second Life are another way in which people gather information online to discuss politics and voting (Wheaton, 2007). Virtual platforms hosting discussions and events gather people and form communities, which is another example of how social media can impact elections.

The use of online media affects offline behavior regarding voter turnout. Online social influences and voter mobilization across large populations affect decisions to vote offline (Bond, Fariss, Jones, et al., 2012). Political mobilization messages directly influenced political self-expression, information seeking, and real-world voting behavior. This messaging not only influenced the users that received the messages, but the users' friends, and friends of friends. The transmission to real-world/offline voting was greater as the social transmission was between friends who were more than likely to have a face-to-face relationship to spread the mobilizing messaging. This shows that spreading online and real-world behavior in social networks. Initially, television programs were a main access point for audiences to be influenced to purchase or decide to do something. This was titled the "Oprah Winfrey effect" as celebrity actors create impacts on what is suggested to their followers on media platforms (O'Brien, 2013). Ideas influence people's preferences and are shown through social movements and across social media. People are swayed by different social issues and their actions follow their emotional response to that social issue from the idea (Rueschemeyer, 2006). This then demonstrates how mass

media action has political consequences. Media is more interconnected in today's technological world, and new media systems influence peoples' opinions. The access to new media systems allows for more political engagement and resources available online (Rohlinger & Earl, 2017). The common themes across these studies suggest that online media does influence how people respond offline, where people are making decisions away from social media that have political consequences. However, it does not answer the question of how musicians use online media to influence people's offline decision to vote.

Individuals react to socio-political online influences, as algorithmic marketing based on personal online profiles determines specific targeted content curated to individuals (Burkell & Regan, 2019). There is a supply and demand of voters and activists, and social media is a political source to get political information through algorithmic content for individuals (Ellinas, 2018). Content is curated due to an individual's demographics, and the type of political source is presented upon the individual depending on those demographics. For example, white males on social media are more prone to radical right-leaning content (Ellinas, 2018). Social media has created an influence in recent elections, and there are psychological links between social media and voter turnout. Personality traits from online personalities and demographics affect people's response to political mobilization based on the content they see. In one study, the Big Five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism) were used to measure political participation and determine which personalities are susceptible to online posts. (Margetts, John, Hale, & Yasseri, 2016).

Analyzing users' data from social media sites can be helpful to see the effects of social media manipulation and its effect on democracy. This analysis can be done near-real-time or after the election is over. The analysis of social media's effects further shows the link between social media messaging and validated voting, where the vote has been accounted for. Overall, the study shows there are procedures in describing democracy's vulnerability to social media manipulation (Aral & Eckles, 2019). The themes across these findings demonstrate how individuals react to political messaging on social media, and how that can radicalize individuals towards a particular cause. Musicians' postings on social media are influencing individuals, and how those individuals react depends on their beliefs and if they decide to vote.

My research question, if musicians influence voter turnout through social media, is the intersection of all three subsection topics. The literature provides a background on if musicians influence a change in their audiences or provide motivation to their audience. Studies have shown that art compels people to engage in political activities, but this question continues to see if social media has an impact on political engagement. Social media has changed how people interact with each other, so exploring if there is an overall impact on voter turnout and motivation with the increased social media usage will be an interesting find. A gap remains in understanding how musicians influence individuals to vote. Based on the literature and theories about social influences and voter motivation, there are significant findings that show social media influences people's actions outside of the platforms.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The aim of this study was to survey Ohio State students to measure if individual voting behavior was impacted by musicians posting on social media about voter turnout and political issues. My design takes a mixed methods approach, combining a quantitative and qualitative approach. The quantitative measures include survey data about participants' social media use, voter registration and history, and their engagement with voting campaigns and social issues from musicians and other media. The survey participants of this study were Ohio State University-Columbus campus students. The qualitative approach analyzes musicians' Instagram posts and the comments therein. This university is an appropriate context for this study because of the history of Ohio being a swing state in elections ("Ohio Presidential Election Voting History", 2023). Ohio has voted for both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates and has 18 Electoral College votes which can sway a candidate's numbers in the overall Electoral College. This survey group provides insights into the voting behavior of young adults. Voter turnout among young people has increased in recent elections (Tufts University, 2022). This may be due to their engagement on social issues (Tufts University, 2022). Given the context of Ohio's status as a swing state and young voters, I believe that it is pertinent to use Ohio State University's campus for surveying students after the 2022 midterm elections. There were many social issues on the ballot in 2022, as several candidates had

polarizing views on those issues. For example, Ohio had an open Senate seat in the 2022 midterm elections. This election was between Democrat candidate Tim Ryan and Republican candidate J. D. Vance. Ryan campaigned towards union employees in Ohio with issues about jobs in Ohio, as well as campaigning for social issues like abortion rights. Vance's campaign included topics of banning abortion nationally and less funding for universities. This race was similar to states, like Pennsylvania, which also held highly contested Senate races. This is a glimpse of what students at Ohio State University's campus had on the ballot in November 2022.

This mixed methods approach provides insights into the attitudes and voting behavior of participants. These two approaches are conducted through surveys and analyses of seven musicians' Instagram posts. The selected Instagram posts represent musicians from different genres, political leanings, a range of followers, and were posted between November 1st and December 6th of 2022, making them appropriate for examination within the framework of this study.

The quantitative portion of the data was collected through a survey, which I began distributing in November 2022 to align with the midterm cycle; the distribution period ended on December 31st, 2022. Election day was November 8th, 2022, and it was a midterm election year. There were many issues state-wide occurring during the 2022 midterm year, as there were numerous Senate elections in states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Arizona. There was increased speculation from the Republican party about a "red wave", in which the Republican party would gain more House of Representative Seats and gain more seats in the Senate following the midterm. This

election had many state-specific issues on citizens' ballots, depending on the Senate, House of Representative, or governor races occurring in a particular state. These issues included rank-choice voting, abortion, and general reactions to extremism rising in the United States.

The data collection was organized using a convenience sampling strategy from voluntary participants. Survey invitations were presented on QR codes which were placed in student-dense areas such as libraries and the student union. Qualtrics was the platform for the surveys, which Ohio State students accessed using the provided QR code. All who responded self-reported as Ohio State students. The questions asked about respondents' social media use, if they follow musicians, if respondents are registered to vote and if they have voted before, and if respondents felt their voting behaviors were influenced by musicians. Additional questions asked respondents if they followed or engaged with actors on their platforms of choice and if those actors motivated them to vote. Then, if respondents saw television ads or online ads promoting voter turnout, campaigns, or political issues. The additional questions provide a comparison for other popular culture influences on voting behavior. There were also demographic questions that asked the students their age, sexuality, gender identity, race and ethnicity, education level, and political alignment.

I use statistical methods to analyze survey responses and controls for the personal sociodemographic factors listed above. Analytically, I conduct a statistical relationship analysis using controls. The use of statistical controls helps remove confounding variables that may be present in my independent and dependent variables. Pertinent

literature about voting behavior is known to be influenced by a variety of factors including demographics, motivation to vote, and online media messaging. Demographics of individuals influence their decision to vote, and these demographics include socioeconomic environment, institutional setting, and party system (Blais, 2000). Motivation to vote is determined by psychological behaviors, where individuals will already have a reaction about a candidate before knowing any further information besides an initial response (Acuri, Castelli, Galdi, Zogmaister, & Amadori, 2008). Online media messaging also affects the decision to vote as political mobilization messages directly influence offline voting behavior (Bond, Fariss, Jones, et al., 2012). Social media use, age, race, and gender could be potential confounding variables, so using statistical analyses, I understand the effects that the control variables had on the main effect, musicians' social media posts and their influence on voter turnout.

Threats to the validity of the design are minimized by having the survey participants anonymous and gathered from student-dense areas on campus. If there is a threat present, it would be a historical threat to validity, where participants would have prior knowledge about the topic of the research (Trochim, 2016). I do not believe that the threat to internal validity was a factor in my research, as participants did not know my survey questions beforehand.

I also included a qualitative research approach using archival data collection. The archival research was collected by analyzing social media posts by musicians during the 2022 midterm election cycle. The chosen posts fit the following criteria: post is about voter turnout and awareness of social issues, post was prior to or on the day of November

8th, 2022, post was about a special election following the November 8th date, and the caption on the Instagram posts.

For these posts, I examine how many “likes” the post had, a sentiment analysis of the comment section of that post, and how many followers the musician has as of February 2023. A sentiment analysis is a computer program that predicts the tone of different responses of a post. The sentiment analysis program used for this research is the Watson Natural Language Understanding tool created by the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM). The musicians’ Instagram posts provide data on the number of people who are engaging in the content, while the comments display people’s reactions, and the number of followers shows the size of the audience. To conduct the emotional surveillance of the comments section, the top-level comments of each post are collected. The top-level comment directly replies to the Instagram post, but a comment replying to this comment would not count. Then, the comments are formatted using a Python script and analyzed using a textual sentiment analysis tool to determine the emotional opinions of the commenters. Additionally, the comments are analyzed with a word-map tool to understand key words and rephrases from the commenters.

I chose the particular methods used in my research as they provide a holistic approach to gathering reactions and responses to musicians who post on social media, and whether that impacts voter turnout. The quantitative data approach gives insight into how participants’ voting behavior is influenced by musicians’ posts on social media. The qualitative approach analyzes the research question from the musicians’ perspective and

how users engage with those posts. Together these give insights to whether musicians influence voter turnout using social media.

Chapter 4. Findings

Survey Findings

After the 2022 midterm elections (November 8, 2022), I distributed my survey to voluntary participants at Ohio State University and closed the survey December 31, 2022. I received a total of 77 responses. Figures 1 through 5 show the demographics of the participants who responded to my survey. These topics include age, gender, race, education level, and political alignment.

