**Celebrities and Their Role in Politics:
When Oprah Speaks, Do People Listen?**

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“I supported Barack Obama in 2008 because I believed then as I do now that he is the right man for the job,” Winfrey said in a statement. “I wanted to share my enthusiasm for his candidacy in hopes that others would see what I saw in him.” (Phillip 2011)

 As we can see from the above quote, Oprah Winfrey continues to be a staunch supporter of Barack Obama. In fact, according to the quote, she wishes that her enthusiasm for Obama would rub off on others. Winfrey was not the only eager supporter of Obama during both the 2008 and 2012 campaigns; many other celebrities voiced their opinions in the hope that potential voters would respond to the celebrities’ endorsements. From George Clooney to Will.i.am, Eva Longoria to Scarlett Johansson, celebrities endorsed Obama with the hope that their opinions would influence the attitudes and voting behavior of average citizens. After all, considering the coverage that celebrities receive in the media, it appears that the media considers celebrities’ political opinions and endorsements to be important; shouldn’t others feel the same? The primary goal of this research is to determine if there is a perception that people listen to celebrity political endorsements. Furthermore, does the proximity to Election Day have an effect on people’s perceptions about how much people listen to the endorsements of celebrities?

Research on the influence of celebrity endorsements typically focuses on young adults’ reactions. The effect of what celebrities say and do is assumed to be especially influential when it comes to informing young adults about what they should care about and the choices that they should make. Perhaps this assumption is due to findings emphasizing the importance of the media in politically socializing young people (Chaffee and Kanihan 1997), and the influence of celebrity-admirer attachments in shaping identity development in young adults (Boon & Lomore 2001). It also could be due to the contention that there is a significant connection between the lives of young people and the celebrity culture (Turner 2004; Inthorn & Street 2011). This may explain why research focuses on this age group. Or, it could be based on the convenience of having classrooms of young college students to survey. Whatever the reason, studies single out young adults as a group to analyze their responses to the endorsements and opinions of celebrities; hence, this research will follow the lead of this existing literature.

For this study, we address the following questions. Do young adults believe that people listen tothe political information they get from celebrities? Moreover, do the gender, ethnicity and partisanship of these young adults influence their perceptions of celebrities and their opinions? Finally, are young adults more likely to perceive that people are listening to political information from celebrities the closer it gets to Election Day?

 To address these questions, this paper utilizes a questionnaire to gather information about young adults’ perceptions of celebrity endorsements and opinions in regards to the political process. Responses to the questions are analyzed and conclusions are drawn. The paper begins with a review of the literature that provides a foundation for an analysis of the impact of celebrity political endorsements. Following the review, the current study is explained and its results are given. The paper concludes with what this tells us about the effect of celebrity endorsements and opinions and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Celebrity opinions and endorsements of political candidates, issues and office holders are now commonplace in the media even when elections are months away. Many actors and comedians, athletes and talk show hosts share their opinions with society in an attempt to influence the opinions of those who listen to them. Oftentimes these celebrities seek to persuade citizens to vote a certain way or advocate for certain issues such as ending poverty, encouraging debt relief and protecting reproductive freedom.

As we examine the influence of these celebrity opinions and endorsements, the literature on celebrity endorsements in advertising provides a starting point for this research. The advertising scholarship is well-developed and has addressed the effect of celebrity product endorsements on the opinions and intentions of consumers. According to these studies, celebrities capture and hold the attention of consumers (Premeaux 2005; Premeaux 2009; Biswas et. al. 2009); they also improve the recall of the message they convey (Friedman & Friedman 1979). Furthermore, celebrities have a positive effect on how consumers perceive the product because the consumers are more likely to relate to the celebrity (Byrne et. al. 2003) and believe the information presented by the celebrity (Kamins et. al. 1989). However, some suggest that the celebrity endorser must be carefully chosen (Friedman & Friedman 1979) and be perceived to have some expertise about the product to influence consumers (Erdogan 1999; Amos et. al. 2008). In the end, the endorsements of celebrities appear to improve the likelihood that consumers will choose the endorsed product (Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins et. al. 1989; Heath et. al. 1994).

