

An Analysis of Political Views on Blogs

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Todd Sullivan

todd.sullivan@cs.stanford.edu

1 Introduction

Due to issues beyond our control in the blog crawler, we do not have blog data for any day after October 28. Thus we cannot examine the run up to the election and reactions to the elections as we discussed in the Future Work section of our last update. Instead, we examine the FeelScore curves with respect to blog network, gender, and age.

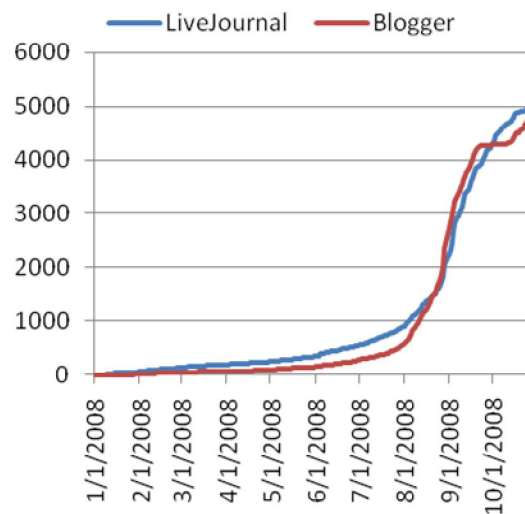
2 Blog Networks

We restrict our study of blog networks to LiveJournal and Blogger, since all other networks have significantly less data. In this blog network study we only consider opinions expressed in blog posts and do not include interests or communities because between the two networks LiveJournal contains 97% of all interests and 100% of communities about a class. Thus to level the playing field we only consider blog-based opinions.

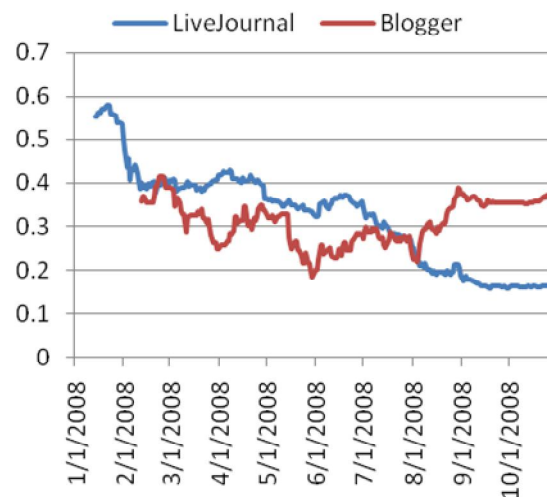
Figure 2a shows the number of authors from each network that have expressed an opinion about a class in at least one of their blog posts. We see that the author counts are almost equal between the two networks. Figure 2b shows the overall FeelScore of both networks. LiveJournal appears to be more positive overall for much of the year, but once both networks start to have exponential growth in authors with opinions (around July/August), LiveJournal's overall FeelScore drops while Blogger's rises significantly. After both curves appear to have leveled off (around September), the curves are around

0.19 away from each other with LiveJournal significantly more negative than Blogger.

