TALKING ABOUT TWEETS:

TELEVISION METACOVERAGE OF TWITTER

DURING ELECTIONS AND ITS EFFECTS

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines press metacoverage (i.e., news about news) of Twitter on television news programs during election campaigns. It takes a look at the impact this metacoverage has on these campaigns. A content analysis found that coverage of Twitter has increased by election cycles (8 stories in 2008, 30 stories in 2010 and 50 stories in 2012) and that PBS Newshour, among other political talk programs cover Twitter the most. Results show that metacoverage of Twitter can have an impact on the public's view of candidates personality traits.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Hillary Clinton, a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2016, launched her Twitter account on June 10, 2013 and has since amassed more than 1 million followers. The launch of her account on this social media micro-blogging website became a big news story in and it of itself. For example, CNN reported on her recent social media activity, in a story highlighting her humor as well as her uncertainty about running for the seat. It showed Clinton's profile picture of choice for her account (her sitting in a chair with sun glasses on) and her description of herself: "wife, mom, lawyer, women & kids advocate, FLOAR, FLOTUS, US Senator, Sec State, author, dog owner, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, glass ceiling cracker, TBD…" CNN also noted her ambivalence about potentially running for office as reflected by her "to be determined" status.

Previous studies have examined metacoverage, or news coverage of news, in the context of presidential campaigns, as well as studies of the impact of Twitter on elections. To date however, no research has analyzed metacoverage of Twitter and the impact of such coverage on presidential elections. With this in mind, I conducted original research on this topic to provide insights on how news covers Twitter in relation to campaigns, as well as whether watching coverage of Twitter influences viewers.

THE RISE OF TWITTER

The social media site Twitter celebrated its 8th birthday on March 21, 2014. Created by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass, it was originally designed as an easier and quicker way to send SMS messages using a cell phone. For this reason, each "tweet" had a 140-character limit: SMS messages only allowed 160 characters, and the founders wanted to give room for usernames. The simplicity of the micro-blogging site combined with its capacity to send information at the blink of an eye made Twitter an engaging and useful commodity. Two years after the site launched, it had more than 1 million registered users. Today, eight years after launch, the site has more than 645 million registered users. According to Arceneaux (2009), "the number of (Twitter) users has grown dramatically…and the company boasts of a 1382 percent increase year-on-year unique users" (p. 1241). Not only has the number of users increased dramatically; use of Twitter by celebrities, political figures and business executives who have turned to Twitter to share their thoughts have made the social media site an important platform.

Twitter has become an important medium for news reporters, politicians and everyday people. Reporters no longer needed to write long articles only to have them edited and re-edited before finally being posted. Using Twitter, they have free reign to "tweet" 140-character messages delivering the important headline and necessary facts. As a result, the site has provided a quick and easy way of getting important information out to masses of people. Some examples of major news stories first broken on Twitter include the "massive earthquake in the Sichuan province of China in May 2008, the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, the crash of US airways flight 1549 on the Hudson River in January 2009 and the volatile protests after the Iranian election in June 2009." (Arceneaux, 2009, p. 1264)

TWITTER AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

In short, Twitter has revolutionized political communication. Cogburn and Vasquez (2009) observe that, "in the past, political news and commentary was only reported by a select group of those 'in the know'. But today, we see both politicians and the Average Joe on Twitter sharing their political banter and opinions." (p. 191) Twitter has also given politicians a way to directly relay information to their constituents and connect on a more personal level. This has become an important way to increase "Get out the Vote efforts." President Barack Obama is one politician who is considered to have mastered the "art" of Twitter. He and other political candidates have even gone so far to create technological tools and interfaces that directly depend on Twitter. "Tech4Obama," a platform and online field device, allowed Obama supporters to micro-target specific voters and convey a clear and meaningful message to these constituents. (Cruz, 2012, p.1)

Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez explore how the 2008 Obama campaign used social media. Given that Twitter was launched in 2006, the 2008 campaign marked its first use in a presidential campaign. As Cogburn and Vasquez (2009) elaborate, "not only did the Obama 2008 campaign have a presence on these social media, they developed strategies for using them to their full potential" (2009, p. 201). This method of campaigning was a planned process to use social media and new technology to their full potential. Obama already had a large contingent of followers on Twitter; at one point during the campaign, he had the largest number of followers of any political figure on the site (Rainie & Smith 2008). One of his campaign strategies was "to personalize the candidate and the campaign, to embrace individual supporters using

the same technologies, and to make them feel a part of the campaign." (Cogburn & Vasquez, 2009, p. 201) Through his use of social media, Obama was able to reach out to numerous supporters and potential donators in one fell swoop. In addition, "these tools were able to also help the campaign to segment out its supporters and to provide targeted messages to unique and narrow constituencies and slices of their activist base" (Cogburn & Vasquez, 2009, p. 201). According to Cogburn and Vasquez, while the 'social media tools are not a "silver bullet," these tools were critical elements for Obama and his victorious presidential campaign. Importantly, Mealy (2009) also argues that such tools were effective at reaching out to ethnic and class- based groups.

Another study, conducted by Lassen and Brown (2010), focused on how United States House and Senate members began adopting the use of Twitter in 2010. They found that use of Twitter ran across party lines in both chambers. Specifically, They showed that "in the House, Republicans are far more likely to use Twitter than Democrats are. In the House, 10 of the 12 Republican leaders use Twitter but only 1 of the 17 Democratic leaders follow suit. Moreover, none of the Democratic leaders meets our definition of an active user" (Lassen & Brown, 2010, p. 3) However, this study found no significant patterns related to electoral competitiveness or demographic lines, contrary to the authors' hypotheses that members would use Twitter more often if they were in a tough battle for their seat or if they were younger. Given that the study was relatively new, the researchers were unsure of how long Twitter would last and what kind of impact it could have on election campaigns.

Cruz (2012) looks at how both Romney and Obama's campaigns used Twitter and other social media in 2012. In the previous race, Obama controlled the social media and Twitter-verse, with McCain doing little to utilize this new technology.

However, Zac Moffat, Mitt Romney's digital director, realized that "Twitter has become the ultimate real-time engagement tool for our campaign" (Cruz, 2012, p. 1). Even as the Republicans finally attempted to get in the social media ring, Obama's own 2012 campaign efforts grossly outmatched his 2008 efforts. Michael Slaby, chief integration and innovation officer for the Obama campaign, explained that "this time around, we [were] much more strategic integrators of technology. We spent a lot more time thinking about the problems that aren't working and trying to build solutions" (Cruz, 2012, p. 1). One of the strategic integrations Obama used in the 2012 campaign was called "Dashboard," an online device that "enable[d] organizers and volunteers to collect data about voters both online and in person and deliver it back to a centralized campaign database; a mobile app that support[ed] mobile canvassing, help[ed] supporters find campaign events nearby and share breaking news" (Cruz, 2012, p. 1) This news was shared on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook so it could receive " re-tweets" and "likes," thereby making it more visible for other users. In sum, Twitter has allowed for an even greater amount of micro-targeting, in which the candidates craft personalized messages and ads to reach voters.

Reinforcing Cruz's observations, the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2012) showed that " the Obama campaign [used] digital tools to reach voters at almost four times the rate of the Romney campaign." Furthermore, "based on data gathered in a two-week window in June, the study found the Romney campaign averaged 1 tweet per day, while the Obama campaign averaged 29 tweets." (Pew, 2011, p. 1) As we now know, Obama went on to win the 2012 election. Looking beyond the presidential campaign context Cruz observes that as of September 3rd, 2012, "some 90 percent of senators and House members now have

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Twitter accounts, as do 42 governors and more than 35 world leaders" (Cruz, 2012, p. 1) - a stark increase from the 2010 study, which reported far lower use. Thus, Twitter has seen profound growth as a campaign tool.

