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The Impact of Donald Trump's Tweets on College Student Civic Engagement in Relation to his Perceived Credibility and Expertise

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THE IMPACT OF DONALD TRUMP'S TWEETS ON COLLEGE STUDENT CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT IN RELATION TO HIS PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY AND
EXPERTISE

by

Thalia Valerie Bobadilla

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by

Thalia Valerie Bobadilla

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents. Your constant love and support of my dreams has been instrumental to my success throughout the years. Through the tears, anxiety, weight gain, weight loss, hair loss, late night talks, laughs, absolute freak outs and doubt, they have been there encouraging me the entire way. Your upbringings and trials have forever humbled me and been the fuel behind my life's ambitions. I hope I have made you proud to call me your daughter. Love Jetrudis.

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The Impact of Donald Trump's Tweets on College Student Civic Engagement in Relation to his Perceived Credibility and Expertise

Abstract

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2018

Because college students use social media so often, it would be incumbent for the researcher to examine the impact Donald Trump's tweets might have on these young adults', civic engagement and how the tweets may be affecting his perceived credibility and expertise. The researcher administered a questionnaire to 350 college students from a private medium sized west coast university using various modified scales examining credibility, expertise and civic engagement. Civic engagement was measured using an adapted version of several civic engagement instruments. The researcher used a correlation analysis to answer proposed research questions. Donald Trump's tweets have a significant positive impact on the way college students perceive him to be credible and an expert. The tweets were not correlated to civic engagement, but further research concluded that specific tweets have the ability to have a significant negative correlation on civic attitudes and behaviors. The correlation analysis also found a significant negative correlation between which form of media students use the most and their civic engagement. A regression analysis was performed to see if the tweets had predicting power on college student perception of his credibility and expertise. The tweets

demonstrated predicting power. A regression analysis was done to see if the tweets had predicting power on college student civic engagement; the regression results showed no significant predicting power between the two. These results suggest that tweets from a United States President have a significant influence on how he is perceived to be credible, the perception of his level of expertise and how his tweets may be affecting civic engagement on college campuses.

Keywords: Twitter, Civic Engagement, Credibility, Celebrity, Mass Media, Expertise

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Chapter 1: The Problem

Statement of the Problem

Many Americans predicted and even rejected the outcomes of who would win the 2016 presidential election (Gay, 2017). “Trump prevailed even though his campaign was mired with controversy and protests, and despite the fact that he had no prior government or military experience” (Johnson, 2018, p. 39). Whether you actively use media or not, one of the fastest growing social media sites (Twitter) has now made its way into the White House and it is a platform that is there to stay. Whether one actively uses Twitter or not the tweets that Donald Trump posts cannot be avoided. They are shared on most media platforms including television, Instagram and Facebook. There have been many questions that have been raised regarding politician behavior and how this might affect civic engagement. Unfortunately, no studies have been done to examine a United States President’s Twitter usage mainly because there have not been many Presidents to use it so often and so liberally. There are no studies examining how our current President’s Twitter etiquette is effecting civic engagement amongst students on college campuses, as well as Donald Trump’s perceived credibility to do his job in relation to his tweets. The tweets may also be having an effect on his perceived expertise. This study looks to examine how Donald Trump’s tweets may be impacting the attitudes and behaviors that college students have toward civic engagement.

Purpose of the Thesis

Millions of people in the United States have some form of familiarity with social media, whether one uses social media or not, many people understand its purpose. Previous to Donald Trump's swearing into office, social media was and remains to be popular.

Barack Obama revolutionized the White House's use of social media and constituent engagement. Perception of Presidential social media etiquette changed when Donald Trump was sworn into office. "An American presidential candidate has never attempted personal use of this magnitude" (Johnson, 2018, p. 39). Suddenly the messages were not only negative, but some also found them to be aggressive.

Donald Trump planned to personally use social media – especially Twitter – as one of the primary means to communicate his messages to the public and change the minds of American voters who previously held negative views of him (Johnson, 2018, p. 42).

