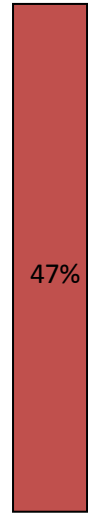


# Bilingual Seminar Course: North America



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**[IN HOW FAR DID MONEY  
AND MEDIA INFLUENCE THE  
2012 PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTION?]**

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## 1. Introduction

**T**he United States regard themselves as a very strong democracy on which they are very proud. The American president is often seen as the most powerful man in the world. US presidents have even fought wars in the name of democracy such as World War II and the Iraq wars.

To understand how important democracy is one has to have a look at the American constitution where it says “We the people” and Article I regulating representative democracy which indicates its importance (U.S. National Archives).

Also, the American president is known in pretty much every western country and also in most other nations. But rarely people know how the President gets elected. But how does the President actually gets into office and even more important what influences his election? In order to find this out this paper will only look at the 2012 presidential election campaign in which Governor Mitt Romney (republican) competed against incumbent President Barack Obama (democratic).

This paper confines on the influence of money from corporations and rich individuals, as well as on social and mass media. Other factors are neglected but might still influence the election. To be named are e.g. religion or natural disaster like hurricane Sandy in New York. The reason to confine on these two aspects is on the one hand to do research about the vastly spread perception that one has only to be rich enough to take influence on politics; on the other hand Thomas Jefferson's statement that information would be the currency of democracy (Hovestädt, 2008).

As the question what influenced the election of 2012 was still a recent topic, there was not much literature in form of books when this work was written. Therefore it wasn't easy to find valid sources especially because social and mass media had to be used as sources as well as research topic. This problem, however, could be solved by using nonpartisan and independent sources such as the Pew Research Center.

## **2. Background knowledge**

### **2.1. General Election**

This paper refers to the general election after the candidates are nominated by the party conventions (Herz, 2011; Levien, 2012; Hanashiro, 2012). The presidential candidates compete during the actual election campaign. The huge influence of media can be observed at the TV debates which are the highlight of the general election. Donations make it possible to finance the costly election campaign.

### **2.2. Electoral College**

When the presidential candidates are chosen during the primaries, each U.S. citizen votes for their presidential candidate and its complementary vice president. This happens state wise and president and vice president are elected indirectly via electors. Thus a balance between inhabitants per state and number of states can be guaranteed. There are a total of 538 electors and the presidential candidate needs to win at least 270 of them in order to become President of the United States. Most states (except Nebraska and Main) have a “Winner-takes-all” system which counts all electors to the winning presidential candidate.

The electors are not bound by law to vote in favor of the candidate for whom they have been elected, but most states require a pledge by the elector that he will vote for the candidate that he has been elected for (U.S. National Archives, 2012).

### **2.3. Federal Election Commission (FEC)**

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) belongs to the executive branch and serves the purpose to administrate and enforce federal campaign finance laws. One of the most important laws enforced by the FEC is the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) adopted in 1972. This law is meant to control donations and expenses but it also requires presidential candidates and committees that support them to file regular reports (Gellner & Kleiber, 2012, pp.204; Federal Election Commission [FEC], 2013a). The FEC is later going to be important in context with donation regulations.

### 3. Money

If a politician decides to run for presidency he certainly needs a huge amount of money. Obama and Romney each gained over one billion dollars (Open Secrets: Center for Responsive Politics, 2013). A presidential candidate needs to organize voter registration and he has to meet with voters to show his personal side and to present himself in an emotional way, not only as a maybe becoming person working for the government. Moreover, he has to make ample use of mass media. For instance television where he can send out ads which are favoring him or opposing his rival (negative campaigning). In fact, a presidential candidate has to communicate with voters via mass media and inform them about his issues. Another common used strategy is direct mail which costs a lot but on the other hand receives its aim by sending the information directly to voter's homes (Gulati, 2012). This shows that money is substantial in winning an election. In the further chapters I'm going to focus on the influence of corporations spending money but also the influence of media.

#### 3.1. Public funding of Presidential Election (hard money)

A presidential candidate has the ability to utilize official financing by the government in order to reduce the power of the private sector. This money stems from the Presidential Election Campaign Fund (PECF) which is a fund financed by voluntarily taxes (The \$3 Tax Checkoff) and is administered by the FEC. All of this money which refers to the control of the FECA is called hard money (FEC, 2013b).

Since it applies a limit on expenses for the candidate and he is not able to accept other donations the use of hard money was refused by both Romney and Obama.

#### 3.2. Corporations

Corporations have a great interest in influencing the presidential election. This can be derived from the huge amount of money spend on the campaign (see further down in this chapter) or the fact that many corporations paid more for lobbying than paying income taxes (Public Campaign, 2011). Corporations state they feel obligated to express their support of the free market system (Welsh & Young, 2010) but also to influence politics in their favor. In the following chapter this influence will be analyzed.

