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Frenemies

Why do Americans have such animosity for people who identify with the opposing political party? Jaime E. Settle argues that in the context of increasing partisan polarization among American political elites, the way we communicate on Facebook uniquely facilitates psychological polarization among the American public. *Frenemies* introduces the END Framework of social media interaction. END refers to a subset of content that circulates in a social media ecosystem: a personalized, quantified blend of politically informative "expression," "news," and "discussion" seamlessly interwoven into a wider variety of socially informative content. Scrolling through the News Feed triggers a cascade of processes that result in negative attitudes about those who disagree with us politically. The inherent features of Facebook, paired with the norms of how people use the site, heighten awareness of political identity, bias the inferences people make about others' political views, and foster stereotyped evaluations of the political out-group.

JAIME E. SETTLE is an Associate Professor of Government, director of the SNaPP Lab, and co-director of the Social Science Research Methods Center at the College of William & Mary. She studies the American public's day-to-day experience with politics. Settle has published in *Nature*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and has been supported by the National Science Foundation.

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How Social Media Polarizes America

JAIME E. SETTLE
College of William & Mary

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We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Abraham Lincoln
First Inaugural Address
March 4, 1861

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Frontmatter
More Information

Contents

List of Figures *page* ix
List of Tables xi
Acknowledgments xiii

1 A Fundamental Change in Political Communication 1
Psychological Polarization 4
Politics on Social Media 8
Data and Methodology 16
Outline of the Book 17

2 Facebook in Context: Theorizing Interaction on Twenty-First-Century Social Media 20
Social Media Culture in the Early Twenty-First Century 21
The News Feed Ecosystem 32
Political Content on the News Feed 44
Political Interaction on the News Feed: A Fusion Behavior 47

3 The END Framework of Political Interaction on Social Media 50
Political Expression Aspects of News Feed Interactions 52
News Exposure Aspects of News Feed Interactions 59
Political Discussion Aspects of News Feed Interactions 64
Conceptualizing END Interactions 70
Conclusion 76

4 How Do END Interactions on the News Feed Psychologically Polarize Users? 78
The Etiology of Psychological Polarization 80
The Puzzle: What Caused Psychological Polarization? 87
The Facebook News Feed Ecosystem: The Perfect Storm 91
Conclusion 98

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More Information

5 In the Eye of the Beholder: Politically Informative News Feed Content 102
Learning the Political Views of Our Social Connections 104
Who Generates Political Content? 112
The Daily Dosage of Facebook 115
Political Content or Politically Informative Content? 119
The Inference Studies 123
Conclusion 134
6 Political Inference from Content on the News Feed 136
Theorizing Politically Informative Content 137
Political Inference from Written and Visual Content 143
Illusion or Reality? 148
Source Cues 153
Conclusion 158
7 Biased Inference from END Interactions 161
Reality Versus Perception: Ideological Leanings in a Polarized Era 162
They Are All the Same: The Out-Group Homogeneity Effect 168
They Are All Extreme: Perceived Polarization 173
Everybody Agrees with Me: False Consensus Effect 183
Conclusion 194
8 Judging the Other Side 197
Judging the Responsibilities of Citizenship 198
Knowledge Judgments of Anonymous Others 202
Does Contact Matter? Judging Out-Partisans in Social Networks 210
From Individuals to Groups: Information-Processing Stereotypes of the Partisan Out-Group 214
Distinguishing "Us" and Distancing "Them" 217
Building the Case for the Polarizing Effects of Using Facebook 224
Conclusion 234
9 Erasing the Coast of Bohemia in the Era of Social Media 235
Mapping Affordances to Outcomes 237
Assessing the Trade-Offs 239
A Path Forward 243
Conclusion 254

References 257
Appendices 281
Appendix A Overview of Studies 283
Appendix B Measurement Considerations and Research Design 293
Index 309

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47253-1 — Frenemies
Jaime E. Settle
Frontmatter
More Information

Figures

1.1 Growth in social media usage in America, 2005–2016 *page* 11
2.1 The home page for the Facebook website 33
2.2 The status update box 37
2.3 Content from a third-party source 38
2.4 Mechanisms for social feedback 39
2.5 Schematic of a Facebook post 41
2.6 Comparison of the appearances of aggregated information versus social feedback 42
5.1 Rates of political learning, by Facebook activity level 106
5.2 Opportunities for learning political views of social connections, by tie type and agreement level 111
5.3 Exposure to political content, by usage frequency 116
5.4a–b Exposure to political content, by level of partisan strength and political interest 118
5.5 Example status update stimulus 126
5.6 Mean estimates of the proportion of raters who evaluated status update in category as political 127
5.7 Example Facebook lede stimulus 128
5.8 Effect of source cue on determination that content is political 131
6.1 Perceived ideological bias of thirty-six media sources 142
6.2 Willingness to ascribe partisan identity, by stimulus type and judgment that content was political 145
6.3 Consensus in estimates of the partisanship of an anonymous Facebook poster 149
6.4 Accuracy rates of partisanship attribution, by topic and partisanship of judge 153
6.5 Comparing signal-reinforcing and signal-contradicting stimuli on consensus in perceptions of partisanship 156

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47253-1 — Frenemies
Jaime E. Settle
Frontmatter
More Information

