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Incivility in 2022 Senatorial Elections

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By Mark Meyer

Introduction

Twitter is a popular social media platform that allows members to send out messages for followers and others on the app to see (the app was recently rebranded as X). The use of mass communication on the Twitter platform and social media in general has made it very appealing for use by Congress, and the platform has many different uses for political candidates in campaigns. This widespread reach even allows the app to be used for advertising and political candidates in campaigns. Thus, official campaign social media accounts and personal accounts are created. Overall, this has created new media for campaigning in comparison to the traditional campaign media such as radio, television, and print. Social media apps like Twitter give the candidate an avenue for direct communication to their voters and allow the candidate to share an opinion on policy or current news. The platform can also be used to run advertisements for the campaign and these advertisements can follow the same structure as those in paid media such as attack ads, issue ads, or to promote an endorsement.

This research looks to answer the question, "How does Twitter usage for political campaigning differ from the traditional paid media?" This question will examine how candidates use their Twitter accounts throughout the election cycle. To do this the study will analyze the types of tweets a candidate sends and their tendencies on the app. This research will give insight into how Twitter usage as a campaigning tool compares to traditional advertising like television, mailing, and in-person meetings. It will also show how each candidate is using Twitter in their campaign efforts whether a campaign is advertising or simply communicating with constituents.

The main importance is as a predictor of political campaigning in the future as media and advertising trend toward social media. This means that understanding the social media landscape will allow us to understand future campaigns including what ads work on social media and what

the voters appreciate from candidates. Like paid media, social media allows for the candidate to give their stance and portray themselves exactly as they wish, but unlike the free media gained from the news.

This research is important because it will show the public and campaigns how Twitter and these new media outlets are being used in campaigning. The study will be able to show the types of tweets that are used and at with what frequency. The coding of the tweets will divide them into categories similar to how paid media is broken into categories. Attack ads, policy stances, election promises, and get-out-the-vote campaigns are all varieties of traditional media ads that can be used in social media. The conclusion of this study will show the comparison between new and traditional media. This demonstrates the advertising the public and provides future campaigns a case study of winning campaigns.

The research will compare the differences between candidates. The study looks at both parties as well as incumbents and challengers. Therefore, this study can show how each type of candidate uses the app to their advantage. It will show the difference in Democrat and Republican use as well as incumbent and challenger. Depending on the situation that each candidate is in they could use a different mix of tweets to win the election. Again, it could be a predictor of a winning advertising strategy depending on the situation the candidate is in.

This analysis also shows what the pressing issues of the election are. The categorizing of tweets can show what resonated with the voters and what these specific campaigns saw as the most important messages to spread to voters. In the 2022 election, tweets about abortion, Trump, election interference, border security, and Ukraine were all deciding issues for the voters. This research can show which policies and stances resonated with the voters.

Literature Review

Twitter is a popular micro-blogging website and social media application. Since its creation in the early 21st Century, the platform has experienced exponential user growth and massive success. Currently, the app is one of the most popular social media sites. The app allows a user to send out a message for their "followers" and those who might be interested to see it. Twitter is a network that both creates new and original content as well as propagates existing content (Asur 2010). The mass adaptation of the app has allowed and or forced political candidates to adopt the app. Nearly everyone seeking a national office has a Twitter account to communicate with constituents. With this wide-scale use comes research and analysis of the situation. The research that covers political Twitter use analyzes a variety of research questions.

Much of the preliminary research looked at Twitter as a predictor of outcomes. The basis for this research is that the widespread use and amount of information posted to social media provide researchers with enough data to forecast future outcomes (Asur 2010). Asur argues that social media in general is a better predictor than opinion polls as they give more information and that allows social media to act as a "reflective information market" (Asur 2010). Due to the daily use and the millions of tweets, Twitter provides a look at the public mood of the user base (Bollen 2011). Social media also provides us with a look into the communication patterns and preferences of people (DiGrazia 2013). Twitter has a large and diverse enough use base to provide a generalizable sample of the population of America. That means analysis of the online activity can be a predictor of offline activity (DiGrazia 2013). Social media provides a fast, easy, and wide-reaching communication outlet that gives real-time data (DiGrazia 2013). Bollen claims that these constant updates provide social media with a unique ability to show early indicators that can be predictors (Bollen 2011). Most of the research on Twitter as a predictor is

to show that the platform is better than other methods of forecasting outcomes. Asur, using a linear regression model of tweets was able to predict the success of movies at the box office (Asur 2010). In that research, it was more accurate than the Hollywood Stock Exchange (Asur 2010). While the Efficient Market Hypothesis is used to predict stock market changes Bollen was able to look at the public sentiment on Twitter to better predict trends in the market. They found that the calm and positive online sentiment was a predictor of the market and thus not as random as the EMH claims (Bollen 2011). These studies led to looking at Twitter as a prediction of election outcomes. DeGrazia found that the greater the "buzz" around a candidate and their campaign the more likely they are to win. He claims that social media is a better election predictor than the polls used in traditional media (DiGrazia 2013).

While some researchers believe Twitter and social media to be a good predictor of election results others have criticized the findings and pointed out the shortcomings in the research. First, the studies often are not predictive but a "post hoc analysis" of the results (Gayo 2012). Second, the user base is not large enough, trustworthy enough, and does not tweet about politics enough to allow for a representative sample of the entire population's public mood (Gayo 2012). These studies tend to neglect the demographic factors as well as socioeconomic factors that go into elections (Gayo 2012; DiGrazia 2013). Twitter is mainly an app for emotion and entertainment and these studies do not account for the sarcasm and double meaning that goes into Tweets (Gayo 2012). Twitter use cannot be a predictor if it is used as a reactionary device. Murthy finds that candidates and political tweeters use the app to react to offline campaign events and traditional media (Murthy 2013). Murthy's study suggests that a candidate's own Twitter use and "buzz" have no relation to the election outcome or vote share they receive (Murthy 2012).

Political use of Twitter is on the rise due to two key actors. Similar to how Kennedy captured people with television the Obama campaign revolutionized the use of the internet and campaign websites even though social media was being used before 2008 (Hong 2019). As a presidential candidate, Donald Trump the former president changed how people campaigned and used the Twitter platform (Hong 2019). It is important to realize which politicians use social media, why they use it, and how that relates to other campaign media strategies. Technology shapes the workings of democracy and affects how candidates campaign to present themselves (Peterson 2012). Websites are used by politicians to present a favorable impression of themselves to the electorate (Gulati 2004). In general, the online presentation is used to reinforce the offline presentation of a candidate. Candidates will present themselves as outsiders or insiders in Congress depending on the makeup of the Congress and their home district (Gulati 2004).