There were also individuals that agreed with what was encompassed in each of the messages. After the 2016 Presidential election in the United States, many questions were raised regarding how peoples' civic demeanor changed as well as their interactions with one another as a result of the election, both on social media and face-to-face (Sanchez, 2018). Since the election a limited number of studies have been conducted connecting the outcomes of the 2016 election and other important items as they relate to civic engagement. The literature review of this thesis shows a number of variables that the 2016 election could be influencing in regards to civic engagement (aka, celebrities in politics, youth in politics, etc.). The purpose of this study is to discover whether or not Donald Trump's tweets may be affecting his perceived expertise and credibility as President, while also examining if his tweets act as a predictor for college student civic engagement.

Definition of Key Terms

Mass Media: The means of communication, as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet, that reach or influence people widely (Mass Media).

Social Media: Social media consists of one or more websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking; web based applications. Social media platforms tend to let users use multiple platforms on multiple devices (Obar & Wildman, 2015).

Twitter: The brand of a social media service and website where registered users may post text that is limited to a certain number of characters, as well as links, photos, or videos (Twitter).

Civic Engagement: Working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes (Jacoby & Ehrlich, 2009).

Credibility: The quality of being trusted and believed in. One's perceived ability to thoroughly perform a task or one's perceived trustworthiness (McCroskey & Teven, 1999).

Celebrity: A famous or celebrated person (Celebrity).

Expert: A person who has a special skill or knowledge in some particular field (Expert).

Significance of the Study

Social media has deeply rooted itself in many aspects of our lives, even if one does consistently engage in it or have a social media account. Most Americans spend hours of their time dedicated to using media, mainly young adults (Logan, Lightfoot & Contreras,

2017). Whether social media is appreciated or not, it has found its way into many individuals' daily routine. This study has the opportunity to demonstrate what a type of impact Donald Trump's tweets are having on civic engagement amongst college students. It also brings into question his expertise and credibility to do his job. Nisbett and DeWalt (2016) bring attention to this in their article on celebrity influence in relation to political impact. Before Donald Trump became President of the United States, he was known by many to be a celebrity in his own regard. He even had his own show on cable television called "The Apprentice" "IMDB" (2004). Whether one is active in politics or not, reading the selected tweets provided in the questionnaire is going to have an impact on the level of expertise and credibility Donald Trump is perceived to have. Many people and organizations have a lot of interest vested in civic engagement and political engagement and this would be a great study to illuminate the type of impact that Twitter messages can have on a community of people.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Celebrity Influence

Wen and Cui (2014) found the role that young people play in political involvement is scarce, but that celebrity involvement was shown to have an increase on this suffering metric in society. They found that celebrity involvement in politics was a multi-dimensional construct consisting of 3 key principles: affinity, parasocial relationships and identification. Research has been done on parasocial relationships and the effects those relationships can have on a consumer's actual life and the way those parasocial interactions can lead to parasocial attachments or parasocial relationships (Stever & Lawson, 2013). "It is not a far fetched notion to conclude that some young people are turning to... icons to form and direct their political and social ideologies" (Nisbett & DeWalt, 2016, p. 144). In Wen and Cui's (2014) study found a direct correlation between celebrity involvement and political/civic engagement through situational involvement and self-efficacy. Not all of their hypotheses were supported, but the study demonstrated that celebrity had a positive outcome on mobilizing the young to participate in public and civic activities.

Young people truly feel confident in their ability when it comes to political issues if a celebrity they like is engaged in or advocating for such issues. So what could this mean for our President and his base of supporters? Nisbett and DeWalt (2016) questioned whether or not the face of a celebrity was enough to increase civic engagement amongst youth. They recognized that there had been an increase in youth