Although this research focuses on the marketing of products, it provides a foundation for the current analysis of the effect of celebrity political endorsements on young adults. This is especially important since the literature on the influence of celebrity political opinions and endorsements on young people is limited (Jackson 2007). As we look at studies that have been done on the effect of celebrity political endorsements, we find research that focuses on the impact of celebrities on youth voting (Wood and Herbst 2007; Austin et. al. 2008). According to these studies, we can argue that celebrities have a mixed impact on motivating young people’s voting behavior. Celebrities can motivate young people to become informed and participate (Austin et. al. 2008), but they are not as influential on the voting behavior of first time voters as other individuals may be. According to Wood and Herbst, family members and significant others are more likely to influence first time voters than celebrities are (2007).

Further research examines the effect of celebrity political beliefs and endorsements on the political attitudes of young people (Jackson and Darrow 2005; Jackson 2007) by using a quasi-experimental approach to determine the impact of celebrity endorsements on college students. Jackson and Darrow’s quasi-experimental study of Canadian college students found that the endorsements of celebrities reinforce some of the political opinions that young people have and make unpopular statements more acceptable (2005). In Jackson’s study of college students in the U.S., he concludes that celebrities have a positive effect on young people’s attitudes; the likelihood that they will agree with a position increases if a celebrity endorses it (2007). However, he warns that not all celebrities have the same impact; the celebrity must be credible and an appropriate match with their endorsement.

Additionally, we find research that uses an experimental method to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements and political activity on the presidential candidate choices of college students and their views about political parties. Usry and Cobb (2010) utilized an initial pretest to define the meaning of the term “celebrity” and measure the traits of the celebrities specifically chosen for the study. The authors then used two experiments to measure the impact of endorsements made by the chosen celebrities. Both experiments found that celebrity endorsements are not beneficial for candidates. In fact, at times, the endorsements hurt the candidates. The experimental study by Anthony Nownes (2012) examined the impact of celebrity political activity on young adults’ attitudes about political parties. His study found the political activity of celebrities can influence young adults’ opinions about political parties as well as their opinions about the celebrities.

While the use of the quasi-experimental design to analyze the impact of celebrity endorsements allows the researchers to focus the respondents’ attention on specific celebrities, it does not allow respondents to suggest who they believe is a celebrity. In both studies (Jackson and Darrow 2005; Jackson 2007), the authors specified three chosen celebrities and analyzed students’ responses to statements made by the three celebrities. Thus, the authors, not the respondents, determined who was a celebrity.

A similar complaint can be made regarding the use of the experimental design in the Usry and Cobb research. Although the authors begin with twenty-two celebrities to evaluate, the list is narrowed down to analyzing the candidate endorsements of only four celebrities during the two experiments (two per experiment). Again, the results may be affected by the four celebrities that were chosen; the endorsements of other celebrities on the initial list may have been more influential and beneficial for the candidates. For the Nownes study, the author chose two celebrities to use in the posttest. The author’s choice of celebrities could have influenced the results of this study.

Instead of analyzing the potential influence that celebrities have on young people’s political beliefs and behavior, Jennifer Brubaker took a different approach to studying the relationship. She employed third-person effects theory to determine if respondents were influenced by celebrities’ endorsements during the 2004 and 2008 Presidential elections. Utilizing the results from surveys administered to college students, Brubaker found that people were more likely to expect a greater celebrity influence on others than on themselves (2011). The fact that the author did not find first-person effects—where individuals perceive an effect on themselves—supports the findings of Usry and Cobb (2010) and Wood and Herbst (2007).

Focusing more on the reasons why citizens respond the way they do to celebrity politics, Inthorn and Street (2011) use thirteen focus groups and twenty-six in-depth interviews to tap into the opinions of young people in the United Kingdom. They caution, like other scholars (Jackson and Darrow 2005), that all celebrities are not equal. Some celebrities are more credible and respected than others and this must be considered when analyzing the influence of celebrities on people’s opinions and decisions. However, their homogeneous sample of white, middle-class young people and their limited use of focus groups and interviews does not lend itself to generalizing about the celebrity influence on the opinions of young people in the United Kingdom.

The extant literature provides a broad picture of what scholars are attempting to identify: the potential impact on young adults of what celebrities say regarding political behavior, issues and candidates. Building on this research, this study examines the responses of college students to the following questions. Do young adults view celebrities as more knowledgeable about politics than the average person, and do they believe citizens are more likely to listen to celebrities than other people about political issues? In addition, do the gender, ethnicity and partisanship of the young people have an effect on their responses? Furthermore, are the responses of young adults different during the year before the election in comparison to the year of the election?