In 2002 the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), also called McCain-Feingold Act, was created. This law prohibited presidential candidates from receiving so called soft money, which is money that

stems from privates. But later in 2010 the Supreme Court declared the BCRA as unconstitutional since it violates the first Amendment of free speech. This judgment is known as Citizen United vs. FEC and from then on corporations and others have no limit on donations as long as they don't stay in direct contact to the candidate or his election team. As a consequence so called super Political Action Committees (PACs) emerged which played a major role in the latest presidential election regarding the party's respectively presidential candidate's budget (Rothberg, 2011 and Gellner & Kleiber, 2012, pp. 204-205).

First, what a super PAC is: Oxford Dictionaries (2010) defined it as "a type of independent political action committee which may raise unlimited sums of money from corporations, unions, and individuals but is not permitted to contribute to or coordinate directly with parties or candidates". By approving unlimited sums a new way of influencing - in one's own favor - politics has been established (Vogel, 2012). Furthermore, to believe the super PACs would not stay in direct contact with the presidential candidate is extremely naive. In fact, they easily find ways to arrange it (Gellner & Kleiber, 2012, p. 205).

As there still is a maximum of \$2,500 concerning direct candidate donations the big donations are carried out via super PACs. Many millions of dollars are donated to the candidates' official super PAC. Sheldon Adelson, for instance, contributed fifteen million dollars to Romney's super PAC Restore Our Future (Jeremy Ashkenas, Matthew Ericson, Alicia Parlapiano & Derek Willis, 2012). Adelson is a billionaire and Las Vegas casino owner who expected low tax rates for wealthy people or people with high incomes from Romney. Additionally, Oxbow Carbon LLC, an oil and gas company founded by the brothers William, David and Charles Koch subscribed 2.8 million dollars to Romney's super PAC. This can be explained by the presidential candidate's promise to open parts of the Atlantic shore for the purpose of drilling for oil and to build which Obama would not approve (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2012). The Koch brothers are bearer of the second biggest family-owned company within the US and have spend over 61 millions of dollars to groups which deny the climate change (Düttmann, 2012) as Koch Industries counts to the worldwide ten most damaging companies to the environment. The Restore Our Future super PAC makes up 16% of Romney's overall donations.

Romney received his donations mainly from big corporations or rather their PACs or individual members such as big banks. Among these banks are the worldwide connected investment bank Goldman Sachs and Bank of America which also gambles in the investment sector. Goldman Sachs donated the highest percentage with 1,033,204 dollars. Bank of America gave almost as much to Romney with a donation of 1,009,402 dollars. Another example are Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan Chase & Co as well as Wells Fargo which all donated huge numbers to the Romney campaign (Open Secrets: Center for Responsive Politics, 2013). The aim behind supporting Mitt Romney instead of Obama is

evident, unlike Obama Romney does not want to regulate the market as much as his opponent (Mutikani, 2012).

Obama, on the other hand, gained more than half (57%) of his donations from small contributions (i.e. \$200 or less) (Federal Election Commission, 2012). Despite the huge number of small donations he also secured the support of some very big corporations. For instance the University of California, Microsoft or Google.

Whereas the super PAC of Romney makes up 16% of his total raised donations Obama's super PAC's importance remains in the single digits with only 7% of his overall raised donations (Jeremy Ashkenas, Matthew Ericson, Alicia Parlapiano & Derek Willis, 2012).

It certainly is true that a candidate needs a lot of money to even start a campaign and keep it going. He has to communicate with voters via mass media or through his presence in various states and regions. Thus a candidate who has more money can spend much more on these purposes and subsequently gain popularity. In addition to that, he has to show extra effort in battle states such as Florida.

Finally, the willingness of corporations to spend great amounts of money reveals the fact that there is a chance of influencing politics.

Thus an influence of corporations exists but is not as huge as often claimed as other factors than solely money play a major role but money is so to say the "fuel" of these activities (Dubner, 2012). However, money is needed and "sometimes, having the most can matter the most" (Dubner, 2012) which means there is a great chance for corporations to control politics in their favor. For example, when an enterprise is harmful to the environment, as it is the case at Oxbow Carbon LLC, and Obama is more likely not to tolerate this in such an extend as his opponent does. Romney would thus be the better choice for the Koch brothers and it could be worth donating millions to Romney than taking the risk of paying fines under Obama. Unfortunately it didn't help this time.

## 4. Media

### 4.1 Social Media

**S**ocial Media's influence works in two directions: from voters to the candidates and the other way around. This will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean was in the election of 2004 the first to make use of the Internet as an essential method of campaigning. He used a web service called meetup.com and hundreds of bloggers who allowed him to respond on their direct feedback. Obama followed this principle in 2008 and expanded the use of the internet as a way of direct communication (Hovestädt, 2008a). In 2012 Facebook, Twitter and co experienced a new height: According to the New York Times Mitt Romney and Barack Obama together had 37,094,000 likes on Facebook and 21,645,000 followers on Twitter on August 10 (Worthham, 2012a).

