
An Analysis of the Campaign Context in the U.S.: How did Political Parties Use Social Media in the 2014 Midterm Election Campaign?

Keywords:

Contextual Factors, Political Parties, Super PAC, Political Consultants, Social Media

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Abstract

Contextual factors influence the ways in which social media are used in elections. By observing the 2014 U.S. midterm election campaign, this paper will consider the impact of social media on political parties, the new professionalization of campaigns, and campaign finance reform. It will first address political parties' use of social media in the election campaign. Second, it will discuss which new trends in the professionalization of campaigns have been instigated by new media. Third, it will examine the role of super PACs and 501 (c) (4) organizations in the current campaign finance regulatory regime. These questions will be tackled in this paper based on interviews with those who played a firsthand role in the campaigns, newspapers, professional journals, and official documents, including political parties' websites. In conclusion, it will reveal three significant contextual factors to consider in the polarized social media environment of American election campaigns. One is that political parties use social media to advertise their campaigns to voters, while they still prefer to use e-mails as a fundraising source. Another is how the changing media environments affect media consultants and other types of political consultants. The more digital technology advances, the more the circumstance of political consultants changes. The other factor is that super PACs play an important role in providing plentiful campaign finance for candidates, although there are regulations banning coordination with individual candidates' campaigns under the current regulatory system. Thus, in the American election system and fundraising mechanism, will American political parties really have more presence in the election campaigns by using digital media? To further research on this topic, this question needs to be considered in depth.

1. Introduction

Contextual factors such as characteristics of the political party system, regulation of electoral processes, political culture, and the roles of old and new media in election campaigns influence the ways in which social media are used in elections. By observing the 2014 U.S. midterm election campaign, it will consider the impact of social media on political parties, campaign finance reform, and the new professionalization of campaigns in the U.S. Consequently, it will suggest further discussions on examining American election campaigns using social media in comparison with other countries.

It will first address political parties' use of social media in the election campaign. There is deeper partisan antipathy and starker political polarization in the U.S. than at any point during the last two decades (Pew Research Center 2014a, 6). Moreover, ideological overlap between the two parties has declined, and the rise of ideological consistency within parties has increased negative views of the opposite party (Pew Research Center 2014a, 6).

Furthermore, political polarization prevails in the current American social media community. It has affected voters' media habits, including their use of social media. Liberals and conservatives get political news from different news sources (Pew Research Center 2014b, 1). Consistent conservatives prefer Fox News as their primary news source, while consistent liberals prefer CNN and MSNBC. There is little overlap in the news sources upon which each group relies. Similarly, voters' social media spheres are divided between right and left. The report indicates that consistent conservatives are more likely to see favorable political opinions and views on

Facebook than are typical Facebook users. Here, "typical Facebook users" means, "Facebook users who see at least some posts about governments and politics on Facebook and pay at least some attention to them" (Pew Research Center 2014b, 7).

On the other hand, consistent liberals on Facebook tend to block or unfriend someone on social media if they disagree with something that person posted about politics (Pew Research Center 2014b, 4-7). Thus, in the polarized social media sphere, the following question will be addressed: how are political parties using social media to foster their relationship with voters?

Next, the paper will give an overview of the new regulatory environment around campaign finance. In the U.S., public funding is only available for presidential elections. The regulation of campaign financing was established by the 1972 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). The FECA has imposed strict contribution limits and disclosure requirements on candidates and national party committees. These statutory provisions based on FECA and subsequent rules adopted under the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) were not altered in advance of the 2012 election (Corrado 2014, 47). The regulatory environment around campaign finance has dramatically changed as a result of the Supreme Court's 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and subsequent legal and regulatory decisions (Corrado 2014, 46-47). The new regulatory environment around campaign finance has brought wealthy new political actors known as "super PACs" into election campaigns. They are considered to play an important role in campaign financing.

There are also critical organizations defined as "Section 501(c) organizations," which are named

after the applicable section of the Internal Revenue Code. The Center for Responsive Politics claims that spending by social welfare groups known as “501(c)(4) organizations” for the applicable provision of the tax code has dramatically increased in past election cycles (Center for Responsive Politics 2015a). Thus, the following question will be examined: what are the role of super PACs and 501(c)(4) organizations in the current campaign finance regulatory regime?

