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Tweeting, Turnout, and Tone: How Might Media Coverage of Politics Shape 2020 Election?

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Tweeting, Turnout, and Tone: How Might Media Coverage of Politics Shape 2020 Election?

Explorer Café

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How to register to vote...

Find your state at **vote.gov**

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 3

In Pennsylvania? - Go to **votespa.com**

- Last day to **register** in PA is **Monday, Oct. 19**
- Last day to request a **mail-in ballot** in PA is **Oct. 27** by 5 p.m.
- Mail-in ballots must be **postmarked** by **Tuesday, Nov. 3**

Why do you vote? What motivates you to vote?

In the chat, tell us the reasons why you vote...

In the chat, tell us what turns you off from politics/voting...

As we talk about research and tweets today, **I want you to think about what types of messages motivate you to vote and why**

What does research tell us about message tone and voter turnout?

Question: Do negative campaign messages increase or decrease voter turnout?

Research on the impact of message tone on voter turnout is **mixed**

- Overall, meta-analyses **do not support** the idea that negative messaging decreases voter turnout
- So researchers have started to look at more specific factors of negative messages that might impact voting and turnout

What does research tell us about message tone and voter turnout?

Negative attack ads/tweets – if perceived as truthful, can help sponsor and hurt opponent



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

Nobody wants Sleepy Joe as a leader, including the Radical Left (which he lost last night!). He disrespected Bernie, effectively calling him a loser!

9:31 AM · Sep 30, 2020

♥ 167.8K 💬 66.4K people are Tweeting about this



Joe Biden ✓
@JoeBiden

You heard a lot come out of President Trump's mouth. Can you name one thing he said to actually make your life better?

10:55 PM · Sep 29, 2020

♥ 722.5K 💬 163.3K people are Tweeting about this



What does research tell us about message tone and voter turnout?



What different reactions might people have to this message?

What does research tell us about message tone and voter turnout?

Other message features

- **Incivility** (i.e., disrespect, name calling, rudeness) – **modest increase** in voter turnout (Brooks, 2010)
 - **Incivility** also increases enthusiasm, perhaps because some people find them entertaining (Kosmidis & Theocharis, 2020)
 - **However**, incivility in **Trump's tweets once President** associated with decline in approval, warmth, dominance (for all but die-hard supporters) (Frimer & Skitka, 2018)

How does positive messaging impact voting and turnout?

Trump doesn't **ONLY** go negative, especially in tweets

Trump's tweets **positive** in 10 days leading up to the 2016 election

➤ Many "Thanks!" in 2016; messages in 2020 about winning

Clinton's tweets were **negative** in 10 days leading up to election

➤ Twitter universe also negative toward Clinton in 10 days before election

Biden goes positive too, but are his tweets motivating people to go to the polls?



Joe Biden ✓
@JoeBiden

I helped pull this country out of a recession before — and, as president, I'll do it again.

5:30 PM · Oct 11, 2020 · TweetDeck

50.3K Retweets 6K Quote Tweets 465.7K Likes

How do you use social media to motivate voters?

What **similarities** and **differences** do you see in message tone/strategy/content between the **2016 campaign** and **2020 campaign**?

What social media content about the 2020 election **do you retweet/share or favorite/like**?

What type of tone/strategy/content **makes you want to vote or not vote**?

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