Social media differs from websites in that it is used to compete against traditional media and disseminate information (Cook 2016). The findings on who uses and adopts social media platforms are not universal. They differ depending on the platform, the group of politicians being examined, and the year. In general, social media is used by the underdog in the race and those who may not fit ideologically with the electorate (Hong 2019). Others did it before him, but Trump is the most popular candidate to use social media in order to bypass traditional media and party infrastructure (Hong 2019). Where traditional media outlets focus on those in power who share the channel's ideological beliefs social media is often used by the outsider, the underdog, or the minority to buck the trend and present their self-image (Hong 2019). Congressional candidates seek alliances with others on social media and are using the apps to present their image instead of a party image (Peterson 2012). This type of social media use by candidates can undermine the traditional media and democratic discourse (Bode 2015). Twitter is used for

personalized marketing of candidates and to move away from party-focused advertisements (Enli 2013). Twitter and other social media platforms are more likely to be used for election mobilization than branding (Enli 2013).

Before the universal adoption of Twitter, it was Republicans who committed to the platform use first (Peterson 2012). This was because they were the minority party and were looking for party solidarity and an electioneering advantage (Peterson 2012). Like being in a minority position current state legislators who use Twitter are typically female, young, and legislatively inexperienced (Cook 2016). The characteristics of the district you serve also affect whether you are an early adopter of the platform (Cook 2016)(Peterson 2012). Now Twitter is so widespread that it is being effectively used by both resource-heavy and resource-light candidates from both sides of the party spectrum (Bode 2016).

Social media provides many benefits to a political campaign. It is an effective tool to obtain the voter's opinion and reach the swing voter (Bode 2014). The Twitter audience is found to be very politically active and likely to vote as well as donate to the campaign (Bode 2014). Twitter allows for word-of-mouth advertising with retweets and quote tweets that naturally grow the campaign following (Evans 2014). The relationship built with stakeholders on Twitter is the most important aspect of the platform (LaMarre 2013). Having this professional relationship and direct communication can influence the public opinion of a candidate (LaMarre 2013). The Twitter account of a campaign, while not bringing in additional votes, does attract attention and momentum to the offline campaign (Conway 2013). It is the ideal platform to reach the younger audience of people under 30, and it is the best source to find the daily mood of the electorate (Evans 2014). However, Bode found that the larger the following the less effective the

connection to the constituency (Bode 2014). This is due to the lack of personal interaction and direct communication between a candidate and a constituent.

In analyzing how candidates use the app during the campaign cycle researchers have come to a variety of conclusions as to the tendencies of candidates on Twitter. The number of followers on a personal or campaign account does not affect the number of tweets sent by the account (Conway 2013). In the Conway study, they found that in the 2012 campaign cycle, there was no consistent increase in the tweet volume as the election neared (Conway 2013). In contrast to Conway's study, Bode found that as the election neared the number of tweets sent by a candidate and a campaign increased (Bode 2016). Looking at the 2018 campaigns it was found that candidates changed their Twitter styles and tendencies to fit their home states (Granberg 2021). There was also a difference in the style between the two major parties in 2018. Republicans used the app to mobilize their base whereas Democrats used the platform for traditional campaign activities and advertisements (Granberg 2021). The whole of the Democratic party used the platform more strategically than their Republican counterparts by having candidates in places where Trump performed poorly in 2016 attack the President and his position (Granberg 2021). Granberg also found differences in the tendencies from incumbents to challengers. Incumbents looking to be reelected used the platform to solidify their policy positions to be seen as credible. Challengers use the application to attack their opponents more frequently than the incumbents do. The reason for this is that the incumbent has a built-in advantage and to attack or even acknowledge and debate their opponent an incumbent would be legitimizing the campaign of the opposition (Granberg 2021).

The types of tweets that are sent by an aspiring member of Congress differ depending on the year, the election cycle, and the status of the candidate. In examining the types of tweets that

are sent by Congress it was found that half of the tweets are classified as sharing of information from the representative to the constituents. Another quarter of the tweets are the congresspeople tweeting about an activity or event location (Cook 2016). Evans found that in the 2012 campaigns, nearly 70 percent of House members' tweets were dedicated to campaigning (Evans 2014). Conway found that in those same 2012 midterms, there was little to no direct communication from the congressional candidate (Conway 2013). In a study that examined Twitter use by the entire U.S. Congress, just over half of the tweets were informational posts (Golbeck 2010). Much of the information-sharing posts were links to another source's news story that relates to the congressperson. Another twenty-seven percent were tweets that give a location or activity (Golbeck 2010). Direct communication made up seven percent of the total tweets. The next three most common tweet types were official business, personal message, and request of action tweets (Golbeck 2010). As shown, there are many uses for the app and social media in general.

Within the category of direct communication (both internal and external) a candidate speaking to a constituent or other Twitter user is where Twitter negativity is found. Over recent years Twitter has become more and more negative. Not being face-to-face and not personally knowing another user proves to make someone more likely to be uncivil on Twitter (Oz 2018). Starting in the 2016 Donald Trump campaign it became commonplace for both political elites and constituents to be negative on the platform (Heseltine 2016). Twitter has effectively moved past negativity to incivility where people attack each other for their traits and beliefs (Brooks 2007).

Although it may seem that everyone on political Twitter is negative there are trends as to what groups of candidates go negative more often. Auter found that Republicans and challengers

were the most common people to go negative in their social media campaigns (Auter 2016). Heseltine's findings agreed with Auter that the challenger and Republican candidates were most likely to be uncivil (Heseltine 2022). This led to the conclusion that the underdog in the race was most likely to post issue attack ads on Twitter (Auter 2016; Evans 2014). This also points to the conclusion that candidates are more likely to "punch up" as someone in a higher position or who is running for reelection than to "punch down" and legitimize an opponent (Gross 2016; Evans 2014). Evans found that men are more likely to be negative (Evans 2017). Auter on the other hand found no difference in the gender of the candidate and their choice to negatively campaign on Twitter (Auter 2016). Senate races in total were more negative online than House elections and Senate incumbents and winners were more negative than the losers and challengers (Evans 2017). Those who are least likely to go negative are the third-party candidates in any Congressional election (Evans 2017).

