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The message and the medium: an experimental evaluation of the effects of Twitter commentary on campaign messages

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ABSTRACT

Social media are an increasingly important communication tool in political campaigns, yet there is much to learn about how communication effects might differ for these platforms. In contrast to traditional media outlets, messengers often do not fully control their message on social media; rather, the audience often receive the candidate message along with comments and reactions, commonly uncivil ones. Using a survey experiment, we examine the persuasion implications of audience comments on candidate tweets. We find that commentary on tweets becomes part of the communicated message, with mostly positive comments offering a slight persuasive boost, and mostly negative comments offering a larger negative effect.

KEYWORDS

social media; campaigns; communication; messaging; Twitter; survey; experiment; media

In June 2015, Donald Trump posted to his Twitter account announcing he was “officially running for President of the United States.” This post was only the beginning – from trumpeting polling numbers and primary wins to Election Day results, Trump communicated campaign milestones and messages (and continues to do so as president) first and foremost on Twitter. Not only are candidates and elected officials increasingly using social media platforms for political communication, but the public is also turning more and more to social media platforms as a source of political news. According to a Pew Research Center survey, the 2016 election was the first in which the candidates’ social media posts outpaced their websites and emails as sources of news. Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents reported relying on social media platforms for campaign and candidate information rather than campaign websites (10%) or campaign emails (9%) (Shearer, 2016).

Although a rich literature on social media is emerging (e.g., Farrar-Myers & Vaughn, 2015; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Swigger, 2013), there is still much to learn about the nature and influence of social media and if and how it might differ from our existing base of knowledge about political communication effects in traditional

media. One key characteristic of social media that differs from other channels of political communication – television advertising, direct mail, and the like – is the interactive element (Gil de Zuniga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Pasek, More, & Romer, 2009). The communications received by the public through social media are not simply the candidate’s message content delivered; it is the content plus audience comments, reactions, and rejoinders – often critical and uncivil. Unclear from existing research are the implications of these message comments for communication effects. Traditional channels of communication, such as direct mail and television advertising, allow the campaign to control the message that is delivered to voters. In contrast, social media messages allow for audience reaction and commentary in a way that might change the message received by the audience. In particular, online commenters often engage in uncivil commentary, defined as “offensive discussion that impedes the democratic ideal of deliberation” (Anderson et al., 2013; Papacharissi, 2004), and that could undermine or distract from the communicated message. As a recent example, President Trump tweeted “Don’t believe the main stream [sic] (fake news) media. The White House is running VERY WELL. I inherited a MESS and am in the process of fixing

it” but the most favorited reply showing up directly underneath that message read “@realDonaldTrump Its just a shame u didn’t inherit a brain or self awareness. Crazy man! honey get some help & stop this batshit craziness.”¹

Do Twitter replies such as these have implications for the communication effects of candidate messages? Does the increasingly common uncivil social media commentary change the potential persuasiveness of candidate communications on this platform? This research note reports the results of a survey experiment about Twitter communications designed to get an initial take on these questions. The results suggest that audience responses to Twitter posts are very much part of the communicated message, with positive comments offering a slight persuasive boost to the candidate post, but negative comments offering an even larger diminishing effect on the candidate post.

Background and expectations

With the continued expansion of social media into the realm of politics, political communication research has grown to analyze its use and effects. Thus far, this research has focused primarily on how social media are used, and who is using them (e.g., Bimber 2014; Bimber, 2003; Gil de Zuniga et al., 2012; Pasek et al., 2009). What is missing from this literature is a clear understanding of the way the social media platform might change the persuasive effects of candidate communications. This study seeks to understand these effects by considering two prominent factors of social media communication.