civic engagement since the 2008 presidential campaign, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to understand how to maintain civic engagement amongst youth while also trying to increase it. Identification and platform were two large factors that influenced these variables. “It is important to understand how social media is breaking down traditional barriers between famous and ordinary people” (Nisbett & DeWalt, 2016, p. 145). Four themes emerged from the focus groups they held: level of credibility, identification with celebrities, perceived influence of celebrities and social media as a platform for celebrity political speech. Nisbett and DeWalt (2016) brought attention to type of celebrity and how type could influence the celebrity’s perceived credibility. For example, celebrities like Kim Kardashian and Stephen Colbert would have very different impacts on people because of the different types of celebrities they are and how they gained their fame. Which is why it is important to bring attention to President Donald Trump’s perceived credibility and expertise. Boykoff and Goodman (2009) identified six types of celebrities: celebrity actors (Angelina Jolie), celebrity politicians (Barack Obama), celebrity athletes (Colin Kaepernick), celebrity business people (Elon Musk), celebrity musicians (Bono) and celebrity public intellectuals (Stephen Hawking). When it comes to the political arena, “the status and credibility of the celebrity are likely to be important, as is the view that the general population has of them” (Marsh, Hart & Tindall, 2010, p. 324). Pre, and likely post, election Donald Trump would fall into the category of celebrity businessperson. Before Donald Trump became President of the United States he was known for his success in the real estate market, his highly regarded brand recognition and his creation of luxury consumer products. Prior to his inauguration into the White House, Donald Trump’s fame and success was so widely known that he was

mentioned in 67 rap songs. In each of those rap songs he is either referenced as a base line for achieved success, a person who someone should aspire to reach as far as monetary income goes or someone who is already so successful that even the great Donald Trump would know who they are. These are just few of several ways in which he is referenced in rap songs prior to the start of his campaign.

In addition to this Austin, Vord, Pinkleton and Epstein (2008) conducted a study to see how celebrity endorsement influenced political motivation in young voters. The study explored how and why celebrity endorsement could persuade young voters to participate in political affairs. The study proved that celebrity identification resulted in young persons being less complacent and had higher levels of self-efficacy. Results of this study show that celebrity based promotions result in higher political involvement because of decline in complacency and reduction of apathy. Biswas, Biswas and Das (2006) conducted a study to see if consumers preferred information given by an expert versus a celebrity in terms of credibility of information. They found that feelings toward a celebrity usually transfer to whatever it is that they are promoting. Essentially it depends on what is being endorsed. If it is an item that is high in technology, then consumers prefer expert endorsements, if it is something that is low in technology then endorser type did not matter. It was also found that celebrity endorsements were preferred only when viewers felt identification with the celebrity.

Furthermore, Corner (2000) found that contemporary politicians perform within two “spheres of political action” (p. 391). The first revolves around the administrative roles they have to take regarding job procedures: obligatory duties, appearances, conferences etc. The second sphere revolves around one’s shared public persona “and

carries a different set of responsibilities involving the maintenance of personal credibility and popularity, or what can be described as impression management” (Corner, 2000, p. 393). The idea is that these two spheres should operate independent of one another at all times, but many would argue that President Donald Trump combines the two spheres into one. In his new political life Donald Trump’s past questionable behavior is surfacing. “The larger the discrepancy between a celebrity politician’s past and current lifestyle... the greater the likelihood that this celebrity will suffer credibility damage from selective media exposure of his or her past” (Marsh et al., 2010, p. 325). President Donald Trump is still considered a celebrity and does not have many discrepancies between his past (pre election) and his present (post election). With his new scandal involving the pornographic actress known as Stormy Daniels, many forget that he played the role of a top shop CEO on the reality TV show *The Apprentice* who was capable of making strategic executive decisions at the drop of a hat. Much like his catch phrase on the show, “you’re fired”, many white house staffers have indeed been fired. Some praise him and like that he is taking that mentality with him into his new role as President of the United States, while others feel that he should have left this behavior when he left *The Apprentice*. The challenge is that many do support him, but as mentioned previously he is bringing both his professional and public sphere into his everyday duties; more specifically exercising the combination of the two spheres on Twitter.

