

# Democracy in the Information Age: A New Political Enigma

Political Science Honours Thesis  
Presentation

## Devin Tuttle

MacEwan University, Department of  
Political Science.

Supervisor: Jean-Christophe Boucher

**What is the impact of Big Data and predictive analytics on individual autonomy and how does this contribute to an increasingly fragmented society?**

**Case Study analysis on  
campaign behaviour during the  
2008 & 2016 US Presidential  
campaigns**

# Political Operations Overview

Agenda Setting Operations

Emotional Framing

Injustices into Action

# Behavioural Analytics

Big Data &  
Predictive Analytics

Regression Modelling

Social Network Analysis

Case Study 1:  
2008 Presidential  
Campaign of Barack  
Obama



# What was the Frame?

YES WE CAN!

Grassroots Mobilization Strategy



# The Institutionalization of Data

Quantified Voters:  
170 Million Americans

- I. Likelihood to Support Obama
- II. Likelihood to Vote
- III. Can they be persuaded to vote
- IV. Can they be Persuaded to vote Obama

# Who was the Target?

Targeted Online  
Communications

Campaign  
donations 2.5x  
John McCain



The image shows a screenshot of the Obama '08 campaign website's sign-up form. At the top, the Obama '08 logo is displayed. Below it, the text "CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN" is prominently featured. A central image of Barack Obama is shown, surrounded by a collage of campaign-related images. The form includes a "JOIN THE MOVEMENT" label, an "Email Address" input field, a "Zip Code" input field, and a red "SIGN UP" button. At the bottom, there is a "PAID FOR BY OBAMA FOR AMERICA" disclaimer, a small Obama logo, and a "CONTINUE TO WEBSITE" link.

OBAMA'08

CHANGE  
WE CAN BELIEVE IN

JOIN THE  
MOVEMENT

Email Address

Zip Code

SIGN UP

PAID FOR BY OBAMA FOR AMERICA

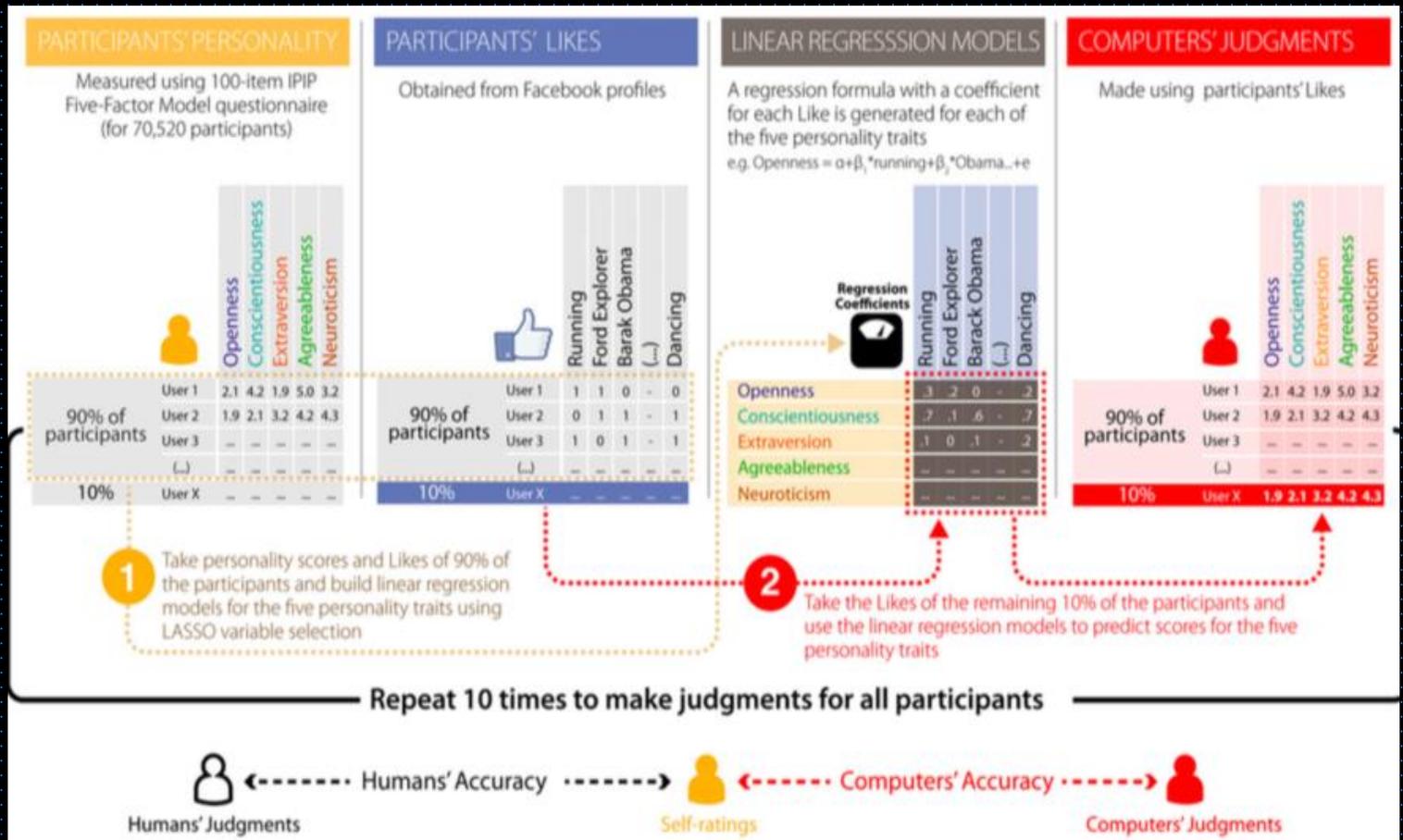
CONTINUE TO WEBSITE

# Case Study 2: 2016 Presidential Campaign of Donald Trump



# Cambridge Analytica & The Republican National Party

You You, Kosinski, Stillwell. 2015.  
 “Computer-based personality judgments are more accurate than those made by humans”