First, unlike traditional channels of communication, social media messages are interactive. An individual is not only exposed to a candidate’s chosen message, but also a multitude of comments and reactions – both positive and negative – from other members of the public. These comments, especially when they appear directly below the original message, might well become a part of the communication. What is the effect of these comments on message persuasiveness or candidate evaluations? Muddiman and Stroud (2017) have examined how readers and journalists engage

with reader comments on *New York Times* articles (e.g., extent of incivility, patterns of flagging for abuse, etc.). Prochazka, Weber, and Schweiger (2018) have found that particularly uncivil comments on a news article can lead to individuals perceiving an article as low quality. These studies suggest that comments can be a fundamental part of the communication effect, but they have focused on news rather than candidates. It is also more likely that comments on Twitter, for instance, will be harder to overlook than comments at the end of a long news article. Morris (2017) evaluated the persuasiveness of Twitter messages as compared to messages from traditional media platforms; however, comments on the messages were not included in the study. Thus, we still have much to learn about how comments might affect the persuasiveness of social media campaign messages.

Second, this study contributes to our understanding of incivility in political communications. Communication scholars have documented a rise in exposure to incivility in political discourse in today’s media environment (Anderson et al., 2013; Brooks & Geer, 2007; Mutz, 2015; Mutz & Reeves, 2005). For example, Mutz (2015) finds that uncivil discourse and close-up camera perspectives combine to create an “in-your-face” perspective that damages the political trust and respect for the opposition that is necessary for deliberative discourse. While much of this research has focused on traditional forms of elite communication, studies have shown that the online environment promotes incivility (Hopp & Vargo, 2017). Online exchanges – especially when anonymous – are often hostile and negative (Coe, Kenski, & Rains, 2014). MIT’s Media Lab found that between 10 and 20 percent of election tweets in 2016 could be classified as “uncivil,” a significant increase from past elections (McGrath, 2016).² Scholars once lauded the potential of the Internet for fostering democratic deliberation, but much of the empirical research about online interactions documents the high level of incivility in online discussion groups and among online news commentary. This incivility in online citizen-to-citizen interactions has been found to create negative affective responses that lead to anti-deliberative attitudes and dissatisfaction with online discourse

(Gervais, 2015), a hostile perception of the other side (Hwang, Pan, & Sun, 2008), and issue polarization (Anderson et al., 2013). While this existing research suggests that engaging in hostile exchanges with strangers can dampen deliberative discourse, we consider instead the implications for commentary on candidate communications on social media. More specifically, this study focuses on the social media platform Twitter. With hundreds of millions of daily users (Wagner, 2017), and with tens of millions of people “following” prominent politicians on the platform (Donald Trump has over 37 million followers and Hillary Clinton has nearly 18 million), it is clear that this platform is increasingly becoming a space for political discussion. Given this, how does uncivil commentary on candidate tweets shape the persuasive effects of the communication?

On the one hand, we might expect that negative comments and responses to candidate tweets will have little impact on the persuasive effect of the candidate’s message. Incivility is now so pervasive (Coe et al., 2014) that social media users might be immune to negative commentary or prone to ignore or discount it. This may manifest in individuals only paying attention to the actual message without reading any of the comments. Certainly, this seems to be one reaction to the comments section for online news. As one journalist put it, “I’ve never really been a fan of comment sections...But, since writing for sites that allow them, I’ve mostly taken the ‘don’t read the comments’ approach – to my own and others’ writing” (Moosa, 2014).

On the other hand, the comments could become part of the communicated message received by the audience, although previous research is somewhat unclear as to the expected effects. Research examining citizen-to-citizen interactions in online discussion groups finds that simply observing – not just participating in – uncivil online discourse can provoke negative evaluations of arguments (Gervais, 2015). This suggests negative Twitter comments could undermine the candidate’s message. We might expect reader reactions to a candidate’s social media post to be especially effective because of differences in the assumed motivations of the speakers. Whereas candidate messages might be discounted as propaganda,

reactions from members of the public might be viewed as more credible and sincere (Antheunis & Schouten, 2011). As such, reader comments could serve to either strengthen or weaken the candidate message, depending on the tone of the comments. Ultimately, it is an open question as to the impact of commentary on candidates’ social media communications.

Data and methods

To test the effect of commentary on Twitter communications, we conducted an online survey experiment using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (mTurk) in April 2016. mTurk is an appealing source for data collection because of its large participant pool and relatively cheap compensation rates. Research conducted into the mTurk participant pool has concluded two important findings: (1) mTurk participants are more demographically diverse than college samples; and (2) the data obtained from mTurk users are at least as reliable as those obtained by other nonprobability methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). For these reasons, mTurk provided a viable option for an initial look at the effects of social media commentary on political persuasion.