Credibility and Expertise

One’s expertise and credibility has a large impact on how one could be perceived. Someone who holds such an important and powerful position in this country could be easily mocked if they fail to take the necessary precautions to quiet the doubts that some

may have about them. McCroskey and Teven (1999) conceptualized credibility in to separate constructs: competence, trustworthiness and goodwill. This typology has been modified and used in many studies. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) conducted a study regarding credibility, celebrity endorsement, trustworthiness and expertise. They hypothesized that a celebrity endorser's expertise would positively influence his or her perceived trustworthiness. They found that expertise had a significant positive effect on trustworthiness. Donald Trump's perceived expertise could then have an impact on the trustworthiness construct of credibility. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) also hypothesized that a celebrity endorser's trustworthiness positively influences consumer's attitude toward the endorsed brand. The hypothesis was proven to have significant effects on brand attitude. There are a lot of people who believe that Donald Trump is doing a fine job. His expertise and success in his previous endeavors have made him a millionaire. They appreciate his executive nature and trust in his abilities to do a good job as President of the United States. Those same individuals are having a difficult time with his Twitter etiquette. It is important that research stay attentive to this because his Twitter etiquette could cause his supporters to question their trustworthiness in him to do his job (e.g. attitude). On the other hand, his use of Twitter may also be giving his non-supporters a substantial reason to continue their disapproval of his actions. Whether he proposes something significant or not, he might be ruining what credibility he does have by taking to Twitter the way he does. "Countless stories and lawsuits reveal lost career opportunities because employees failed to "look the part"(Burgess-Wilkerson & Thomas, 2009, p. 365). Just as Burgess-Wilkerson and Thomas (2009) brought attention to a small factor like clothing playing a role in one's perceived credibility, research should

bring attention to tweets that Donald Trump has posted on his Twitter account. Specifically to examine how some of the content on that profile could be affecting his credibility and expertise. For the most part, as previously mentioned, Donald Trump's success and name recognition have garnered him much admiration and attention in the United States, however it was never for his knowledge or contribution in politics. There are many who find Donald Trump's tweets aggressive, offensive, questionable and scientifically incorrect.

It is difficult not to be surprised when a presidential candidate refers to his genitals, calls for bans on Muslims and a wall against Mexicans. But it is only the lack of decorum that distinguishes Trump. The gendering and racializing of the nation and justification of violent masculinity in its defense is a trope of national imaginaries (Gokariksel & Smith, 2016, p. 80).

However, there are also those who find his tweets to be funny, appropriate, agreeable and necessary. Before Donald Trump became President of the United States there were many who regarded him as a celebrity, and this has affected his perceived expertise and credibility to do his job in the White House in both positive and negative ways. Nisbett and DeWalt (2016) conducted a study in which a theme emerged on celebrity credibility and the amount of social influence that celebrity might have on an issue, they found that type of celebrity could influence the level of persuasive capability that one would have. Since Donald Trump never played a substantial role in the government or military (Johnson, 2018), it would presumably be okay to say that there are many who did not

view him as a candidate who had enough expertise to occupy his current position in the White House.

In 1995, Meyer and Gamson conducted a study to see the role or level at which a celebrity's credibility played in social or political issues. They found that a celebrity's credibility was seen as weak and irrelevant in relation to helping with social or political issues. "Just because someone is famous or popular in some regard does not necessarily translate to the political arena" (Nisbett & DeWalt, 2016, p. 149). Nisbett and DeWalt (2016) also found that identification played a critical role on perceived credibility. If viewers identified with the celebrities, then engagement with political and social issues increased. However, there did have to be some form of connection between what the celebrity was saying and the manner in which they were associated with the issue. For example, one participant from their study brought up Eva Longoria and her public support of Barack Obama's immigration policy; because Longoria is from Texas and a minority she was seen as a credible source to support the issue and bring attention to it. There are no doubts that Donald Trump was perceived to be a celebrity prior to the 2016 election, but what role does that play in his perceived expertise and credibility now that he is the President of the United States in relation to the messages he posts on his Twitter account? More specifically, how might these factors be effecting civic engagement amongst students on college campuses? Thus, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: To what extent, do Donald Trump's tweets affect college student perception of his credibility?

RQ2: How are Donald Trump's tweets impacting college student perception of his expertise?