The Current Study

 The general purpose of this study is to answer the questions above. However, the first action that is needed is to clarify what is considered a celebrity. Although a celebrity is usually defined as a “famous person”, this study is more specific in its definition to avoid ambiguity. For this research the definition of a celebrity is a person who is known as an actor, actress, comedian, singer, musician, talk show host or athlete.

Methodology

This study employs a questionnaire that was administered in fourteen lower-division American Politics classes at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). Six of the classes were conducted during the fall 2011 semester, two were held in spring 2012, four were during the summer 2012 semester, and two took place in the fall 2012 semester. These classes were chosen due to the requirement that all students who graduate from a California State University must complete the general education American Institutions course requirement which this course fulfills. By choosing this course it is also highly unlikely that the students would have the opportunity to complete the questionnaire more than once.

Additionally, by utilizing these fourteen classes, data was gathered from a diverse group of students including all grade levels (entry-level to senior-level) and a variety of university majors. Of these majors, 21% were from the Humanities and Social Sciences, 19% were in the College of Business and Economics, 17% were from the Health and Human Development College and 12% were in the College of Communications; the remainder of the majors were either undeclared (8%) or in the colleges of Natural Science and Math (9%), Engineering/Computer Science (7%) or Arts (7%). Furthermore, the sample of 1,629 students[[1]](#endnote-1) represented the ethnic diversity of the university with 31 % Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, 31% White/Anglo/Caucasian, 25% Asian or Pacific Islander, and the remainder either Black/African American (3%) or other (10%). This diversity may provide different results from previous findings due to the lack of ethnic diversity in the other studies (Pease & Brewer 2008; Usry & Cobb 2010; Inthorn & Street 2011). The sample also represented the students’ political diversity with 37% of the students identifying themselves as Democrats, 22% identifying with the Republican Party, 22% identifying themselves as Independents and the remainder classified as other. Finally, there were more female students than male students in the sample with 59% female and 41% male respondents. The questionnaire included questions on sources of political information, attitudes regarding celebrities’ endorsements, attitudes about political relevance of celebrities and demographic information about the respondents. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

 The diversity of this sample provides the opportunity to examine attitudinal differences about celebrity endorsements that may be due to the gender, ethnicity or partisanship of the respondents. By utilizing the advertising literature, there are justifications for expecting gender and ethnic differences. Findings that consider the effect of respondent gender on attitudes about celebrity product endorsements are mixed. Certain studies contend that women are more likely to be influenced by celebrities than men are (Bush et. al. 2004; Premeaux 2005; Premeaux 2009). However, others argue that women are less likely to be influenced by celebrity endorsements than men (Bashford 2001), or that there is no difference between women’s and men’s attitudes about celebrities (Dix et. al. 2010).

 When considering the effect of respondent ethnicity, the research is limited. There is research that compares responses to the ethnicity of models in advertisements among different ethnic groups (Appiah 2001; Whittler & Spira 2002). In addition, a few studies address the effectiveness of using African American celebrities to endorse products for African American consumers (Alleyne 2002), Latino celebrities to attract the attention of Latino consumers (Khermouch 1999; Wentz 2002) or analyzing advertising practices that target Asian Americans (Morimoto & La Ferle 2005). Despite the limited amount of research, the importance of considering the ethnicity of consumers in advertising strategies is stressed in all of these and can justify the expectation that ethnicity may influence attitudes about celebrities and their endorsements.

 Partisan differences have been documented in public opinion polls. According to the Harris Poll, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to believe that celebrities have a positive effect politically (55% vs. 36%). Besides the two main parties, over half of the Independents (57%) stated that celebrities have little or no effect on the political causes they are involved in (Harris Interactive 2008). Furthermore, polling done by CBS News found that 69% of Republican respondents stated that celebrities should not get involved in politics in comparison to only 33% of Democratic respondents. In this same poll, women are found to be more supportive of celebrity political involvement than men (56% vs. 36%) supporting some of the findings in the advertising literature (CBS News/New York Times 2007). Based on these results, we can expect to find differences in attitudes about celebrities that can be attributed to the partisanship and the gender of the young adults.

 In addition, this study addresses the possibility that young adults’ perceptions of people listening to celebrity endorsements may be different in a non-election year in comparison to an election year. There are a couple of reasons why we can expect this difference. First, as West and Orman state, more celebrities express their political opinions and endorsements during the final days before the election (2003). Although they are visible before and throughout the campaigns, celebrities seem to come out of the woodwork the closer it gets to Election Day. This may be due to campaigns using celebrities to get voters’ attention, or because celebrities choose to speak out about candidates and issues that are important to them when they think voters are paying the most attention. Thus, we see more celebrities voicing their political opinions in the media as well as at events leading up to the election.