Behind gaining likes or followers there is a principle which is as simple as old: "The more people you talk to, the more likely you are to win," states Romney's digital campaign director Zachary Moffatt (Wortham, 2012b). Obama consented to answer questions asked on the online platform Reddit in a Q&A session and Romney created his own Spotify playlist, as Obama did too. Twitter was, for instance, used to remind voters of the first TV debate. Both candidates also had their own Instagram accounts from where they regularly uploaded pictures of for example the candidate spending some time with his family. As well, the first ladies helped their husbands by sharing recipes or DIY projects on Pinterest (Strauss, 2012).

Obama led a superior campaign on the Web over Romney since he had, even with respect to the incumbent bonus, many more likes on Facebook, Followers on Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest as well as on Instagram. On August 10 Obama had approximately 29,101,000 people liked his Facebook presence. Moreover did he lead with roughly 20,420,000 followers on twitter, whereas Romney followed only about 1,225,000 users, which is almost 17 times as many (Wortham, 2012a). Subsequently of the fact that Obama led a superior campaign he attracted more attention among middle class and lower class who favored him as presidential candidate. This can also be derived when looked at where Obama's donations come from.

Furthermore, especially younger people spend hours on the Web and social networks. Subsequently people at ages 18 to 29 predominantly prefer Obama with 60% over Romney (Spiegel Online, 2012).

Nevertheless, there is more than just simple communication behind this effort. The important thing about social media is that it is social and it is attempted to build up a personal relationship between the candidate and the potential voter and thus attempt to appear more human. Or as Obama's chief



blogger, Sam Graham-Felsen, put it: “If you can figure out how to leverage the power of friendship, that opens up incredible possibilities.” (Michel, Pilkington, 2012, p. 4). If either candidate posts a playlist on Spotify this is evidently not directly important for politics as music doesn’t tell anyone how the candidates want to solve the biggest issues in the country, but this is exactly what’s so important. Sharing a playlist or posting family snapshots show a non-politician side of the candidate and allow potential voters to participate in his private life. Thus voters get the feeling they would know the candidate in person or as a friend, what they to a certain extent even do, and can thus better relate to him and consequently give him his vote or mobilize others.

Obama also introduced a system called Vote Builder which gathers information about as many voters as possible and stores them in a centralized system. Information such as age, postal address, occupation and voting history is gained from voter files of 190 million active voters.

As source of information serves also Facebook what ought not to be underestimated. With more than 160 million active users there is enormous information online about age, gender, zip code, ethnicity, religion as well as political orientation. By using all these valuable information and connecting them, customized content can be created and delivered, in particular on social networks. This content can perfectly be targeted at certain demographic groups of people or at people with similar interests, for example in battleground states.

This is where the “power of friendship” applies: If a person receives, for instance, an online appeal to vote for a certain candidate he is more likely to be influenced by it if it was shared by a friend than by the candidate’s team (Michel & Pilkington, 2012, p. 4). This effect gets even more effective when people can be identified who appear to be leaders among their Facebook friends. These “influencers” are prioritized.

However, not only do the presidential candidates and their teams make use of social media, but also individuals who don’t stay in direct contact with the election campaign of either candidate, such as bloggers.

Due to the digitalization it has become possible to easily share content with a vast amount of people just within seconds. As a consequence, scandals spread very quickly once published online. As an example look at the 47 percent statement Romney did when holding a donation convention. At this fundraiser he expressed that 47 percent of all Americans would pay no income tax and would be takers who depend on the government, therefore voting for Obama, no matter what. On September 17 democratic journal Mother Jones published the story and the belonging video in which Romney tells what he thinks of the 47 percent (Corn, 2012).

When typed in *Romney 47%* into YouTube almost 40.000 hits will come up (status: April 24, 2013), nearly all of which with a negative connotation. The video with the most clicks has been viewed over three million times. Furthermore, when analyzing the statistics of how many clicks the video experienced, a rapid increase can be observed (see fig. 1) which means it gained popularity very fast (Mother Jones, 2012).



Fig. 1: Statistic of viewers of Romney's leaked video (Mother Jones, 2012).

In addition social media services such as Facebook played most likely a major role in sharing the video and thus making it more popular. This in turn leads to the conclusion that social media has a great impact in terms of spreading information. However, this can be seen as a rather positive fact since it leads to political participation as well as democratization as it gives people the possibility to easily share their opinion without being dependent on political parties or mass media.

But also can an intended joke by one party about the other candidate turn very quickly into a disadvantage from which the opponent in the end even benefits. When Clint Eastwood talked at the RNC about Obama and led a mock interview with an empty chair representing Barack Obama, just minutes later lots of parodies were shared on Twitter and Tumblr. This is a perfect example of the power of social media where many individuals who couldn't each get a say now get a chance to express their opinion about a topic. Even the official Obama campaign joined in by posting a photo of the president sitting in his chair saying: "This seat's taken" (Wortham, 2012b, p. 2).