Civic Engagement

Several studies have found that there are many benefits to students being civically engaged on college campuses: improved community relationships, motivation to study, new opportunities for faculty teaching and research and more experimental learning settings (Jacoby & Ehrlich, 2009; Justus, Webber, & Mattor, 2016). "Civic engagement has not only proven to enhance student confidence in public communication, but has also compelled students to feel more excited about their future as democratic citizens" (Justus, Webber, & Mattor, 2016, p. 107). This knowledge alone will largely impact how Donald Trump's tweets in relation to his perceived expertise and credibility will have lasting effects on civic engagement on college campuses.

There are a lot of factors that make up civic engagement. Some of which include: acting upon a heightened sense of one's communities, benefitting the common good, participating in building a civil society, public work, promoting social justice locally and globally, recognizing and appreciating human diversity, taking an active role in the political process and more (Hattani, 2017; Jacoby & Ehrlich, 2009). Karp and Luhiste (2016) conducted a study on political engagement with online panels. They found that younger people were more difficult to reach and that there was a clear correlation between age and civic duty. The data also implied that there was a weak relationship between age and attention to politics. However an increase in age would suggest that age is an important determinant of political engagement and civic duty since older participants presented an interest in political engagement and civic duty.

Carpini (2000) found that civic disengagement is particularly evident in the young. Coupled with this, youth are less trusting of their fellow citizens, less interested in politics, less knowledgeable in the matter of politics and finally less likely to participate in politics outside of voting. Carpini (2000) attributes some of this apparent lack of civic engagement to failed government. There is also a lack of outreach to the youth to demonstrate their usefulness or appreciation in civic engagement. Ho, Binder, Becker, Moy, Scheufele, Brossard and Gunther (2011) examined how perceptions of media bias and the consequences of those biases paired with hostile media phenomenon affect political participation. The public has become suspicious of media impartiality, as a result of this the public has become skeptical of news media not doing its ethical duty to report on news as it should; people start to gain negative attitudes about the political system, which could influence their civic engagement. Donald Trump's tweets are undoubtedly contributing to the positive and negative attitude towards media.

Finally Hansen and Pedersen (2014) analyzed how voters become knowledgeable and efficacious during election campaigns. They found that civic perspective was of great importance to election campaigns as was political knowledge. Since the Trump administration began, there have been obvious shifts in the manner in which people try to civically engage. Logan, Lightfoot and Contreras (2017) made a special note of this in their findings during an ethnographic study examining the effects of black and brown students trying to be politically active and civically engaged on a predominantly white college campus post Trump inauguration. Students felt like they were criticized for expressing their opinions.

Black students feel they are not able to reveal their authentic selves and are forced to assimilate and conform to perceptions of peers—not able to reconcile who they really are with others’ expectations of them based on their race... Students experience feelings of isolation and only-ness, heightened awareness of their race, having to expend more mental and emotional energy than White peers, being physically avoided by peers (Logan, Lightfoot & Contreras, 2017, p. 256).

Campus climate was a significantly salient theme throughout the study. Black and Brown students felt a sense of hostility from the campus climate and that deterred students from engaging in political activism or civic engagement. Feeling targeted, both directly or indirectly, can certainly have an effect on how one carries themselves in public. This can make it difficult for someone to speak up for an injustice they witness if they feel like they even slightly identify with the targeted group in question. As children, many are told by adults to stand up for what is right, but what if the most powerful adult in the nation is the one you feel targeted by? Of course there are those who feel that they can finally identify with the President and this is going to attract a group of followers the likes of which America has not overtly seen in quite some time. Media has always played a large role in American society and Donald Trump has ushered in a new form of media with his inauguration: Fake News Media. Thus the following research question is posed:

RQ3: How are Donald Trump’s tweets impacting college student civic engagement?

Youth Media Usage in Relation to Current Events

Atkin, Galloway and Nayman (1976) conducted a study to see if the amount of exposure to campaign content in media was related to the level of political knowledge and the degree of interest voters had in a campaign. What they found was that exposure to mass media was functionally related to political knowledge and interest. Level of education also proved to be a factor that indicated the strength of the relationship between political knowledge/participation and media usage, which is another factor that makes analyzing the issues at hand as it pertains to college students important.