USE BY AND COVERAGE OF TWITTER AND NEWS

Just as politicians have increasingly made use of Twitter, so have journalists. The Pew Research Center Journalism Project (2011) found that a majority of tweets from television news programs link to the program's own sites. This means that when television news outlets use Twitter, it is mostly to re-direct viewers back toward their television coverage. The messages and tones of their tweets and news coverage were typically the same. Furthermore, the Pew Research Center Journalism Project looked at how television programs use their Twitter feeds in general. The study found that as of 2011, these program's main Twitter feeds were used for reporting the news and re-directing to their own sites. However, some programs, like Fox News, did use their Twitter feed as a reporting tool and even went so far as to solicit information from the public. Although the major news programs seemed to use their Twitter feeds in a largely one-dimensional way, the study also found that individual reporters were a driving force behind news reporting on Twitter. For example, whereas ABC news programs did not use their Twitter feed much during the week of the study, anchor George Stephanopoulos tweeted 13 times.

In addition to using Twitter, journalists also cover it as news. Arceneaux (2010) examined news of Twitter from its inception in 2006 to 2009. He found that reporting on Twitter broke down into three themes: explanation, positive, and negative. Arceneaux explains that "given the relative novelty of Twitter, it is not

surprising that a great many writers felt compelled to explain the basic functions of this application before providing further details on its use" (2010, p. 1267). He further subcategorized the explanation theme into brevity and speed. In regards to brevity, Arceneaux noted that journalists had mixed opinions: some commented on the drawbacks of 140 characters, whereas others said that "Twitter could actually improve one's writing ability, rather than corrupt it" (2010, p. 1268). His other category, speed, reflected a feature that typically impressed journalists, citing examples of Twitter breaking news stories before local news got the story. The "positive" theme featured in the study showed how reporters and journalists found Twitter useful in areas such as keeping in touch with important contacts, self-promotion, and in the political arena. As for the negative views of Twitter, they were "a distinct minority of the sampled coverage" (Arceneaux, 2010, p. 1268). The negative category featured concerns among worried reporters and journalists about information overload or unintended consequences resulting from Twitter. Information overload was the primary concern, as some felt that Twitter had "unleashed a torrent of useless information upon users" (Arceneaux, 2010, p. 1268). By and large however, most journalists and reporters believed that Twitter could be a positive force for them.

METACOVERAGE OF ELECTIONS

Although little research other than Arceneaux's study has examined news about Twitter, a larger body of research has examined metacoverage, or news about news in the context of presidential campaigns. This research has examined outlets ranging from print news sources and traditional television news programs to political talk shows and political comedy. According to Esser (2003), press metacoverage,

"refers to coverage of the presence, behaviors, products, and roles of the news media, journalists and other news personnel" (p. 619) As Kerbel (1999) states, "Journalists, in earlier times passive communicators of information about political figures, have increasingly emerged from the background to talk about themselves – their political observations, their experiences covering politicians, even their thoughts about how well they cover the news" (p.83).

The findings of this research show that there is substantial press metacoverage during election campaigns. For example, Kerbel found that roughly 20% of election coverage on ABC and CNN included metacoverage. Other research into press metacoverage in the context of election campaigns demonstrates that it also appears outside of regular network news outlets. Brewer and Wise (2010), examined coverage of the 2008 presidential primary campaign to expand "the scope of previous research by analyzing the amount, tone, targets and themes of press meta coverage in not only traditional broadcast network evening news but also two other popular television news genres: political talk and political comedy" (p. 129). The study found that press metacoverage was much more common on political talk and comedy programs (The O'Reilly Factor 71%, Countdown 80%, The Daily Show 57%) than a network show like NBC nightly news (36%). An additional point raised by both Kerbel and Esser's research is whether metacoverage has hindered the election process by promoting a cynical understanding of elections. The worry is that metacoverage drowns out policy driven reports and instead focuses news programs on horse race coverage or other non-issue events. As a result, the public may be less informed about each candidate's stances on particular issues and more informed about who is ahead in the race and reporters analysis of the competition.

However, Esser argues that metacoverage "is not necessarily a sign that the press has abrogated one of its core political functions: to assess the conduct of political actors." At the same time, he suggests, that by performing this function of metacoverage "the news media takes advantage of an opportunity to bolster their political role in electoral politics." (Esser. 2003, p. 637).