Figure 1: Age of Participants

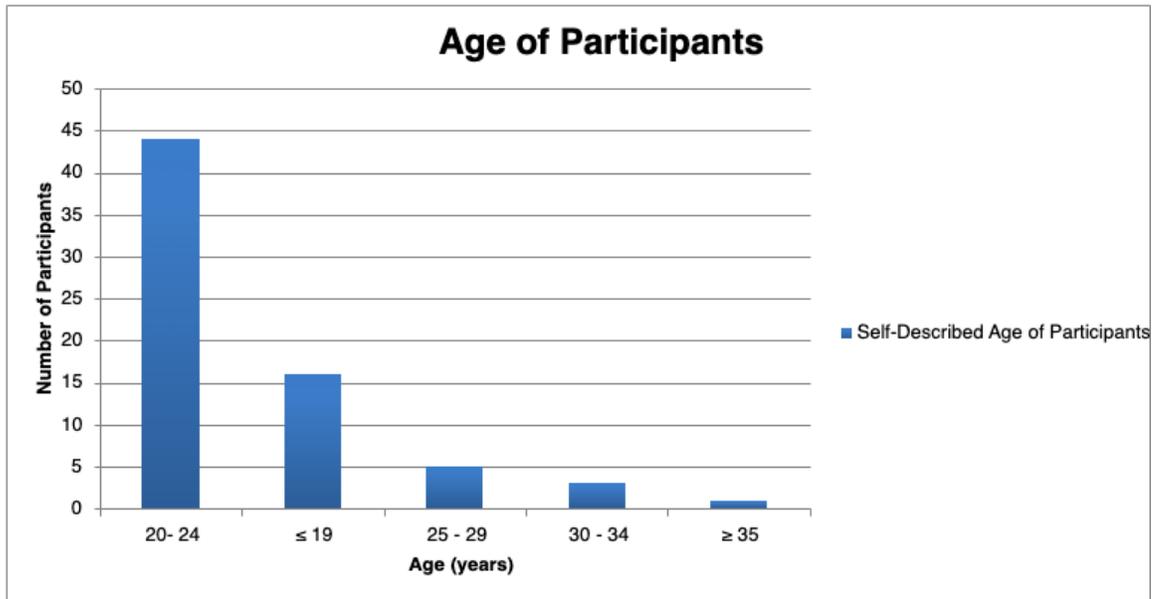


Figure 2: Gender of Participants

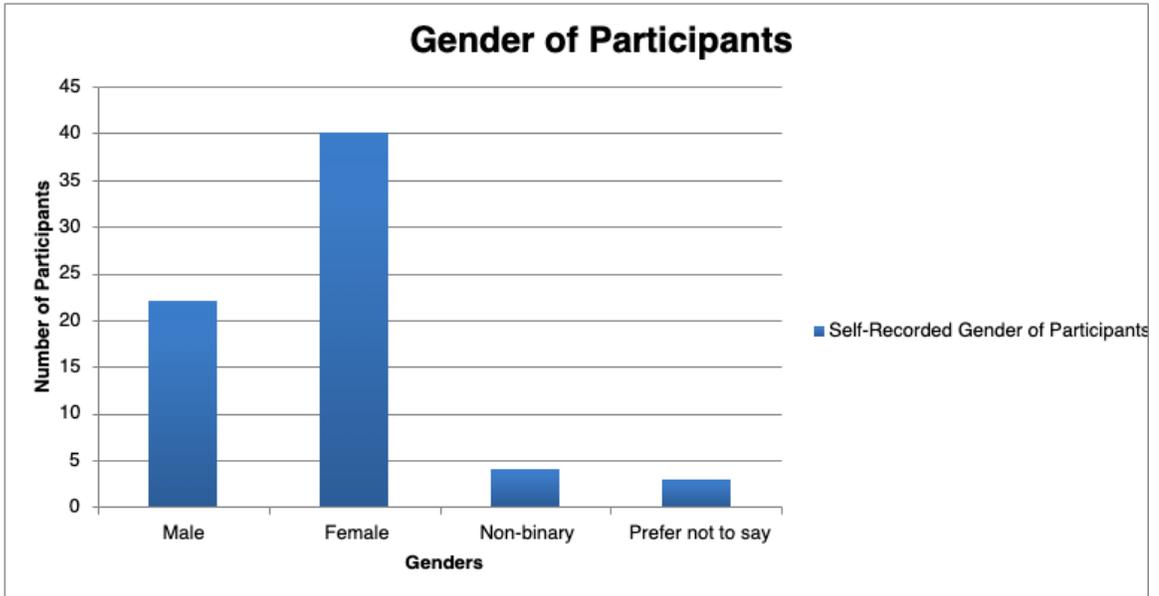


Figure 3: Race of Participants

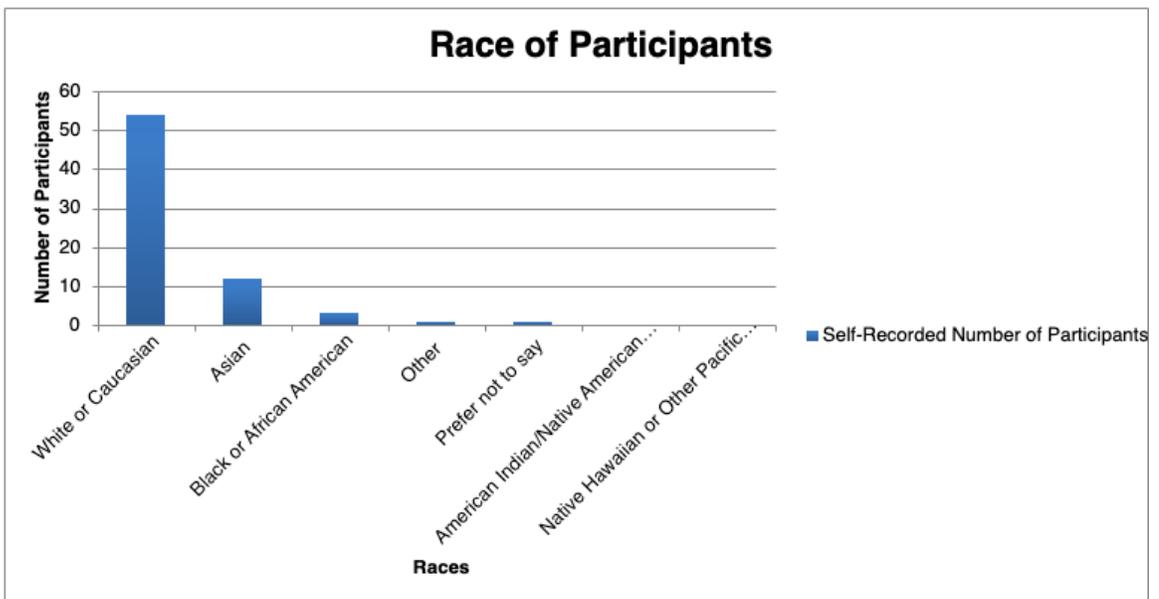


Figure 4: Educational Level of Participants

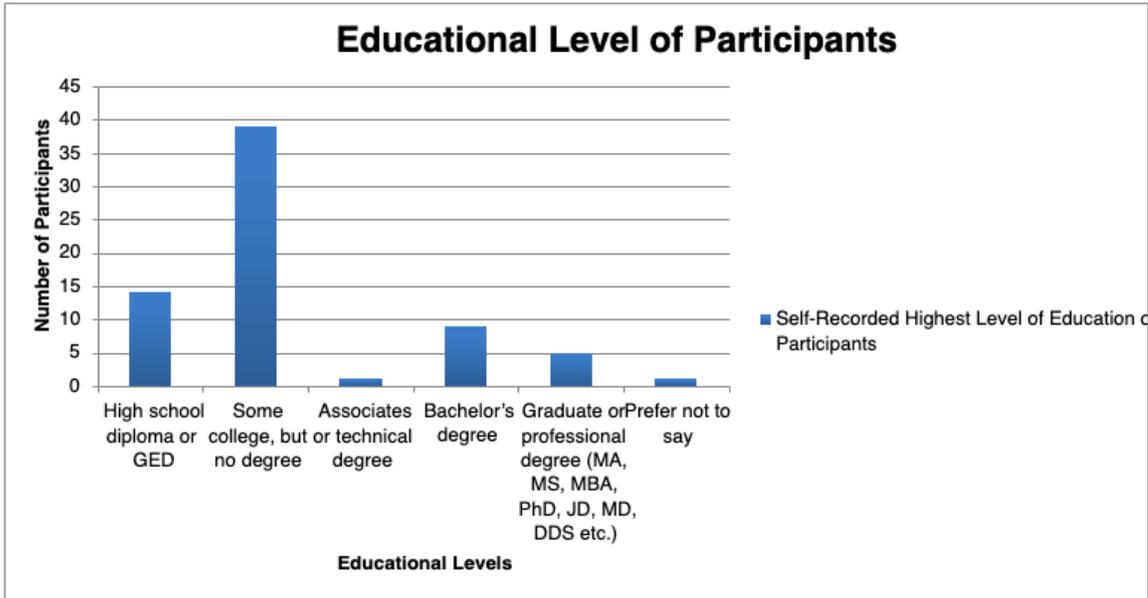
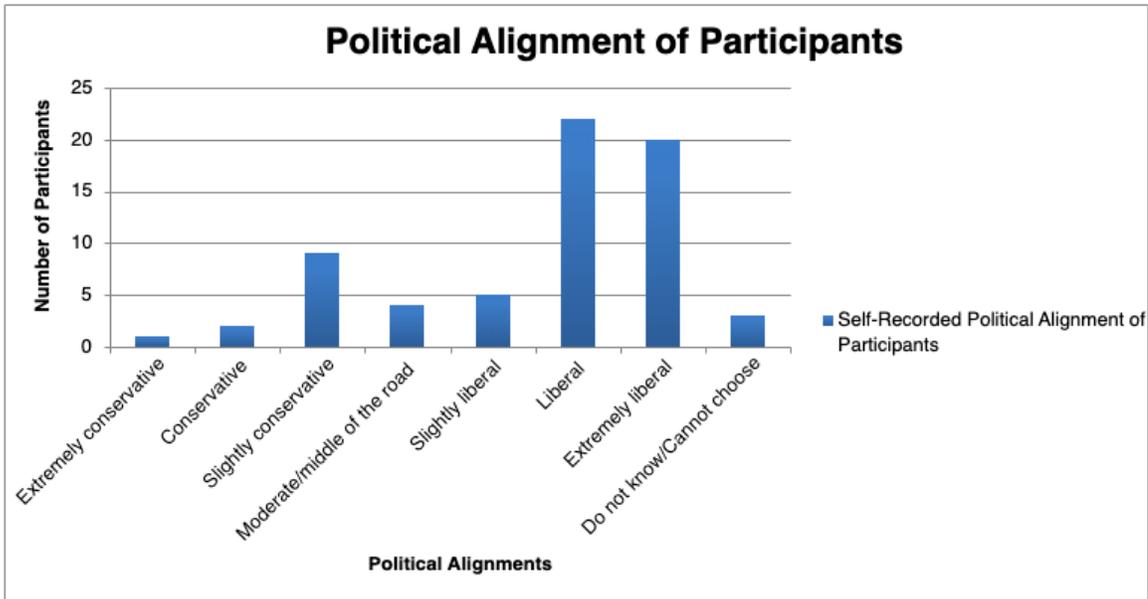


Figure 5: Political Alignment of Participants



The demographics of the participants were recorded using Qualtrics, an online survey tool that also calculated and tabled the participants' demographics. For age, of all the respondents, only two participants are not eligible to vote due to their age (both participants are seventeen years old). The rest of the participants are 18 years and older, with the average age being 21.3 years old and the median age being 20. According to Figure 2, more women responded to the survey than men, with 40 respondents being women, 22 men, and then four reported as non-binary. Three participants preferred not to answer. The race of participants recorded were majority white or Caucasian with 54 respondents, with Asian reporting the next highest with 12 respondents. Black or African Americans and other races were lower among participants. Regarding educational level among participants, a majority had some college but no degree with 39 recorded participants. The next highest category was high school diploma with 14 total respondents, then bachelor's degree and graduate or professional degree 9 and 5 participants respectively. Lastly, the political alignment recorded showed that a majority of respondents described themselves as liberal or extremely liberal, with 22 and 20 participants respectively. The next highest category is slightly conservative, with 9 respondents describing themselves. The other political alignment categories were smaller in count as compared to those mentioned.

The next set of figures (Figures 6 and 7) describe how many participants are registered to vote and their previous voting history, with how many participants voted in each year. The figures describe how many of the participants are civically engaged, and how recently they have voted.