The second reason is that young adults, like others, pay more attention to the media for political information in the final days of a campaign (Jamieson & Kenski 2006). Therefore, whoever is endorsing a candidate or discussing political issues in the media at that time will most likely have a larger audience to address. As mentioned before, celebrities and their opinions tend to be more noticeable in the media as elections come closer. As a result, the perception that young adults have about the knowledge and influence that celebrities have on average citizens may change due to increased media coverage as the election approaches.

Hypotheses

 Throughout campaigns the media is saturated with a variety of celebrities endorsing a political candidate or advocating for a specific issue. As we see more celebrities being involved in politics, we can surmise that “someone” believes associating celebrities with a candidate or issue can be beneficial, but why is it beneficial? According to Darrell West and John Orman (2003), celebrities are independent from typical political interests and thus are not beholding to any specific group or individual. As a result, celebrities are viewed as the closest thing to an “autonomous free agent” that can be found in the U.S. political system, distancing them from negative feelings that can be associated with politicians and government.

In addition, it is also believed that celebrities are informed about political matters, perhaps more informed than the average citizen. According to Jackson (2007) celebrities who have shown a commitment to a candidate or an issue are actually viewed as knowledgeable and credible political sources. Oprah Winfrey’s support for Barack Obama and Chuck Norris’ endorsement of Mike Huckabee are examples of these celebrities’ sincere and well-informed commitment to their candidates. A celebrity’s dedication to an issue can also provide credibility to their advocacy. It may be due to their personal experience with an issue, such as Magic Johnson’s support for HIV-AIDS care and research (Pillow 2012) and Michael J. Fox’s advocacy for Parkinson’s awareness and research (Rabidoux 2009). Or, it may be because they are willing to travel to war-torn countries for a first hand perspective on the conflicts as Angelina Jolie, Mia Farrow, George Clooney and Ben Affleck have done (Kristof 2011). Whatever the reason, this type of endorsement and activism provides celebrities with the authority to frame issues. Furthermore, evidence of government respecting this authority can be found in the increased rates of celebrity testimony before the U.S. Congress regarding the issues the celebrities are dedicated to (Thrall et. al. 2008). Based on this information, the first hypothesis is:

*H1*: Young adults believe that celebrities are more informed about politics than the average citizen.

In addition to the general question of whether young adults believe that celebrities are more informed about politics than the average citizen, we also explore what types of young adults are more likely to believe this.Based on the literature cited earlier, we test for impacts that may be due to respondent gender, ethnicity and partisanship. We also test for the impact of proximity to Election Day. This variable is measured as a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the survey was conducted at any time during the election year of 2012. Finally, we also tested for any impact based upon the type of news source that was relied upon by the students.Students were asked to identify their sources of political information; the variable measures the extent the students rely upon internet sources.

Besides being viewed as independent of the political system and a credible source of information, we know that celebrities are experienced with being in the spotlight and dealing with the public. They are used to being covered by the media as well as handling fans and others who seek information about their public and private lives (West & Orman 2003). The result of this attention is the necessity for celebrities to understand their audience and be able to communicate with them for the purpose of maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship.

As we consider who people listen to for their political information, it is logical to think that politicians could be trusted sources of political information. After all, they would need to know the political system to be able to run a successful campaign or perform the duties required in a government office. However, opinion polls (Gallup Poll, Pew Research Center, CNN Poll) reveal that trust in government and politicians has declined over the years to the point that Americans state they trust their own political judgment more than they trust the opinions and decisions of politicians (Newport 2010). These negative opinions are based on citizens’ attitudes that politicians are corrupt and self-serving, and that they are out of touch with the needs of average citizens (Bennett 1997). Others insist politicians will say what is necessary to appeal to their audience (Graber 1976).

Thus, due to celebrities’ autonomous nature, their perceived credibility, and their skill at communicating with average citizens, the second and third hypotheses for this study are based on the respondents’ perception that citizens listen to celebrities for political information more than they listen to others, including politicians and experts. For the second hypothesis, the logic behind the lack of trust in government and politicians that is mentioned above is used. Therefore, the second hypothesis is:

*H2*: Young adults perceive average citizens to be more likely to listen to a celebrity than a politician about political issues.