In conclusion, social media is on the one hand a great way to communicate with voters, mobilize voters, gain donations and even appear as a friend. On the other hand, it is a great way for voters to express and share their opinion. The candidate's political teams can more easily find out what voters want by looking at blogs or using systems like Obama's Vote Builder. Thus personalized content can be send to voters which is more likely to succeed. By sharing a candidate's favourite music or family pictures the voter can participate in his life and thus better relate to him. A person is more likely to vote for another if he knows his character and not only his political agenda.

Furthermore, can every person through social media get a say and also influence others again by sharing their point of view. Negative headlines spread very fast, even within one day it can reach the whole world. A former Google digital analyst even described social media’s influence as following: “Whichever candidate uses Facebook the most effectively could win the war.” (Michel & Pilkington, p. 2). In the recent presidential election campaign the use of social media was certainly one of the factors that helped Obama “win the war”, especially because Obama’s support stems mainly from the middle class where also his donations come from (Federal Election Commission, 2012).

Social media in politics lead in general to democratization as everyone can express their opinion and reach a vast amount of people. Another consequence is political participation since through social media especially younger people now take part in politics as it is easier to be heard and they spend a lot of time in the web anyway. Though, critics say that systems like Obama’s Vote Builder would violate privacy laws and are calling for regulations (Michel & Pilkington, 2012. p4). However, social media is already a crucial part of modern democracy as it stays independent, everybody can participate and candidates know what their voters want which leads to better communication.

**4.2. Mass Media**

In connection with (presidential) elections media has the following tasks: information, opinion making, control or check whether something is correct, e.g. fact checks. In this context mass media is on the one hand platform for messages of the candidates and on the other hand it captures political topics themselves and comments on them as well.

<b>Mass Media as Platform</b>	<b>Mass Media as opinion leader</b>
TV ads	Comments
TV debates	Tendencies to one-sided coverage

**Fig. 2 Mass media as platform and opinion leader**

These functions will be analyzed in the following chapter. Due to the fact that tendencies to a political orientation are very striking at TV news channels this chapter will begin with Fox News and MSNBC.

According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in 2009, Fox News is perceived on the far right whereas MSNBC appears mostly politically liberal orientated. Almost half (47%) of Americans state they regard Fox News as “mostly conservative”, 24% say neither liberal nor conservative and only as many as 14% have a “mostly liberal” perception of Fox News. In contrast to that, only 11% of people asked do think MSNBC is “mostly conservative”

orientated. Furthermore, MSNBC is perceived as “mostly liberal” by a little more than a third (36%) of Americans, 27% say it is neither liberally nor conservatively orientated.

All other TV channels which were included in the survey have similar perceptions among Americans. For this reason only the two most contradicting TV channels, in terms of political orientation, will be used for examination.

#### 4.2.1. One Sided Interpretation

As a striking example two pieces about Romney’s 47 percent claim will be examined. One published by Fox News and the other one published by MSNBC (for full articles see appendix).

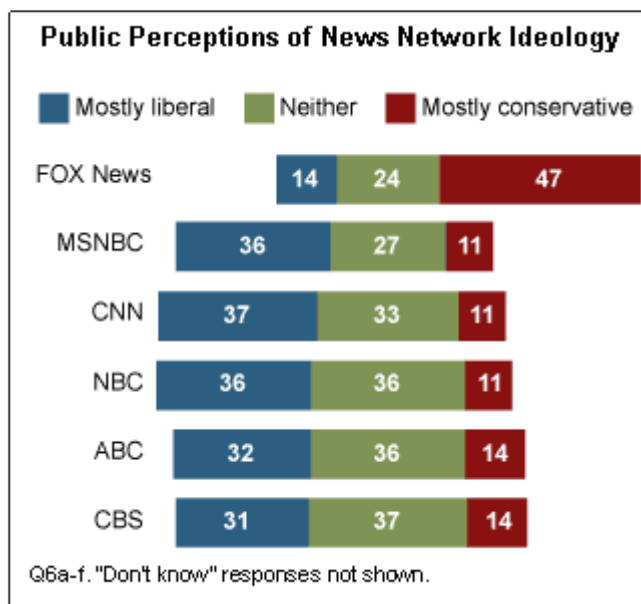


Fig. 3 Public perceptions of news network ideology. (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2009)

In the first article written by Chris Stirewalt of Fox News, it is being claimed that political experts would compare Romney’s leaked video with a video of Obama which wasn’t intended to be seen by the public as well and leaked in 2008. According to this article Obama “needed to convince the bitter clingers that he really was on their side” (ll. 17-18) which he stated in the video.