Figure 6: Total Number of Participants Registered to Vote

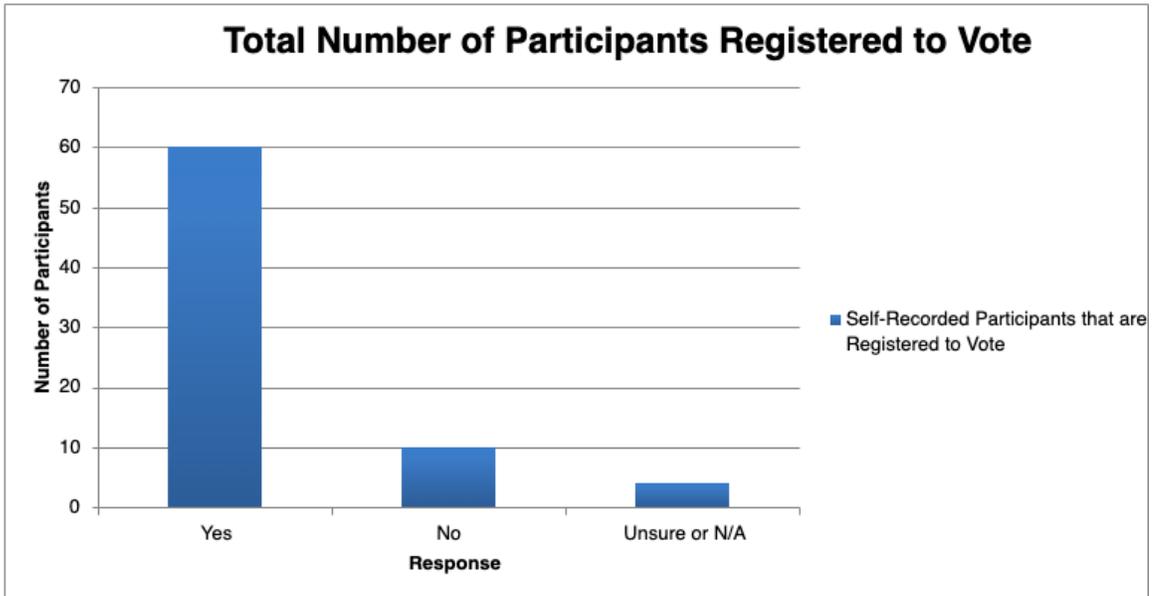
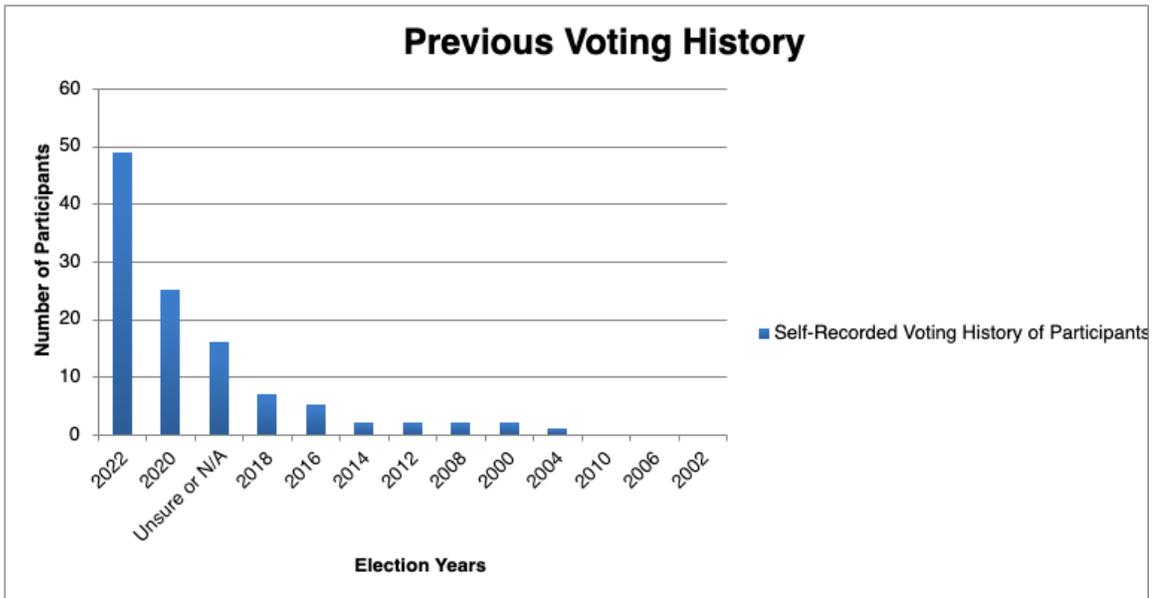


Figure 7: Previous Voting History

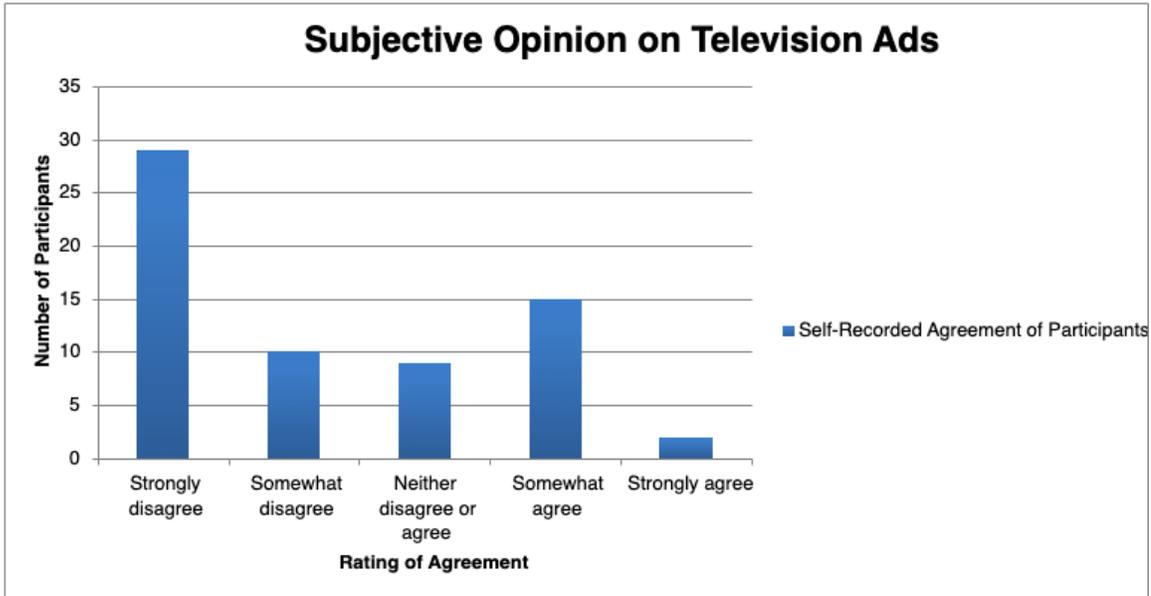


With these results from participants, most responses stated that they are registered to vote with 60 total. 10 participants stated that they are not registered to vote, and four were unsure or it was not applicable to the respondent. For the next question, “When was the last time you voted in a general election?”, respondents answered that they voted in 2022 with 49 responses and the next highest turnout year was 2020 with 25 participants recalled that they voted during that election year.

Referring to the research question, whether musicians who post on social media impact voter turnout, there are different ways to answer that based on the survey data. I want to compare the variable, musicians who post on social media, to other forms of voter engagement. Then I analyze those forms of voter engagement to provide context to the results of this specific research question. The four methods of voter engagement include: television ads, online ads, musicians on social media, and actors on social media. There are three ways to interpret the effect of these voter engagement methods: peoples’ subjective opinions, the objective relationships between if they were exposed to a method of voter engagement and whether they are registered to vote, and the objective relationship between if they were exposed to a method of voter engagement and whether they voted in 2022. This shows whether there is an effect of the four voter engagement methods through a comparative objective and subjective analysis. The analyses are created by Qualtrics from the survey data, and through a related statistical function. It is important to note that none of the results are statistically significant, potentially due to the small sample; however, there are still insights to view through these relationships.

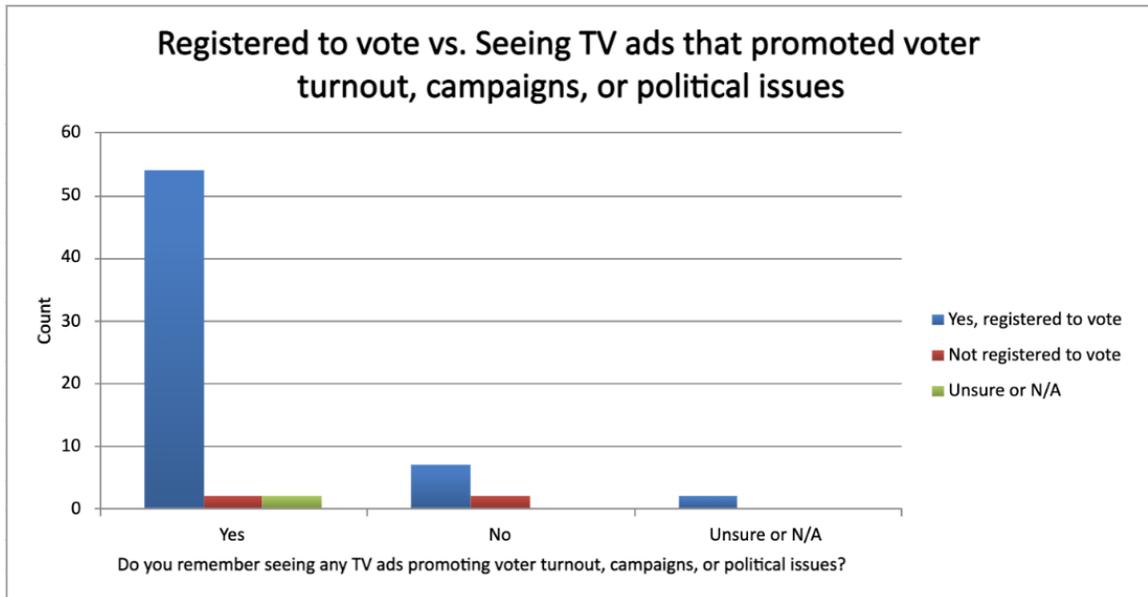
Figures 8 through 19 show that related statistical function between the four voter engagement methods subjectively and objective relationships.

Figure 8: Subjective Opinion on Television Ads



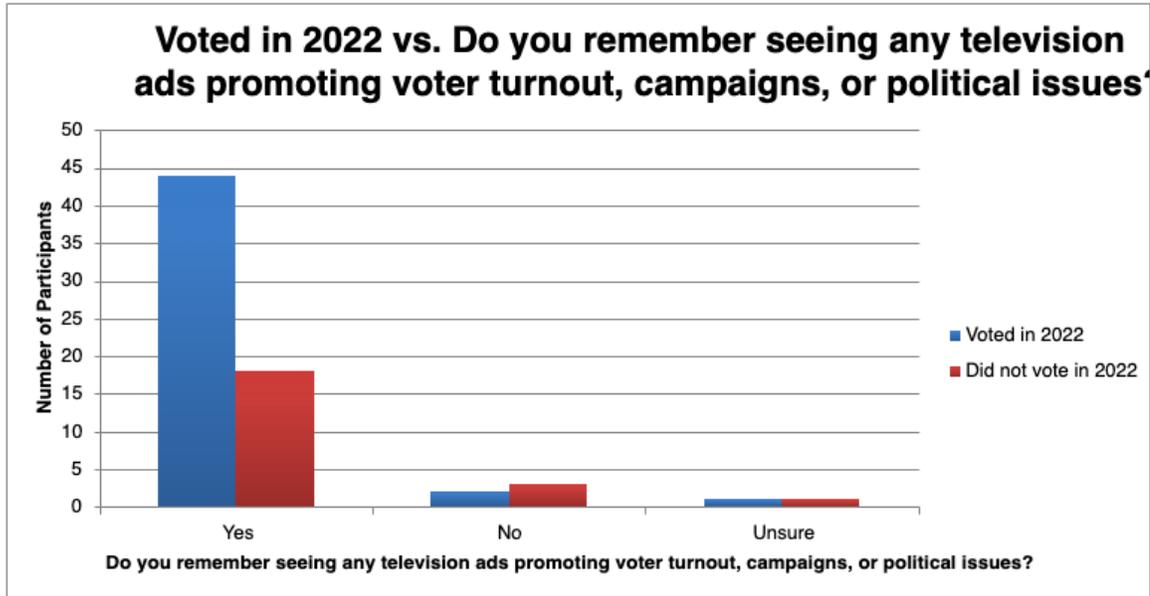
Subjectively, many people do not think that TV ads influenced their decision to vote. But another sizeable portion of the sample think that TV ads somewhat influenced their decision to vote. On average, people feel somewhere between somewhat disagree and neither disagree nor agree that TV ads influenced their decision to vote.