Participants of this survey were U.S. adults age 18 or older who signed up on mTurk to participate in HITs (or Human Intelligence Tasks) in exchange for compensation.³ The 515 respondents answered pre-treatment questions regarding demographics, attention paid to politics, voter registration status, and likelihood of voting. Upon completion of these questions, the respondents were randomized into two treatment groups (positive or negative comments) and a control group. In evaluating the sample demographics, the researchers found them to be similar to Twitter user demographics in the areas of income, education, and gender; however, Twitter users are typically younger than the respondents in the sample (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Balance tests across demographics and relevant pretreatment variables suggest randomization was successful and are reported in Table A1 of the Online Appendix.⁴

Before being shown the tweets associated with their condition, respondents were prompted as follows:

Politicians these days have been using social media platforms to communicate with constituents and supporters. Nathan Clark, a candidate for an open seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, has been using social media sites to reach out to potential voters. A practicing attorney and former state legislator, Clark is married with three children. The next screen will present a recent post Clark made on his Twitter account.

The tweet shown to all conditions (seen in Figure 1) read: “Beautiful day to be on the campaign trail! Visiting every county in the district today! #ClarkForRep.” Respondents in the control group saw only the tweet, while members of each treatment group saw the tweet in addition to four reader comments. The set of four reader comments was either mostly positive (shown in Figure 2) or mostly

negative (shown in Figure 3). One neutral tweet (“@ClarkForRep I hope there’s going to be a debate soon”) was displayed in both the positive and negative treatment conditions to help the exchange appear more realistic (in that we might not expect reactions to a real Twitter post to be all negative or positive).⁵ Admittedly, these conditions represent a clear simplification of the range and combination of comments that are seen in Twitter exchanges. We created conditions that were as comparable and clear as possible to ensure a clean interpretation of the communication effects.

Tweet comments were parallel with the exception of tone. For example, one responding tweet in the positive treatment condition stated, “One thing clear: @ClarkForRep CARES about people in this district.” The responding tweet in the negative treatment condition stated, “One thing clear: @ClarkForRep does NOT CARE about people in this district.” Additionally, the names, usernames,

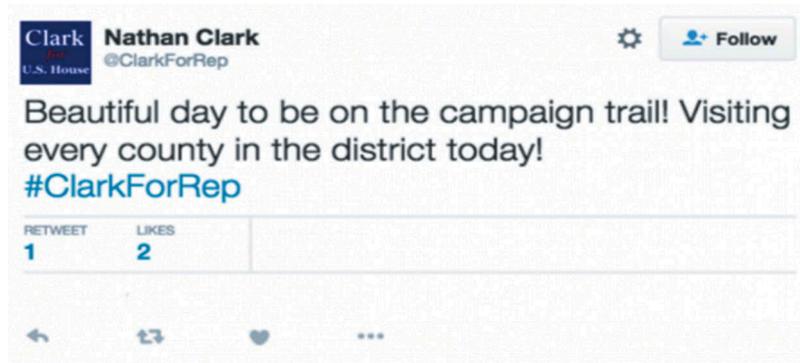


Figure 1. Candidate tweet.