Negativity is not a random choice or coincidence rather it is born out of the emotions of the Twitter user. Hot-button topics which are those that are highly divisive and covered most in the traditional media are more likely to be where a candidate uses negativity (Oz 2018). Morally loaded questions or the topic of national and district values also lead to Twitter negativity (Oz 2018). Candidates do not go negative on their own. A political candidate will respond to negativity in a proportional way that leads to the general escalation of Twitter incivility (Heseltine 2022). The negative posts are most commonly issue-based or personal attacks on the opposition (Auter 2016).

Just as it is in traditional media, in social media, and on Twitter, the reasoning behind the decision to go negative is because it is effective. Candidates believe their campaign will be more successful if they go negative (Gross 2016). Heseltine found that the public feeds off candidate

incivility and it drives both Twitter interaction and buzz to the campaign (Heseltine 2022). This study also found there are great demand-side benefits to a campaign going negative online (Heseltine 2022). While there is no correlation between message tone and message recall with voters it was found that negative posts lead to greater political interest and voter likelihood (Brooks 2007).

Perhaps the most agreed-upon conclusion is about when negativity occurs. Simply put the more competitive the race the more likely it is that the people will go negative on Twitter (Bode 2016; Gross 2016; Evans 2017; Auter 2016). The competition of the race drives high tensions and negativity between the candidates (Auter2016). As candidates drop out of a race it is more common for candidates to go negative towards other candidates (Gross 2016). Candidates are more likely to go negative as well as the election draws near (Bode 2016).

Twitter and social media are not the only medium where candidates go negative. In almost every other advertising space, political candidates go negative with attack ads. Up until recently, candidates were more likely to have a positive tone or message on Twitter compared to television (Bode 2016). Now the use of social media and traditional media for political campaign purposes are very similar. In traditional media 64 percent of the advertisements are negative (Evans 2017). Also, the trend of minority party challengers being more negative continues in traditional media (Evans 2017). Congress uses the two mediums to convey the same message and information (Golbeck 2010). The choice to use the two media channels both comes down to a risk-reward analysis that differs from candidate to candidate (Hong 2019). Campaigns even coordinate their attack ads between the two channels to maximize their reach of the constituency (Bode 2016). It is found that if used correctly social and traditional media can have a symbiotic relationship (Conway 2015). Congress uses the new media to feed the traditional media with

stories (Conway 2015). Social media fosters an environment of searching out multiple sources meaning there is channel complementary (Himelboim 2013). As of 2013 almost half of the social media hubs were attached to or connected with a traditional media company (Himelboim 2013). The local traditional media outlets are very cooperative with social media whereas the national ones do not embrace the new media as much (Himelboim 2013). This relationship leads to a strong correlation between the number of social media mentions and the traditional media coverage an individual member of Congress gets (Hong 2012).

"Twitter is a part of and has a special role in the media ecology" meaning while there are similarities between the two platforms Twitter and traditional media have some stark differences as well (Murthey 2015). Social media has posed a threat to traditional media due to its usage rate and personal interaction with congressional members (Lipinski 2004). The use of traditional media depends on the trust of the source. This has spawned the most current use of social media which was mentioned briefly above. There are two social media uses the first being a response to traditional media by a congressperson, the second being to bypass the traditional media gatekeeping and spread their message. The second option is quickly becoming the primary use of social media (Conway 2015). Candidates and members of Congress use social media to influence the traditional media and the party to change the message that is being reported (Conway 2015; Peterson 2012). Twitter is found to be less effective than traditional media in spreading news but, is most effective in combating what a candidate sees as misinformation (Cook 2016).

Traditional media still plays an important role in the process of a campaign. Twitter does not imitate the advertisements of traditional media. Both in tone and quantity there was no correlation found between the traditional media campaigning strategy and that of the social media campaigning strategy (Bode 2016). The use of traditional media had a stronger correlation

to the persuasion of the median voter; however, the use of social media was stronger in engaging politically active constituents (Bode 2016). Traditional media is still needed to legitimize a campaign as it is seen as more formal and professional by the constituent (Conway 2015). Television also still causes greater political participation and donations from the constituents (Kaid 2002). Early traditional media sets the scope and outlook for the rest of the election (Hong 2012). While social media has some ability to do this the widescale adaptation of these platforms has shown that there is no true benefit when everyone has an account (Hong 2012). The one candidate who did benefit from this was Obama as he was the innovator but there is currently no competitive advantage in having a Twitter account (Hong 2012). All of this shows that the use of both traditional and social media is needed but in differing ways by the campaigns themselves.

Methodology

This study will examine all the tweets sent out by a campaign during the general campaigning cycle. I will select four candidates from two different 2022 senatorial races. One race has a Republican incumbent and one with a Democrat incumbent. I will look at both the incumbents' and the challengers' Tweets during the general election. I will examine all the tweets from the personal and campaign Twitter accounts of all candidates.

The first race is between Blake Masters and Mark Kelly from the Arizona Senate race. Mark Kelly is the Democratic incumbent and Masters is the Republican challenger. The second race is between Ron Johnson the Republican incumbent and Mandela Barnes the Democratic challenger. This campaign race is for the Wisconsin Senate seat. In both cases, the incumbent won the election. These races were both listed as "Toss Ups" by Cook Political Report before the election. "Toss-up" means they were the closest to call or predict and could have gone either way

on election night. These races were chosen because they were among the most competitive and one would think might lead to a very high level of active campaigning and Twitter usage. First, it will let me assess the election outcomes with a lesser chance of the incumbency rate interfering with the outcomes. Second, a toss-up means the incumbent must campaign for the moderate vote instead of focusing on the strong partisan voters. Third, this will show the result that Twitter and campaigning can have on the swing voters or those who may change their minds during the race. This is important because a strong base will stay with you no matter how you use the Twitter App.