Figure 9: Objective Relationship Between Television Ads and Registration to Vote



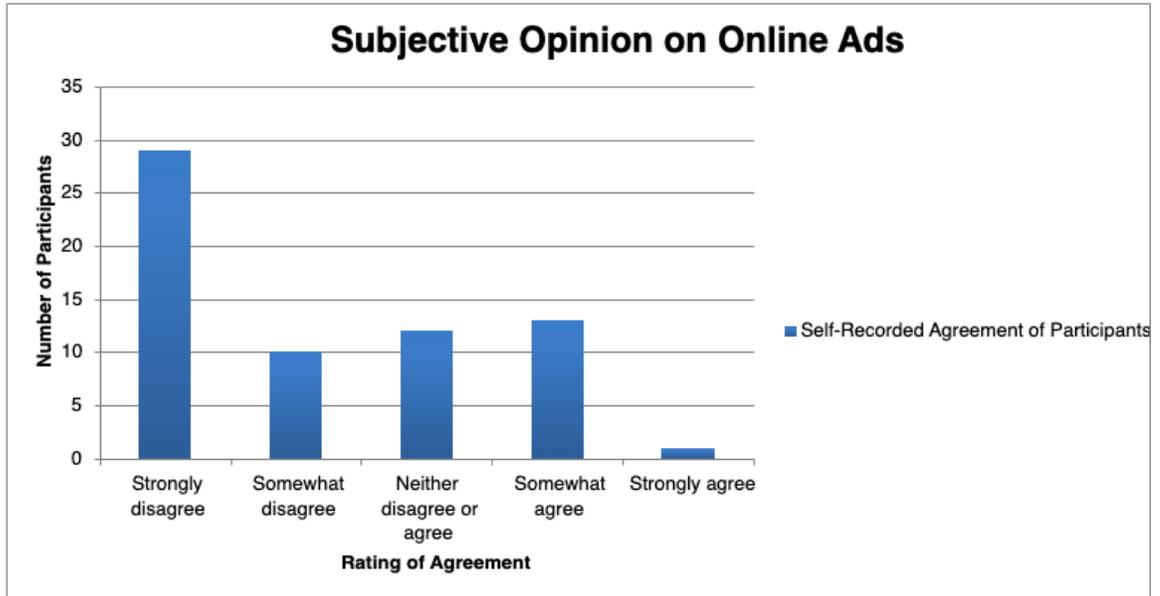
Objectively, most people who remember seeing TV ads that promoted voter turnout, campaigns, or political issues are registered to vote. But also, most people who do not remember or are unsure are also registered to vote.

Figure 10: Objective Relationship Between Television Ads and Voted in 2022



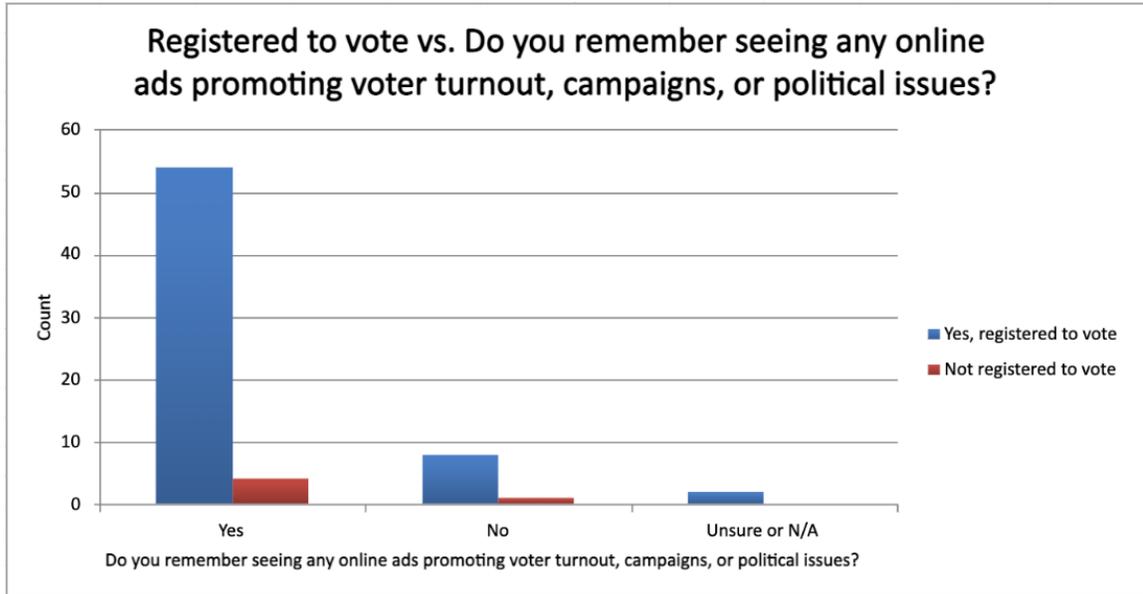
People who saw TV ads promoting voter turnout, campaigns, or political issues were much more likely to have voted in 2022 compared to those that did not vote in 2022.

Figure 11: Subjective Opinion on Online Ads



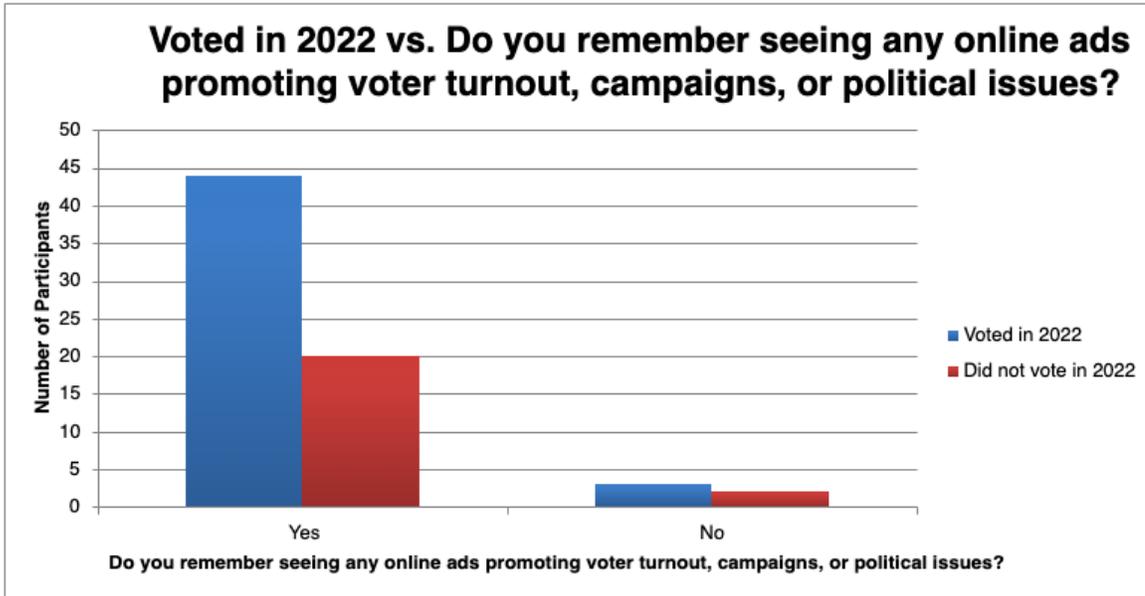
Subjectively, many people do not think that online ads influenced their decision to vote. On average, people feel somewhere between somewhat disagree and neither disagree nor agree that online ads influenced their decision to vote.

Figure 12: Objective Relationship Between Online Ads and Registration to Vote



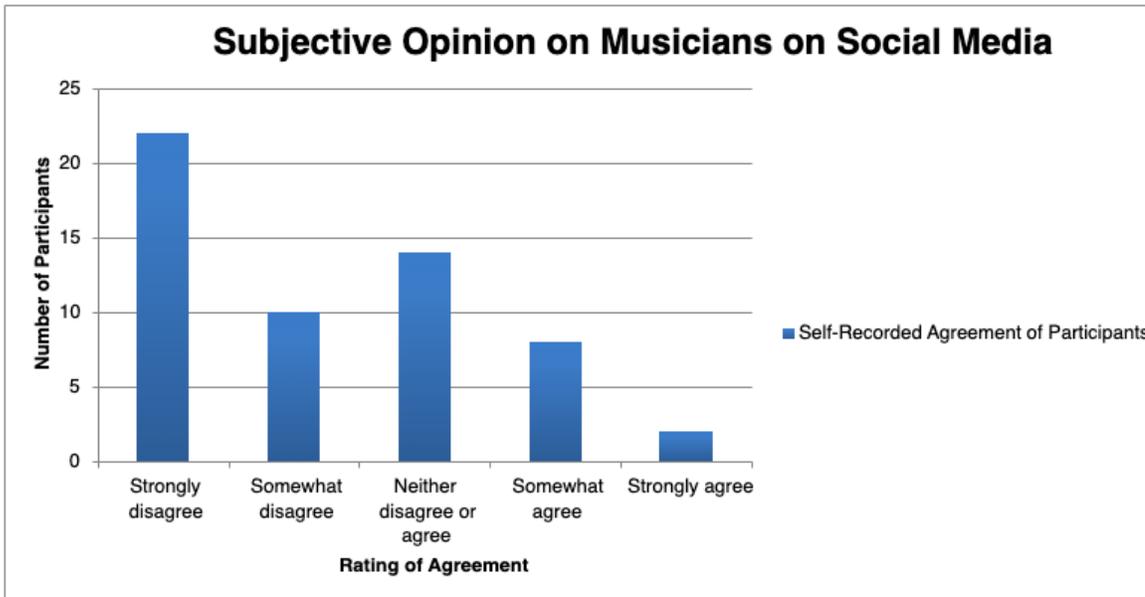
Objectively, most people who remember seeing online ads promoting voter turnout, campaigns, or political issues are registered to vote. But also, most people who do not remember or are unsure are also registered to vote. The sample size is too small to look for statistical significance.

Figure 13: Objective Relationship Between Online Ads and Voted in 2022



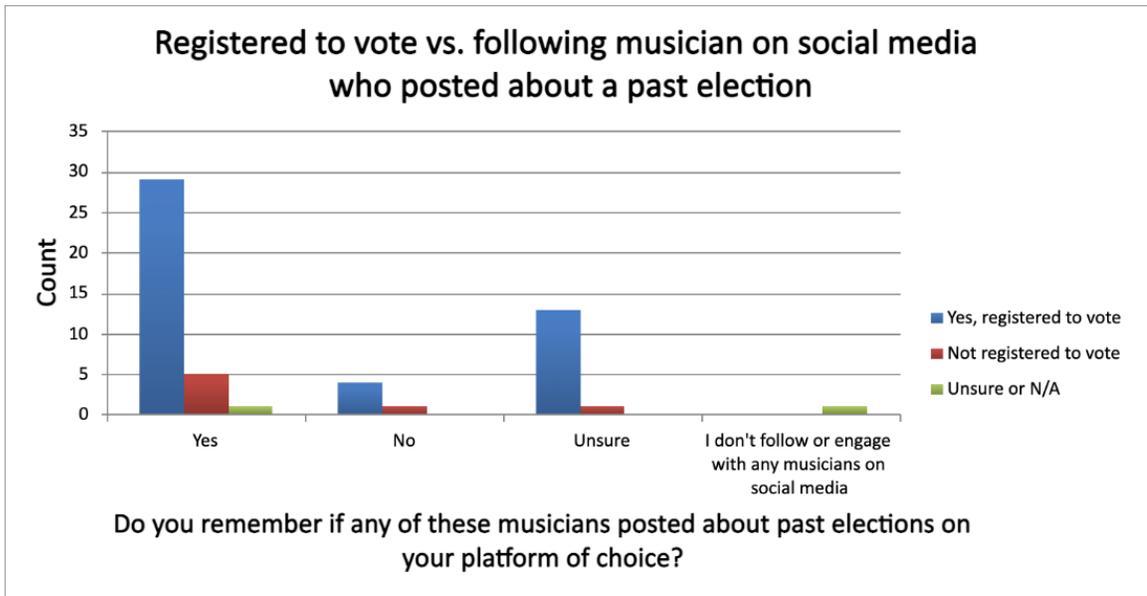
People who saw online ads promoting voter turnout, campaigns, or political issues were slightly more likely to have voted in 2022 than those who did not vote in 2022.