What Stirewalt is basically doing is comparing Romney’s video with Obama’s and thus firstly setting the focus not only on Romney rather than on Obama and secondly stating that what Romney said in his video was actually (politically) fine (e.c. ll. 14-16) and thus in turn minimizing his offensive message. The article accuses Obama for gaining his votes only by promising government spending (e.c. paragraph 4) whereas Romney apparently only *explains* that he “won’t get the votes of the 47 percent who pay no federal income taxes and isn’t going to try” (ll. 27-28). In addition, Stirewalt goes even further and claims that Obama would buy his votes in a way (e.c. ll. 34-37).

This Fox News article presents Romney’s statement about the 47 percent as totally correct and acceptable. According to Stirewalt, Romney would in his speech just distinguish between makers and takers. Makers are the ones that really work and pay income taxes whereas takers are the ones who receive government spending and pay no income tax, which is a widely accepted theory among Republicans. Thus Romney would only state that a smaller government is needed since there’s a danger in “having too many citizens reliant on government” (l. 61). At the end of his article Stirewalt

even praises Romney for being brave and standing to his word “rather than ducking or hiding” (ll. 72-73).

Thus Romney’s statement in which he offends 47 percent of Americans seems to be harmless and Fox News claims that he actually just described what were correct, that America can’t afford endless government benefits.

A totally different judgement about the 47 percent statement has been made by Steve Benen, a MSNBC journalist. He corrupts Romney rather than staying objective and certainly takes a position.

Benen claims that Romney crossed a line and now has a “dramatic problem” (l. 106). Romney is accused of “expressing contempt for nearly half of the American population” (l. 114). In addition, Romney is declared stupid when Benen says that “Romney doesn’t even understand the politics of the issue” (l. 117).

Benen’s disparaging message is underlined by the ample use of words in context with Romney in a disdainful way. For example when Benen says that “Romney trashed half the country” (l. 89) or “in Romney’s eyes [half the country] is made up of slothful and pathetic losers” (l. 124).

According to their political tendency mass media interpret candidate’s statements and neglect their democratic information function.

#### **4.2.2. TV Debates**

TV debates are a crucial instrument for the candidates to convey their message as well as to show that each of them would be the better one, thus having become highly important. In such a debate the candidates are asked a question to which each has two minutes time to respond following a debate until the next question is asked (The New York Times, 2012a & The New York Times 2012b).

In the second debate the way the questions were selected was a little different: citizens picked by CNN with the help of pollster determined the questions the candidates had to face (Marschall, 2012a). In this context television is unpartisan since it only serves as a platform for the debate.

The literature proceeds from TV debates influencing the election outcome. The German White House correspondent Dr. Christoph von Marschall sees Obama’s positive effect broken by Romney’s performance in the first debate. Three days after, Obama’s lead has only been half as much as before nationwide. In addition, Romney won the swing states Florida and Virginia (Marschall, 2012b).

This theory can be proven by several statistics. According to a poll conducted by NBC, Wall Street Journal and Marist College published on [realclearpolitics.com](http://realclearpolitics.com), Obama led the race in Florida before the first TV debate (9/30) with 47% over Romney (46%). Whereas after the first debate, according to a survey conducted by We ask America, Obama lost one percentage point and Romney took over the lead with 49%. This is in line with Marschall’s statement.

Swing State: Florida			
Date	Pro Obama in %	Pro Romney in %	Conducted by
Survey conducted before 1 <sup>st</sup> debate, 9/30	47	46	NBC, Wall Street Journal and Marist College
Survey conducted after 1 <sup>st</sup> presidential debate, 10/6	46	49	We ask America

Source: own compilation after Politico, November, 2012a.

Fig. 4 Polls before and after the first presidential TV-debate, Florida

Also when having a look at the whole nation an effect can be observed. In a survey conducted nationwide before the first TV debate, 50 % were likely to vote for Obama whereas only 45% were like to vote for his opponent. After the debate only 44% would vote for Obama and now 49% for Romney.

Nationwide			
Date	Pro Obama in %	Pro Romney in %	Conducted by
Survey conducted before 1 <sup>st</sup> debate, 9/12 – 9/16/2012	50	45	NBC News/Wall Street Journal
Survey conducted after 1 <sup>st</sup> presidential debate, 10/4 – 10/9/2012	44	49	IBD/TIPP
Survey conducted after 2 <sup>nd</sup> presidential debate, 10/17 – 10/20/2012	47	47	NBC News/Wall Street Journal
survey conducted after 3 <sup>rd</sup> presidential debate, 10/22 – 10/25/2012	49	48	Politico/George Washington University

Source: own compilation after Politico, November, 2012b.

Fig. 5 Polls before and after the presidential TV-debates, nationwide

After the second debate a tie can be observed, 47% for both. When the final and third presidential debate had taken place, 49% were favouring Obama whereas one percentage point less (48%) would vote for Romney.

These trends are also revealed by a number of statistics conducted by the Pew Research Center (see Fig. 6).