For the third hypothesis, the logic that citizens are more likely to listen to celebrities for political information than experts, such as scientists and academics, relies on the belief that experts’ information is not neutral; it is used to promote an agenda. Experts have very little authority over their work due to their loyalty to the individuals or organizations that they work for (Schudson 2006). Celebrities are also more skilled at communicating with the general public than experts are. After all, to be successful a celebrity must connect with the general public as opposed to writing or speaking to a select group of similarly educated individuals which is the goal of experts.According to Richard Schechner, the use of scientific or academic jargon throughout the various disciplines makes the information that is conveyed by experts difficult to understand for ordinary people (1995). Based on these expectations, the third hypothesis is:

*H3*: Young adults perceive average citizens to be more likely to listen to a celebrity than an expert, scientist or academic about political issues.

As with the first hypothesis, the respondent gender, ethnicity and partisanship plus the proximity to Election Day and the source of information, will be considered when testing the second and third hypotheses.

Results

To address these hypotheses, we examined both the frequency tables produced for each dependent variable and conducted ordered logistic regression analyses. For the first hypothesis concerning the belief that celebrities are more informed about politics than the average citizen, we find that young adults tend to disagree with this statement. As reported in Table 1, most respondents either strongly disagree or disagree with that statement. The median value is “disagree” while the modal one is “neutral” barely beating “disagree”. Therefore, in investigating the first person effect it appears that young people do not hold celebrities in high regard relative to average citizens in terms of political information.

In order to determine if certain types of young people are more or less likely to agree with the statement, we conducted an ordered logistic regression analysis for the following equation:

*Belief about Celebrity Knowledge = Democrat + Republican + Black/African American + Hispanic/Latino/Chicano + Asian/Pacific Islander + Internet as Source of Information + Proximity to Election + Women*

The partisan variables Democrat and Republican are included as dichotomous variables leaving Independents as the omitted comparison group. For the ethnicity variables, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, and Asian/Pacific Islander are included in the same manner leaving White/Anglo/Caucasian as the omitted comparison group. The variable measuring reliance on the internet as a source of information is measured on a 0-3 additive scale with a value of 1 added for each of the following sources of information identified as a source the respondent uses: (1) Internet News Sources, (2) Social Media, and (3) Internet Blogs. The Proximity to Election variable is measured to indicate whether or not the questionnaire was administered during an election year; for this case it is 2012. A gender variable is included such that men are the omitted comparison category. Finally, the dependent variable is the belief about celebrity knowledge coded on a 1-5 scale with greater values indicating a stronger belief that celebrities are more informed about politics than the average citizen.

Results for this preliminary analysis are reported in Table 2. The results suggest that Republicans are less likely to believe that celebrities are more informed about politics than Independents while there is no difference between Democrats and Independents. This result fits with the conventional wisdom that Republicans are more suspicious of celebrities in politics. The data also suggest that ethnicity is an important factor. Self-identified Hispanic/Latino/Chicanos and Asian/Pacific Islanders are more likely to believe that celebrities are more knowledgeable than average citizens than are self-identified White/Anglo/Caucasians. Finally, women are less likely to have this positive view of celebrity knowledge than men.

As discussed earlier, we are also interested in a third person effect. In particular, we are interested in how young adults perceive the impact of celebrities on politics for others. To examine this we look at two questions. First, we examine whether young adults believe that other average citizens listen to political information from celebrities more than they listen to politicians. Second, we look at the same question about who citizens are more likely to listen to for political information, but instead of relative to politicians we test it relative to academics, experts, or scientists.

While young people tend not to believe personally that celebrities are more politically informed than the average citizen, they tend to believe that average citizens listen to celebrities about political issues more than they listen to politicians. The data presented in Table 3 suggest this finding with both the median and modal categories indicating that young adults agree with this statement. In order to determine what type of young adults are more likely to believe this, we conducted an ordered logistic regression analysis similar to that reported in Table 2. These results, reported in Table 4, suggest that the only predictor for this statement is respondent gender with women less likely to believe this about their fellow citizens while men are more likely to believe this.