Figure 14: Subjective Opinion on Musicians on Social Media



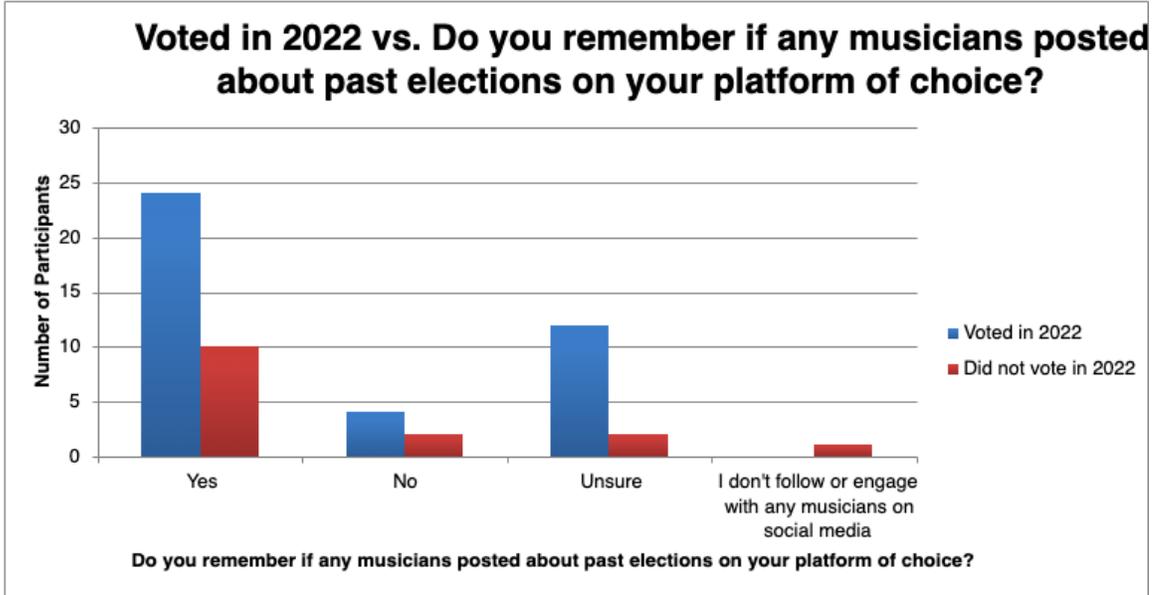
Subjectively, most people do not think that the musicians that they follow or engage with influence their decision to vote. On average, people feel somewhere between somewhat disagree and neither disagree nor agree that musicians that they follow or engage with on social media influenced their decision to vote.

Figure 15: Objective Relationship Between Musicians on Social Media and Registration to Vote



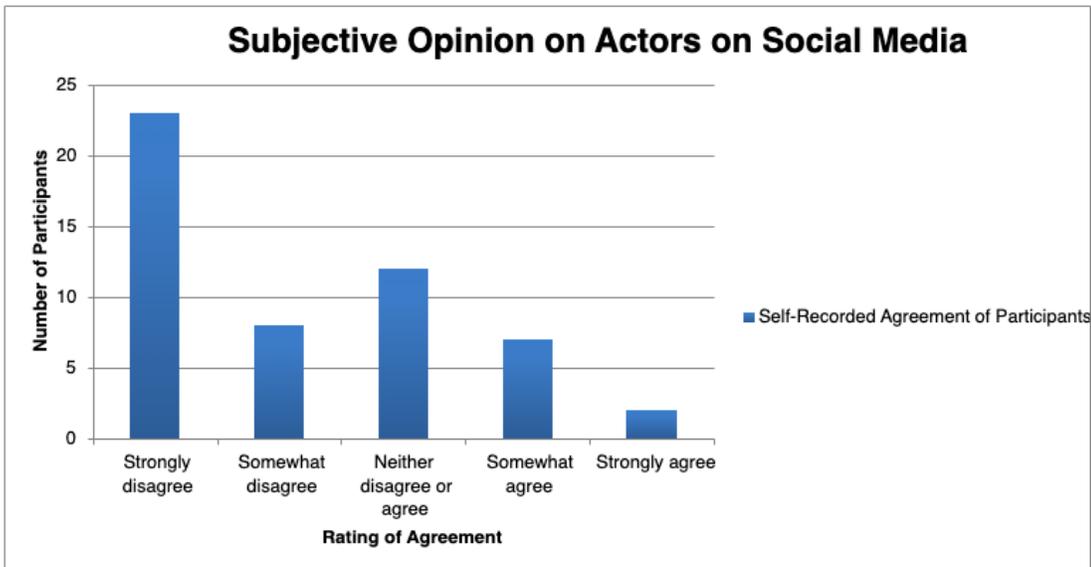
Objectively, most people who remember seeing musicians post about past elections are registered to vote. But also, most people who do not remember or are unsure are also registered to vote.

Figure 16: Objective Relationship Between Musicians on Social Media and Voted in 2022



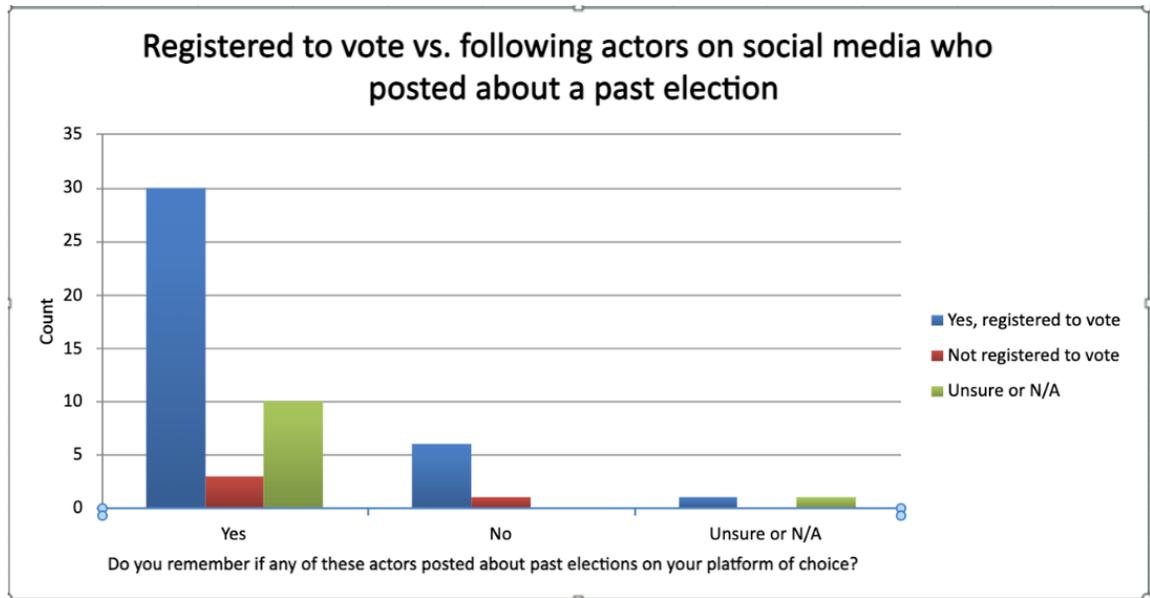
People who saw posts by musicians on social media about past elections were slightly more likely to have voted in 2022.

Figure 17: Subjective Opinion on Actors on Social Media



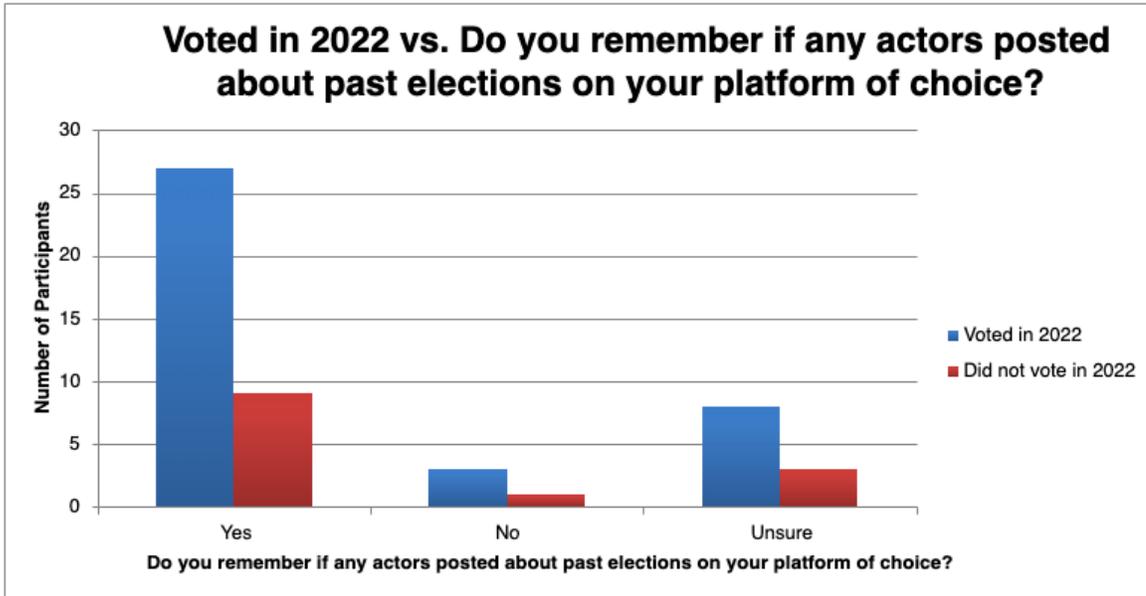
Subjectively, most people do not think that the actors that they follow or engage with influence their decision to vote. On average, people feel somewhere between somewhat disagree and neither disagree nor agree that actors that they follow or engage with on social media influenced their decision to vote.

Figure 18: Objective Relationship Between Actors on Social Media and Registration to Vote



Objectively, most people who remember seeing actors post about past elections are registered to vote. But also, most people who do not remember or are unsure are also registered to vote. The sample size is too small to look for statistical significance. This is a similar trend to musicians' postings.

Figure 19: Objective Relationship Between Actors on Social Media and Voted in 2022



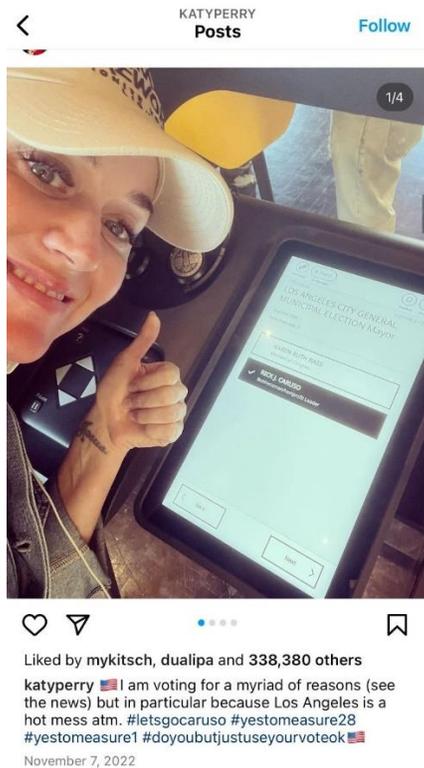
People who saw posts by actors on social media about past elections were no more or less likely to have voted in 2022.

The figures all describe the subjective opinions of participants on the four methods of voter engagement compared to the objective relationships between those methods and registration to vote and voted in 2022.