THESIS OVERVIEW

My research is an attempt to synthesize previous research to address how television news covers Twitter in relation to the presidential campaigns. My first goal was to establish how often television news programs actually covered Twitter news, which programs covered it the most, and what themes this coverage emphasized. I was also interested in how these programs visually represented this coverage. Finally, I was interested in showing what impact, if any, news coverage of Twitter may have on presidential campaigns.

My research begins in Chapter 2, where I discuss what programs I used in my content analysis; how often these programs covered Twitter in the context of the politicial campaigns in 2008, 2010 and 2012, and how they framed their coverage. Chapter 3 describes the experiment I conducted to test the effects of television news coverage of Twitter. Finally, in Chapter 4 I review my results and then discuss their implications, as well as potential directions for future research.

Chapter 2

TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE OF TWITTER IN CAMPAIGNS

Although previous studies have examined Twitter's impact on the presidential elections and metacoverage of presidential elections separately, no study to date has examined metacoverage of Twitter in the context of elections. My research provides the first toward an understanding of such coverage. Specifically it addresses four research questions.

> RQ1: How often did television news programs cover Twitter in recent election cycles?

Here I hypothesized that there has been increased coverage by television programs as Twitter has increased in popularity. Thus, I expected the least amount of coverage in 2008, more in 2010 and more still in 2012.

> RQ2: Which television programs covered Twitter the most during recent election cycles?

Once I have discovered how often metacoverage appeared in these election cycles, I will analyze which programs featured the most metacoverage and which group of programs (network, cable, comedy, special election) covered Twitter the most.

> RQ3: What themes on television coverage of Twitter emerge during recent election cycles?

Here I break the television coverage of Twitter down into separate reoccurring themes.

> RQ4: How did television programs visually present Twitter in the election coverage?

Furthermore, I aim and find out how television news covered Twitter in the context of elections and portrayed the coverage to their viewers.

METHOD

Given that Twitter was launched in 2006, there are only three election cycles relevant to my study: 2008, 2010 and 2012. Two of these were presidential election cycles (2008 and 2012) whereas the other was a mid term election cycle (2010). I first had to choose what time frame I would use in analyzing the coverage. I decided to examine coverage from June 1 through November 15 for each year. This time frame encompassed the general election campaign and slightly beyond to capture post election coverage.

Next, I chose which news programs to include in the content analysis. In doing so, I sought to represent a variety of news "genres": broadcast news programs, cable news/ talk programs, comedic news programs and special election coverage programs. I included cable news/ talk programs and comedic news programs given that Brewer and Wise (2010) found that they frequently presented metacoverage. In short, I attempted to capture a representation of the broad spectrum of news programs covering the election. The programs included: *ABC World News with Diane Sawyer*, *NBC Nightly News*, *CBS Evening News with Scott Pelley* (network) and *CNN Newsroom*; *PBS Newshour*, (public television*) Anderson Cooper 360* (CNN), *The Rachel Maddow Show* (MSNBC), *Hannity*, *The Fox Report with Shepard Smith*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Special Report with Scott Baier**(Fox News Channel), *The Colbert Report* (Comedy Central). I also included special election coverage of the Republican

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National Convention, Democratic National Convention, Presidential Debates, Vice

Presidential Debates and Election Night (Fox News Channel).

I used two databases, LexisNexis and SnapStream to collect the content for the

analysis. I used LexisNexis to collect transcripts and I used SnapStream to collect

video of the television news coverage. The search term I used to find coverage was

"Twitter." I then excluded any "hits" that did not focus on the use of Twitter by

citizens, candidates, campaigns or pundits in the context of election campaigns. For

example, on numerous occasions a talk show host would plug their Twitter handle and

ask the viewers to follow them or like them on their social media site. I disregarded

these self-promotion hits. In all, I found 88 valid hits, that is, stories about Twitter in

an election campaign context.

CODING SCHEME

For each valid hit, I then coded its theme. My coding scheme included three

themes. These themes will be explained in more depth in the Results section. I created

a series of instructions for placing each story in one of these three. The three

categories for my coding scheme were "Use by Campaigns", "Public Reaction", and

"Other information about the Campaign." For "Use by Campaigns" the coding

instructions were as follows:

- Categorize the transcript as "Use by Campaigns" if the anchor describes how a political figure has been using Twitter OR how Twitter has influenced the way campaigns have been run OR how Twitter is affecting a current political figure.