Third, the paper will discuss professionalization and the rise of a new class of political communication specialists in the social media election campaign. While political consultants have long played important roles in American campaigns, with a rapid proliferation of broadband and mobile phones, a new class of specialists is required to manage campaign social media, for example, by making campaign advertising available on voters’ mobile devices (Kiyohara 2013, 35–36).

As the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) 16th report (2015, 4-5) on competition in the market for the delivery of video programming shows, the number of subscribers to cable TV has been declining. Patterns of consumer behavior have changed with the high penetration of digital video recorders (DVRs), mobile digital television (DTV), Video on Demand (VOD), and social media. This pattern of program consumption has changed the political consultants’ world and affected campaign ads. Thus, we ask: which new trends in the professionalization of campaigns have been instigated by new media?

These questions will be tackled in this paper based on interviews with those who played a firsthand role in the campaign, newspapers, professional journals, and official documents, including political parties’ websites. The paper

will highlight the 2014 midterm election. However, these questions will be addressed in light of trends in the 2012, and 2016 presidential campaigns as well.

2. Context: Political Parties

(1) Social Media as New Campaign Ads

In the U.S., every presidential election since 2000 has showed us phases of campaign Internet use. Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign became a blueprint for American political parties on how to approach social media (Owen 2013, 238). Owen (2013, 246-247) claims that political parties’ approaches to social media have changed in the post-2008 election era and that the digital campaign played a more central role for the Democratic and Republican parties in the 2012 election than before. In the background, more and more registered voters have followed political parties on Facebook and Twitter (Pew Research Center 2014c, 3).

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Republican National Committee (RNC) attempt to appeal to voters to follow their Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. As of February 7, 2016, the DNC had 1,190,309 fans, and the RNC had 1,949,930 fans on Facebook. In addition, the DNC had 463,050 followers, and the RNC had 563,995 followers on Twitter. The numbers show that both the RNC and the DNC have many fans and followers on Facebook and Twitter. They both post content related to their candidates and negative statements against their rivals, the electoral process, issues, and events, including ads. However, the reality is that few people pay attention to the political parties’ engagements when posting and tweeting. The larger goals for the political parties in using social

media are to gain attention through other media sources that would reach a much larger audience (Owen 2013, 254–255).

Moreover, social media is the tool that allows political parties to deliver their messages to voters without being filtered by traditional media (AP 2012). For example, a day before the GOP's first TV debate of 2016 presidential candidates on August 6, 2015—although a lot of traditional media such as CNN delivered information about the event to voters—the DNC posted a three minute, 27 second video called “Brush up on basic GOP terms before tomorrow’s debate” on its Facebook page. Similarly, social media enables political parties to deliver their messages to their voters directly. However, it is not always interactive communication. In fact, for political parties, social media plays a “broadcasting” role in approaching voters. The national party committees were said to have paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for advertising on social media (Willis 2014). Interestingly, it is not a tool to communicate with voters interactively. Rather, like TV ads, it is to broadcast the political parties’ messages to voters.

In an interview with the author, Brandon English, Digital Director, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), also recognized the role of social media in spreading information. For political parties, social media is a new political advertising channel. According to English, Internet radio and video ads are effective. English mentioned that TV ads had not been replaced by online ads, but digital media was very useful to combine users’ demography and voters’ data profiles, which can allow the political party to do more micro-targeted campaign ads (English, 2015).

Pandora is also an interesting new advertising channel. On Pandora, which is a music-streaming

service, you can create your own profile page like Facebook, and, once you become “friends” with someone, you will see what songs your “friend” is hearing on Pandora. In a phone interview with the author, Sean Duggan, VP Advertising Sales, Pandora, also mentioned that Pandora’s information, including listeners’ zip codes, would be very helpful to campaign micro-targeting. He identified over 560 campaigns that used Pandora in 2014, while 180 campaigns did so in 2012. Based on the large number of Pandora’s audience/listeners, more campaigns preferred to use it in 2014 than previously (Duggan 2015).

On the other hand, the Republican Party recognizes that there remains a digital divide between it and the Democratic Party. Since 2008, the Democrats are considered to have left the Republicans far behind in social media use because the Obama campaign used it quite well to win the presidential election. It is still uncertain that the Republicans have caught up with the Democrats.

