Political Pipeline Group

Potential Users:

One of the best aspects of our proposed design is that while we are focusing more-so on people of voting age in the US (18+), our product could be usable by anyone who wishes to become more politically aware. We would like to explore self-tracking in the realm of helping individuals become aware of their own political beliefs (current and through time), as well as how they go about finding information about the political climate in the US. We realize however that in order to learn more about getting the right design we need to focus on niche demographics. In doing so we hope to learn more about the work structure that we are trying to improve upon with our design. For the purpose of our contextual inquiries, we are dividing our participant group into two categories: politically active individuals and politically inactive individuals.

"Politically active" individuals are those who make a concerted effort to read political news. Entry-level political science students, individuals involved in student leadership (like the ASUW), and professors of high political acumen (i.e., political science professors) represent different levels of knowledge amongst people who already possess the motivation required to be politically savvy.

"Politically inactive" individuals are people who do not expend a large amount of energy following politics-related news. We wish to gain the perspective of international students and college freshmen. International students who are not naturalized citizens may have less of an incentive to participate actively in US politics because they do not have the ability to vote. College freshmen have only recently become old enough to be eligible to vote, and we believe that because they would not have been old enough to vote in the last presidential campaign that they may not currently possess a strong interest in politics.

Field Study:

We plan to visit members of the ASUW, as well as political science professors in their respective offices. In order to talk to other groups we have considered it would be best to look in student common areas such as Odegaard or the HUB, as those places are largely inhabited by underclassmen. There will be challenges to gaining access to those that are just starting out their interest in politics, or the inactive, because admitting ignorance is a sensitive issue. To address this challenge we hope to make use of surveys to collect a range of input from a wide group of participants, including individuals who may be too shy to openly discuss their lack of political knowledge.

To gain insights into behaviors that have taken place in the past, we will augment our interviews through the use of retrospective accounts. We will also attempt to simulate the task of information gathering by asking our participants to demonstrate how and from where they acquire their news (e.g., through the use of a laptop, smartphone, etc.) in order to discover the work structure around political data acquisition. This will take the form of the conventional master/apprentice relation. Examples of potential interview questions are as follows:

- What is something difficult about following political news for you?
    - What would make it easier?
- Do you feel motivated to follow the news?
    - If no: What would motivate you to start/continue following political news?
    - If yes: Why do you feel motivated to follow the news?
- What sources of news do you prefer?
- How often/with what frequency do you follow the news?