The results for the statement about whether young adults believe other citizens are more likely to listen to celebrities about political issues than to experts suggest similar findings. The distribution in Table 5 is very similar to Table 3 with the same median and modal categories but with slightly more distribution in the neutral category in Table 5 than in Table 3. The results of the ordered logistic regression analysis (see Table 6) find a similar relationship for gender with women less likely to believe this than men. There is also a relationship for partisanship with Republicans less likely to believe this than Independents. Finally, along ethnic lines Black/African Americans are more likely than White/Anglo/Caucasians to believe that other citizens are more likely to listen to celebrities for political information than they do to experts.

Conclusion

 From these results it appears that young adults believe celebrities are not any more informed about politics than the average citizen. However, we also see that young adults believe that other people are more likely to listen to a celebrity for political information than a politician, expert, scientist or academic. It appears that even though young adults personally may not think that celebrities are more enlightened about politics, they do believe that other people are more likely to listen to celebrities regarding political issues.

In addition, we find gender differences as far as respondents’ perceptions of how politically informed celebrities are, and how much average citizens listen to celebrities when it comes to political issues. We also find differences in attitudes based on the ethnicity and partisanship of the respondents. These differences include who young people perceive to be more politically informed and who average citizens are more likely to listen to for political information. One difference we did not find is an impact of the election year on young people’s perceptions; the proximity to the election variable was not statistically significant. Furthermore, this study provides evidence supporting Jennifer Brubaker’s contention that celebrity endorsements have third-person effects on college students rather than first person effects.

From these results we can gather that using celebrities to convey messages to the public is successful because people are more likely to listen to them than to others, even though the others may have more expertise. However, this is an analysis of young adults’perceptions; we must be careful in generalizing these results to the general population.

A future project focusing on the ethnicity differences found in this research is to compare the ethnicity of the respondents to the ethnicity of celebrities who are viewed as trustworthy and knowledgeable. Based on earlier mentioned findings in the advertisement literature (Alleyne 2002; Wentz 2002), we can surmise that young adults may be more likely to trust and listen to political information from celebrities who share the same ethnicity that they do. This research can help us understand the influence that celebrities have in the political world.

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**Table 1. Belief that Celebrities Are More Informed about Politics than the Average Citizen among Young Adults.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | 1.36% |
| Agree | 11.87% |
| Neutral | 36.65% |
| Disagree | 35.11% |
| Strongly Disagree | 15.02% |

N = 1,618; Median=Disagree; Mode=Neutral

**Table 2. Ordered Logisitic Regression Analysis of Types of Young Adults Who Believe Celebrities Are More Informed about Politics than the Average Citizens.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Coefficient | Robust Standard Error | Significance |
| Democrat | 0.012 | 0.112 | NS |
| Republican | -0.246 | 0.141 | \* |
| Black/African American | 0.241 | 0.353 | NS |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano | 0.365 | 0.124 | \*\*\* |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 0.632 | 0.126 | \*\*\* |
| Internet as Source of Information | 0.017 | 0.062 | NS |
| Election Year | -0.031 | 0.100 | NS |
| Women | -0.201 | 0.108 | \* |

N = 1360. Wald chi2 (8) = 40.91. Prob > chi2 = 0.00

\*p<.1; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01

**Table 3. Belief that Average Citizens are More Likely to Listen to Celebrities than Politicians about Political Issues.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | 17.56% |
| Agree | 53.99% |
| Neutral | 18.12% |
| Disagree | 8.97% |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.36% |

N = 1,618; Median=Agree; Mode=Agree

**Table 4. Ordered Logisitic Regression Analysis of Types of Young Adults Who Believe Average Citizens are More Likely to Listen to Celebrities than Politicians about Political Issues.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Coefficient | Robust Standard Error | Significance |
| Democrat | -0.144 | 0.120 | NS |
| Republican | -0.168 | 0.140 | NS |
| Black/African American | 0.312 | 0.402 | NS |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano | 0.138 | 0.128 | NS |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | -0.189 | 0.131 | NS |
| Internet as Source of Information | 0.098 | 0.066 | NS |
| Election Year | 0.032 | 0.104 | NS |
| Women | -0.382 | 0.108 | \*\*\* |

N = 1360. Wald chi2 (8) = 23.02. Prob > chi2 = 0.00

\*p<.1; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01

**Table 5. Belief that Average Citizens are More Likely to Listen to Celebrities than Academics/Experts/Scientists about Political Issues.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | 12.68% |
| Agree | 38.59% |
| Neutral | 22.08% |
| Disagree | 21.83% |
| Strongly Disagree | 4.83% |