For example, in an interview with the author, Democratic strategic consultant Andrew Feldman said, “I don’t think they are catching up because database of voters for Democrats is better than Republicans (Feldman, 2015).” On the other hand, in a phone interview with the author, Republican pollster and political consultant Kristen Soltis Anderson said, “I don’t think there was a huge difference between the Republicans and Democrats as to the 2014 campaigns. Republicans caught up with using data and social media significantly (Anderson, 2015).”

As for the 2012 presidential election, the RNC recognized there was a digital divide between the Republicans and Democrats. The RNC led the Growth and Opportunity Project under Chairman Reince Priebus in December 2012. It announced

how to grow the Republican Party and improve its campaigns, and highlighted the importance of using new media and more digital technology because it felt that the Republican Party was behind the Democrats (Barbour et al, 2014, 24–25). Compared with the Democrats, the RNC held that building better data and analyzing the data were very important to improve its campaigns. It recommended that all media incorporate social media and mobile phones into their media campaign plans because consumption of media by audience was increasingly fragmented (Barbour et al, 2014, 40). However, at this moment, it may be hard to tell whether or not Republicans will catch up with Democrats in digital strategy during the 2016 election cycle.

(2) E-mail Remained an Important Fundraising Tool

Political parties see social media as a new advertising tool. Thus, another question should be considered here: how are they fundraising on the Internet? American elections need massive funds, and the amount of online donations has been dramatically increasing.

Many presidential candidates have started to use e-mails for their fundraising strategies since the early 2000s. Presidential candidates received online donations through their websites during the 2000 presidential election campaign (Bimber and Davis 2003, 38–39).

In addition, there was a new trend whereby candidates asked for smaller, multiple donations via social media, e-mail, telephone calls, and direct mail during the 2012 presidential election (Green et al, 2014, 81). They indicate that not only Obama but also some Republican presidential candidates such as Ron Paul had extensively used online fundraising (Green et al, 2014, 93). Thus, what are

political parties using for their online fundraising?

The short answer is that they prefer to use e-mail rather than social media. To explain why, I should mention that political parties play an important role in redistributing campaign funds and redistribute the money from party leaders and safe incumbents to candidates who are running in close races. In addition, the DNC and RNC get more involved in congressional elections (Herrnson et al, 2014, 149). Furthermore, the importance of Internet-based fundraising programs by political parties' efforts is reinforced (Herrnson et al, 2014, 150).

It is suggested that American political parties are following the example of their European counterparts by transforming their presence in campaigns using digital media (Owen 2013, 247). That may be explained by the fact that political parties play a more critical role in redistributing campaign fundraising.

I then would like to articulate why political parties prefer e-mail as their fundraising tool. I attended CampaignTech Conference East in Washington D.C. on April 21 and 22, 2015. One panelist said that social media was similar to broadcasting, while e-mail was like one-on-one conversation. E-mail is considered to be a more personal and effective social media tool in campaign fundraising.

The RNC also emphasizes that e-mail remains a very important source of fundraising and notes, "E-mail continues to generate significant revenues. State parties and campaigns must invest in the data to continue to grow their working e-mail lists" (Barbour et al, 2014, 58). It recognizes a big growth in online fundraising as well, as the RNC added 1.2 million donor e-mails to their file and 2.2 million additional e-mails (Barbour et al, 2014, 56).

The National Republican Senatorial Committee

(NRSC) also acknowledges the importance of the former presidential candidate's e-mail list. Mat Lira, executive director of the NRSC, said that e-mail was the NRSC's most successful digital fundraising source (Miller, 2014). In 2012, the Romney campaign rented almost every GOP e-mail list available to build its own list of contacts and donors. In 2014, the party used the Romney campaign's list as the most important source list for online donations. In October 2014, the NRSC emailed the list no fewer than 16 times in one week. E-mails were often addressed from Romney, while the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) also used it at least once. However, not only the Republicans but the DNC also used the e-mail list from the Obama campaign in 2012 (Miller, 2014).

In 2012, thanks to the 2008 Obama campaign, the Democratic Party had the advantage of an e-mail list. Laura Olin, a Democratic strategist, also said, "E-mail is still going to be the main driver. We had some success in 2012 with raising money online with social, but compared to e-mail it was still a drop in the bucket. E-mail is still going to be the most important fundraising tool in 2016" (Campaigns & Elections 2015, 28).