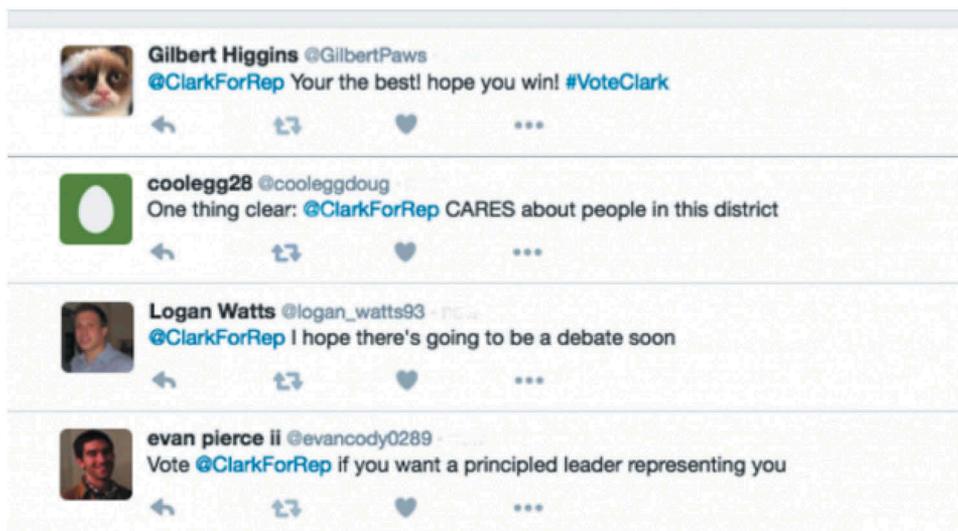


Figure 2. Comments displayed in the positive commentary treatment condition.

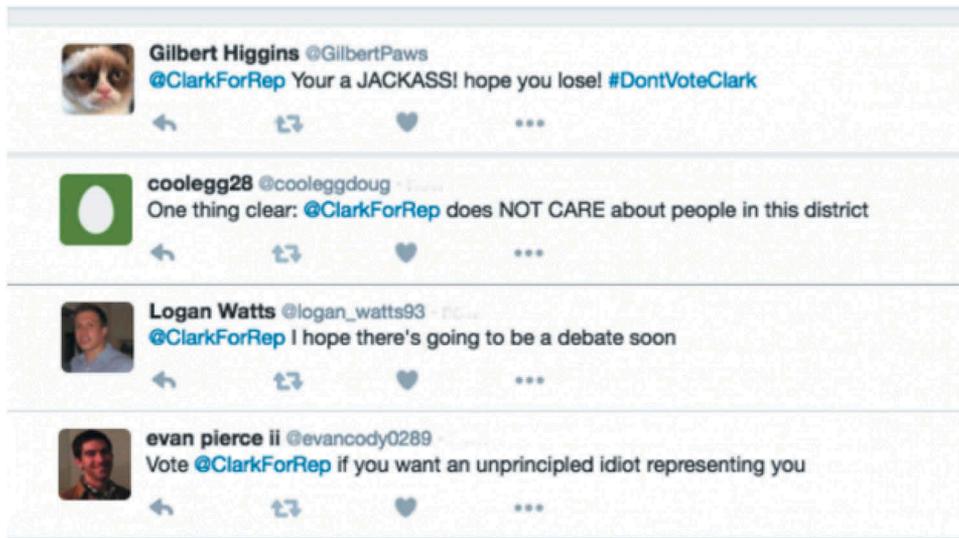


Figure 3. Comments displayed in the negative commentary treatment condition.

and profile pictures for responses to Clark’s tweet were kept the same across conditions. In designing this experiment, we intentionally composed the comments in the negative and positive treatment conditions to be as similar as possible. As can be seen in Figures 2 and 3, the wording of comments in each condition was nearly identical, save for changing one or two words that served as indicators of the tone of the comment.⁶ Constructing the treatment conditions in this way ensured that observed treatment effects would be caused by differences in tone, rather than by other confounding factors, such as length of text, syntax and grammar of the comment, or the characteristics of the commenter.

A manipulation check found that the tone of the Twitter commentary was perceived as intended: 84.1 percent of those in the positive treatment indicated that the responses were “mostly positive,” whereas 80.8 percent of those in the negative treatment indicated that responses were “mostly negative.”

Results

We examine the differences across conditions on several post-treatment attitudes, including evaluations of the candidate and the message. We report the full set of raw means in Table 1.⁷ Across 13 different outcomes, we find negative effects from the negative comment condition compared to the

control. Compared to the control group, individuals who also saw negative comments were significantly less likely to evaluate the candidate as trustworthy, knowledgeable, electable, caring, or as a strong leader. They were also significantly less likely to say they had a favorable impression of the candidate or would vote for him. Finally, they were significantly less likely to say he effectively used social media and were less likely to evaluate his social media presence as informative, credible, or persuasive, and more likely to evaluate it as negative and hostile. Compared to the control group, there were smaller, but still significant and positive treatment effects among those who saw the positive comments in all but two cases.

To be sure, the campaign communications presented in this paper represent a low-information

Table 1. Difference of means across conditions.