I will look at all Tweets that are made by the official campaign. This means I will look at the personal and campaign Twitter accounts. The Twitter accounts that will be observed are the following. Mark Kelly: @CaptMarkKelley and @SenMark Kelley, Blake Masters: @bgmasters. Ron Johnson; @SenRonJohnson, Mandela Barnes @TheOtherMandela, and @LGMandelaBarnes.[1]

I will only code the tweets that are written in English. Any retweet, original tweet, or tweet that is referencing and responding to Spanish will not be coded. I cannot speak the language and will not be able to accurately translate the meaning of the Tweet. The factors of civility and sarcasm cannot be accurately coded unless I know the language.

I will examine all the tweets from the moment the general election begins to the moment the general election ends. For this research, the general election for each of these races begins the day after the primary election voting ends. Therefore, I can examine the tweets that only look at the general election and Twitter use while the candidates are up against the opposition party. For

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[1] For Mandela Barnes the account @LGMandela Barnes is all official Tweets from him in his position as the Lieutenant Governor of the State. Due to this all the tweets are Positive, Civil, and would be Issue Tweets. Therefore, these Tweets will not be included in the coding of the study. It would not be useful to the analysis of the campaign and would likely not fit the definition on campaigning on Twitter and Social Media.

Masters and Kelly of Arizona, the timeframe will be from 12:01 AM on August 3rd, 2022, to 7:00 PM on November 8th. For Johnson and Barnes, it will be from 12:01 AM August 10th to 7 PM November 8th. These dates are different as the two primaries in Wisconsin and Arizona do not happen on the same date. Therefore, the general election period is not the same for all four candidates and campaigns in the study.

For this research study, I will be following the methodology used by Brooks and Greer in "Beyond Negativity: The Effects of Incivility on the Electorate." Their study codes first for positivity, then for trait-based or issue-based messaging, and finally for civility of the message. Some minor adjustments will be made to the original study design.

All these tweets will be coded to determine the true message. Each tweet will be put into an Excel sheet in the exact text that the account sent out. Then the tweet will be coded for the controls of the study. These include date, party, incumbency status, which account is used to send the Tweet, and whether the tweet is an original post (Tweets and Quote Tweets) or a retweet from someone else. The date will be listed so I know when each tweet was sent and can investigate what timely factors could have influenced that message. Knowing what account sent the post allows for insight into the difference in tone between a personal and an official campaign social media account. Party and incumbency are common controls for a study such as this one. These controls allow for analysis of each position a candidate may be in for an election cycle. Controlling for original posts or repost shows whether a candidate is simply agreeing with or endorsing a thought compared to it being their message and ideas.

The first aspect of a tweet I will code for is the positivity or negativity of the tweet. Looking at the language used in the tweet each post will be categorized as inherently positive or negative. Positivity will be coded as 1 in the Excel block and Negativity as 0. Positivity of a

Tweet means the message speaks in favor of the candidate and their policy/issue positions. It also could be that the tweet is highlighting the positive aspects of the candidate. The negativity of a tweet means the tweet highlights the aspects of the opponent that are perceived as or posed as negative. It can also be highlighting a problem they see or speaking negatively of another public figure on the application.[2]

The second factor of a tweet that will be coded for is whether the message is trait-based or issue-based. Trait-based will be coded as a 1 and issue-based will be coded as a 0 in the Excel sheet. A trait-based post is any message that is focused on the personal characteristics of one of the candidates. An issue-based post focuses on the policy stance or an issue facing the nation.

The third and final aspect to be coded for will be civility. The tweet will be categorized as either civil or uncivil. Civil tweets will be coded as 1 and uncivil tweets will be coded as 0 in the Excel sheet. Although it is not universally agreed upon, for this study to determine the civility of a Tweet I will follow the process laid out in "Beyond Negativity." Brooks and Greer simplify the process of civil and uncivil coding with respect. If the Tweet shows general respect between the two candidates or parties, it is civil. If there is no respect in the Tweet, it will be coded as uncivil. Incivility includes "going an extra step; that is, adding inflammatory comments that add little in the way of substance to the discussion" (Brooks 2007). Because a positive tweet would not still be positive if it were uncivil all positive coded Tweets will automatically be coded as civil.

The last factor that will be coded will be the use of a photo, video, or reference to another tweet (Quote Tweeting). I will code a 1 if these are used in the tweet and a 0 if they are not. This coding does not code for if a photo, video, or quote tweeting occurred but rather for if it is

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[2] For this study I will categorize all informational posts about activities, locations, and voting records as civil, issue-based, and positive. They are all in favor of their campaign and are focused on the issue of the campaigns not the traits of either candidate.

needed to determine the positivity, civility, and whether it is an issue or trait-based tweet. If I needed the other tweet or image to determine my coding of the three factors, I would code the tweet a 1. If the tweet contained a visual or was about another tweet and the original tweet's meaning stands alone then it will be coded a 0.

Two examples of tweets that were used in this study are as follows. First is, @bgmasters: "@SenMarkKelly votes just like @BernieSanders in the U.S Senate. The difference between Bernie & Mark is that Bernie will actually look you in the eye and tell you what he is…Mark Kelly lies through his teeth." This was sent as a retweet by Blake Masters. This tweet was coded as negative, trait-based, and uncivil. It is negative as it is going against Mark Kelley's campaign. It is a trait as it is concerned with his trait or proposed trait of lying. Lastly, it is uncivil as it does not show respect to the opponent's campaign. Second is, The CHIPS Act is creating more high-paying manufacturing jobs in Arizona, reducing our reliance on foreign countries. It will help produce more microchips here at home, strengthening our economy, lowering costs, and bolstering national security. This is positive as it pushes Mark Kelley's campaign. It is issue-based as it focuses on a policy, and it is civil as all the positive tweets are civil.

Data Analysis

This study involved examining the language, images, videos, and deeper meaning behind 1,565 Tweets from the four candidates. To analyze this data, I first created ANOVA[3] tables to find the statistics of my coded data. I did this for each candidate's coded tweets. Next, I combined the candidates' data and created ANOVAS one for each party (Republican and Democrat) and then one for challengers and incumbents. Next, I did a correlation equation for

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[3] See Apendix A for the ANOVA tables.

the coded data. I found the correlation between the three factors I coded for and outlined in the methodology. Lastly, I created charts and column graphs to give a visual of the collected data.