However, after the actual TV debates have taken place there still might be some influence. It usually appears in the form of comments made by others, especially on TV, in newspapers or social media, in particular Facebook and Twitter. One very

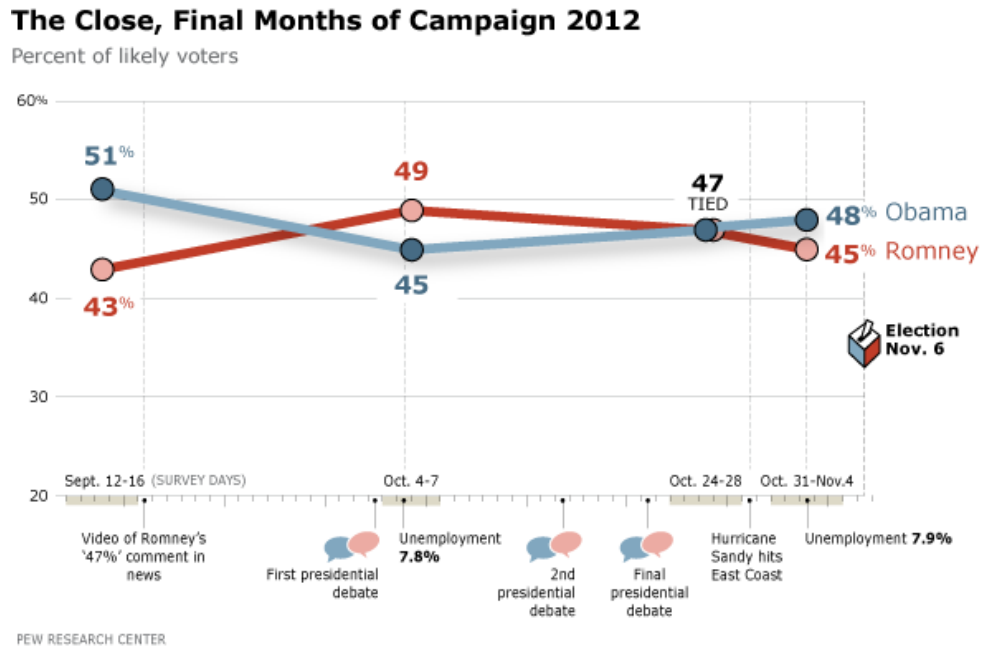


Fig. 6 Overview of when which candidate would win the election

famous commentator from the conservative side is Bill O'Reilley who can be seen every weeknight on Fox News in his O'Reilley Factor where he regularly offends all kinds of Obama's policies or immigration laws (Fox News, 2013).

As portrayed very detailed above TV news channels show tendencies to a certain political orientation. Same applies for newspapers: The New York Times and the Washington Post can both be counted to the liberal side, Redstate to the conservative side (Marschall, 2012b).

Mass media's influence on presidential elections can be without any doubt confirmed. Some news media, like Fox News or MSNBC, report very one-sided and still enjoy lots of daily viewers which suggests their power. TV debates play also an important role at media's influence. But the question remains how long their influence lasts and how crucial it is for the election outcome since the decision for who to vote is not monocausal and depends on several factors. However, a short-term influence on voters can be proven.

Mass media is essential for democracy, as Thomas Jefferson put it: "Information is the currency of democracy" (Hovestädt, 2008b). Due to television presidential candidates have a platform on which they can communicate with the American people. But they also receive what voters want via agenda setting, as with social media. Very striking is also the fact that for the second debate citizens could ask questions which shapes direct democracy in a whole new way.

## 5. Conclusion

**D**emocratic elections are in the center of every democracy. They have to be “open and fair to all” (Urofsky, 2001) and should represent the individual interests of a pluralistic society. The U.S. Government follows this idea when referring to Abraham Lincoln: “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (Urofsky). It is to be proceeded that the formal criteria of democracy are fulfilled, but this was not part of this work. In this paper it was examined in how far money, social and mass media manipulate or strengthen the democratic process.

As shown, corporations influence the election campaign by donating huge amounts of money. Since the Citizens United vs. FEC sentence corporations were allowed to spend unlimited sums of money to super PACs which in turn can spend this money to help a candidate get elected. The costs of the election campaigns are so extremely high that corporations might be necessary to finance those elections.

Corporations spending money is legitimate since it functions as representation of interests which is a basic principle of pluralistic democracy. But if the influence of big corporations gets unproportional high it can be regarded as a danger to democracy as powerful influence is concentrated to a few money-givers. The Citizens United vs. FEC sentence should be abolished which would be the first step to lower the costs for election campaigns. When one candidate secured a big donor, his opponent has to follow in order to not experience a drawback. Because official financing is not sufficient and is restricted to special purposes, both Romney and Obama didn't make use of it.