	Control	Positive	Negative
Effective use of Social Media (1–5)	3.31	3.69*	2.21*
Favorable Impression (1–5)	3.45	3.62*	2.44*
Strong Leader (1–5)	2.94	3.11*	2.25*
Trustworthy (1–5)	2.92	3.06*	2.30*
Knowledgeable (1–5)	3.06	3.13	2.43*
Electable (1–5)	3.07	3.30*	2.31*
Caring (1–5)	3.12	3.32*	2.37*
Social Media Presence is... Negative (1–5)	1.96	1.70*	3.35*
...Informative (1–5)	2.85	2.80	2.20*
...Credible (1–5)	3.05	3.11	2.30*
...Hostile (1–5)	1.61	1.44*	2.52*
...Persuasive (1–5)	2.48	2.68*	2.04*
Vote for Clark (1–5)	2.63	2.84*	2.03*

Control group: N = 166; Positive group: N = 167; Negative group: N = 167
*0.05 p-value; †0.10 p-value

environment. Respondents were not presented with a real candidate, and they were provided very little information about the candidate in terms of policy positions or partisanship, so we might expect the comments to have a larger effect on candidate evaluations. On the other hand, the results displayed in Table 1 indicate that respondents are not reacting to the comments alone. If this were truly a “blank slate” condition in which respondents had no impression of the candidate, we would expect the means in the control condition to be around 2.5. Instead, what we see is that these means of attitudes fluctuate quite a bit, ranging from 1.96 to 3.31. This indicates that the comments are becoming part of the communicated message, providing either a slight persuasive boost (positive) or a significant undermining of the message (negative).

To improve precision of results, we estimate multivariate models for four key outcomes: perceived effectiveness of Clark’s social media use, favorability of the impression left by Clark, persuasiveness of social media use, and the likelihood of voting for Clark. In addition to demographic controls, we include two measures of social media use on the expectation that savvy Twitter users might have different attitudes on the outcomes than others if, for instance, they have become

desensitized to negative online commentary. The full results are presented in the appendix (Table A2 and Table A3) and presented graphically in Figure 4.⁸

As seen in Figure 4, the negative treatment condition results in a highly significant decrease on all four of these dependent variables. For example, all else held constant, those who received the tweet with negative comments evaluated Clark’s social media effectiveness as 1.2 points less effective on a 1–5 scale relative to the control – a 32 percent change. This translates to moving from evaluating Clark’s social media effectiveness as “Somewhat effective” to “Somewhat ineffective.” This same pattern is observed for the other three outcomes: respondents exposed to the negative tweets had a 1.1 point less favorable impression of Clark on average than those in the control (31 percent change); considered him to be 0.5 points less persuasive (16 percent change); and were 0.6 points less likely to cast a vote for Clark (21 percent change).

In contrast, the positive treatment condition improves evaluations of Clark and his social media use, although the effects are statistically significant only for the variables measuring effectiveness of Clark’s social media use and the likelihood of voting for Clark. While these asymmetric

