

**Mackenzie Smillie**  
**Senior**  
**National Security and Political Science**  
**How the Visual Presentation of Information Impacts Information Recall**  
**Mentor: Dr. Chris Haynes**

It's hard to go anywhere without seeing someone on their cellphone, or having a conversation with someone without them asking if you saw what so and so posted on Facebook. With that being said social media and internet use has become a significant part of everyday life, it has many benefits such as connecting friends and family who live far apart, but it is easy to wonder if it has any negative effects. I argue that the constant use of internet and social media is changing the way people think and process information. The question I looked to answer was how does the visual presentation of information impact information recall? Relatedly, John Zaller's "Receive-Accept-Sample" or RAS model of opinion response argues that most people are conflicted about ideas and that people respond to survey questions based on an average sampling of those considerations or pieces of information that are at the top of their head. First in the Receive step, people receive information all around them from the news, things they read online, or things they hear from others. Second, people accept new information conditioned on their prior beliefs and predispositions like partisanship and based on their familiarity and extent to which they trust the source. Finally, people tend to sample from the relevant considerations at the top of their head or that which is most salient to them. If this model is true, then one might expect that internet and social media use could change the way people process information. People who are predisposed to the internet are more familiar with it and are more likely to trust it and therefore more likely to accept the information presented on a social media or internet platform to be true. To assess these expectations, I employed a national online survey where participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 9 experimental groups in 2 consecutive immigration policy experiments: 1) Merit-Based experiment; 2) Pathway to Citizenship experiment. Each group received 1 of 4 presentation formats. To analyze my results, I ran a series of difference of means tests to compare information recall between experimental groups. Three findings stand out; first participants who have been socialized by Twitter recall more when given the Twitter presentation, and those who have been socialized by Facebook recall more when given the Facebook presentation, second participants who use the internet often recall more when given the Twitter or Facebook presentation, and lastly, participants who have a high favorability to Facebook recall more when given the Facebook presentation. Overall the results suggest that presentation may have an effect on information recall, more specifically the more familiar someone is with a presentation, the more likely they are going to recall the information. Moving forward it will be important to continue looking into how presentation impacts recall and additionally if presentation has any impact of support for a policy.