Social media's influence can be categorized into two parts. First, when it is used by voters and second, when used by the candidates. Through social media every person gets a say without being dependent on a political party or mass media and can reach very many people. This leads to a whole new way of democracy where many people can discuss with each other about political topics. Furthermore, Facebook, Twitter and co. lead to political participation, especially among younger people. By making use of social media one aims to influence the decision of another for who to vote for.

Another positive aspect is the independent and very fast exchange of information. Out of this results that negative headlines like Romney's leaked video spread very fast and reach an incredible amount of people which supports transparency. But it has to be added that one shouldn't credit to much reliability to social media since everyone can say what he wants without having to give a source.

Presidential candidates use social media to communicate with voters and mobilize them. Additionally, it is being attempted to build up a personal relationship and appear as a friend which triggers



emotions. Social media also supports democracy when used by candidates as they can stay better in touch with their voters and consequently mobilize them.

Mass Media serves on the one hand as platform for the candidates and on the other hand takes action and comments. The TV-debates are essential for the election and couldn't exist without mass media. TV debates give the viewer a very true image of the candidates since no one comments on them and the candidates can present themselves. TV debates are thus a great way of strengthen democracy. However, many mass media report one sided like Fox News or MSNBC which results in an intransparent influence. For democracy an independent and pluralistic press is essential because only then one can make his own opinion.

In spite of this problem the American polity is democratic. When you look at it very detailed you can realize how money and media factually influence politics.

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Picture of Mitt Romney:

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## Appendix

The following is the Fox News report about Romney's 47 percent statement which is analyzed in the chapter "Social Media".

5 **"There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what. All right, there are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe that government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it. That that's an entitlement. And the government should give it to them. And they will vote for this president no matter what."**

10 -- *Republican presidential nominee **Mitt Romney** speaking at a May 17 fundraiser in Boca Raton, Fla. in a video obtained by liberal magazine Mother Jones.*

Political pundits are comparing the leaked video of Mitt Romney at a fundraiser writing off the 47 percent of the electorate who don't pay federal income taxes to the leaked 2008 fundraiser video of then-Sen. Barack Obama blaming his problems in the Pennsylvania Democratic Primary on bitter voters who "cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them."

15 But while Obama was talking about something in contradiction to his campaign message – talking down the very voters he was trying to persuade to come to his side – Romney was actually on message, just in more blunt fashion than usual.

20 In his secretly recorded fundraiser comments, Obama was saying that he needed to convince the bitter clingers that he really was on their side and show them that he would increase taxes on what even back then he was calling the "1 percent" in order to provide them more generous benefits.

Romney is trying to expand that argument beyond the government workers fight. He is, in some moments at least, calling for a national referendum on the question of how much government we can afford, even if we like the benefits obtained from it.

25 Obama's message was that he could show blue-collar voters that he was on their side with his message about tax increases and make them overcome their own racist or xenophobic tendencies. He could win them over with promises of government spending. He partly succeeded with the bitter clingers in 2008 but his party failed in 2010.

30 Romney's message, however, was that he won't get the votes of the 47 percent who pay no federal income taxes and isn't going to try. While Obama was explaining his bid to woo voters opposed to him and favorable to Hillary Clinton in the primary and a Republican candidate in the general election, Romney was explaining why he was writing off a huge chunk of the electorate.

And while Democrats may disagree with Romney about what motivates those who are bound to choose Obama, no one can disagree that he's pretty close to right about the number and the fact that they aren't coming over to the red side this year.

35 The current of Romney's campaign is an idea that has long animated the American right: the makers versus the takers. Those who believe in smaller government are driven by the fear that government expansion is a perpetual-motion machine. The more people who receive benefits from the government, the more people who will vote for increased government benefits.

It's a national version of the same one that has been playing out on the state and local level in recent years.

40 In Chicago, the public school union is on strike over some modest changes proposed by the city's Democratic mayor, Rahm Emanuel. But the previous 30 years in the city have been largely a love affair between government worker unions and the Democratic politicians.

45 It has mostly worked well for both sides in Chicago and in Democrat-dominated cities and states across the country. Government-worker unions provide the funds and organization to elect Democrats, who in turn expand the pay, benefits and privileges of government union members. Lather, rinse, repeat.

But the cycle cannot go on forever. In California, Wisconsin, Michigan and many other states and cities, budgets eventually would not allow for this ongoing expansion, forcing a conflict between politicians and their patrons in government unions. In California, the future remains uncertain and hinges on a massive tax hike proposed by the Democratic governor. In Wisconsin and Michigan, Republican governors won reductions.

50 Romney is trying to expand that argument beyond the government workers fight. He is, in some moments at least, calling for a national referendum on the question of how much government we can afford, even if we like the benefits obtained from it.

55 In other moments, Romney seems to retreat into an argument basically about competency. Who is a better manager, him or Obama? Romney says he can manage better and should be given the big job on the grounds of competency alone.

But the video is evidence that there is an ideological current running through the former Massachusetts governors' campaign – a current best exemplified in Romney's decision to tap Paul Ryan as his running mate.