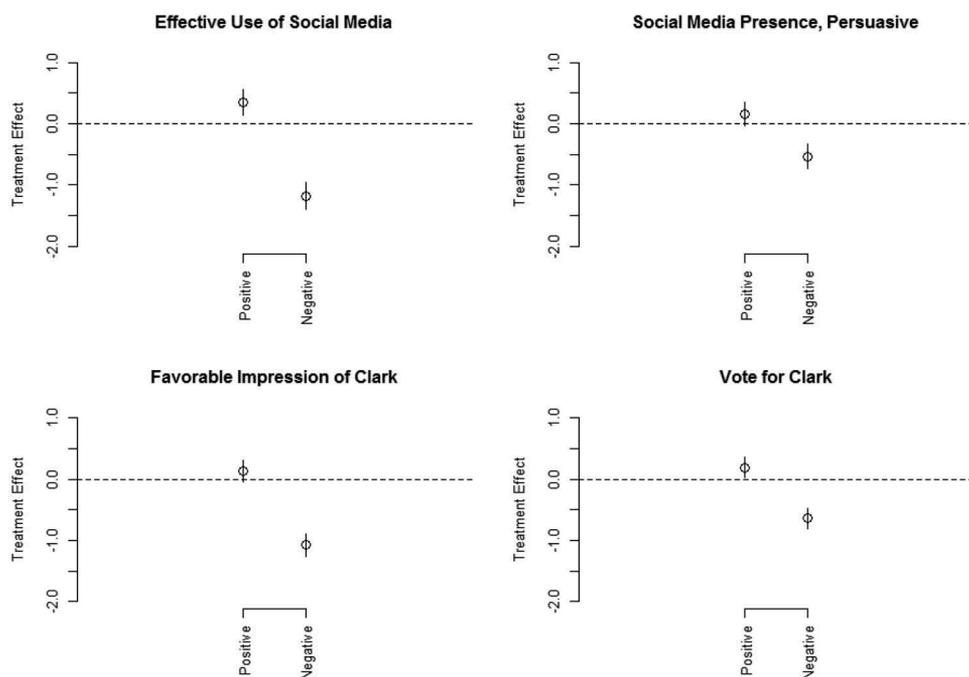


Figure 4. Positive and negative treatment effects.

results are consistent with previous research finding that negative comments increase attention to messages (Brooks & Geer, 2007), the use of “flaming” language in the negative treatment could create some lopsidedness across conditions.

Overall, these results offer compelling evidence that the audience comments on candidate Twitter posts become part of the communicated message. Moreover, the tone of the audience commentary can shape the persuasiveness of the candidate’s message.

Discussion

In the Trump era, Twitter has become a primary channel of political communication. In contrast to traditional forms of political communication, Twitter is interactive, so the audience receives not only the intended political message, but also the reactions to and critiques of the message. This study shows that these Twitter comments on candidate tweets have a pronounced influence on the communication effects of the candidate message. We find that mostly positive comments help to modestly amplify the effectiveness of the campaign communication, while critical commentary weakens the effectiveness of the campaign communication. Specifically, those viewing a candidate Tweet with mostly favorable comments were more likely to vote for the candidate and had more positive evaluations of the candidate’s social media use, while those viewing a candidate Tweet with mostly unfavorable comments had a lower likelihood of voting for the candidate and less positive evaluations of his persuasiveness, favorability, and social media effectiveness.

As this was the first scholarly effort to evaluate the effect of Twitter comments on candidate campaign communications, we have necessarily relied on a clean, but overly simplistic, environment. We might expect, for instance, smaller or mediated effects if we were to examine Tweets from actual candidates with whom respondents had stronger pre-existing attitudes. The generalizability of the effects is clearly limited by the use of a fictitious candidate, limited information about the candidate (or opponent), and a constrained set of comments. Nonetheless, the experiment is able to demonstrate the theoretical importance of considering Twitter

comments as part of a candidate’s communicated message. As such, these results highlight the ways in which social media platforms are changing the nature of political communication. The effectiveness of campaign communication can be largely shaped by the context of the medium, and in this case, social media commentary can strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of a candidate’s message. These results provide a first look into the effects of audience commentary on the persuasive effects of candidates’ Twitter posts, but we do want to highlight possible areas for future research.⁹

Moving forward, research should consider how these effects might be shaped by factors such as partisan cues, policy positions, and high-information settings. We might expect, for instance, comments to have a smaller effect when a candidate is tweeting about a policy issue on which a respondent has an existing opinion. Likewise, there may well be smaller persuasive effects when a candidate is well-known and respondents have strong prior evaluations. It is also important to consider how the effects of Twitter comments vary based on the nature of the commentary – for example, the use of flaming language, the popularity of the comments, or the number of overall comments. Unclear, for instance, is exactly which comments are likely to capture the attention of readers, especially in cases with long lists of Twitter responses. Although the present study cannot address the ways in which each of the above political factors may influence the results, it does provide a valuable foundation of understanding for the potential social media commentary has for causing shifts in candidate evaluations and political behavior. Given the rise of political communication on social media, there is a need to better understand how the characteristics and constraints of a platform might shape the nature and influence of the communicated message.