Selected Instagram Posts

The following are Instagram posts by musicians that have fit the criteria previously mentioned. The posts are all from the 2022 midterm election year and are from various musicians of genres and political ideologies.

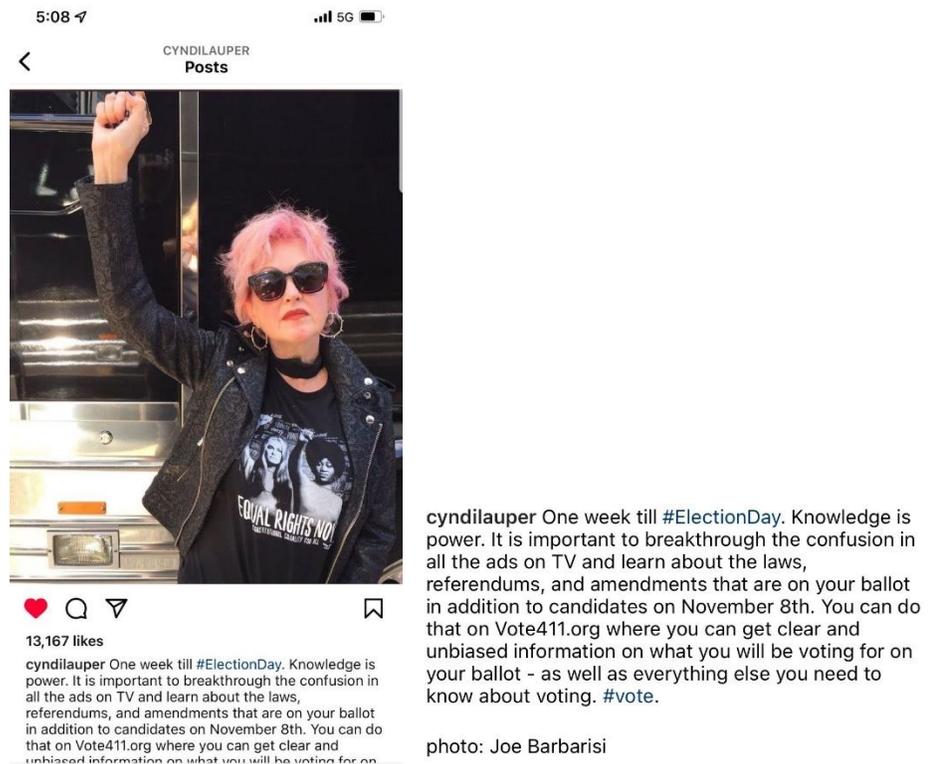
Illustration 1: Instagram Post by Musician Katy Perry, Posted 11/07/2022



This post describes the photo taken by American pop artist, Katy Perry, who in this photo is standing next to her electronic voting booth (Perry, 2022). The image shows her voting for the candidate Rick Caruso (Republican Party candidate), who was running for Mayor of Los Angeles in November 2022. Katy Perry received 338,382 likes on her post. The comment section was turned off for this post as of 2023. Perry has over 188 million followers on her Instagram account.

Perry is photographed here with her digital ballot as she voted for Republican Rick Caruso. Caruso did not win the mayoral election for the city of Los Angeles (The New York Times, 2022). Democrat candidate Karen Bass won.

Illustration 2: Instagram Post by Musician Cyndi Lauper, Posted 11/01/2022



American musician Cyndi Lauper posted the above Instagram photo, and her caption discusses the week up to election day. The post has 13,167 likes with 201 total comments. Lauper has 1.4 million followers as of early 2023 (Lauper, 2022).

Lauper in her caption tells where her followers can get voting information. The post also tells her followers where to get unbiased information to where her followers can know more about who is on their ballot. Lauper also is wearing an “Equal Rights Now” shirt, indicating for intersectional equal rights for women while also in the raised fist pose, which indicates political solidarity.

Illustration 3: Instagram Post by Musician Killer Mike, Posted 12/06/2022



The next Instagram post shows the American rapper Killer Mike talking with Senator Raphael Warnock at the Atlanta, Georgia, barber shop, The Swag Shop. The post has 4,120 likes with 170 comments (Killer Mike, 2022). The post was also in conjunction with the Georgia special election between Senator Raphael Warnock and Herschel Walker. As of 2023, Killer Mike has 1.7 million followers.

The Georgia special election was the runoff election between Democratic Senator Raphael Warnock and Republican candidate Herschel Walker. This election was a continuation of the November 8th, 2022, election and was held on December 6th, 2022. Incumbent Senator Raphael Warnock won the runoff election against Herschel Walker (NBCUniversal Group, 2022).

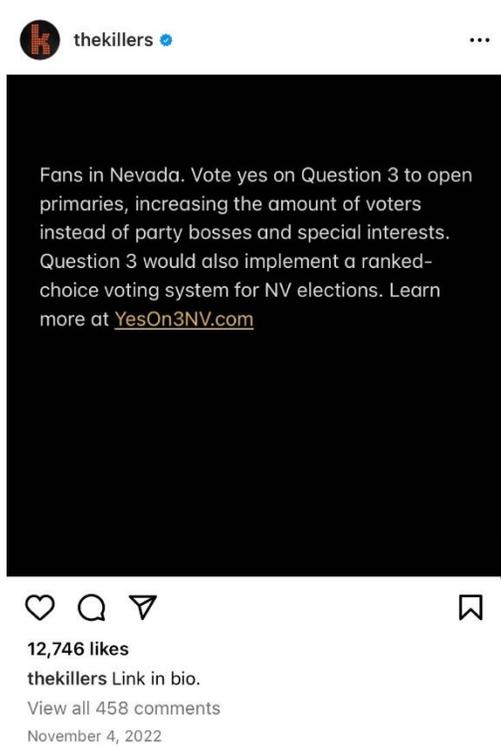
Illustration 4: Instagram Post by Musician John Rich, Posted 11/08/2022



Country musician John Rich posts the above image on his Instagram account. He predicted Republicans winning many of the elections, and the hashtag to vote for the 2022 midterm elections. John Rich has 111,000 followers as of 2023. The post has 11,691 likes with 352 comments (Rich, 2022).

With this post and the caption, it references the song by Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR) “Bad Moon Rising”. CCR songwriter and singer John Fogerty leans liberal and has sent several cease-and-desists to Republicans like Donald Trump who have used “Fortunate Son” during rallies (Browne, 2021). Rich makes the prediction that Republicans will win across the House of Representatives, Senate, and governor races in the 2022 midterms. The 2022 midterm elections results saw Republicans gain control of the House, but Democrats gained seats in the Senate.

Illustration 5: Instagram Post by Musical Group The Killers, Posted 11/04/2022



The Killers are a Las Vegas, Nevada-based alternative rock band. The post was made on their official band social media account with a call to action to their fans in Nevada. They are supporting Question 3 in Nevada to open primaries and implement ranked choice voting for future Nevada elections. The band also provided a link in their post and in their account's biography. The post has 12,746 likes and 458 comments. The Killers have 1.3 million followers as of 2023 (The Killers, 2022).

The Instagram post is to get their followers based in Nevada to vote yes on a state-wide issue on the Nevada ballot about ranked choice voting. Since the 2022 midterm elections with this question on the ballot, Nevadans voted for ranked choice

elections. This now changes to a system of open primaries and voters rank their choice of candidates from the top five of primaries (The New York Times, 2022).

Illustration 6: Instagram Post by Musical Group The Linda Lindas, Posted 11/03/2022



The Linda Lindas are an all-women punk rock band based in Los Angeles, California. The group posted this image with two other images about an event sponsored by the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Victory Fund and The Second City. This event occurred in Chicago, Illinois to get out the vote. This event was hosted by Jeanne Mai Jenkins and featured Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Tammy Duckworth. The Linda Lindas made an appearance along with actor/comedians Jimmy O. Yang and Aasif Mandvi. Their caption also calls for their followers to vote in the midterm election.

This post has 4,277 likes with comments turned off. The Linda Lindas have 283,000 followers as of 2023 (The Linda Lindas, 2022).

With this post promoting Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian voter turnout, these communities did in fact increase their turnout in states with highly contested elections. AsAmNews reported that their early voting turnout increased by 20% (Tong, 2022). This shows that the turnout for these communities has increased and efforts to get out the vote were successful.

Comparison of Posts

Additionally, these posts alone are documenting the call to vote to their followers. Each post mentions in some form to vote, or what to vote about depending on the follower's location. These are methods of voter engagement by musicians to influence voter turnout on social media, in this case Instagram. After documenting these posts, I have noticed that the posts that were Democratically-leaning were more successful in their efforts engage their followers to vote, given by the real-time results from the 2022 midterm elections. There are benefits to using these posts, as these musicians not only have a variety of political ideologies, but also a variety of likes and comments. This allows for my analysis of these posts to see how many people have come across their post and liked it, and then view the comments on the posts. The sentiment analyses of the comment sections are beneficial as they better indicate how the commenters feel about the post overall. This also helps describe the tone of different topics mentioned in the comment sections.

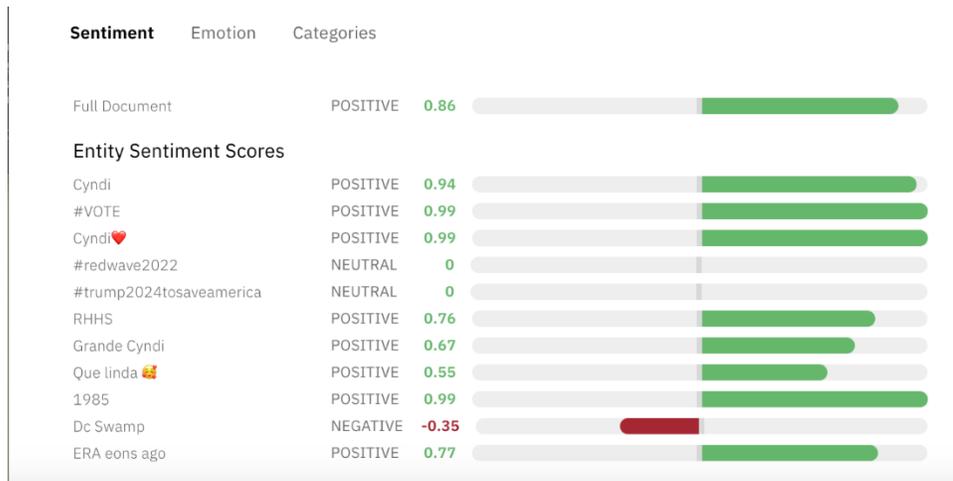
With the posts, the use of word maps better depicts the most common words used across an entire comment section. The top ten most frequently used words are available below. The sentiment analyses describe the overall tone of comment sections, and within those comment sections specific topics that frequently appear. This provides context for what commentors are talking about, and how that is useful to that specific post.

Comment Word Map and Sentiment Analysis Findings

Along with the survey data, I also gathered the previously mentioned Instagram posts' comments. I want to gauge people's opinions on the posts I have selected. I look at social media posts by musicians about those topics to get insight on people's response to those types of posts. I have not drawn any statistical significance conclusions to the quantitative survey data due to the limited sample size. So, this approach shows another way to understand the impact of these musicians' posts. I analyzed six posts by musicians of different political leanings about different political and social issues. These posts are from Katy Perry, Cyndi Lauper, Killer Mike, John Rich, The Killers, and The Linda Lindas. Two of the six musicians, Katy Perry and The Linda Lindas, have turned off their comments on their voter engagement posts.