Blake Masters tweeted a total of 554 times during the general election. He was mostly positive in these tweets. Fifty-eight percent of all his tweets were positive and focused on pushing his campaign message. His positive tweets outnumbered his negative tweets by 323 to 231. In terms of the subject of the tweet or the tweet category, the issue-based tweets vastly outnumber the trait-based tweets. Ninety-six percent of all the tweets were issue-based. Blake Masters sent only 23 trait-based tweets while sending 531 issue-based tweets. This trend was similar when looking at the civility of tweets. Ninety-one percent or 506 were civil tweets. Due to all the positive tweets being classified as civil, it is helpful to isolate the negative tweets and use those to look at the uncivil tweets. So out of the 231 negative tweets, 48 of them were uncivil. This shows that twenty percent of all the negative tweets sent about the Mark Kelley campaign by the Masters campaign were uncivil and without respect. He was by far the most uncivil by the total number of uncivil tweets sent.

Looking at the Mark Kelley campaign we see some vast differences in the strategy of the Twitter style. First, the Kelley campaign was far less negative than the other four campaigns observed in this study. Kelley only sent 404 total tweets during the general election meaning he sent only seventy-three percent of the tweets that his opponent sent. He sent 376 positive tweets to only 28 negative tweets meaning he was positive ninety-three percent of the time. He followed the general trend of all the candidates in sending mostly issue-based tweets. Ninety-seven percent of his tweets were issue-based with only 14 total trait-based tweets being sent. The Kelley campaign was very civil and respectful on Twitter with 99 percent of the tweets being

civil and only two tweets being coded as uncivil. Out of the total number of negative tweets sent only seven percent of those Tweets were uncivil.
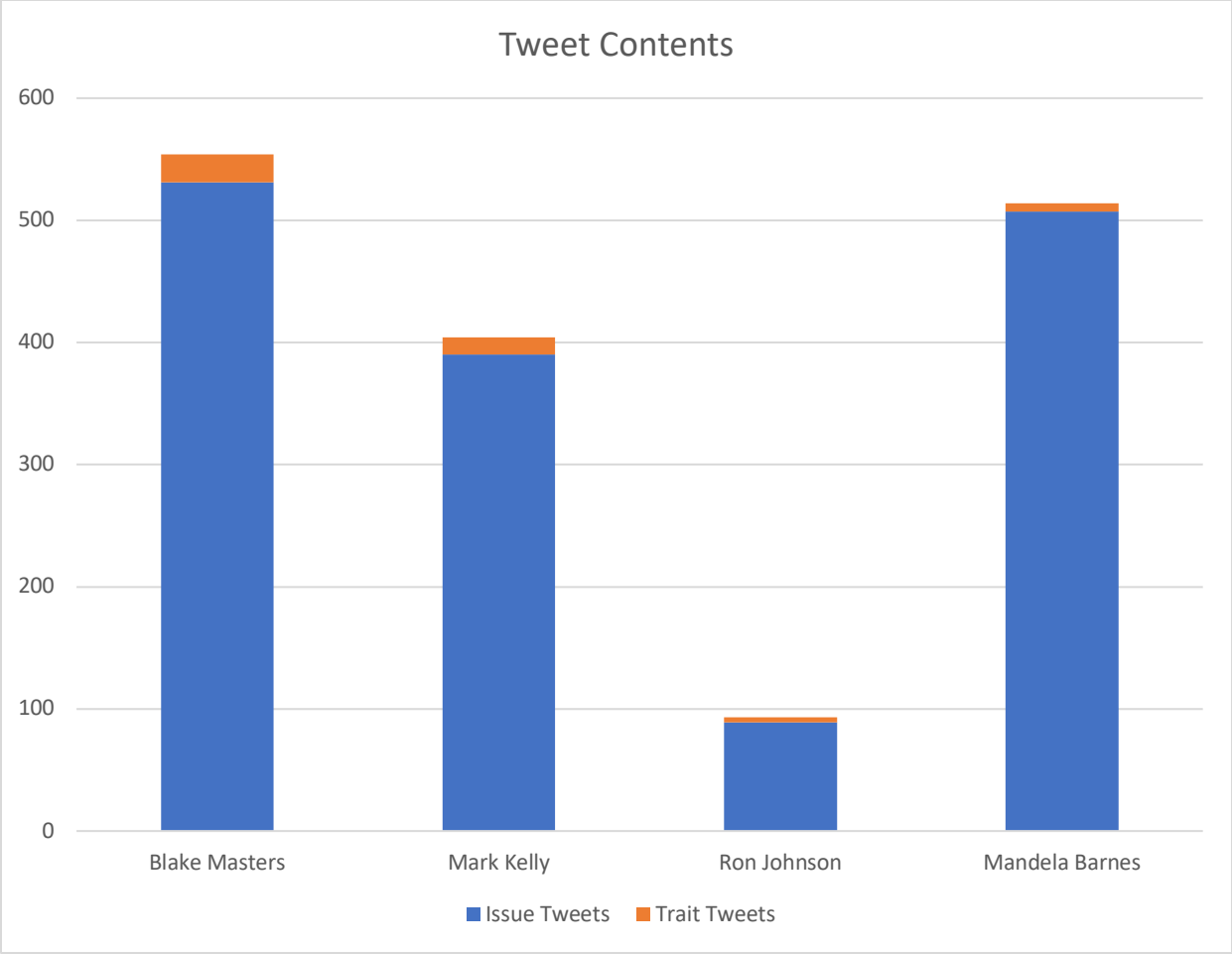
The Ron Johnson campaign was another outlier not in frequency but rather in total output. He only sent ninety-three total tweets throughout the general election. He was out-tweeted by every candidate five times over and compared to his opponent he only sent eighteen percent of the number of Tweets of the Barnes campaign. Despite the lower level of Twitter activity, the campaign followed the same patterns as the other campaigns. He was the most negative candidate with only being positive fifty-three percent of the time. There were fifty positive tweets sent compared to forty-three negative tweets. Johnson also focused on issues. Ninety-six percent of the Tweets were issue-based with only four of the total tweets being trait-based. He is mostly civil with 80 total tweets being coded as such and therefore eighty-six percent of his tweeting was civil. Only thirteen tweets were uncivil or fourteen percent of his total tweets. As a percentage of the negative tweets, thirty percent of the negative tweets were uncivil. This data shows that as a percentage of the total number of tweets and of negative tweets Ron Johnson was the most uncivil. By comparison in terms of percentage, he was almost double the other candidates and he was four times as uncivil as his opponent Mandela Barnes.