It is also important to consider the normative implications of these findings for campaign communication. Most obviously, these results suggest that in using social media to communicate with the electorate, candidates run the risk of losing control of their messaging. At the same time, the results also highlight the potential for strategic exploitation of the observed dynamic. These

results point to the ability of trolls, bots, and activists to hijack political exchange in a way that undermines civic political discourse on social media. The implications of such exchanges could then have spill-over effects on political polarization, trust, and cynicism.

Overall, the results presented here emphasize the importance of updating our theoretical understanding of political communication to include the contextual implications of social media platforms. Unlike traditional forms of communication, social media allows its users to interact with a candidate's message through comments, limiting the candidate's control over the message that is delivered to voters. With this knowledge, future research must further explore these findings to understand how other political factors may alter these results.

Notes

1. Original tweet from February 18, 2017; Accessed by authors on February 20, 2017.
2. MIT Media Lab measures incivility using Tonar, an algorithm-based analytic engine that recognizes vulgarity, profanity, racial/ethnic slurs, "schoolyard insults," and violent expressions.
3. All subjects were routed to a university Qualtrics survey and were paid \$0.40 for completing the survey. Participants were only excluded from analysis if they did not complete the survey, which only amounted to 15 of the 515 respondents (about 3%).
4. The balance tests indicated that the only significant difference that occurred between groups was on the age variable. This difference is taken into consideration later in the analysis with multivariate regression.
5. To be sure, Twitter commentary is far more varied in the real world. We relied on simplified representations to allow for a cleaner test of our theoretical expectations.
6. We worked to find messages that could be very symmetric except for in their tone. Admittedly, the use of the word "jackass" might be viewed as more conspicuous than "best." On the other hand, the manipulation check found quite comparable assessments of tone across the conditions, with slightly fewer characterizing the comments in the negative conditions as mostly negative. In other words, we see no evidence that the stronger observed effects for the negative condition are from the use of an expletive.
7. Effective use of social media was measured by asking respondents, "In your view, how effective or ineffective is Clark's use of social media?" Response options ranged from 'Very Ineffective' (1) to 'Very Effective' (5). Favorability of Clark was measured by asking,

"Would you say that you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of Clark?" Responses ranged from 'Very Unfavorable' (1) to 'Very Favorable' (5). In order to measure persuasiveness of Clark's social media use, respondents were asked to indicate how well 'persuasive' described Clark's social media presence on a scale from 'Not at all well' (1) to 'Extremely well' (5). Lastly, likelihood of voting for Clark was measured by asking respondents, "Given what you know, how likely would you be to vote for Clark?" Response options ranged from 'Not at all likely' (1) to 'Extremely likely' (5). For ease of presentation, means are reported.

8. For ease of interpretation, the results presented in the table are from an OLS regression. However, re-estimating the model using an ordinal logit does not change the substantive results. Looking only among those who passed the manipulation check finds that the positive treatment effect is statistically significant for all outcomes, despite the loss in cases. Nonetheless, the effect size remains smaller than for the negative treatment. These results are presented in the Online Appendix.
9. The manipulation check of experimental conditions suggests respondents did read the comments to the candidate's Twitter post. It is unclear, however, how commentary shapes evaluations when there is a long list of comments or when the tone of comments is mixed.

Notes on contributors

Victoria A. Dounoucos received her PhD in Political Science from Duke University where her research focused on political persuasion, political communication, and survey methodology. Currently, she works as a Survey Methodologist at RTI International.

Professor D. Sunshine Hillygus is a Professor of Political Science at Duke University. She has published widely on the topics of American political behavior, campaigns and elections, survey methods, public opinion, and information technology and politics.

Caroline Carlson is a PhD student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she conducts research in American Politics.

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Online Appendix

Table A1. Balance test of pre-treatment covariates.

	Control	Positive	Negative
Female	0.45	0.43	0.41
Age	37	35	34
Education (1–8)	4.27	4.09	4.07
White	0.76	0.74	0.83
Income	55,700	50,800	52,800
Party ID (1–7)	3.12	3.18	3.17
Ideology (1–5)	2.59	2.63	2.54
Social Media Use (1–9)	3.83	3.89	3.81
Twitter Use	0.45	0.48	0.54

Raw means on pre-treatment covariates for each treatment group. Significant differences are indicated in bold. Significance is measured at the 0.05 level. Party ID ranges from ‘Strong Democrat’ (1) to ‘Strong Republican’ (7). Ideology ranges from ‘Very liberal’ (1) to ‘Very conservative’ (5). Twitter Use is a dummy variable indicating whether or not respondents have used Twitter in the past month.