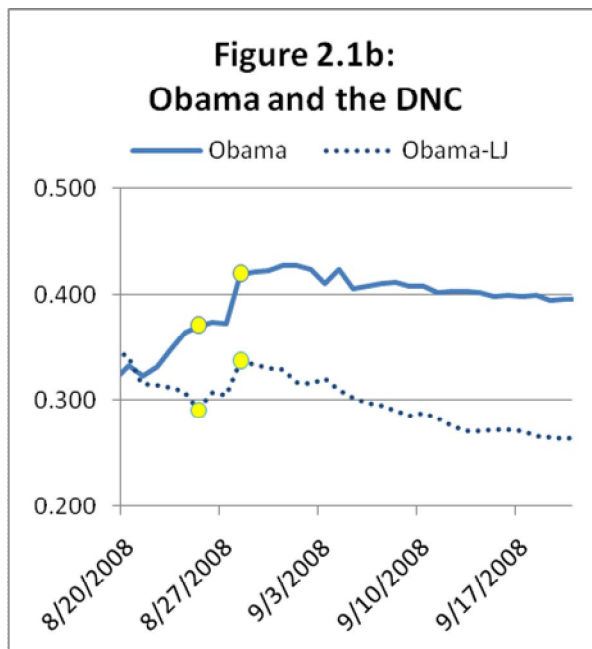
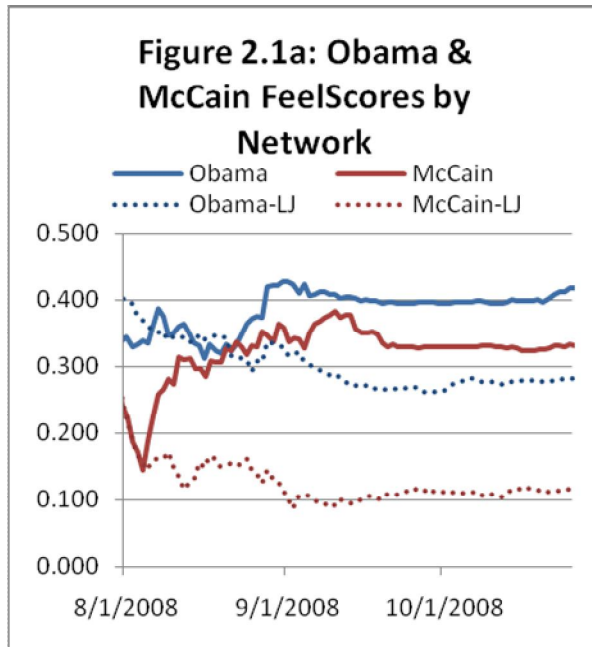
**Figure 2a: Author Counts
By Blog Network**



**Figure 2b: Blog-based
FeelScore By Blog Network**



Splitting the author counts of Figure 2a by class reveals few significant differences between the networks. As the election nears a gap of 70 more authors expressing opinions about Democrats appears with Blogger having more authors. A gap of 120 authors expressing opinions about McCain and Palin also appears with LiveJournal having more authors. All other curves remain roughly equal between the two networks.



2.1 National Conventions

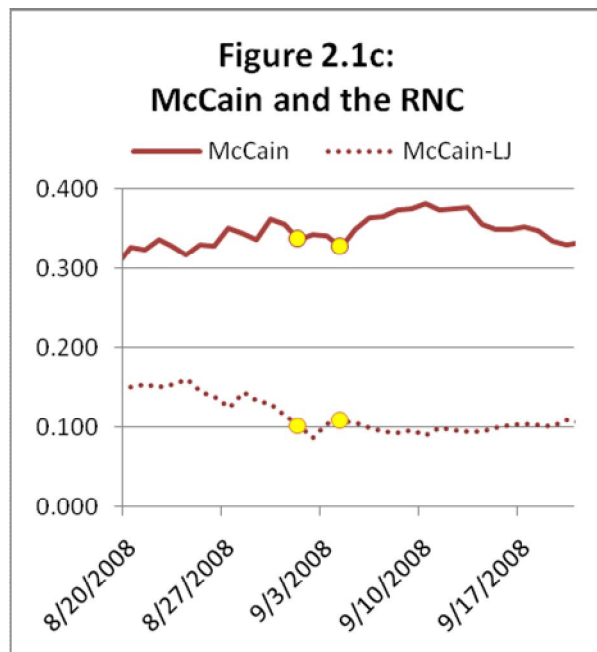
Figure 2.1a shows Obama and McCain's FeelScores by network with the solid lines being Blogger's curves. Blogger appears to be a more balanced network in that Obama and McCain's curves are close to each (less than 0.1 away). LiveJournal on the other hand is largely supportive of Obama with a gap of 0.17. At the same time, LiveJournal is more pessimistic, with its Obama FeelScore below both candidates' FeelScores from Blogger. The difference in opinion between networks is largest with McCain. McCain's gap between the two networks settles down to 0.22 while Obama's levels off to 0.12.

Figure 2.1b shows Obama's curves during the Democratic National Convention. Obama receives a boost of around 0.046 during the DNC from both networks, but LiveJournal's authors exhibit the graduate drop in FeelScore afterwards while Blogger's authors are much more flat. Obama's Blogger curve was also on an upswing going into the DNC while LiveJournal's was on a downward trend. A glance back at Figure 2.1a shows that after the curves flatten after the DNC, the Blogger curve has lost roughly half of the gain brought by the DNC while the LiveJournal curve has lost all of the gain.