N = 1,618; Median=Agree; Mode=Agree

**Table 6. Ordered Logisitic Regression Analysis of Types of Young Adults Who Believe Average Citizens are More Likely to Listen to Celebrities than Academics/Experts/Scientists about Political Issues.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Coefficient | Robust Standard Error | Significance |
| Democrat | -0.136 | 0.110 | NS  |
| Republican | -0.232 | 0.140 | \* |
| Black/African American | 0.842 | 0.362 | \*\* |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano | 0.134 | 0.121 | NS |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | -0.155 | 0.127 | NS |
| Internet as Source of Information | 0.030 | 0.059 | NS |
| Election Year | -0.056 | 0.099 | NS |
| Women | -0.349 | 0.103 | \*\*\* |

N = 1359. Wald chi2 (8) = 23.37. Prob > chi2 = 0.00

\*p<.1; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01

1. Sample sizes of responses to the questions differ due to missing data or multiple answers circled by respondents.

**Appendix**

**Directions: Please complete this questionnaire. Your responses are anonymous so do not write your name on the questionnaire.**

**For this questionnaire the definition of a celebrity is a person who is known as an actor, actress, comedian, singer, musician, talk show host or athlete.**

1. Which source of political information is the most reliable? (circle one)
a) Newspaper
b) Television news (including PBS and Cable news)
c) News Radio
d) Talk Radio
e) Newsmagazines
f) Internet news sources
g) Social media, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
h) Internet blogs

2. Which source(s) of political information do you use? (circle all that apply)
a) Newspaper
b) Television news (including PBS and Cable news)
c) News Radio
d) Talk Radio
e) Newsmagazines
f) Internet news sources
g) Social media, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
h) Internet blogs

3. Whose endorsement of a political candidate or issue do you trust the most? (circle one)
a) a politician or government official
b) an interest group
c) a family member
d) a friend
e) a celebrity
f) other

4. Would you vote for a celebrity for political office? (circle one) Yes / No

4a. If yes, which celebrity/celebrities would you vote for?

5. Would you vote for or against a candidate based on the endorsement of a celebrity? (circle one) Yes / No

6. Would you vote for or against a proposition based on the recommendation of a celebrity? (circle one) Yes / No

7. Which celebrity/celebrities’ endorsements or recommendations would you trust?

8. Why do you trust these celebrities?

9. Which political candidates are associated with the following celebrities?

Chuck Norris
Ben Affleck
Jessica Simpson
Oprah Winfrey
Adam Sandler
Jessica Alba
Will.i.am
Barbara Streisand
Whoopi Goldberg
Kelsey Grammer
Alex Rodriguez
Ellen DeGeneres

10. What are the political issues or causes associated with the following celebrities?

Bono
Angelina Jolie
Sean Penn
Kanye West
Stephen Colbert
Ashley Judd
Magic Johnson
Patricia Heaton
Jon Stewart
Sean P Diddy Combs
Sting
George Clooney
Michael J. Fox
Susan Sarandon
John Cougar Mellencamp

**Please rate the following statements by circling the response that most closely represents your opinion**:

11. Celebrities are more informed about politics than the average citizen. (circle one)
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

12. Celebrities convince people to think or vote a certain way. (circle one)
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

13. Celebrities should not get involved in political issues or causes. (circle one)
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

14. Average citizens are more likely to listen to celebrities than politicians about political issues. (circle one)
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

15. Average citizens are more likely to listen to celebrities than academics/experts/scientists about political issues. (circle one)
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

16. During political campaigns, too much attention is focused on celebrities. (circle one)
 Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

17. Celebrities should not run for political office. (circle one)
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

18. Celebrities draw attention to a political issue or candidate. (circle one)
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

19. Celebrities are effective at conveying political messages to the general public. (circle one)
 Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

20. In your opinion why do candidates use celebrities in their political campaigns?

21. What is your gender? (circle one)
a) Female
b) Male

22. What is your age?

23. What is your ethnicity? (circle one)
a) Asian or Pacific Islander
b) Black or African American
c) Hispanic/Latino/Chicano
d) Native American
e) White/Anglo/Caucasian
f) Other

24. What is the highest level of school you have completed? (circle one)
a) 12th grade
b) First year of college
c) Second year of college
d) Third year of college
e) More than three years of college

25. What is your college major?

26. Are you a registered voter in the United States? (circle one) Yes / No

27. What is your political party identification? (circle one)
a) Democrat
b) Independent
c) Republican
d) Other [↑](#endnote-ref-1)