

Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature

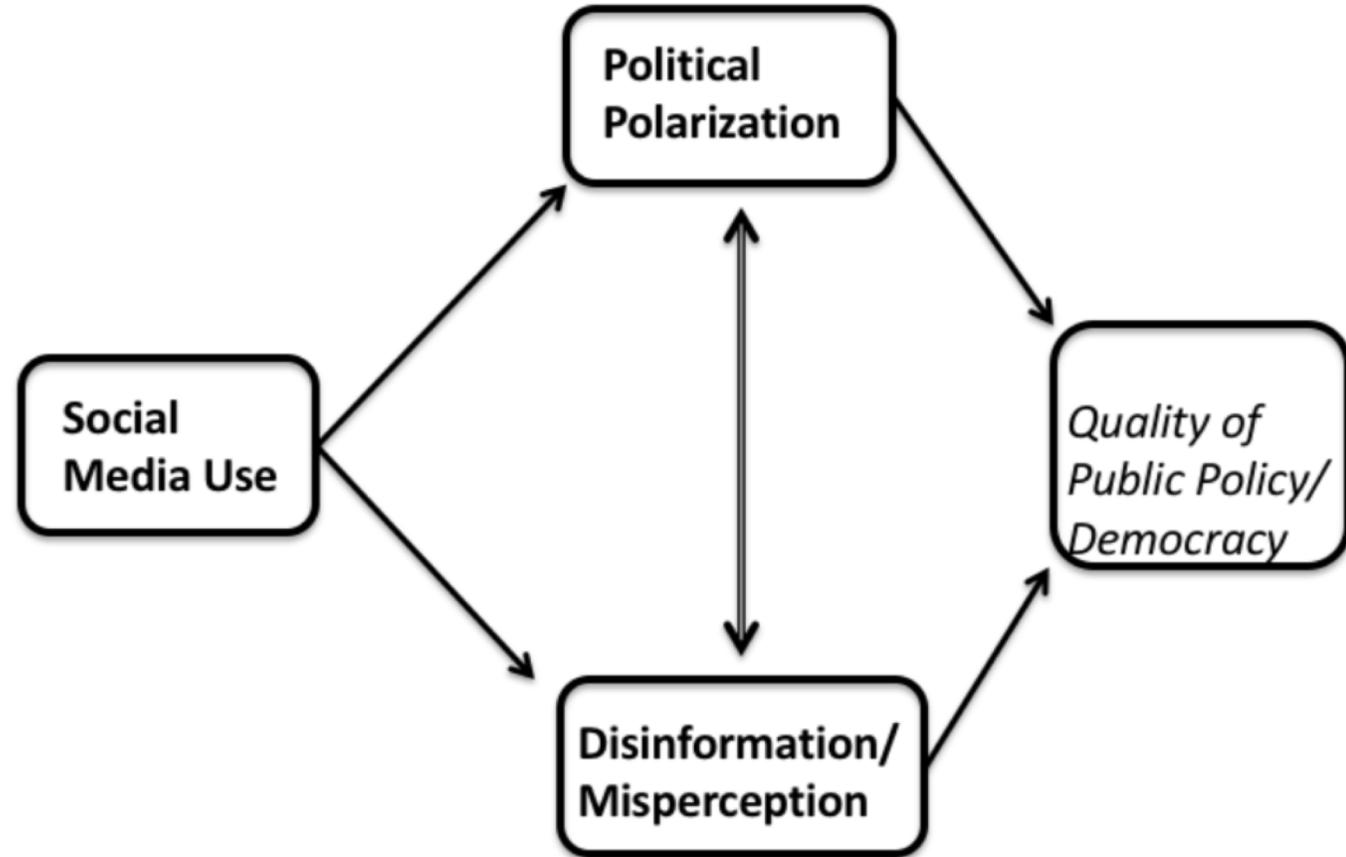
Introduction

In little more than half a decade, we have gone from the *Journal of Democracy* featuring a seminal article on social media entitled “Liberation Technology” (Diamond 2010) to the same journal publishing a piece as part of a forum on the 2016 U.S. elections titled “Can Democracy Survive the Internet?” (Persily 2017).

- E-government
- Greater citizen engagement
- Opportunity to learn citizen preferences