There are two forms of aggregation of the comments from those Instagram posts. These are word maps and sentiment analyses. The word map shows the number of times a word or emoji occurs in people's responses. A sentiment analysis is a computer program that tries to predict the tone of different responses of this post. The sentiment analysis program is the Watson Natural Language Understanding tool, which is created by the

Illustration 8: Cyndi Lauper Sentiment Analysis



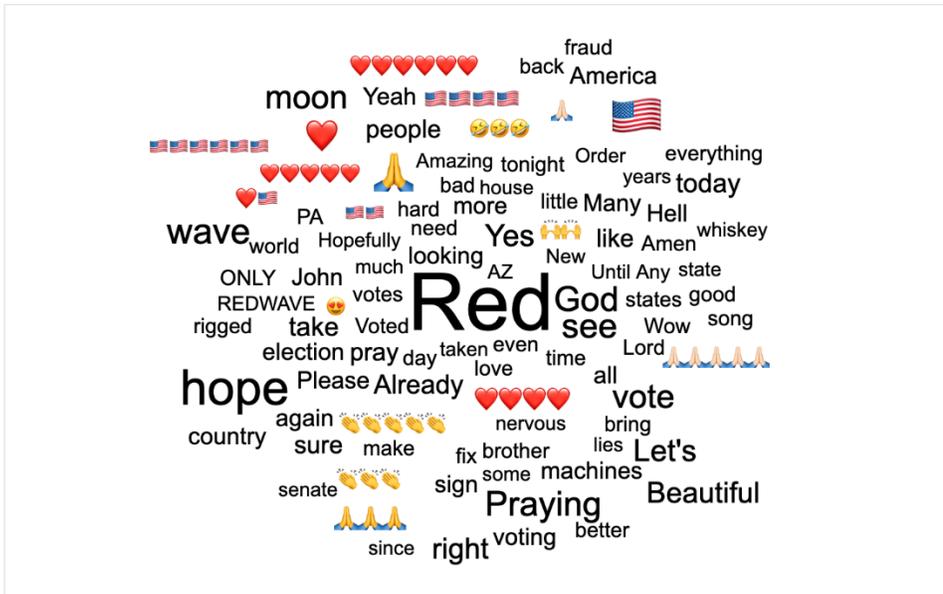
Above describes the analysis of the top sentiments in the comments section of Cyndi Lauper’s Instagram post. The sentiment score is 0.86, and the comments section is overall very positive tone. There are specific topics in the comments section that are heavily positive, completely neutral, or few negative tones associated with them. For example, Cyndi Lauper has a very positive tone in the comments, and she is the original poster. Other very positive comments include the “#VOTE” and more comments supporting Lauper with emojis such as “❤️”. Completely neutral topics were about the incoming “red wave” for the midterm election and about former President Trump for the next presidential election. The fairly negative topic was about the D.C. “swamp”, referring to corruption in Washington, D.C.

The concepts of the sentiment analysis give more context to what the commenters are talking about. This analysis also predicts the most reoccurring and most important concepts in the comments section. In this comments section, the top five concepts, according to this tool, are reproduction, voting, Cyndi Lauper, child, and woman.

Above describes the top sentiments in the comments section of Killer Mike’s Instagram Post. The overall sentiment score is 0.38, so the overall comments section has a fairly positive tone. Within the comments, there are specific topics that have more positive and negative tones associated with them. For example, Killer Mike, the poster, has an overall positive tone in the comment’s responses. However, comments about Raphael Warnock and Herschel Walker both have very negative tones overall.

The concepts give more context to the commenters’ discussions. This analysis predicts the most reoccurring and most important concepts. In this comments section, the top five concepts, according to this tool, are Joe Biden, voting, luck, Marxism, African Americans.

Illustration 11: John Rich Word Map



The top ten words and emojis in John Rich’s comments section of his Instagram post include: “Red”, “us”, “hope”, “🙏”, “wave”, “God”, “praying”, “❤️”, “vote”, and “moon”.

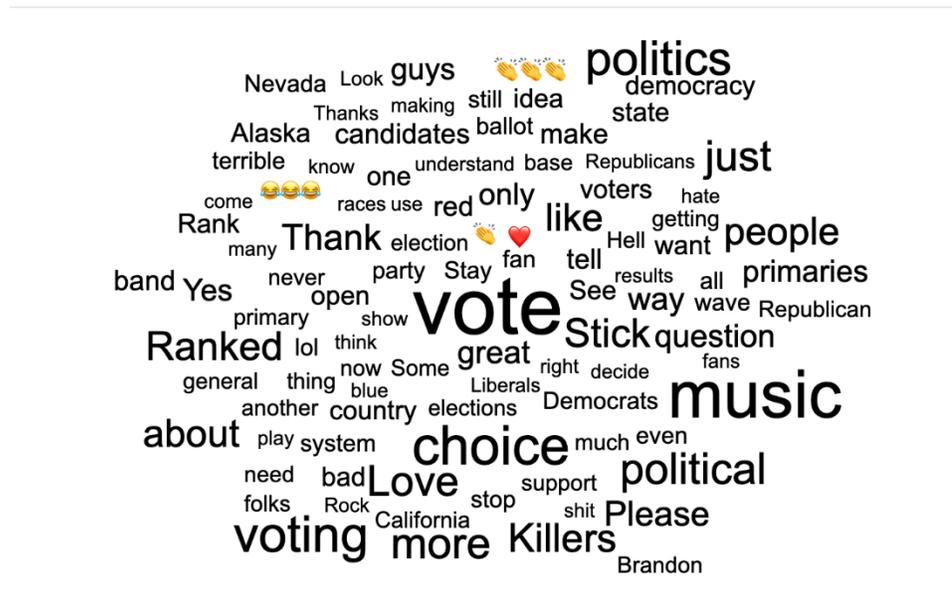
Illustration 12: John Rich Sentiment Analysis



Above describes the analysis of the top sentiments in the comments section of John Rich’s Instagram post. The sentiment score is 0.64, and the comments section’s tone is fairly positive. Within the comments, there are specific topics that have mostly negative and some positive tones associated with them. For example, the 30,000 and 3:00AM topics are very negative. These topics refer to the conspiracy found in the Republican party that there were 30,000 votes that found at 3:00am. The few positive topics were about Lord Kemp, which refers to praising the Lord about Republican Governor of Georgia Brian Kemp, and Blake Master, a Republican Senate candidate in Arizona.

The concepts of the sentiment analysis provide context to the comments section. This analysis predicts the most reoccurring and most important concepts. In the comments section of Rich’s post, the top five concepts, according to this tool, are God, the United States, voting, prayer, and electoral fraud.

Illustration 13: The Killers Word Map



The top ten most used words and emojis from The Killer’s comment section are “vote”, “music”, “choice”, “voting”, “politics”, “more”, “political”, “Love”, “just”, and “Ranked”.

Illustration 14: The Killers Sentiment Analysis



Above describes the analysis of the top sentiments in the comments section of The Killers’ Instagram post. The sentiment score is -0.32 , which is a fairly negative overall comment section tone. In the comments, there are specific topics that have negative and neutral tones associated with them. For example, Democrats, “2 years ago”, and liberals have very negative tones. The “2 years ago” refers to criticism of the band not discussing politics during the presidential election year of 2020. The neutral-toned topics are California, “#VOTE”, and the hashtag Nevada means home. That hashtag refers to the home state of The Killers.

The concepts of the sentiment analysis lay out context to what the commenters are talking about. This analysis also predicts the most reoccurring and most important concepts in the comments section. In this comments section, the top five concepts, according to this tool, are mind, voting, liberalism, political party, and democracy.

For Katy Perry's and The Linda Lindas' Instagram posts, the following news sources describe the general reaction to their posts about the 2022 midterm elections. Billboard magazine describes the fans' reactions from Twitter to Perry's post. The fans have an overall negative reaction to her post, with the theme across reactions being hypocritical – where fans notice her support for social issues like reproductive rights but then support a Republican candidate for mayor of Los Angeles (Kaufman, 2022). According to AsAmNews, a nonprofit media organization, they mention the sold-out performance The Linda Lindas had for the “Get Out the Vote” show with Vice President Kamala Harris (Xiao, 2022). This performance was specifically to get out the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander vote. The overall tone of the news article was positive regarding The Linda Lindas' participation, and the topic of get out the vote had a positive tone as the article mentions that population of voters were highly motivated to vote in 2022. Overall, these word maps, sentiment analysis, and news articles provide a qualitative perspective to my research question, and examples of musicians that engaged their audiences to vote.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Survey Discussion

The survey results provided a bigger picture to my research question. For instance, in the demographics section, participants who would describe themselves as female were more likely to lean liberal or extremely liberal compared to participants who would describe themselves as male. This shows that participants in my survey who described themselves as women were more likely to be involved in social issues that were similar to the Instagram posts that highlighted those same social issues. In the registered to vote and previous voting history figures, more participants reported that they voted in 2022 than in previous years. This is a change, as typically there is more turnout during presidential election years but due to the media messaging and online political campaign, literature shows that the change is due to those online voter engagement methods (Bond, Fariss, Jones, et al., 2012). Thus, there is more turnout for the 2022 midterm year as compared to the 2020 presidential election year.

When viewing the subjective opinions of participants about their agreement regarding the four methods of voter engagement (television ads, online ads, musicians on social media, and actors on social media) on average people felt somewhere between somewhat disagree and neither disagree nor agree that each of these four methods of voter engagement influenced their decision to vote. Of these four methods, on average,

people felt that musicians had a slightly stronger effect on their decision to vote. With the objective relationship between the voter engagement methods and registration to vote, participants who were registered to vote were more likely to remember the television ads and online ads the most. Musicians and actors on social media have similar trends of participants who were registered to vote were more likely to remember musicians' and actors' posts, but at a lesser number than those who remembered television ads and online ads. This refers to the literature that due to the success of television ads, online ads would be equally effective, and they have been for this midterm election year (Gueorguieva, 2008). With registration to vote, the objective relationship between the four voter engagement methods and participants who voted in 2022 showed that television ads and online ads were still compelling people to vote, as were musicians who posted on social media. Actors on social media made no difference to participants who voted in 2022. This is an important finding, as musicians on social media are somewhat compelling people to go vote in the 2022 midterm elections. Importantly, the sample size is too small to make a statistically significant conclusion for any of these methods of voter engagement. However, comparing these 4 forms of voter engagement, the TV ads seem to have had the strongest correlation with voter turnout compared to online ads, musicians who post on social media, and actors who post on social media.

Word Map & Sentiment Analysis Discussion

The word maps describe the most frequently used words that appeared in the comments sections of the selected Instagram posts. With Cyndi Lauper's word map, there

is an overarching theme of voting among her post's comments, as well as support for Lauper's post about the social issues she supports. This can be seen as people are engaged in what Lauper is posting and reacting positively. For Killer Mike, voting was another frequently used word to describe the post about the Georgia runoff election. The two candidates also appear as the comments suggest debate about both Warnock and Walker with context of Georgia's election, and how it shows that not only this post, but majority of posts selected were promoting about state-specific issues that were on the ballot. This is important as midterm election years do not have a presidential election, but hold many House of Representatives, Senate, governor, and local elections. John Rich's post shows the frequency of words like "red" and "praying" are indicative of commenters aligning their views with Rich, so the demographic fan base of Rich's shares his views and ideologies about the 2022 midterm elections. This can contribute to Rich's audience having already implicit opinions about candidates running in the 2022 midterms, and that influences voting behavior (McDermott, 1998). Lastly, The Killers share the pattern of "voting" appearing in the comments section frequently as well as "music" and "ranked". "Ranked" refers to ranked choice voting, which is what The Killers were advocating for in their original post. The patterns here are indicative of the commenters' discussion about ranked choice voting. The use of The Killers' post is a way for people to get political information (Ellinas, 2018). The post also can then influence viewers political mobilization based on the band's own Internet persona (Margetts, John, Hale, & Yasseri, 2016).

Overall, the word maps demonstrated how the posts, despite being about different state issues and ideologies, all had one word that was frequently used - “vote”. The use of this word appearing the most frequently across the four posts shows that the commenters are engaging in discussion about voting and promoting others to vote as well in the online setting. As the literature has mentioned, those that engaging in discussion about voting and political topics are more likely to translate those behaviors offline and in the voting booth.