The "Public Reaction" category coding instructions were as follows:

- Categorize the transcript as "Public Reaction" if the anchor describes how the public is reacting to events occurring in the

campaign on Twitter OR if the anchor covers celebrity reactions to campaign news OR the anchor's reaction to a tweet.

Finally, the "Other information about the Campaing" coding instructions were as follows:

- Categorize the transcripts as "Other information about the Campaign" if the anchor presents facts and figures about the campaign and candidates by posts on Twitter OR presents information that is NOT public reaction and is NOT use by campaigns.

I had a fellow Honor's Thesis student re-code a randomly selected subsample of 44 of the 88 stories. This ensured reliability from the coding process. In comparison to my initial coding we matched on 37 out of 44 of the stories. This yields an agreement percentage of 84% and a Cohen's kappa value of .74. The latter is a statistical measure of inter-rater agreement and is thought to be a better measure than simple percentages because it takes into the possibility of agreement by chance. Values over .70 are generally considered adequate for inter-rater agreement. (Fleiss, et al., 2003)

RESULTS

Twitter was mentioned a combined 234 times in 88 separate news stories about the election campaigns of 2008, 2010, and 2012. In 2008 there were only eight total stories. This number increased to 30 stories for the 2010 midterm election cycle and 50 stories in 2012.

An overwhelming percentage of the Twitter stories were from cable television and most of them were from political talk show programs (44/88). In addition, the program that utilized these social media aspects the most in delivering information on

the news was PBS Newshour, which covered Twitter on 15 separate stories. *PBS Newshour* was followed by *Hannity*, who covered it 11 stories, and *The Rachel Maddow Show,* who covered it in 8 stories.

USE BY CAMPAIGNS

One theme that emerged in television news coverage of Twitter was the use of it by political figures in order to disseminate and gather information. In 2008 there were only four news stories that covered this theme. However, in 2010 and 2012 there were 14 and 12 stories that covered this theme, respectively. With the increase in the use of Twitter in political communication, presidential candidates such as Barack Obama realized they had access to a new medium through which they could reach voters. The more frequently candidates used Twitter in their campaigns; the more news programs covered them. In all, 30 of the 88 news stories (34%) focused on use by campaigns.

An example of the theme can be found in a *PBS NewsHour* segment that aired on September 20, 2010. This story discussed Sarah Palin's use of Twitter, noting that, "Palin has also made effective use of social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, to announce endorsements or comment on current events" (PBS, 2010). Another story on use of campaigns was featured on the *CBS Evening News* on July 14, 2012:

> Internet savvy used to be an asset for a political campaign, now it`s essential. And for candidates from both parties, creating an online presence now goes far beyond Facebook and Twitter. For decades getting out the vote meant working the phones and going door to door. But these days, going where the voters are means going online, targeting smart phones, laptops, and tablets.

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Similarly, a November 1, 2012 story on *PBS Newshour* observed how campaigns use social media for information on potential voters. "So it's a mix of trying to identify your supporters and get them to register, get them to tell their friends, get them to tell people on Facebook and also driving negative messages, sometimes snarky Twitter-type messages against the other candidate" (PBS, 2012).

PUBLIC REACTION

The most common theme in television news coverage of Twitter was public reactions on social media to election events. Of the 88 news stories, 40 (45%) focused on the theme of public reaction. The programs sometimes covered trending topics after the presidential debates and election night. For example, on August 30, 2012, Fox News' special election coverage of the Republican National Convention discussed "Eastwooding". The report explained that, "the Twitter universe is lighting up, of course. And they're running a little late because of the improvised Clint Eastwood performance" referring to Clint Eastwood talking to an empty chair. Another example, shown on *PBS NewsHour* on October 4, 2012, reported that the debate "was a big hit on Twitter, that's for sure. There were 10.3 million tweets in the 90 minutes of the debate. That's more than all of the Democratic National Convention. So we're really seeing an increase in people's political interest on Twitter." Similarly, on October 17, 2012 the *Rachel Maddow Show* commented after the second debate "the Obama campaign launched a website at bindersfullofwomen.com" referring to one of Obama's viral campaign efforts capitalizing on a perceived Romney gaffe.