In the interview with the author, Brandon English also explained that e-mail played a more significant role in campaign fundraising and recruiting volunteers than social media because social media could spread information but it was easier to move people to action over e-mail (English, 2015).

However, the important thing is whether or not parties and individual campaigns have a good e-mail list. In the interview with the author, Andrew Feldman also said, "Online donation is very important. But social media fundraising doesn't work well, and it will be up to how good

your (the candidate's) e-mail list is" (Feldman 2015). It can be obviously said that e-mails remain fascinating tools for political parties' fundraising in the social media campaign era.

Furthermore, access to the voter database of the political party is crucial for presidential candidates. In the 2016 presidential election campaign, access to political party's voter databases is a big issue. The DNC shares a voter database with the presidential candidates who want to get its nomination. However, the DNC cut off the access by the campaign of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) because the campaign breached the firewall and accessed the voter data file of the Hillary Clinton campaign. The DNC charged that multiple staffers from the Sanders campaign downloaded the voter data of the Clinton campaign (Brumfield, Merica, 2015). On the other hand, the Sanders campaign sued the DNC in federal court and they said DNC tried to undermine the campaign (Treyz, Merica, Diamond, and Zeleny, 2015).

Thus, it can be likely said that political parties have gained more presence in election campaigns, providing the good e-mail lists that candidates need.

3. Context: Campaigning Money & Regulation

(1) Rise of Super PACs under the New Regulatory Regime

As noted already, the basic federal regulation of campaign financing was enacted by the 1972 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). The FECA has imposed strict contribution limits and disclosure requirements on candidates and national party committees. In addition, the Federal Election Commission (FEC), which administers and enforces the FECA, was

established by Congress in 1975. These statutory provisions based on the FECA and subsequent rules adopted under the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) did not change in advance of the 2012 election (Corrado 2014, 47).

However, the Supreme Court's 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and subsequent legal and regulatory decisions resulted in a new regulatory environment of unrestricted financial activities in federal campaigns (Corrado 2014, 46-47). The conservative group "Citizens United" produced a documentary movie criticizing Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and tried to air it during the 2008 presidential campaign. In opposition to their intentions, the FEC invoked the 2002 BCRA to stop "Citizens United" from airing the movie. "Citizens United" subsequently filed a lawsuit against the FEC that eventually made it to the Supreme Court, which found that the FEC had violated the First Amendment (Kiyohara 2013, 30-31).

The Supreme Court decision opened a new way for federal political committees called "super PACs" to use unlimited contributions to expressly advocate the election of candidates (Corrado 2014, 46). This phenomenon is based on the Court's majority ruling that the First Amendment does not permit restrictions on speech based on the identity of the speaker (Corrado 2014, 49). In short, the Court's decision permitted any organization that is allowed to engage in political activity to spend money independently in support of candidates.

The FEC thus implemented the decision in 2010 and approved super PACs as independent expenditures-only committees distinguished from traditional PACs. Super PACs can raise unlimited amounts of money from corporations,

unions, associations, and wealthy individuals, and spend unlimited amounts to advocate for or against political candidates. However, the FEC prohibits them from directly donating to political candidates or coordinating with political candidates on expenditures, such as campaign ads. In other words, super PACs should not be coordinated with political candidates. Still, super PACs often have close connections with candidates, congressional leaders, and party leaders (Magleby and Goodliffe 2014, 216).

It is said that super PACs played an important role in financing TV ads during the 2012 presidential campaign (Kiyohara 2013, 31, 38). For instance, "Restore Our Future," which supported Romney, broadcast advertisements attacking Newt Gingrich because Gingrich jeopardized Romney's lead in the polls before the Iowa caucuses (Magleby and Goodliffe 2014, 228). Most super PACs spent a tremendous amount of money on TV ads. Not only in presidential elections, but also in congressional elections, super PACs played an important role in financing (Magleby and Goodliffe, 2014, 229). With regard to the 2014 senate election, super PACs comprised half of the top 10 Senate election spenders (Vandewalker, 2015a, p. 7).

In the 2016 election cycle, super PACs have already helped presidential candidates. For example, a super PAC backing Carly Fiorina, a Republican presidential candidate, "is organizing events for the candidate in early nominating states, handling advance work and setting up merchandise tables (Confessore, 2015)." Also, Gold and Rucker (2015) reported that super PACs had played an extremely important role for fifteen Republican contenders that month.