Mandela Barnes' campaign was similar to the Arizona race in the number of tweets with 514 total tweets sent. He was the second most active Twitter user in this study only trailing Blake Masters and he out-tweeted his opponent by 550 percent. He was mostly positive in his messaging with 63 percent of his tweets being positive. He totaled 325 positive Tweets and 189 negative tweets. Once again just as the other candidates had he almost always sent issue-based tweets. Ninety-nine percent of his tweets were issue-based and only seven total tweets were trait-based. Like his party affiliate Mandela Barnes was extremely civil. He was civil 97 percent of

the time. When looking at incivility in the negative tweets only the fifteen uncivil tweets are only seven percent of the total number of negative tweets.

Positivity of Tweets
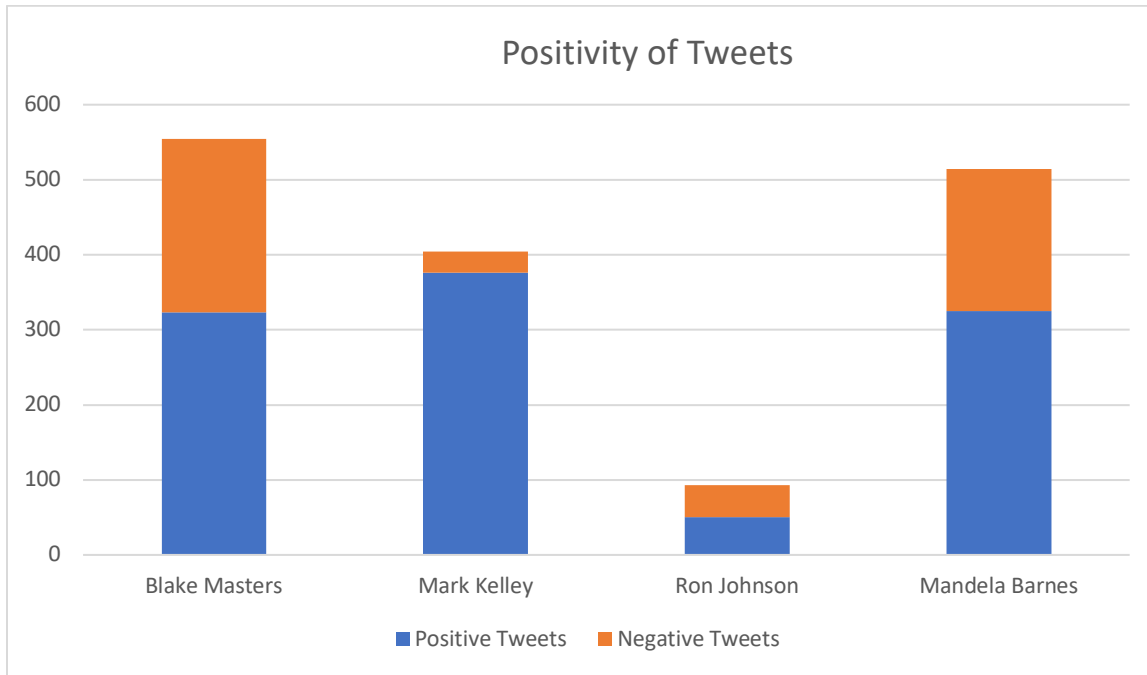
This graph is a visual representation of the positivity of tweets. It shows a breakdown by candidate and campaign of the positive and negative tweets sent. In this chart, we see that Blake Masters, Ron Johnson, and even Mandela Barnes are similar in their positivity. Just over half the time, these candidates are positive on Twitter. The outlier here is Mark Kelley. He is far less negative compared to the other campaigns. Here we also see that Ron Johnson is less active on Twitter but by a percentage is the most negative on the app. One last observation is that besides Ron Johnson who failed to even total 100 tweets, all the candidates sent a similar number of positive tweets averaging 341 positive tweets per campaign. With that said they were more varied in the number of negative tweets sent.

Tweet Contents

Legend: ■ Issue Tweets   ■ Trait Tweets

Categories: Blake Masters, Mark Kelly, Ron Johnson, Mandela Barnes

Here we have a graph that outlines the Tweet contents also described as the category or subject being spoken about in the tweet. Here we see that every single campaign followed the same pattern in the breakdown of issue-based and trait-based tweets. Every campaign studied sent almost all issue-based Tweets during the general election. One other observation is that Blake Masters sent the most trait-based tweets and the most tweets overall.

Civility of Tweets

Uncivil Tweets as a Proportion of Negative Tweets
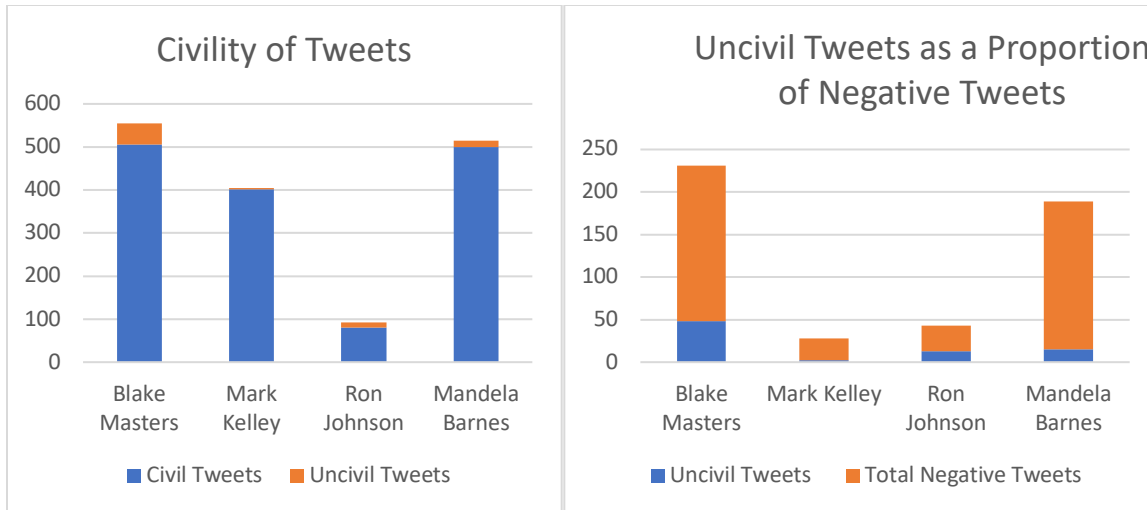
These two charts show the incivility of tweets. The first chart shows the number of civil tweets compared to the number of uncivil tweets. Here we see that Blake Masters has by far the greatest number of uncivil tweets. It also shows that Mark Kelley has the least and hardly any uncivil tweets. The second chart shows the number of uncivil tweets as it relates to the number of negative tweets in total. This chart shows that Blake Masters and Ron Johnson have the greatest percentage of uncivil tweets when compared to other negative tweets.