OTHER INFORMATION

The final theme that emerged was when the television programs relayed general facts and figures about the campaign or the candidates via Twitter. These stories, accounted for 18 out of the 88 stories (21%), emphasized a variety of angles, and encompassed all of the stories that did not fall into either the "use by campaign" or "public reaction" category. For example, on November 2, 2010, CNN Newsroom reported that "as you watch the Twitter- verse come in, a clear plurality, over 37 percent of Americans say they're voting against somebody or a policy, when they go to the polls." Another example appeared on Fox News Watch on August 8, 2012 when news anchor Jim Pinkerton commented:

> Mitt Romney has 856,000 Twitter followers. Obama has 18.5 million. Even more crucially, Romney is following a grand total of 255 people and Obama is following 674,000.I don't think that President Obama is reading those 674,000 Twitter followers…They're putting it all in a computer some place. And I'm sure it's helping them.

VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Using SnapStream, I was able to look at how each news program covered Twitter visually by using screen caps.

Figure 1   Rachel Maddow September 10, 2012

As Snapstream was a recording device, I had video footage of the news stories from August 24 to November 15, 2012. I went through all 29 of these stories to look at how the news portrayed Twitter. The majority of the stories featured their news anchors speaking to the camera and superimposing images of the tweets to which the story was referring. From time to time the programs would flash a picture of the tweet in question or graphs that demonstrated the numbers under discussion. *PBS Newshour*, the program that covered Twitter the most, took a unique approach to their visual

display of their coverage. This was the only program that actually labeled the portion of their coverage as a look into social media and its impact on the election. The "Daily Download," the core of the *PBS Newshour* segment had two guest speakers give their analysis on Twitter and on the social media. The show used a combination of super-imposed images of the tweets as well as video of Barack Obama or Mitt Romney discussing Twitter.

Figure 2   PBS Newshour, November 11, 2012

CONCLUSION

My content analysis showed that there was metacoverage of Twitter present in the context of the election campaigns. As expected, each election cycle, starting from 2008 and ending in 2012, saw more metacoverage than the last. The presence of metacoverage of Twitter in the context of the election campaign process is important

because it begs the question of what impact this metacoverage may have on campaigning and the public.

Chapter 3

THE EFFECTS OF NEWS COVERAGE OF TWITTER

RQ5: How does viewing television programs coverage of Twitter influence audience member opinions?

The previous chapter shows that there is metacoverage of Twitter in the context of electoral campaigns. The coverage included several themes, including use by campaigns and public reaction. This chapter considers the potential impact of such coverage on election campaigns. Specifically, I addressed the above research question to examine news coverage effects of Twitter and conducted an online experiment survey. This experiment focused on CNN news coverage of how Twitter was used by a candidate (Hillary Clinton) and its effects on viewer's perceptions of the candidate.

METHODS

The experiment, which used a posttest-only design, revolved around the participants viewing videos and then reporting their opinions about a range of topics. Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the three videos: one about Hillary Clinton creating her own Twitter profile, one about how Twitter has been used on the campaign trail more generally, and one about "boiler-room" scams involving fake stock options in Spain. The first video is meant to represent news coverage of the "Use by Campaigns" theme. The video about Twitter on the campaign trail is meant to

represent news coverage about the "Public Reaction" theme. The last video serves as a control to provide a basis for comparison.

The survey was conducted through Qualtrics, an online survey site, from March 26 to April 7, 2014. During this week and a half period, a recruitment email was sent to a variety of groups: Fraternities, Sororities, National Honors Societies, Business Offices and fellow thesis students. The survey was distributed to a variety of age groups so that the results would be more representative. In total, 122 people participated in the experiment, including 48 men and 74 women. The majority of the survey participants were 21 or 22 year olds, but approximately 21% of the group was more than 25 years of age. In addition, 66% of the participants were University of Delaware students, 9% of the participants were from other universities, and 25% were not college students. As far as the demographics are concerned, the survey included an overwhelming majority (90%) of Caucasian students. Finally, the survey included substantial diversity in terms of party identification, as 45% of participants considered themselves a Democrat, 27% Republican, and 28% Independent.