Figure 2.1c shows McCain's curves during the Republican National Convention. Both networks show no change during the convention, but Blogger's authors have a rising opinion of McCain immediately after the convention while LiveJournal's authors remain flat. Figure 2.1a shows the difference more dramatically, with Blogger's reaction to the RNC being the last large mound before McCain's solid curve becomes flat while LiveJournal shows no reaction with a flat dotted curve from September 1 through October.

These graphs suggest that authors on Blogger are more receptive to the conventions while LiveJournal's authors either do not pay attention to the conventions at all or quickly

forget any positive opinions brought about by the conventions.



2.2 McCain and Palin

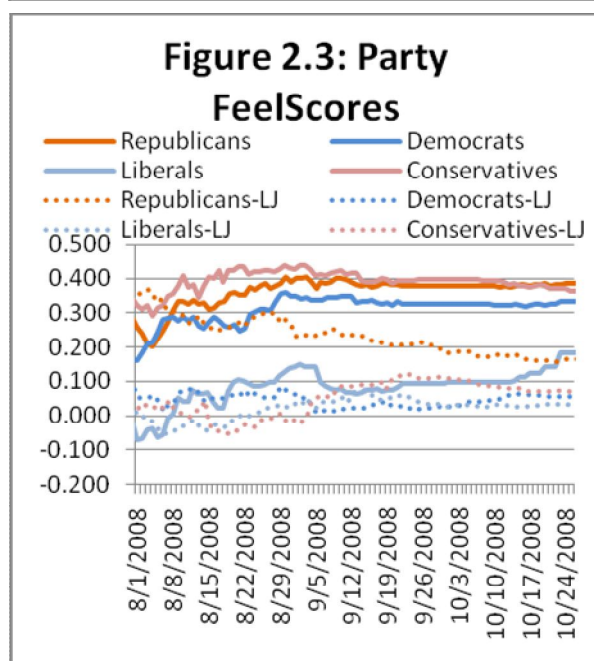
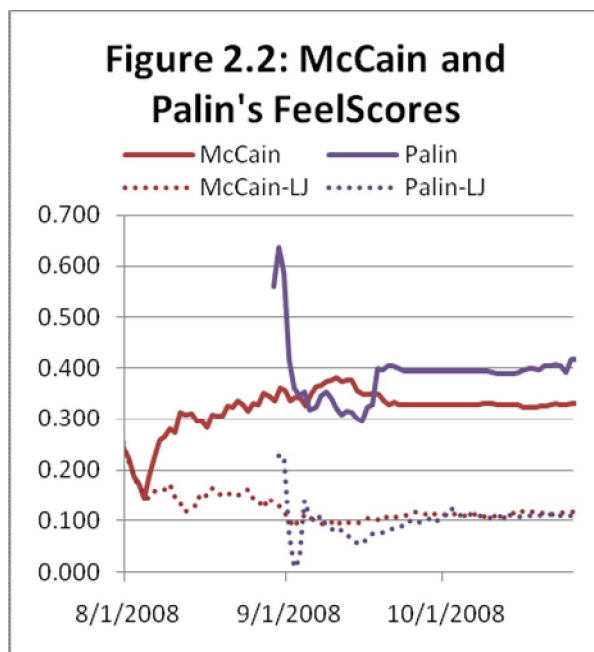
A glance at McCain and Palin's FeelScores in Figure 2.2 shows that while the networks differ by more than 0.2 on their FeelScores, each network individually rates McCain and Palin about the same. LiveJournal's opinions are closest to each other with the network's McCain and Palin curves being almost identical in October. Blogger's opinions level off with Palin ahead of McCain by around 0.08.

This trend is not exhibited in the Obama and Biden curves. Both networks have a Biden FeelScore of around 0.41 while the Obama curves differ as shown in Figure 2.1b.

2.3 The Parties

The busy graph of Figure 2.3 shows that Blogger authors mostly talk negatively about the Liberal class while LiveJournal authors talk negatively about all classes but Republicans. Amongst the Blogger curves the Republican, Democrat, and Conservative classes are all within 0.1 of each other while the Liberal class is at least 0.2 below the others. The LiveJournal curves show a different trend with the Democrat, Liberal, and Conservative

classes all within 0.1 of each other and the Republican class 0.1 to 0.2 above the others.