The intense race among many Republican candidates causes candidates to run out of

money. The former Texas governor and Republican candidate Rick Perry was short of funding in early August 2015. His campaign was no longer able to pay its staff. The Opportunity and Freedom PAC, a super PAC supporting Perry, tried to backfill the campaign. Gold and Rucker (2015) quotes Austin Barbour, senior adviser to the Opportunity and Freedom PAC: "We knew we would have to do more than just paid media and there's nothing in the playbook that says we can't do that." The pro-Perry effort was one of the most epochal examples of super PACs playing a very important role in the 2016 presidential race (Gold and Rucker, 2015). Finally, Rick Perry withdrew from the presidential election campaign on September 11, 2015. It is too early to tell how long super PACs can prolong campaigns.

As of September 2015, super PACs fund many candidates, and Republican super PACs, in particular, have already raised or committed hundreds of millions of dollars in the 2016 election. On the other hand, Democrats have tighter restrictions on super PACs than Republicans, but super PACs will function to keep the race intense for a longer period (Confessore, 2015). Thanks to super PACs, cash-strapped campaigns will not need to withdraw from the race immediately.

(2) 501(c) (4) Organizations and "Dark Money"

Super PACs are not the only influential organizations that should receive attention here. There are also some types of 501(c) groups categorized by Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code. Among them, nonprofit and social welfare 501(c) (4) organizations play an important role in campaign financing. Since their primary purposes are social welfare activities, they can keep their

donors secret; on the other hand, standard political committees must disclose the donors under the FEC guidelines (Schwartz, 2012). They existed before the 2010 Supreme Court decision. The IRS brought a regulation into effect in 1959, which meant that these groups were allowed to participate in some political activities as long as politics was not their main purpose (Center for Responsive Politics 2015b). However, in 2012, they were considered the most-interested organizations since the number of such groups increased and since they rivaled super PACs in expenditures (Magleby and Goodliffe 2014, 243-244).

The primary purpose of 501(c) (4) organizations' activities thus should not be political engagement, while they can also receive unlimited donations from corporations, individuals, or unions. These donations are not tax-deductible, in contrast to 501(c) (3) organizations under the IRS code. Furthermore, there are some limitations on 501(c) (4) organizations getting involved in political activities. For example, they are not allowed to give money directly to candidates and endorse a particular candidate (Johnson 2016, 231). However, they can run ads mentioning issues such as regulations and taxes related to a candidate, and lobby for particular causes. They also do not have to disclose their donor lists to the IRS except during audits (Johnson 2016, 231). That is why these organizations' donations are often called "dark money" (Center for Responsive Politics 2015a).

Many groups and political operatives that formed super PACs also established affiliated 501(c) (4) organizations as they can provide choice to donors who want to contribute a huge amount of money yet remain anonymous (Corrado 2014, 67). For example, the conservative

501 (c) (4) organization, Crossroad GPS, and its sister super PAC, American Crossroads spent \$48 million in the 2014 midterm election. Both organizations have the same president, Steven Law. These two groups were the biggest outside spenders in the midterms, excluding the parties themselves (Vandewalker, 2015b). While Republican donors complained about both groups for spending hundreds of millions of dollars in 2012, only to lose most of the races in which they campaigned (Goldmacher, 2014), the Center for Responsive Politics shows that their success rate dramatically increased in the 2014 midterm election, as compared to the 2012 election (Center for Responsive Politics, 2012, 2014).

4. Context: Change of Professionalization

It is quite well known that political consultants have played a big role in U.S. election campaigns. The development of political consultants promoted the development of election campaigns from party-centered to candidate-centered (Herrnson 2013, 136). Furthermore, campaigns are considered to depend heavily on various political consultants such as media teams, pollsters, and direct-mail specialists (Johnson 2016, 235).

Since the 1990s, a transformation has occurred, which means professional political consultants have played a significant role in advising even those who run for office below the statewide level, and political consultants make key decisions and strategy as well as develop campaign communications for the clients (Johnson 2016, 15). However, Johnson (2016, 15) remarks that new digital technology such as mobile and the Internet is leading to another conversion.