“Social networking sites, and Internet use in general, allow for more audience interactivity and relativity” (Nisbett & DeWalt, 2016, p. 151). The form of media that people choose to consume is also going to influence how political issues and current events are divulged. “Young people tend to use more social media” (Nisbett & DeWalt, 2016, p. 152) and because of this it is important to recognize the role that Twitter plays in not only the lives of older generations, but the audience in question; college students. It was noted that when a celebrity would say something, their comments would be circulated through social media as well as legacy media. One participant in the Nisbett and DeWalt (2016) study mentioned that, “You can take a tweet from Twitter and screenshot it, Instagram, Facebook. I can see more celebrity political statements through these than I see on TV” (p. 152). This is noteworthy because Donald Trump constantly uses Twitter. This could be because he understands the power this affords him. Tweets can be shared on Facebook, Pinterest, Snapchat, email and through text messages. One could even screenshot the message and save it as a photo and share it on any platform that allows users to post photos. Essentially the possibilities and places you could share a tweet are endless.

Logan, Lightfoot and Contreras (2017) had a participant that mentioned the importance of social media and how essential it is in reaching the younger generations. If one fails to use social media, then they are undoubtedly keeping younger generations out of the dialogue. Pinkleton and Austin (2004) conducted a study to see how young people's media usage related to their public affairs involvement through evaluations of their media use, efficacy and apathy. Some political observers feared that the type of media outlet they used would affect their involvement. They found that media provides youth with a lot of their knowledge on politics. Despite concerns expressed by political observers, media usage had no correlation with apathy in young voters. However, efficacy and involvement were correlated with media used by young voters.

Another factor to consider is second screening. Gil de Zúñiga, Garcia-Perdomo, and McGregor (2015) defined second screening as assessing an additional web connected device to get more information about something or enter into a discussion about a program that one is watching while simultaneously doing the two things. Second screening is an important factor for the sole reason that many college students turn to their web connected devices to share content or explore information they may have viewed on television. Some students might gain their awareness of current events through legacy media. Because legacy media is a considered one way communication, many will turn to second screening to double check the information via a connected web device; most turn to their smartphones. Twitter is one of the most easily accessible means to stay connected on the most recent discussions occurring on most current events.

Launched in 2006, Twitter has rapidly gained prominence as a leading way of exchanging information in real-time format... In this context,

whereas blogs and websites tend to require specific effort to access information, often restrict direct communication and have weak ties between bloggers and readers, Twitter allows individuals to express their own views through ‘tweets’ and enables them to follow other ‘tweeters’ as well as to be followed. All of this ensures that Twitter is a far more interactive form of communication (Blair, 2013, p. 135).

Although Twitter allows its users the ease of sharing information rapidly and abundantly, most users can still find topics of current national news on other media platforms as well. Twitter just happens to be one of the easiest to share since it offers hyperlinks or direct connections to other media accounts users might have. “When understood as a purposive act, second screening provides individuals with additional information, potentially orienting opinions, all in a space where discussion and elaboration are encouraged” (McGregor & Mourao, 2017, p. 266). Thus the follow research question is posed:
RQ4: How will the form of media that college students use most to collect information about current events or news effect their civic engagement?

Social Cognitive theory and Human Computer Interaction as a Theoretical Framework

From a theoretical standpoint, this study attempts to fill a substantial gap in previous literature by providing a combination of evidence acquired from the questionnaire, previous literature and how students may or may not be motivated to civically engage as a result of these factors. Other factors will also be considered such as one’s preferred mode of media and one’s choices of credible media.