# Making America Great Again

41% of MSM News  
Stories Were on Trump

Injustice Framing &  
“Erosion of  
American Values”

Political Malaise of  
Clinton Supporters



# The Engineering of Consent

Fragmented Ecosystems

Pseudo-Politics of  
Self Regard

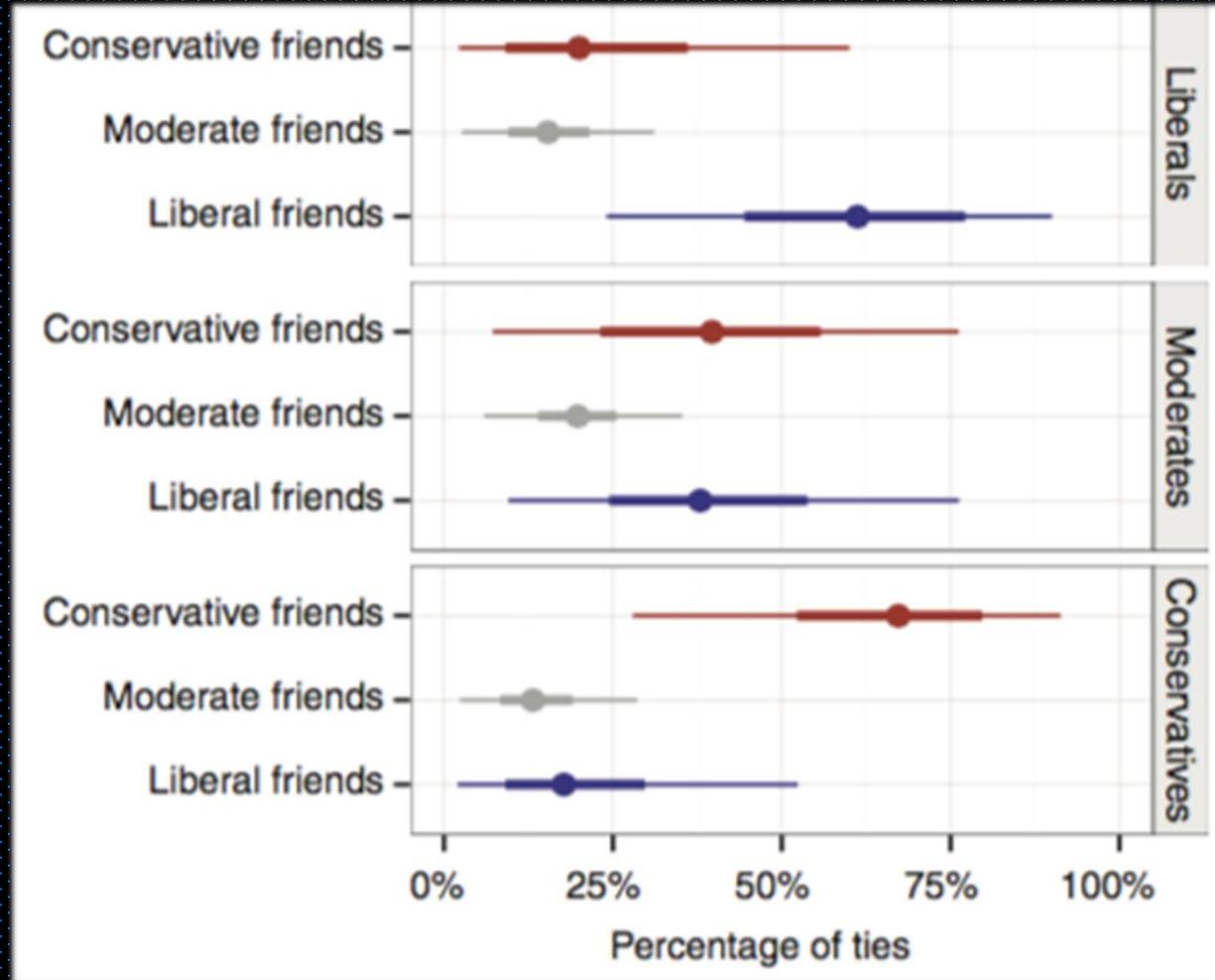
Homophilic Populations



# Analytics to Echo Chambers

Bakshay, Messing, Adamic 2015:  
Homophily in Social Networks

- i. No means to verify truth,
- ii. Believe bias is the truth,
- iii. Engage in vigorous counter claims against their opposition



# Echo Chambers to Social Fragmentation

Lack of Unified  
Political Consciousness

The Creation of Multiple  
Truth-Regimes