3 Gender

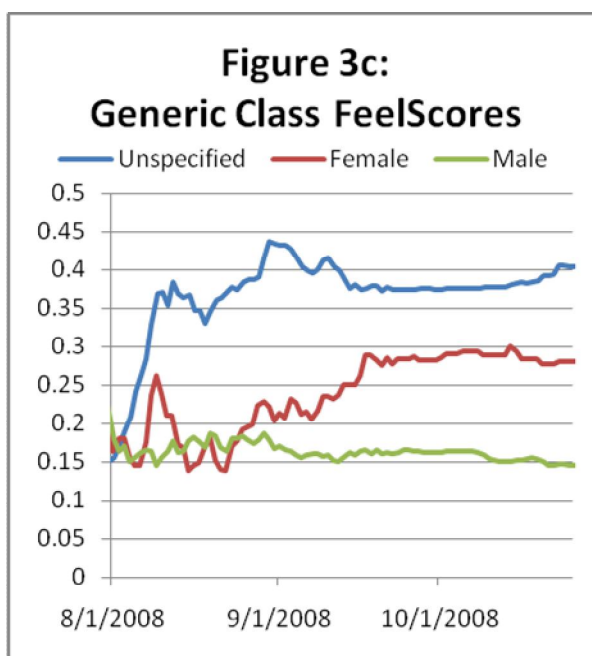
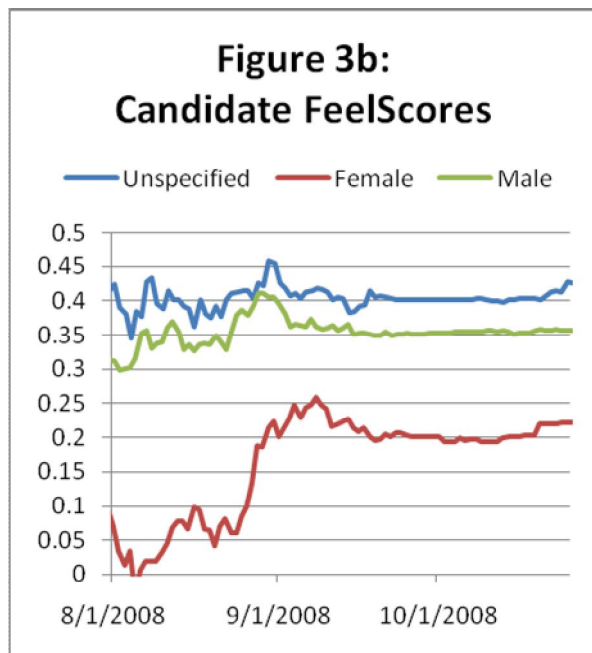
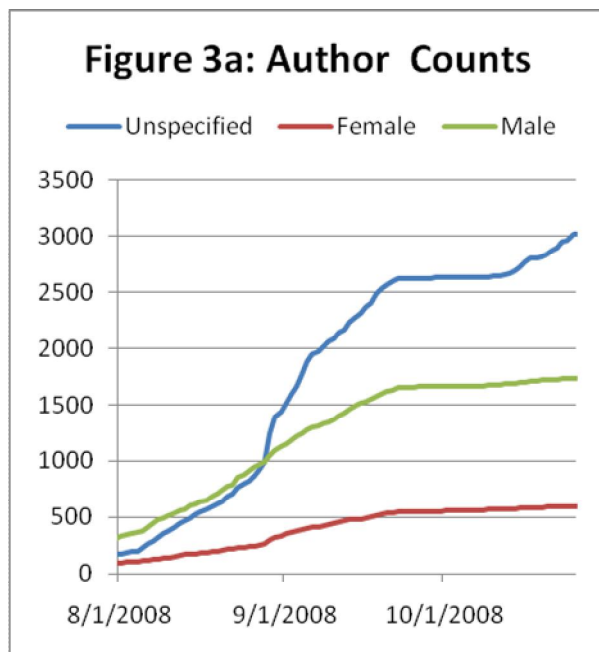
We now move to examining how opinions change with gender. In this section we restrict our data to the Blogger and MySpace networks because LiveJournal does not contain gender data. Figure 3a shows the number of authors by gender with opinions about at least

one class. Three times as many authors with a specified gender are male rather than female.