In 1986 Bandura created the social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory

focuses on how behavioral, cognitive, biological and other personal factors all simultaneously work together to understand why and how people actively seek out different forms of media to educate themselves on matters they are interested in and act out those learned items. These factors also influence how people may seek to find a form of media that aligns with their current views or beliefs of the world (Bandura, 1986). However, the way one gradually views and interacts within their authentic life can be indefinitely impaired if they expose themselves to one particular form of media too much (e.g. Fox News). This causes a sort of desensitization. Desensitization meaning that consumers become less sensitive to content they are exposed to since they are so used to seeing it all the time. Which may be an indicator for the reason behind respondents' decision to make the selection they made regarding credible sources of media and what they use the most to collect information on current events. The theory proposes that media has a large affect on consumer behavior (e.g. civic engagement). It also suggests that people actively seek out specific forms of media that align with one's beliefs or desires to learn about something they are interested in (Bandura, 1986). For example, someone who likes Donald Trump would find it beneficial or pleasing to follow his Twitter account to stay current on news they feel is important and feel aware about what is going on in the U.S. The purpose of the theory is to research how one's behavioral social environment is influencing one's mass communication choices how it is affecting their social environment.

“The very structure of life is increasingly computational and networked, and this is not optional” (Dix, 2017, p. 127). Since even basic technology is available to most citizens in the United States, human computer interaction (HCI) is a useful theoretical model

because it makes it possible for researchers to observe how technology can change and shape how learning takes place. HCI also affects our attitudes and behaviors. “One of the more recent changes in HCI is that computers really have become ubiquitous to the extent that it is rare to find any technology that does not involve computation” (Dix, 2017, p. 123). Technology inhabits the lives of many Americans everyday. Whether it is to see what time it is on one’s smart phone or submit an order to Starbucks for pickup, technology is undoubtedly utilized in our daily routines. HCI has changed in various ways throughout the years because of how quickly technology has evolved.

A key change in HCI was when computation entered leisure and home centered systems. The market for social networks, satellite navigation, smart phones and smart TVs is no longer the corporate buying for its workers, but consumers buying for themselves. This shift from employer-determined to self-determined choices of systems drove in no small part the shift from efficiency and user interface design, to emotion and user experience design (Dix, 2017, p. 127).

The challenge of experiencing too much HCI is that we become too dependent upon the technology as it influences our day to day. The applications one uses begin to become essential and part of normal life.

Though using a technology may significantly alter a person’s perceptions or abilities, the user may become accustomed to the technology’s presence. The device itself withdraws into the background of the user’s awareness, and attention is focused on what is being done with the device (Tripathi, 2016, p. 243).

People become too dependent on technology to tell them what to do and how to behave. This is largely influencing how people interact not only with technology, but also with other people as well both face-to-face and online.

Summary

Based on the concerns and studies previously discussed, the topic in question is one that would answer important questions about the way Donald Trump is choosing to present himself and his messages on Twitter. Furthermore how his tweets may be effecting civic engagement amongst students on college campuses. There are several studies within the literature that suggest that he is still considered a businessperson celebrity in the eyes of many citizens, rather than an official expert who is qualified of occupying his role as President of the United States. This factor combined with his perceived level of expertise and credibility from his tweets suggests that his tweets are having an impact amongst students on college campuses and their behaviors/attitude towards civic engagement. This thesis seeks to provide a perspective that has not yet been considered and could lead to further examination of the affects of Donald Trump's tweets on the general population. These investigations are important because college students, as well as half the American population, live in a consumer mindset. Twitter messages that express a clear stance on issues of national importance from the President of the United States could predict civic engagement and perceived expertise and credibility.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Sample

The ideal participants for this study are college students. The population is unique to study since they are often using social media, constantly willingly and unwillingly bombarded with shared news on current events and a likely population to have political interest because of their level of education. Additionally, the survey methodology for this research was conducted using convenience sampling.

Procedure

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to a private Northern California college university. The survey was completed within public speaking, interpersonal communication, and general education courses. Each of the classes was a general education course, which enabled a broader representation of the population. Students at the university are required to take many general education courses, which means each of the classes had an array of students from different educational backgrounds. Participants were given a brief introduction about the thesis topic prior to beginning the questionnaire. Afterwards, students were given 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire and turn it in to be compensated with candy.

Variables

Tweets – Tweets collected for this study included 5 of the most retweeted Donald Trump tweets within the last 6 months. The tweets were collected from a platform called Twitter. Twitter is a social

media platform and website where registered users may post text that is limited to a certain number of characters, as well as links, photos, or videos (Twitter).