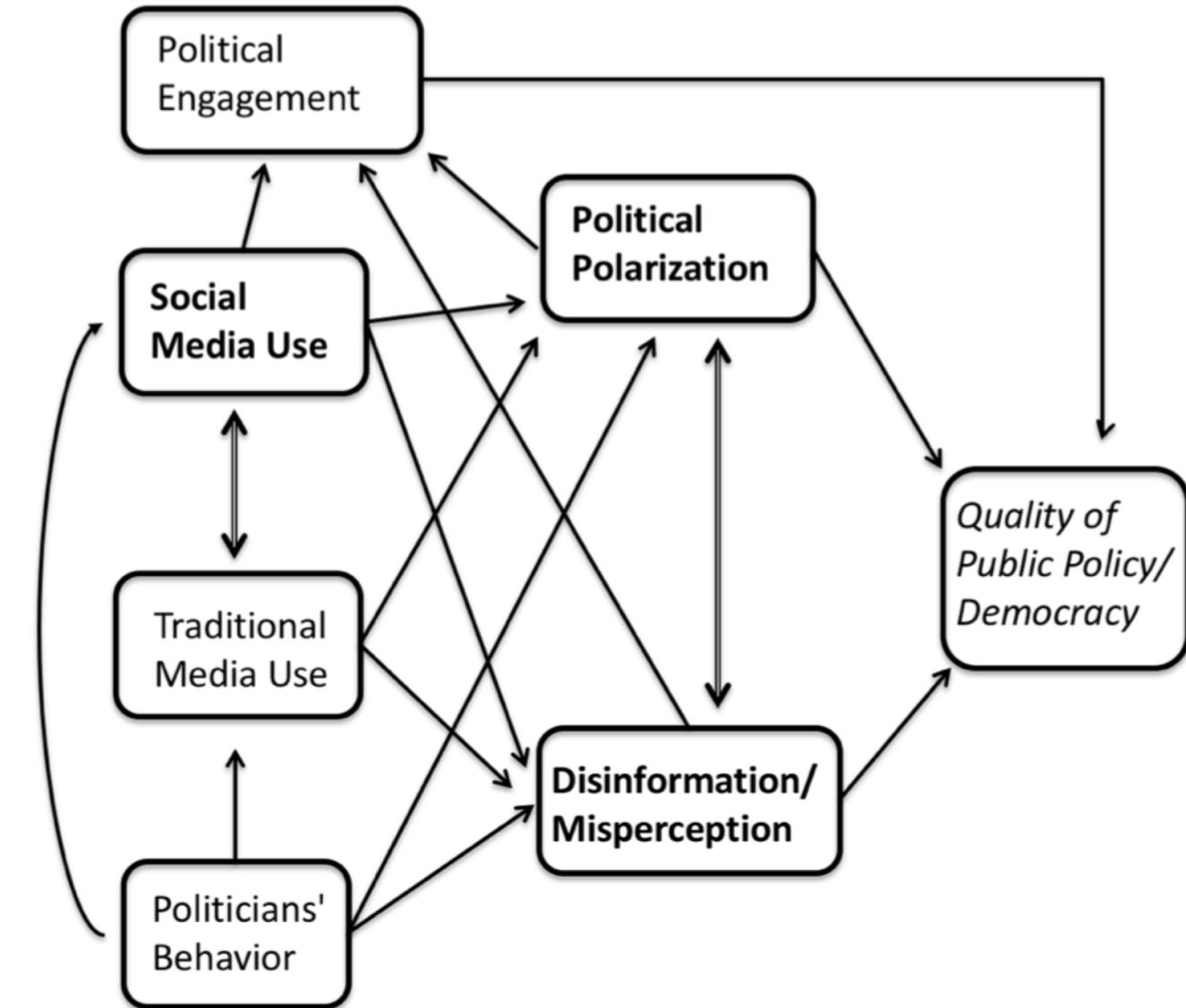
Relationship between Social media, Political Polarization and Disinformation/Misperception

- Do political polarization and/or disinformation decrease the quality of democracy?
- Do political polarization and disinformation fuel each other?
- How does social media affect political polarization or disinformation?



Relationship between 3 factors

- Social media complex relationship with mainstream media
- Politician (sometimes) spread disinformation
- Social media does not directly affect democracy



Topics

1. Online Political Conversations
2. The consequence of exposure to disinformation and propaganda in online setting
3. Producers of disinformation
4. **Strategies and Tactics of spreading disinformation through online platforms**
5. Online content and political polarization
6. How misinformation and political polarization affect American democracy

Strategies and Tactics of spreading disinformation through online platforms

Strategies

1. Selective censorship
2. Manipulation of search rankings
 - a. Keyword Stuffing
 - b. Link Bombs (Idiot example)
 - c. Mutual Admiration Societies
3. Hacking & Releasing
4. Directly sharing disinformation on Social Media

Actors

1. Bots
2. Trolls
3. Influential Bloggers
4. Volunteer Ordinary Users

Example Studies

- Elections in US, Britain, France and Germany.
- NATO operations in Baltics
- Live Journal
- Internet Research Agency & Wikipedia
- Bots in China
- Bot studies in other regions
- Bot detection algorithms

- Gaps in research

Vulnerability of Platforms

- Social media is susceptible to disinformation due to its business model
 - Dependence on ads
 - Need for regulation
 - Belarus political study on Facebook, Google, Yandex, VK and Odnoklassniki
- Social media is susceptible to disinformation due to algorithm's dependence on user engagement
 - BuzzFeed study, top 20 fake news shared more than top 20 news from reputable sources
 - 7 out of top 10 stories on Facebook about Angela Merkel were false.

Vulnerability of Platforms

- Accounts on Black market
 - Inorganic ways to verify accounts
- Reporting fake news
 - Censorship by moderators
 - User perceptions and bias
 - Study of legitimate accounts being suspended

Thank You