With respect to the four candidates, females are vastly more negative as shown in Figure 3b. Each curve is the average Feelscore amongst the Obama, McCain, Biden, and Palin classes. Once the averages level off, the female curve is 0.15 below the male curve and 0.2 below the unspecified curve. The unspecified gender authors are consistently the most positive bloggers.

The average Feelscores amongst the Republican, Democrat, Liberal, and Conservative classes are quite different, as Figure 3c depicts. As usual, unspecified gender authors are the most positive. After all three curves stop shifting, the female curve is 0.15 above the male curve. Thus females are far harsher in respect to the candidates while males are much more harsh in respect to the parties and generalizations such as liberal and conservative.

Individual comparisons of various classes do not reveal any new trends. The low Feelscore of the male curve in Figure 3c is entirely due to the Liberal class, which stays around -0.1 for the entire time frame.



4 Age

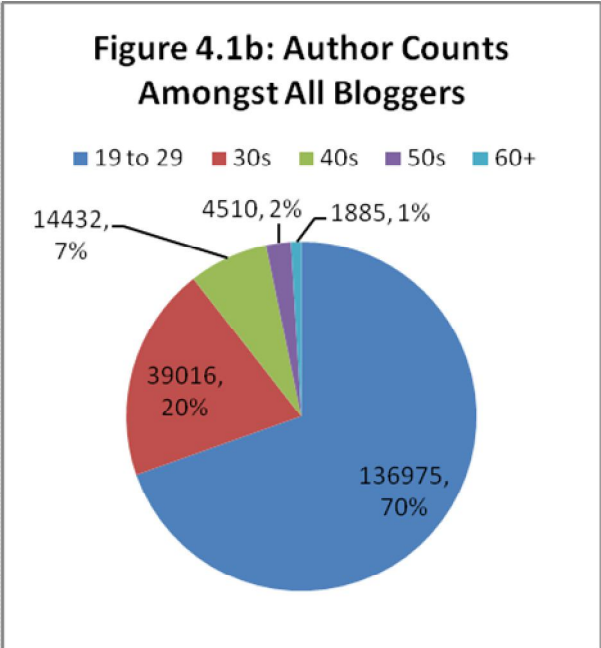
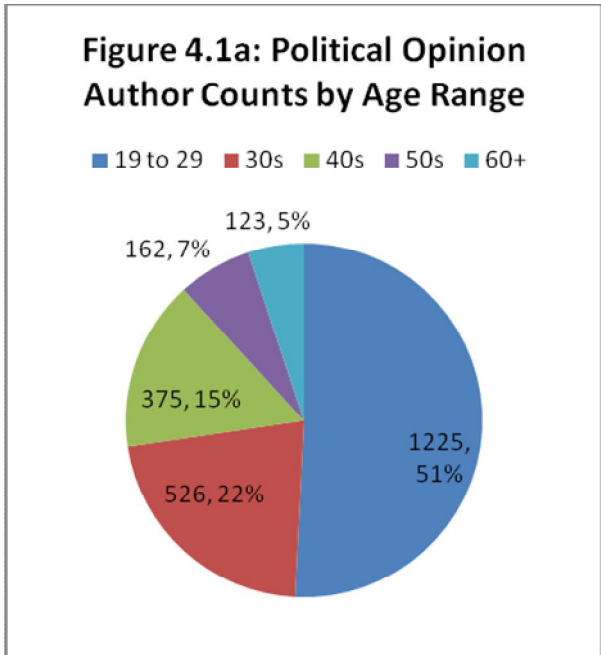
We separated authors into age groups of 19 to 29, 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60+. Unfortunately, generating Feelscores over time by age produces unusable results due to data sparseness. Most of the classes have less than 100 authors with opinions in each age group with many classes only having one or two age groups with at least 40 authors. In this section we highlight a

few cases where we have enough data to see interesting trends.