6.6 Effect of source cue on clarifying partisan signal sent by otherwise ambiguous stimuli 157
7.1 Willingness to make ideological inferences, by stimulus type and perception of political content 171
7.2 Ideologically consistent evaluations, by stimulus type, perceived partisanship, and in-group status 173
7.3 Ideologically extreme evaluations, by stimulus type, perceived partisanship, and in-group status 175
7.4 Confidence in ideological estimates, by partisanship strength and News Feed scrolling frequency 176
7.5 Percentage of named contacts whose friends are more extreme than subjects' friends, by dyad type and agreement level 179
7.6 Mean number of stereotyped policy judgments, by Facebook usage rate 182
7.7 Rate of "liking" on stimuli in inference studies, by in-group status, content type, and stimulus type 188
7.8 Subjects' interest in publicizing their political content, by treatment group 192
7.9 Subjects' estimations of the rate of support for their expressed political views, by partisanship and treatment group 193
8.1 Missing knowledge evaluations, by content type, evaluators' partisanship strength, and in-party perception 204
8.2 Mean values for the reported knowledge level of the poster by content type, respondents' partisanship strength, and in-party perception 205
8.3 Difference in mean knowledge judgment of the poster by content type and partisanship strength 206
8.4 Mean knowledge evaluation, by in-party perception and objective knowledge level 209
8.5 Mean level of confidence in accuracy of knowledge evaluation, by subjects' partisanship strength and News Feed scrolling frequency 211
8.6 Percentage of dyads of each agreement level to whom respondents ascribe negative judgments about knowledge level and source reliability 213
8.7 Mean estimate of percentage of out-party adhering to information-processing stereotype, by partisanship strength and Facebook usage 216
8.8 Mean absolute percentage difference in party composition based on social stereotypes, by level of Facebook political engagement 219
8.9 In-party friendship preference and similarity, by Facebook usage 221
8.10 Social distancing behaviors, by dyad agreement level and political competence judgments 223
B1 Distribution of inadvertent exposure and intentional exposure variables in the END Framework Survey 297

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47253-1 — Frenemies
Jaime E. Settle
Frontmatter
More Information

Tables

2.1 Frequency of Facebook Usage *page* 44
2.2 Reported Incidence of Engagement with Political Content 46
3.1 The END Framework: Distinguishing Characteristics of Political Interaction in the News Feed Ecosystem 51
3.2 Incidence of Political Status Update Posting 54
4.1 Central Argument, Demonstrable Mechanism, and Testable Implications of the END Framework of Social Media Interaction 99
5.1 Manners of Learning the Political Views of Others 107
5.2 Opportunities for Learning Political Views of Social Connections, by Tie Type 110
5.3 Typology of Politically Informative Content 124
6.1 Willingness to Infer and Confidence in Inference, by Level of Partisan Strength and Political Interest 146
6.2 Willingness to Infer and Confidence in Inference, by Facebook Usage Frequency 147
7.1 Percent Agreement with Exaggerated Statements about Out-Party Political Views 181
7.2 Reported Reasons for "Liking" Political Content 189
8.1 Mean Absolute Difference in Social and Demographic Composition of Parties 218
8.2 Overview of Relationship between Facebook Usage and Facets of Psychological Polarization 225
9.1 Suggested Relationships between Social Media Affordances and Processes of Psychological Polarization 238
A1 Demographic Characteristics of the Samples 290
A2 Overview of the Samples 291
B1 Question Wording for Facebook Usage Variables 295
B2 Correlations between Facebook Usage Variables 296

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Jaime E. Settle
Frontmatter
More Information

B3 Distribution of Additional Facebook Content Generation Behavior Variables 297
B4 Distribution of Additional Facebook Active Consumption Variables, the Frequency of Content Clicked 298
B5 Distribution of Additional Facebook Active Consumption Variables, the Frequency of Content Seen 298
B6 Proportion of Evaluations Indicating They Would Engage with Facebook Content, by Facebook Usage Frequency 299
B7 Proportion of Evaluations Indicating They Would Engage with Facebook Content, by Newsfeed Scrolling Frequency 300
B8 Proportion of Evaluations Indicating They Would Engage with Facebook Content, by Political Content Generation Frequency 300
B9 Coding Scheme for Social Connections Battery 303

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Jaime E. Settle
Frontmatter
More Information

Acknowledgments

Three pivotal factors enabled this book to become a reality.

The initial motivation for writing the manuscript was a response to the wrath of a string of "Reviewer 2's." During the course of one of the most fruitful collaborations of my life – with the original UCSD Facebook gang of James Fowler, Robert Bond, Chris Fariss, Jason Jones, and Lorenzo Coviello – we received persistently negative reviews on a chapter of my dissertation that we submitted repeatedly for publication as a stand-alone article (Settle *et al.* 2016). Rightly so, the anonymous reviewers noted that politically relevant behaviors on Facebook were conceptually underdeveloped and that we could not make strong claims about what we were measuring when we analyzed, for example, the text of Facebook status updates. Therefore, any argument we made about the cause or consequence of particular behaviors on the site would be built on theoretically shaky ground.

My desire to address thoroughly this concern eventually transformed into a desire to write a book-length treatment of what it meant to be "political" on Facebook and what, in my view, is the most dire consequence of politically informative interactions: the psychological polarization of the American public. I'm indebted to my co-authors-turned-friends for the privilege of working with them on our earlier joint work, and I thank James Fowler for telling me back in 2013 to "just write the book already." Although no data from our collaboration with Facebook was used in this book, I am a better scholar for having had the experience of working in such an environment and for being pushed to think hard about problems at the edge of our current knowledge about American political behavior.

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