 Additionally, the questionnaire responses mirror the aforementioned trend, with 34% of Generation Z respondents claiming that social media has allowed them become more critical of the government, as opposed to 13.5% of Generation X responses[41]. This rapid increase reflects a dramatic change over time, especially when explored in conjunction with other elements such as increased access to aforementioned social media networks. One respondent states that '*It's become harder than ever for politicians to hide things from the voting public due to social media*'[42], arguably a point which favours the potential ability of communication technologies to establish critical opinions of the government.

Generation Z's heightened engagement with social media and the internet continues to support the concept that those that utilise communication technologies as a mode of political engagement experience a decreased sense of trust in the government. '*I think that technology has increased distrust in the government and their decisions. The ability for information to be shared in seconds allows all decisions… to be seen by anyone through the media platform….*'[43] asserts a Generation Z respondent; this corresponds with other data that reveals individuals that are exposed to political content frequently online have substantially less trust in numerous areas of the government, including the environment, national security, refugees and employment.[44] This reinforces the conclusions drawn from Goldfinch's preceding study that outlined more frequent e-government users having less trustworthy attitudes towards the government.

Notwithstanding, there continues to be a sizeable quantity of Generation Z's persons who are yet to utilise political media as part of the information age, reflecting a continuity between both Generation X and Z. Though a modernised shift towards online technologies, many are still resistant to forms of change, stating that '*social media has, if anything, made it harder for me to have a serious political discussion with someone, because I'm always wary of being aggressively disagreed with*'[45]. In conjunction, many continue to feel a sense of patronisation by older generations whilst using such technologies for political engagement. Participant 2 in the Generation Z focus group discusses this in relation to the 2016 Election Liberal Snapchat

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[41] Questionnaire for Generation Z and Generation X.
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] Questionnaire for Generation Z and Generation X.
[45] *Ibid.*

Filter, stating that '...*we see the way they're trying to communicate. and it's not coming across on 'our level'*[46]. This may hinder the extent to which this trend will continue to expand in the future, potentially ensuring elements of continuity. Despite this, the increasing use of media by Generation Z reveals an expanding number of persons who are disenchanted by contemporary politics - continuing to be enhanced due to the convenience of online media.

Generation X has simultaneously been subjected to technological changes within society, altering their political participation on a micro level with macro implications. In order to examine the full influence of modern communication technologies it is beneficial to analyse the generation's transition from the late 1960s onwards, and how their variations in media usage have altered their trust in the government. Generation X's between 2009 and 2010 experienced dramatic growth in the field of social media usage[47], as the fastest growing audience for these networks. Unlike Generation Z, television still remains the predominant form of communication technology, revealing a continuity in its dominance for this Generation ever since the 1960s, with up to 70% of homes in Sydney and Melbourne owning a television set at the time[48]. Generation X is unique in that they are '*the first generation to grow up with more than three channels of television and the personal computer*'[49], establishing them as a unique perspective for investigating how modern communication technologies has influenced their confidence in the Australian government contemporarily.

The distinctive communication technology patterns of Generation X make them a prime demographic for exploring the hypothesis of this Personal Interest Project. Peter Chen, a member of Generation X, comments on his personal experiences with traditional media channels compared to contemporary communication technologies and if it provides the same ability for the general public to become informed about the government; '*It's moved in*

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[46] Focus group with Generation Z participants, July 2016.
[47] *Gen X and Social Media: Stuck in the Middle - Inner Social Media-ness.* (2014). *Inner Social Media-ness.* Retrieved 29 July 2016, from http://innersocialmedianess.com/gen-x-and-social-media-stuck-in-the-middle/
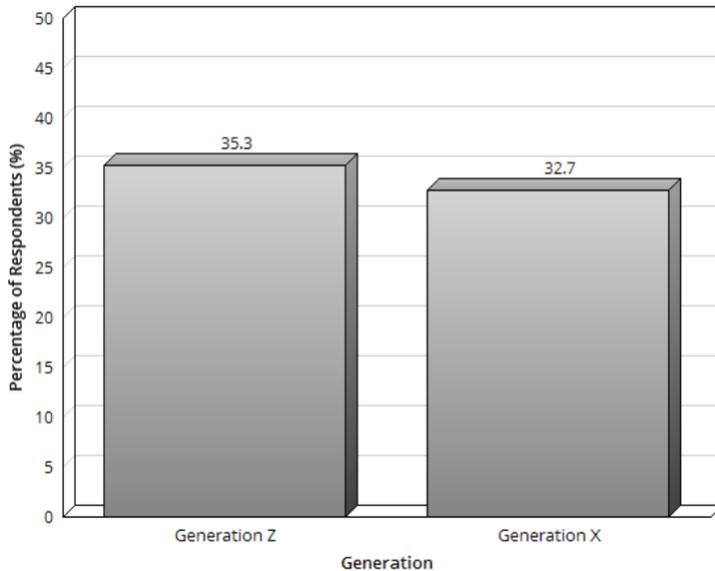[48] *Communications 1950s - 1960s | Online Education Home Schooling Skwirk Australia. Skwirk.com.* Retrieved 15 July 2016, from http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-189_t-505_c-1867/communications-1950s-1960s/nsw/communications-1950s-1960s/australia-s-social-and-cultural-history-in-the-post-war-period/the-impact-of-changing-technology-on-everyday-life
[49] *Gen X and Social Media: Stuck in the Middle - Inner Social Media-ness.* (2014). *Inner Social Media-ness.* Retrieved 29 July 2016, from http://innersocialmedianess.com/gen-x-and-social-media-stuck-in-the-middle/

different directions, the depth and quality has declined… but at the same time the width and diversity of media has increased', he states, asserting that the '*strict reliance on a small number of oligopoly media organisations*'[50] for Generation X's in particular has faded. Though the extent to which members of this generation have embraced social media is not as extensive as Generation Z, data collected still reveals similar trends - though to a lesser degree, depicted in Graph 5 with Generation X trailing behind Z narrowly[51]. It can be claimed that those that have become actively engaged in e-government display a similar lack of trust, with participants that state they are frequently exposed to political content online reporting that they 'highly trust' or 'trust' the government more frequently than those without exposure in only one section of politics[52]. As Generation X's begin to 'tap into' social media networks and establish a larger online presence, they arguably have experienced a similar decline in governmental trust over time.

Amongst the majority of Generation X's, a resistance to change is present, with negative attitudes to social media and other modern communication technologies described in questionnaire responses as '*often inaccurate*' and '*biased*'[53]. These perspectives are shared by numerous respondents, stating that '*you can only trust very few social media sources and I believe this perpetuates misinformation in Australian political culture*'. These attitudes towards modern communication technologies appear more frequently than for Generation Z - revealing a continuity in how this generation employs online media forms as part of the information age. This limits the extent to which one can explore trends pertaining to social media's influence over persons trust in the government over time for Generation X, though

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[50] Interview with Peter Chen, June 2016.
[51] Questionnaire for Generation X and Generation Z.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Questionnaire for Generation X.

some speculations can be drawn which reveal a decrease in trust being linked to a rapidly growing utilisation of modern communication technologies.

Nonetheless, what can be deduced from an exploration of Generation Z and X trends supports a definite correlation and potential causation between social media's usage and deteriorating confidence in the government. This provides a foundation for further research as society becomes progressively modernised online as part of the twenty-first century information age, posing the dilemma, how will the Australian government eventually counter this change?