The three videos were all chosen from CNN in order to control for source, and all were recent news stories so there was no bias involved from showing clips from the past. I distributed the videos at random to the participants, so that approximately 33% of people saw each of the three video options. Participants were only told they would watch a one-minute video clip and answer some questions pertaining to the video. The first video shows a CNN news anchor reporting on Hillary Clinton's new creation of a Twitter account. The video goes on to describe how popular the account has been, with more than 150,000 followers. The video also discusses speculation about Clinton running in 2016 for president and highlights her humor and likeability by showing her

making a joke on her own Twitter page. The second video focuses on a CNN anchor covering Peter Hamby's article about Twitter use on the campaign trail. The video explains that the 2012 election campaign shows the impact of Twitter and social media for politicians and journalists alike. The control video begins with a clip of the movie "Wolf of Wall Street" and goes on to explain the recent string of fake stockbroker scams that have been occurring throughout Spain. The video compares the heists to that of the popular movie "Boiler-Room" and pictures Interpol and the FBI cracking down on the case.

After watching one of these videos, participants were asked a variety of general survey questions. The key questions focused on Hillary Clinton a potential candidate in 2016 presidential election campaign. A parallel set of questions asked about another potential 2016 contender, Chris Christie.

Other questions asked participants their thoughts about the videos they watched (how informative, biased, or entertaining the video was). Another set of questions focused on social media use (whether or not the participants had a Twitter or Facebook account, and if so how often they used these to follow politics and campaigns). Still another set of questions asked about the participant's perceptions of CNN and Fox news programs. A final block of questions asked how useful Twitter and Facebook are as sources of information about politics, as well as how much impact the participants believe these social media sites have on campaigns. These questions all served in disguising the true focus of the study.

RESULTS

I analyzed the data using SPSS, a statistical software package. In order to test for effects of the Clinton video on participant's views of her, I ran a series of

independent t-Test analyses for the questions asked about Clinton. The questions that were included in these comparisons were:

- What is your overall opinion of Hillary Clinton?

- How likely do you think it is that Hillary Clinton will run for president in 2016?

- How likely do you think it is that Hillary Clinton will win if she runs for president in 2016?

- How likeable do you think Hillary Clinton is?

- How funny do you think Hillary Clinton is?

Each variable was coded on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (the least favorable response) to 4 (the most favorable response). For example, for the perceptions of Clinton as funny the coding was 0-very unfunny, 1- somewhat unfunny, 2- somewhat funny and 3- very funny. This coding system was used for all the variables. Among the 83 respondents that saw the control video and the Use of Twitter on the campaign trail video, Clinton had a 1.25 rating on how funny she was, a 1.78 rating for overall opinion, a 2.33 rating for whether she will run, a 1.60 rating for whether she will win and a 1.86 rating for how likable she is. Thus, Clinton was viewed as not very funny, but respondents had a somewhat favorable opinion of her, thought she was somewhat likely to win, saw her as likeable, and saw her as likely to run for the presidency of 2016.

I then compared these numbers to the 38 respondents who view only our Clinton video. The variables that were impacted the most from this comparison were respondent's views on how likeable she is and how funny she is. Of the people that only saw the Clinton video, they gave her a 1.49 rating on how funny she is and a 2.08 rating on likeability. The Independent T-test shows that watching the Hillary Clinton

video, therefore, has significance for these two variables. The P value for the variable on Hillary Clinton being viewed as funny show a .027, which below the .05 threshold to ensure there is statistical significance. The p value for the variable of likeability is a .017, which is also below the .05 threshold to ensure there is statistical significance. Essentially, the T-test confirms that when watching the Hillary Clinton video, viewers were impacted and as a result were likely to view Hillary Clinton more positively in regards to her humor and likeability.

When comparing the 38 respondents who only viewed the Clinton video to the total for the other three variables there is no statistically significant data. The overall opinion for Clinton rises to 1.82 and the rating for her chances of winning rise to 1.67, but neither of these changes constitutes any real significance.