60 This idea about the dangers having too many citizens reliant on government outlays has animated Ryan's entire career. Republicans like Ryan have long warned of a tipping-point moment in which Democrats will have included so many voters in federal benefits that there aren't enough net contributors to vote in favor of reducing the size of government.

Romney and his campaign have seemed to back off that argument in their convention and subsequent campaigning, shifting back to the competency argument rather than the message that the country is heading off a cliff off government dependency that once breached, cannot be undone.

65 It's an approach that carries the risk of a big defeat, but it's still a better one for Romney. With the press talking endlessly about Romney gaffes and every bumble becoming a cause célèbre, Romney will lose the competency argument against the incumbent.

70 He has to make this a battle of ideas and visions. Picking Ryan was a step in that direction. He took another step Monday night when he came out and owned the comments in the video. Rather than ducking or hiding, he owned it.

Perhaps with this video out and being replayed over and over again, Romney won't be able to retreat from his embrace of boldness.

Stirewalt, Chris. (September 18, 2012). With video leak, Romney goes back to bold approach. *Fox News*.

75 Retrieved April 20, 2013, from <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/09/18/with-video-leak-romney-goes-back-to-bold-approach/>



80 The following is the MSNBC report about Romney's 47 percent statement which is analyzed in the chapter "Social Media".

### **Romney's contempt for the '47 percent'**

85 Just 24 hours ago, Mitt Romney was already in a rough spot. With the presidential election seven weeks away, he was coming off a bad week in which he cravenly tried to exploit the deaths of Americans abroad for partisan gain, watched President Obama solidify his lead in the polls, and found his aides sniping at one another in the press.

By mid-morning yesterday, Team Romney was determined to get back on track, signaling shifts in strategy, a new ad campaign, and a renewed focus. Nothing to worry about, hand-wringing Republicans, campaign aides said, everything is just fine.

90 And then *Mother Jones'* David Corn reported that Romney trashed half the country in a secretly-taped fundraiser, and fleshed out additional details with Rachel last night.

In case you haven't seen the damaging quote itself, Romney, talking casually to some wealthy supporters, presented this argument:

95 "There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what. All right, there are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you name it. That that's an entitlement. And the government should give it to them. And they will vote for this president no matter what.... These are people who pay no income tax. Forty-seven percent of Americans pay no income tax. So our message of low taxes doesn't connect. So he'll be out there talking about tax cuts for the rich. I mean, that's what they sell every four years. And so my job is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives."

100

The Romney campaign does not deny the legitimacy of the video or the accuracy of the quote.

105 Presidential candidates can get away with quite a bit during a campaign, but when a multi-millionaire talks trash about half the country while hobnobbing with other multi-millionaires, it's safe to say that candidate has a rather dramatic problem on his hands. Indeed, keep in mind, this wasn't a gaffe or an accident -- this was Romney speaking his mind in ways we don't usually see.

110 As this relates to tax policy, it's true that nearly half the country has no federal income tax burden (though they pay plenty of other taxes). But while Romney sees this 47 percent of Americans as lazy moochers who refuse to "take personal responsibility," the truth is we're talking about millions of seniors who've left the workforce, Americans with disabilities who can't work, students who have not yet entered the workforce, millions of low-income families, and middle-class families who take advantage of tax credits Republicans have traditionally supported.

115 In other words, Romney is not only expressing contempt for nearly half of the American population, he doesn't even seem to understand those he's condemning. On the contrary, the Republican candidate seems to believe these Americans are indolent schemers trying to get away with something, which is demonstrably ridiculous.

For that matter, Romney doesn't even understand the politics of the issue. In his mind, *all* of these people are Obama supporters, which doesn't even make any sense.

But what makes this scandal so devastating is the scope of the offense.

120 Romney accuses Obama of being divisive, especially when it comes to class, but here's a video of Romney castigating nearly half the country based on class. Romney's rhetoric says he wants to bring people together, but the clip shows him saying he considers it his job "not to worry about those people."

And for my money, the most damaging phrase of all is, "I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility." Half the country, in Romney's eyes, is made up of slothful and pathetic losers.

125 As Jim Messina, the campaign manager for Obama for America, put it, "It's hard to serve as president for all Americans when you've disdainfully written off half the nation." It's also worth keeping in mind that Romney has been accused of going years without paying federal income taxes himself -- a charge that, if true, would put him in this lazy 47 percent himself. We don't know for sure, however, if the allegations are accurate because Romney refuses to release his tax returns.

130

Benen, Steve. (September 18, 2012). Romney's contempt for the '47 percent'. *The Maddow Blog*. Retrieved April 20, 2013, from [http://maddowblog.msnbc.com/\\_news/2012/09/18/13936616-romneys-contempt-for-the-47-percent](http://maddowblog.msnbc.com/_news/2012/09/18/13936616-romneys-contempt-for-the-47-percent)

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140

Konstanz, May 4, 2013