As indicated previously, according to the FCC,

the number of subscribers to cable TV has been declining. Broadcasters too are using various ways to respond to consumers' demands, which means that they are providing their programs not only on traditional TV but also on mobile DTV, VOD, online video distribution, and social media (Federal Communications Commission 2015, 4). The change of consumption patterns thus has affected TV advertisements, and the revenue of TV ads is decreasing (Lafayette, 2015).

For instance, in the interview with the author, Kristen Soltis Anderson answered, "I think very much so," when I asked her, "Do you think change of media environment (consumption of TV programming from cable to online) affects political consultants' jobs? (Anderson, 2015)" In addition, in an interview with the author, Democratic political media and creative consultant Colin Rogero admitted that people's viewing habits had changed, although TV was still the primary information source for them. He commented about campaign ads in the 2014 midterm election, "The old way doesn't work well anymore." He also suggested that 30 seconds for TV ads was still standard because of cost effectiveness and repeat messages, but most Internet and mobile ads are 15 seconds long. He emphasized that the percentage of media budgets allocated for digital advertising for campaigns would continue to grow (Rogero, 2014).

In an interview with the author, veteran Democratic media consultant Peter Fenn suggested that popular media consumption had changed rapidly. Where advertising was concerned, he signified that people were watching programming on Apple TV and Amazon Prime rather than on network TV and cable TV. As for changing political consultants, since the way of media consumption was transformed,

Fenn attached significance to reaching voters who depended on smartphones and skipped TV ads on their DVRs. He commented, “people are relying on social media, so that creativeness is more important to media consultants. (Fenn, 2015)”.

Furthermore, as campaign strategies are becoming more and more digitalized such as through use of social media and creation of sophisticated data to reach voters, American election campaigns need more and more consultants. In the interview with the author, Andrew Feldman emphasized that data consultants came into election campaigns as new consultants. He told me that they played an important role in creating models for how campaigns could reach voters online (Feldman, 2015).

Thus, changes in programming consumption patterns affect both TV advertising and the way media consultants work in election campaigns. Not only that, but the more they are digitalized, the more consultants are needed in campaigns. It is clear that more sophisticated digital technology is transforming the role of political consultants.

5. Conclusion

This paper reveals three significant contextual factors to consider in the polarized social media environment of American election campaigns. One is that political parties use social media to advertise their campaigns to voters, while they still prefer to use e-mails as a fundraising source. Political parties also have the advantage of good voters' email lists to candidates for fundraising in campaigns. Another is that super PACs play an important role in providing plentiful campaign finance for candidates, although there are

regulations banning coordination with individual candidates' campaigns under the current regulatory system. New outside groups, including super PACs and 501(c)(4) organizations, are considered to fund the candidates indirectly to fight intense races. The other factor is how the changing media environments affect media consultants and other types of political consultants. It is interesting that, in the interview with the author, Colin Rogero said, “The old way doesn't work well anymore” (Rogero, 2014). The more digital technology advances, the more the circumstance of political consultants changes. It is rapidly changing; thus we need to observe carefully how it is advancing.

As a closing statement, the paper covers contextual factors to provide further discussions on examining American election campaigns using social media in comparison with other countries. For example, unlike in the U.S., the Japanese election system is more party-centered. In Japan, there is a public subsidy system for political parties, in line with the Political Party Subsidy Act passed in 1994. Because of this public subsidy system, candidates for public offices in Japan do not need to put as much effort into fundraising as politicians in the United States do, although online contributions are gradually increasing in Japan (Chen & Kiyohara, 2015).

On the contrary, in the U.S., public funding is available only for the presidential election. Furthermore, once presidential candidates receive the public funding, they have to agree to limit campaign spending to a specified amount. Presidential candidates feel the public funding has few advantages (Kiyohara, 2011, pp. 10-12). Outsider groups such as super PACs play an important role in financing the campaigns.

Thus, in the American election system and

fundraising mechanism, how will the relationship between candidates and political parties transform as the campaigns become more digitalized? Will American political parties really have more presence in the election campaigns by using digital media? To further research on this topic, these questions need to be considered in depth.

*This study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 26280124.

*This paper was presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association. It is updated from the paper, “ソーシャルメディアの普及に伴うアメリカ選挙キャンペーンにおける変化—2014年中間選挙を事例に—” (Changes of American Election Campaigns Using Social Media : the 2014 Midterm Election) for the SSI Journal, Vol.3 Number, pp. 31-46 in Japanese.

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