**Troubling consequences of online election rumoring**

**Online Appendix:**

*Rumor series question wording*

"Now I'm going to read different statements people made about the candidates prior to the election. Please tell me how often you have heard or read each statement – many times, just once or twice, or never." For each statement a respondent heard, there were two follow-up questions: "So you've heard people make that statement about [candidate]. Have you ever heard or read anything suggesting that the statement is false?" and "What do you think about the statement? Do you think that it is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or have you not thought much about it?" The statements follow: "Barack Obama is a Muslim" (91% heard rumor, 55% heard refutation, 22% believed); "Barack Obama does not qualify as a natural-born citizen of the U.S." (59%, 30%, 10%); "The bulk of donations to the Obama campaign came from a handful of wealthy foreign financiers" (41%, 11%, 20%); "Barack Obama said that the national anthem conveys a 'war-like message' and should be replaced with 'I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing'" (15%, 3%, 6%); "Joe Biden said that wealthy Americans who pay higher taxes are being patriotic" ([true] 39%, 23%, 46%); "While serving as the Mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, Sarah Palin successfully banned several books from the local library" (40%, 15%, 13%); "While serving in the Navy, John McCain caused the 1967 fire aboard the USS *Forrestal*, resulting in the deaths of more than 100 sailors" (17%, 4%, 4%); "John McCain said during a *60 Minutes* interview that he was a 'war criminal' who 'bombed innocent women and children'" (11%, 3%, 3%); "Sarah Palin said that 'God made dinosaurs 4,000 years ago,' and called them 'Lizards of Satan'" (9%, 2%, 3%); "In 1980, John McCain divorced his wife of almost 15 years and married 25-year-old Cindy 5 weeks later" ([true] 48%, 5%, 59%).

*Online series question wording*

The online series is composed of 10 items, one general usage question and several more specific follow ups. For all items, higher values correspond to more frequent use. The general usage question, which was located near the start of the survey, read: "How often did you get news or information about the Presidential candidates or the campaign from the Internet or World Wide Web in the months leading up to the election – everyday or almost everyday, several times a week, several times a month, less often, or never?" (Recoded so that higher values correspond to greater frequency, $M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.8$) The follow up questions, which were placed shortly after the rumor series, focused on specific online sources: "Earlier you said that you sometimes go online. Now I'm going to read a list of online sources of political information that some people use. Please tell me how often you got information about the Presidential candidates or the campaign from each of these sources in the months leading up to the election – everyday or almost everyday, several times a week, several times a month, rarely, or never? Here's the (first/next) one… E-mail from friends and family ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 1.6$); E-mail from political candidates, parties, or other political groups ($M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.3$); The website of a major national news organization, such as cnn.com, msnbc.com, or foxnews.com ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 1.7$); The website of an independent political news organization, such as realclearpolitics.com or politico.com ($M = 1.4$, $SD = 1.0$); The website of a politically conservative news organization or blog, such as NewsMax.com or Townhall.com ($M = 1.2$ , $SD = 0.8$); The website of a politically liberal news organization or blog, such as AlterNet.org or the DailyKos.com ($M = 1.2$, $SD = 0.6$); The website of a nonpartisan organization that summarizes or recommends news stories, such as Google News or Digg ($M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.3$); The website of a nonpartisan organization that

provides voter information, such FactCheck.org or Project Vote Smart (*M* = 1.4, *SD* = 0.9); A video sharing site, such as YouTube or Hulu (*M* = 1.6, *SD* = 1.1)."