4.1 Political Age Ranges

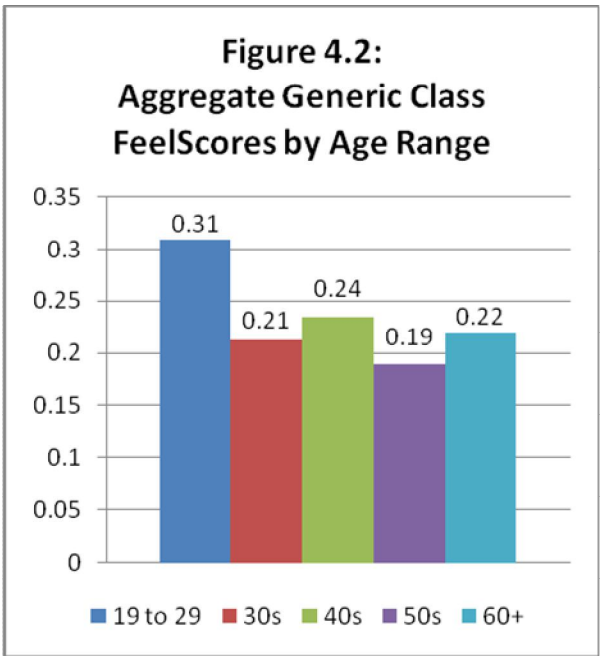
More younger authors state their opinions on blogs than older authors, as shown in Figure 4.1a. The data points indicate the author count before the comma and percentage after the comma. The proportions are definitely related to the author counts for each age range amongst all bloggers. Figure 4.1b shows the author counts for all bloggers (irrespective of if they have an opinion about a class).

The data shows that young people, while making up a large proportion (70%) of all bloggers, do not talk proportionally as much about politics as other age groups. This causes the 19 to 29 age group to only make up 51% of authors with opinions about at least one class. Much of this drop is transferred to the older age groups with 2% going to 30s, 8% going to 40s, 5% going to 50s, and 4% going to 60+.



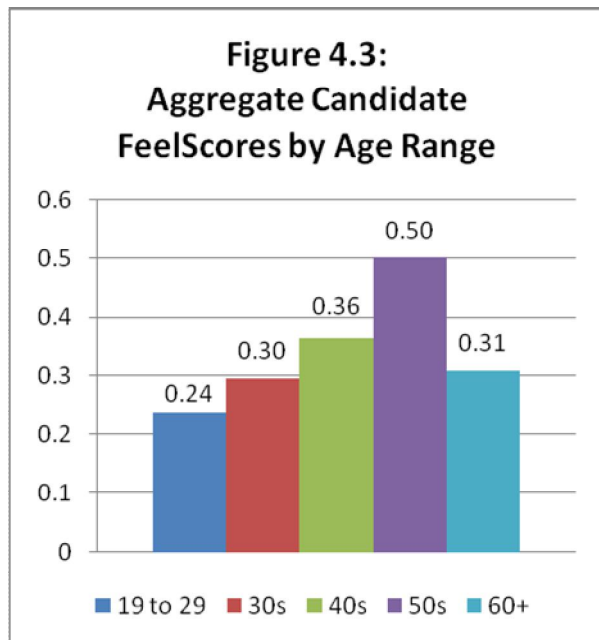
4.2 The Parties

Figure 4.2 shows the average FeelScore across the Republican, Democrat, Liberal, and Conservative classes by age range. Interestingly, the youngest age range of 19 to 29 are most positive about these generic classes with a FeelScore of 0.3. All other age groups agree with each other around 0.2.



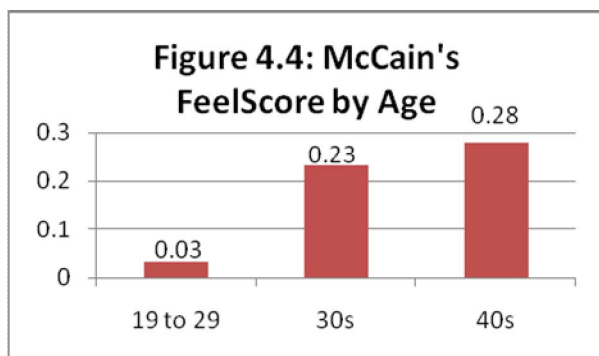
4.3 The Candidates

We see a completely different trend when looking at candidates. As Figure 4.3 shows, amongst the candidates the 19 to 29 age range is the most negative. As an author's age increases, the author's expected FeelScore averaged across the candidates increases, with the exception of the 60+ range which ruins the otherwise delightful trend.