Republican Tweets

Democrat Tweets
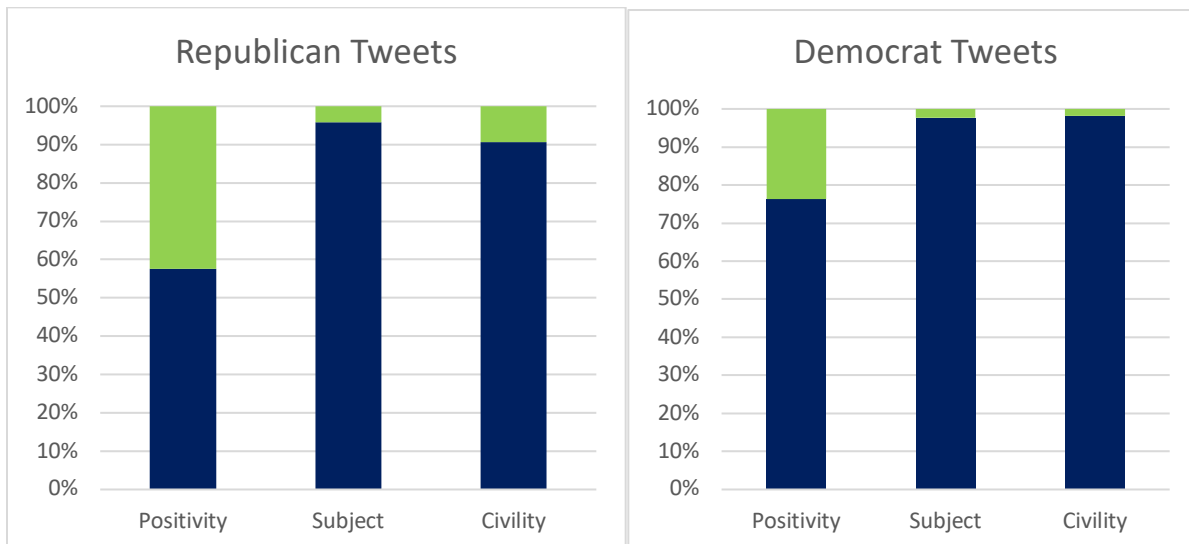
Here are the charts which show a breakdown of the candidates' Twitter activity split by political party. These charts show the percentage of the party's tweets. The blue bar is for positive tweets and the green is for negative. The blue is for issue-based, and the green is for trait-based. Lastly, the blue is for civil tweets and the green is for uncivil tweets. This shows that the Republican party was more negative and more uncivil than the Democratic party. The percentages show that the Republican candidates are about twenty percent more negative than their Democratic counterparts. The Republicans are also more than twice as uncivil. As it was in the individual analysis the groups are very similar in their tendency to send issue-based tweets. Both parties rarely send trait-based tweets. Each one has a small sliver of trait-based tweets.
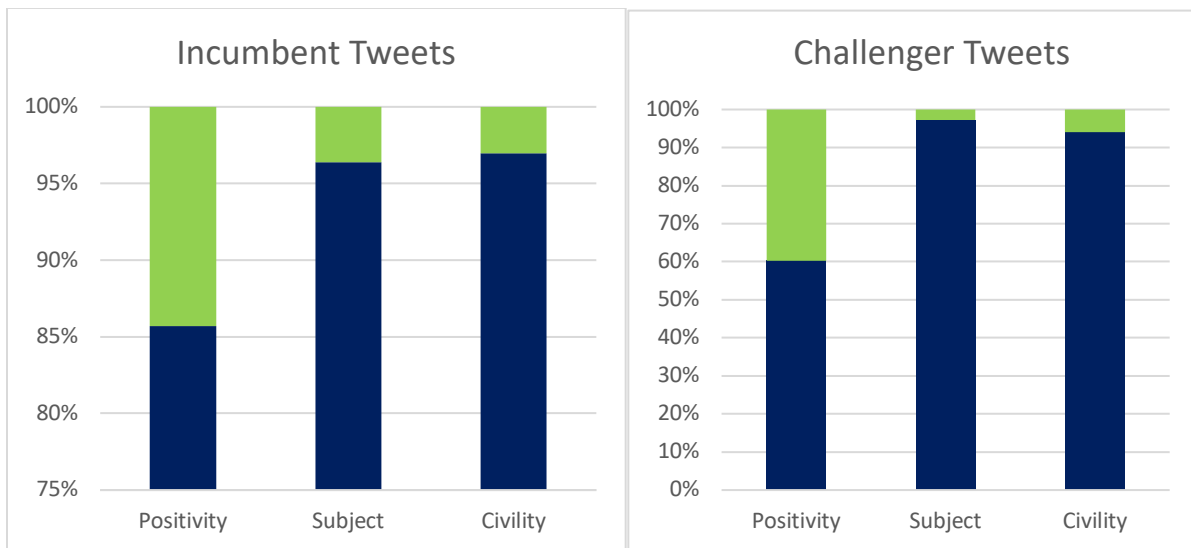
These charts show the same as those focused on the party. The colors represent that same with blue being the percent of tweets that are positive, issue-based, and civil while green is negative, trait-based, and uncivil. Here we see that negativity and incivility are far more common in the challengers' tweets. This follows the logic laid out in previous research where candidates punch up to discredit the opposition. As this is happening the incumbents will not stoop to a lower level as they do not wish to give credibility to the opposition. Here we see that Blake

Masters who is the challenger and Republican is a big factor in the negativity percentage in these graphs.

Discussion

The data from this study allows us to compare these findings to that of other studies. Although only Brooks' "The Effect on Incivility on the Electorate" follows the same data collection method all the previous research can be applied to this study. The findings on campaign messaging, types of tweets sent, positivity, and incivility all give a benchmark to compare with this data.