The sentiment analyses show the tones of the comment section across the four posts. There are key similarities and differences between the four and they showcase a larger picture of the general sentiment of voter engagement from musicians on social media. Three out of the four posts have a general mix of positive and negative sentiments with the full comment section being positive. This is not the case for The Killers’ Instagram post, as that has the only full comment section with a negative overall analysis. The topics across all four posts included references to politics, whether discussing specific candidates or political parties like Democrat and Republican. These topics were either seen as neutral or very negative. The sentiment shows that commenters were more likely to react negatively or at least neutrally to any type of candidate presented or the political party associated. Even if the post did not outwardly state a political party, it would still be mentioned and be reactive. The exception is found in Rich’s post, where the candidates mentioned were positive topics. This is due to the notion of Rich appealing to his own demographic audience, and that influenced their reaction. The concepts across all four of these posts include voting. The concept of voting appearing across the four

posts is very important, as it shows that the commenters are discussing voting as part of the larger conversation brought on by the initial post. It demonstrates that individuals are receiving the political messaging and are discussing within the online space and will translate that political messaging into real-life voting behavior (Bond, Fariss, Jones, et al., 2012). The concept of contextualizing voting in these online spaces affirms that the method of musicians posting on social media is at least prompting individuals to discuss and debate about voting in the comment section.

The news articles for the remaining two posts also provide insight into sentiment towards Perry's and The Linda Lindas' Instagram posts. For Perry, individuals reacted on Twitter as her comments were disabled on her post. This shows that Perry was attempting to control some of her followers' reactions based on her voting for a Republican candidate. The Twitter responses still demonstrate that fans reacted negatively to her voting for Republican candidate Rick Caruso and fans telling others to vote for Democrat Karen Bass (Kaufman, 2022). This is interesting as it adds another layer to the musician posting on social media, where the post is re-contextualized to fans prompting other fans of the artist to vote. This still creates online discussion about voting between fans and influences their decision to vote in 2022. With The Linda Lindas, they were attempting to increase voter turnout, but have disabled their Instagram comments. Based on the age of the group (three out of four members are minors), this is the inference to why I believe their comments are turned off to thwart away any reaction towards the band members that are minors. With that, I believe their post is still attempting to motivate young AAPI voters in the 2022 midterms. The positive tone of the news article about the Linda Lindas

determines that the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) voters were motivated to vote in 2022, and their presence and post could help members of their community to vote. Both news articles discuss how voting is still a prominent factor in the musician's posts, and the reception of those posts to vote (whether that is for the candidate the musician promotes or not).

Overall, the survey and analysis of Instagram posts both provide insight to whether voter turnout in 2022 was motivated by musicians posting. I think these overall findings do demonstrate that musicians posting on social media, like Instagram, does compel individuals to vote. The participants of the survey recorded their social media use, if they followed musicians, if they are registered to vote, and if they voted in 2022. The objective relationship between musicians on social media and registration as well as voting in 2022 shows that there is some overlap between the two, and that their subjective opinion on if they were influenced to vote by musicians is telling a different perspective. Participants may dismiss a musician's post influencing their decision to vote, but the objective relationships tell that there are individuals who recall musicians' posts and have voted. That relationship is present and is a way to see how voters were influenced by those posts. The analyses of Instagram posts also highlight this relationship between musicians posting and voter turnout as individuals in the comment sections were talking about voting. Discussing political mobilization messaging, like voting, is shown to drive offline voting behavior, and whether there were positive or negative reactions towards a candidate or political party, the context of voting was consistent and present. From those

posts and the comment sections, it can be inferred that musicians were in some way impacting voter turnout in the 2022 midterm election.

I believe that this research can be developed towards analysis during a presidential election year. Future elections will continue to use social media as a form of campaigning, as studies have noted that during the early years of MySpace and YouTube (Gueorguieva, 2008). There is more to be done, especially surveying young voters in swing states like Ohio. This study can be duplicated to other states and university campuses to also see how geographical locations receive different campaign content (Geys, 2005). Overall, a larger sample size and more representative sample would improve this research, and it would continue important conversations about voter turnout and voter motivation among young adults.

Chapter 6. Limitations

There are limitations in this research from both quantitative and qualitative methods. From the survey, the total number of participants is 77, which is too small of a sample size to consider any statistical significance in analysis. There are possible threats to validity, internal and external, due to this research study not being a true randomized sample. The survey utilized convenience sampling strategy from voluntary participants and was not a truly randomized sample of students at Ohio State University. There were limitations within the survey respondents as well, where those that responded do not reflect the complete representation of students at Ohio State University.

There are some limitations to using these Instagram posts as well, as I cannot see the total number of engagements of the posts. This is the total number of people who have looked at the posts, liked or scrolled past. Only the account holder has that information. The likes on an Instagram post do not indicate how a person feels about that post. There is a difference in accounts that only engage by liking a post, compared to those that leave a like and comment. Of thousands that like one of the posts, there are then a few hundred comments that I can use to determine their tone about that post.

In terms of the qualitative methods, there are limitations within the use of Instagram and the sentiment analysis. Instagram does not represent all followers of these selected musicians, as many musicians have multiple presences on various social media

platforms. Instagram is one that was chosen due to the diversity of demographics, such as age groups, that use Instagram. Sentiment analyses have their own limitations as well. The analysis program is subjective, and it assumes that there is a distinction between positive and negative sentiment. There can be different interpretations of the text that are analyzed and could be interpreted as positive by one person and negative by another. Sentiment analysis programs are also limited in terms of multilingualism. A program may not be able to detect text in languages that it was not trained in. Language nuances and cultural contexts may affect the text sentiment. These are the combined limitations of the mixed methods approach in this research study.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

The information gathered from students at Ohio State University and from comment sections of musicians' posts provide a case for how musicians using social media can impact voter turnout. From this research, there are key findings from both surveys and Instagram posts. The quantitative surveys demonstrated how young adult voters engaged with different methods of voter engagement, and what the most effective ways were. Surveys showed that television ads and online ads were most effective, but musicians posting on social media was somewhat effective as well. The qualitative Instagram comments, the word maps and the sentiment analyses both showed that the commenters were discussing voting across all the posts. As previous literature has noted, individuals that discuss politically mobilizing messaging are more likely to transfer those discussions offline with their friends and influence their voting behavior (Bond, Fariss, Jones, et al., 2012). As political messaging is reinforced on social media by these posts, as are individuals' voting habits. The posts on social media created by musicians can impact voter turnout.

The study shows that there was a relationship between musicians posting on social media and voter turnout and impacting voter turnout positively. The focus on young adult voters also shows what effective methods of voter engagement were in 2022, and looking forward to future elections how that may change or stay the same. Future

studies can continue to look at the relationship between a musicians' use of social media and voter turnout. This study can be done at other universities that have swing state status like Ohio ("Ohio Presidential Election Voting History", 2023). The more participants that are involved in a study like this can better determine the relationship between musicians on social media and voter turnout. Continuing the conversations about voter turnout and voter motivation around young adult voters would be impactful as that is the emerging demographic that regularly uses social media.

This study indicates that musicians' posts on social media are a method of voter engagement. Those posts have become comparable to television ads and online ads as election years come and go, and these posts are featured due to the algorithmic nature of social media platforms. There is a need for voter turnout and motivation for young adults, and this method is a potential, untapped source for it.

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Appendix A. Consent Form & Survey Questions

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Turn out the Vote: How Musicians Mobilize on Social Media

Protocol Number: 2022E0949

Researcher:

Leigh Ziegler

Sponsor:

Rachel Skaggs

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

Procedures/Tasks:

You will be asked a series of questions about your social media use, musicians, and voting.

Duration:

The length of the interview will be between 5 to 10 minutes. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:

The risks to participating are sharing of information regarding social media use or voting behavior. The benefit of contributing is the opportunity to participate in an academic research study.

Confidentiality:

We will work to make sure that no one sees your online responses without approval. But, because we are using the Internet, there is a chance that someone could access your online responses without permission. In some cases, this information could be used to identify you.

Also, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- Authorized Ohio State University staff not involved in the study may be aware that you are participating in a research study and have access to your information; and
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Future Research:

Your de-identified information will not be used or shared for future research.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By agreeing to participate, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

This study has been determined Exempt from IRB review.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Leigh Ziegler at ziegler.228@buckeyemail.osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251 or hsconcerns@osu.edu.

Providing Consent

I have read (or someone has read to me) this page and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am not giving up any legal rights by agreeing to participate.

To print or save a copy of this page, select the print button on your web browser.

Please click the button below to proceed and participate in this study. If you do not wish to participate, please close out your browser window.

Opening Statement:

Hello, thank you for participating in this survey. This survey is for research about social media use, musicians, and voting. The responses will be used for research for my Master's Thesis at The Ohio State University. There are no wrong answers. You will be anonymous. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can quit at any moment. By acknowledging this, you consent to participating.

1. Please select all social media sites that you currently use.
 - a. Facebook,
 - b. Twitter,
 - c. Instagram,
 - d. TikTok,
 - e. Reddit,

- f. WeChat,
- g. Other:___

2. If you use any of these platforms, do you follow or engage with any musicians there? Check all that apply for any of the social media platforms that you clicked above.

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure,
- d) I don't use any of these platforms

3. Are you registered to vote?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure or N/A

4. When was the last time you voted in a general election? Select all the years that you voted.

Unsure or N/A, 2022, 2021, 2020, ..., 2000

5. Do you follow or engage with any musicians on social media?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure

6. Do you remember if any of these musicians posted about past elections on your platform of choice?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure,
- d) I don't follow or engage with any musicians on social media

7. Do you follow or engage with any actors on social media?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure

8. Do you remember if any of these actors posted about past elections on your platform of choice?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure,
- d) I don't follow or engage with any actors on social media

9. Do you remember if any of these actors posted about past elections on your platform of choice?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure,
- d) I don't follow or engage with any actors on social media

10. Do you remember seeing any TV ads promoting voter turnout, campaigns, or political issues?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure

11. Do you remember seeing any online ads promoting voter turnout, campaigns, or political issues?

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Unsure

12. Please rate your agreement to the following statement: Musicians I follow or engage with on social media influenced my decision to vote.

- a) Strongly disagree,

- b) Somewhat disagree,
- c) Neither disagree or agree,
- d) Somewhat agree,
- e) Strongly agree

13. Please rate your agreement to the following statement: Actors I follow or engage with on social media influenced my decision to vote.

- a) Strongly disagree,
- b) Somewhat disagree,
- c) Neither disagree or agree,
- d) Somewhat agree,
- e) Strongly agree

14. Please rate your agreement to the following statement: TV ads influenced my decision to vote.

- a) Strongly disagree,
- b) Somewhat disagree,
- c) Neither disagree or agree,
- d) Somewhat agree,
- e) Strongly agree

15. Please rate your agreement to the following statement: Online ads influenced my decision to vote.

- a) Strongly disagree,
- b) Somewhat disagree,
- c) Neither disagree or agree,
- d) Somewhat agree,
- e) Strongly agree

16. Did any post(s) by musicians, actors, TV ads, or online ads influence you to *not* vote?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

Demographic Questions:

1. Age: number drop down
2. Gender: male, female, non-binary, other, prefer not to answer
3. Do you identify as LGBTQ+?: Yes or no
4. Race (Census Categories): White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race

5. Education Level: Less than high school, Completed high school, Some College (no degree), Associate's degree or equivalent, Bachelor's degree or equivalent, Master's degree, Professional degree, Doctoral degree
6. What would you consider your political alignment?: Extremely conservative, Conservative, Slightly conservative, Moderate/middle of the road, Slightly liberal, Liberal, Extremely liberal, Do not know/Cannot choose, N/A