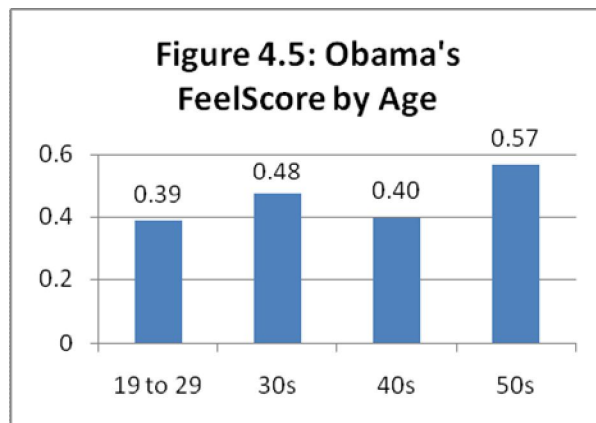
4.4 Older Authors Like McCain

Only three age ranges had more than 40 authors with an opinion about McCain. By October 25, the age ranges 19 to 29, 30s, and 40s had author counts of 215, 104, and 75 respectively. Figure 4.4 shows the FeelScores of these age groups. This stair stepping trend exhibits the exact opposite behavior with the Liberal class as shown in Section 4.6.



4.5 Everyone Likes Obama

Obama's FeelScores across age do not exhibit the stair stepping trend. By October 25, the age ranges 19 to 29, 30s, 40s, and 50s had author counts of 334, 127, 101, and 41 respectively. As Figure 4.5 shows, both young and old people like Obama more than McCain, and there is no distinct trend of younger or older authors liking Obama more.



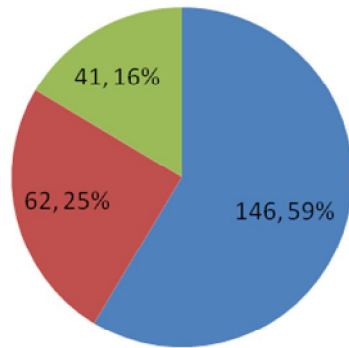
4.6 Liberals, Liberals, Liberals

Figure 4.6a shows the number of authors in each age range that have stated an opinion about the Liberal class on or before October 25. The data values indicate the count before the comma and the percentage after the comma. Only three age ranges had at least 40 authors with an opinion about the class with the 19 to 29 age range having far more authors than the 30s and 40s age ranges.

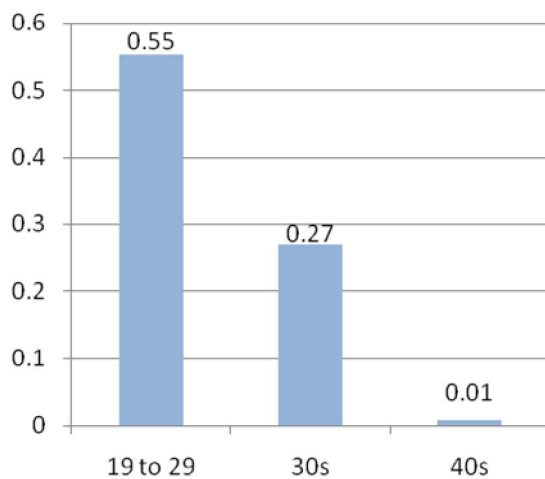
Figure 4.6b shows the FeelScores of these age ranges with respect to the Liberal class. Interestingly, we see a decrease of around 0.27 in FeelScore as we move from left to right. The youngest age group is quite positive about the Liberal class, while the 30s age group is only somewhat positive and the 40s age group is close to neutral. Even though none of the age groups has an overall negative feeling of the class, in comparison to all other FeelScores that we have seen thus far, the 40s age group appears to be quite negative towards the Liberal class.

**Figure 4.6a: Liberal
Author Counts by Age**

■ 19 to 29 ■ 30s ■ 40s



**Figure 4.6b: Liberal
FeelScores by Age**



5 Future Work

We hope that by our next update the crawler will have been fixed so that we can examine trends around and after the presidential election. In addition to examining FeelScores close to the election, we will also pair our data with poll data and pursue any other interesting avenues that pop up.