Table A2. Model results.

	Effective Social Media(1)	Favorable Impression(2)	Persuasive(3)	Vote for Clark(4)
Positive Treatment	0.345* (0.107)	0.135 (0.091)	0.160 (0.099)	0.192* (0.084)
Negative Treatment	-1.176* (0.108)	-1.074* (0.092)	-0.531* (0.101)	-0.641* (0.085)
Female	0.028 (0.089)	0.062 (0.076)	-0.167* (0.083)	0.051 (0.070)
Age	-0.009* (0.004)	-0.009* (0.003)	-0.011* (0.004)	-0.011* (0.003)
Education (1-8)	-0.074* (0.035)	-0.015 (0.030)	-0.048 (0.032)	0.021 (0.027)
White	-0.001 (0.105)	0.050 (0.090)	0.039 (0.099)	0.068 (0.083)
Party ID (1-7)	0.049 (0.036)	0.094* (0.031)	0.011 (0.034)	0.035 (0.028)
Ideology (1-5)	-0.016 (0.066)	-0.060 (0.057)	0.011 (0.063)	-0.009 (0.052)
Social Media Use (1-9)	0.009 (0.030)	0.001 (0.025)	-0.051 ⁺ (0.028)	-0.038 (0.023)
Twitter Use	0.172 (0.108)	0.211* (0.092)	0.310* (0.101)	0.192* (0.085)
Constant	3.672* (0.285)	3.532* (0.243)	3.069* (0.266)	2.845* (0.224)
Observations	488	488	486	487
Adjusted R ²	0.319	0.313	0.115	0.185

Note: Results reflect estimates from OLS regression models. ⁺p < 0.1; *p < 0.05. Party ID ranges from ‘Strong Democrat’ (1) to ‘Strong Republican’ (7). Ideology ranges from ‘Very liberal’ (1) to ‘Very conservative’ (5). Twitter Use is a dummy variable indicating whether or not respondents have used Twitter in the past month.

Table A3. Evaluations of social media use and clark, manipulation check passers.

	Effective Social Media(1)	Favorable Impression(2)	Persuasive(3)	Vote for Clark(4)
Positive Treatment	0.461* (0.105)	0.192* (0.091)	0.204* (0.103)	0.245* (0.082)
Negative Treatment	-1.374* (0.106)	-1.225* (0.092)	-0.636* (0.104)	-0.778* (0.083)
Female	-0.016 (0.089)	0.018 (0.077)	-0.176* (0.087)	0.029 (0.070)
Age	-0.010* (0.004)	-0.010* (0.003)	-0.009* (0.004)	-0.011* (0.003)
Education (1-8)	-0.073* (0.035)	-0.011 (0.030)	-0.049 (0.034)	0.032 (0.027)
White	0.043 (0.105)	0.075 (0.091)	0.036 (0.103)	0.115 (0.082)
Party ID (1-7)	0.005 (0.037)	0.054* (0.032)	-0.007 (0.037)	0.016 (0.029)
Ideology (1-5)	0.025 (0.068)	-0.026 (0.059)	0.024 (0.067)	0.008 (0.053)
Social Media Use (1-9)	0.013 (0.030)	0.005 (0.026)	-0.030 (0.029)	-0.024 (0.023)
Twitter Use	0.139 (0.107)	0.198* (0.094)	0.277* (0.105)	0.131 (0.084)
Constant	3.732* (0.279)	3.594* (0.243)	2.953* (0.273)	2.751* (0.219)
Observations	427	427	427	427
Adjusted R ²	0.418	0.384	0.151	0.269

Note: Results reflect estimates from OLS regression models. *p < 0.05. Party ID ranges from 'Strong Democrat' (1) to 'Strong Republican' (7). Ideology ranges from 'Very liberal' (1) to 'Very conservative' (5). Twitter Use is a dummy variable indicating whether or not respondents have used Twitter in the past month.