Unfortunately, for the most part there was no significantly significant data that was found when looking at the majority of the other questions. When comparing the two different Twitter related videos to the control video, much of the answers and opinions were the same. If they were different an Independent sample T test was run and there was no significance seen. However, it is important to note that the only two variables that were impacted by watching the Hillary Clinton video were in regards to her humor and likeability. Both of these are assessments of personality traits rather than broader evaluations already formed about Hillary Clinton. Being that Clinton is such a well-known figure, overall opinions about her have already been formed. For this reason a video dealing with Clinton's character traits probably would not change overall opinion of her. Instead the video only appeared to change views of character traits directly emphasized in the video such as her humor and likeability.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY

The goals of my research were to find out whether television news metacoverage of Twitter existed in relation to the election campaigns, and if so, what impact this metacoverage could have on campaigns. Looking at 2008, 2010 and 2012, I not only confirmed that there was metacoverage of Twitter in relation to political campaigns, but as predicted, the amount of metacoverage increased with each campaign cycle. Furthermore, I found that when the news covered a positive news story about a candidate's use of Twitter, people had a more positive view of the personality of the candidate in question.

Using this information, news programs such as those on CNN may recognize that their reports of candidates or political figures using Twitter can potentially change people's views on that candidate. As demonstrated by my experiment, CNN's positive news coverage of Hillary Clinton had a positive impact on my sample's view of her personality traits. Thus, a stream of positive stories for Clinton or another candidate such as, Chris Christie on Fox might have a profound effect on the stories these programs cover.

The more quickly political figures recognize the power and impact that news coverage of Twitter and social media can have on the way the public views them, the better off they will be. Political candidates will look to social media such as Twitter as a way to get positive personality stories into the media. Candidates can use this tool of metacoverage of their Twitter actions as a way to bolster their image. They will also

have to be wary of their actions on Twitter because gaffes such as those Romney experienced in the 2012 campaign went viral and forced him into defense mode.

While my results carry potential implications for both news programs and politicians, it is important to note the limitations to my research. The experimental results only show that news programs metacoverage of Twitter can affect views of personality traits; they reveal no significant impact on people's overall opinions about the candidate. In addition, my research only looked at a story that portrays a candidate's use of Twitter in a positive light. Another limitation to my study was that most of the experiments' participants were relatively young, liberal college students who could already have a preconceived bias toward Hillary Clinton. Furthermore, my research looked only at television news programs and did not include any print media like newspapers. These television news programs were only a fraction of the programs so other shows could have had more or less metacoverage. Other limitations to my study include only showing a video about one candidate and not taking place during the main campaigning season.

Further studies could build on my research in a variety of ways. For example, my experiment only looks at a story on Twitter that is positive, while other research could look at the effects of a negative story on Twitter. It is possible that a negative story could diminish the public's view of a political candidate, making candidates wary about what they post on their accounts. Other potential points for study could be whether the improvements or damages that Twitter may exact on the public's perception of a candidate's personality, can directly affect voting for the candidate. Finally, my research could be extended by looking at what impact a story like this could have in the middle of campaign season rather than during a lull. The story I

showed aired in early 2014, well before the 2016 presidential election or even before true contenders began their campaigning. It would be interesting to see whether there would be more or less of an impact if the same video were shown in the middle of a Clinton campaign, for example.

CONCLUSION

Looking toward the 2016 presidential election campaign, it is clear that Twitter and other social media outlets may have an impact on political candidates. According to Arceneaux (2010) Twitter has followed a familiar path of other technological innovations such as the telegraph, the radio and the television. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt effectively utilized the radio by beginning his fireside chats with the public, and President John F. Kennedy was the first candidate to use television to its fullest in a campaign. It seems that President Barack Obama has shown a similar arc in his use of social media such as Twitter.

A prime example of the relevance news programs are putting on metacoverage of Twitter can be seen in CNN digital studios. CNN digital studios aim to show "a bite-sized video news series built specifically to be viewed and shared on Twitter called your '15 second morning'" (Sheilds, 2014, p. 1). The entire overhaul for CNN is aimed at reversing declining ratings by attracting younger viewers who enjoy social media and Twitter. This shows how much impact news outlets believe Twitter has right now and may have in the future.

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