The first conclusion from this data is incumbents were more positive. This agrees with the literature that they do not want to give credibility to the challenger's campaign. Incumbents focus on the positive messaging to prop up their campaign. This is easier for incumbents to post positive messages as they can post campaign information along with updates from their work in Congress. Golbeck found in his study that a vast majority of all tweets sent were information for a representative to share with their constituents on the policy they are acting on or the events they are taking place in. Incumbents have this ability as part of their incumbency advantage. Therefore, incumbents are more likely to be positive, possibly because of a greater opportunity to be positive.

Second, the challengers were more negative. This is consistent with the conventional wisdom that people punch up in elections not down to discredit the incumbent. In Gross' article, he used the phrase of punching up to mean that the challenger who has less status and power is more likely to attack the incumbent. This is done to try and pull down the incumbent and discredit them as a candidate. The messaging typically attacks the voting record of the incumbent

on a policy position they acted on while serving in Congress. Being negative then hurts the incumbent without forcing the challenger to show their stance on the issue.

Campaigns were focused more on issue-based Tweets than trait-based Tweets. This is consistent with the literature that most of the Tweets are information-based and about activity in the campaign or positions. Candidates give informational tweets as it is most helpful for the constituents. Auter found that informational tweets receive good interaction from the constituents. These tweets show off the policy positions a candidate holds and which events they see as being important. For incumbents, it shows how hard they are working in office. Both candidates can show off their connections with the community.

Republicans used Twitter more negatively to mobilize their base voters while the Democratic candidates used it more for advertising. This data showed that Republicans were more negative in their Twitter messaging. This follows conclusions from prior research that the party out of power is more negative. Similar to the challengers being more negative and punching up parties who do not hold congress are likely to be more negative. This is useful to discredit the other party's policy progress and pass blame for the issues the nation faces. Democrats being in power therefore follow the trend that those in power are most positive and promote the policy passed while they held control of the Legislature. The term mobilizing base voters simply means Republicans consistently use the app to call for action be it voting, financial support, or campaign involvement from the party constituency. Democrats are more likely to simply show off their positions instead of calling for action.

Although I only looked at the Toss Up races and not others negativity seemed to be less prevalent in these races as they wish to reach the medium voter. This is inconsistent with the literature on competitive negativity. Most of the articles I looked at said negativity is positively

correlated to competitiveness in races. So, it would suggest in these two highly competitive races negativity should be the highest of any race. Besides Ron Johnson, the candidates were positive most of the time. These candidates seemed to buck the trend and it could be as a strategy to attract the median voter. While Twitter has not been proven useful in connecting with the independent, these candidates could have seen this as their opportunity to gain supporters whereas television is most commonly used to attack an opponent and motivate partisans.

In the negativity there was, the Tweets were more issue-based and less trait-based. In looking at all the negative tweets it was more common for these to be issue-based than trait-based. The positive tweets were more trait-based. A negative trait-based tweet is seen as very uncivil and stepping over a line. This is not seen as a professional move by constituents and is often avoided. Positive trait-based tweets are common as they show the candidate and their personality. These commonly provide a look into how candidates live their personal lives and what characteristics they possess and see as essential to the job.

Due to the time and manpower constraints on this study, there is still a great deal of research to be done. I have multiple suggestions to be used in future research. First, one could analyze all the candidates in an election cycle. Research that looks at all Senate, House, and even presidential candidates would give a greater look into social media campaigning. This was a limited study in the number of accounts and races examined meaning the inclusion of more candidates would improve our understanding of online campaign messaging. The second would be to add a longitudinal element to the study. While other research referenced in this study took a longitudinal approach this one did not. A longitudinal element would allow the study to examine how factors such as positivity, basis of tweets, and civility are affected by the proximity to election day. This would also show the relation between the factors and important election dates

such as debates, media appearances, world events, or passage of major policy. Last, future research could investigate not just the general election but the primary as well. Most of the precious research only looked at the two main candidates in general election races. Looking at the primary as well could show the differences in campaign strategy and messaging depending on who is seen as the opposition of the time. It could also show the power dynamic and relations between those within the same political parties.

Conclusion

This study expands upon the vast amount of research on social media use in campaigns. This research shows how negativity and incivility are used in elections and when the campaign decides it is beneficial to go negative. Although it only looks into two senate races this research gives results that show the future of all political campaigning. While this study does agree with the findings of previous research. The results also show there is still much to learn about the use of new media in political campaigns. Currently, there is no consensus of results on when, why, and how people use negativity and more research like this can lead to general acceptance of results. Every campaign uses it differently to coordinate with their traditional media messaging and the news media's coverage.

Appendix A

Blake Masters

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
Positive/Negative	554	323	0.58303249	0.24354522		
Trait/Issue	554	23	0.04151625	0.0398646		
Civil/Uncivil	554	506	0.9133574	0.0828954		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	214.66787	2	107.333935	879.053278	4.93E-261	3.00114832
Within Groups	202.566787	1659	0.12210174			
Total	417.234657	1661				

Mark Kelley

Anova: Single Factor	Column1	Column2	Column3	Column4	Column5	Column6
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
Positive/Negative	404	376	0.930693069	0.064663538		
Trait/Issue	404	14	0.034653465	0.033535612		
Civil/Uncivil	404	402	0.995037221	0.004950434		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	232.77093	2	116.3854641	3382.55505	0	3.0031737
Within Groups	41.564332	1208	0.034407559			
Total	274.33526	1210				

Ron Johnson

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
Positive/Negative	93	50	0.537634409	0.251285647		
Trait/Issue	93	4	0.043010753	0.041608228		
Civil/Uncivil	93	80	0.860215054	0.121552127		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	31.5125448	2	15.7562724	114.0530175	7.89644E-37	3.02848483
Within Groups	38.1290323	276	0.138148668			
Total	69.6415771	278				

Mandela Barnes

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
Positive/Negative	514	325	0.63229572	0.232951055		
Trait/Issue	514	7	0.013618677	0.013459394		
Civil/Uncivil	514	499	0.970817121	0.028386466		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	242.194553	2	121.0972763	1322.037511	0	3.001571175
Within Groups	140.970817	1539	0.091598971			
Total	383.16537	1541				

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