Credibility – The quality of being trusted and believed in. One’s perceived ability to thoroughly perform a task or one’s perceived trustworthiness (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). This was used to measure Donald Trump’s perceived credibility.

Expert – A person who has a special skill or knowledge in some particular field (Expert). This was used to measure Donald Trump’s perceived level of expertise.

Civic Engagement – Working to make a difference in the civic life of one’s community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes (Jacoby & Ehrlich, 2009). This was used to measure participants’ perceived level of civic engagement.

Measurement

The questionnaire contained 8 sections to measure participants agreeability with Donald Trump’s tweets, his perceived credibility, his perceived expertise, and his perceived qualification to do the job as well as participant: social media usage, civic engagement, political information and demographics. The dependent variables for this study were civic engagement, expertise and credibility. The independent variable was Donald Trump’s tweets. The tweets were selected based on the most retweeted tweets within the last six months. This was done to ensure that there was not a selection bias. Retweets do not mean that people agree with the tweet, it could simply indicate that the tweet spiked an interest in the reader. A retweet allows the user to leave their own thoughts on the tweet along with a display of the tweet.

Section 1 contained a measurement to determine the degree to which a participant agrees with a specific Donald Trump tweet. This scale had 5 different items within it that were measured via Likert scale from 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree. An example of a statement in this section includes "My warmest condolences and sympathies to victims and families of the terrible Las Vegas shooting. God bless you!".

Section 2-3 contained a measurement that was modified using a scale created by McCroskey and Teven (1999) and Ohanian (1990), which included 23 different items with the intention of measuring how people feel about Donald Trump. McCroskey and Teven's (1999) scale was used to measure credibility using three different adjectives: competence, goodwill and trustworthiness (items 1-18). Ohanian's (1990) scale was used to measure expertise (items 19-23). This was done using six bipolar adjectives on a scale from 1-7. Participants were asked to rate their feelings of Donald Trump on a semantic differential scale that included items such as trustworthy and untrustworthy. Participants were instructed to circle a number between 1 and 7.

Section 4 contained a measurement intended to measure participant media usage. Participants were asked to select one option from the provided list regarding how often they use media and which form of media they believe is the most credible. The scale included 2 different items that asked participants how often they use social media and which form of media they believe to be the most credible. An example of a statement in this section includes "I use social media" with a list of options immediately following that ranging from all the time to never.

Section 5 contained an adapted version of many civic engagement measurements by Bobek, Zaff and Lerner (2009), Doolittle and Faul (2014), Flanagan, Syvertsen and

Stout (2007), Jacoby & Ehrlich (2009), and Justus , Weber and Mattor(2016). This section of the survey measures student civic engagement and is a 16-item instrument taken from adapted versions of measured civic engagement. Participants are asked to identify how much they agree or disagree with the statement using a 5 point Likert type scale. The questions were also sub-coded into questions of attitude and behavior, to help with further analysis when running tests in SPSS. An example of a statement in this section includes “I believe in promoting social justice locally and globally”.

Section 6 contained a measurement intended to measure Donald Trump’s perceived qualification. This scale had 5 different items within it that were measured via Likert scale from 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree. An example of a statement in this section includes "I believe that Donald Trump is doing a good job as President of the United States”.

Section 7 contained a measurement intended to measure participant political information. Participants were asked to select one option from a provided list regarding different political questions. An example of a statement in this section includes “How do you tend to politically label yourself”? The scale includes 7 different items that asks participants questions about some of their political decisions.

Section 8 contains demographic variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, year in school, level of education and discipline.

In terms of reliability for the credibility scale that was developed and tested by McCroskey and Teven (1999) yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .94, which is extremely high in terms of reliability. Alpha reliability for the civic engagement measurements by Bobek, Zaff and Lerner (2009), Doolittle and Faul (2014), Flanagan, Syvertsen and Stout

(2007), Jacoby & Ehrlich (2009), and Justus , Weber and Mattor(2016) yielded reliability from .73 to .91.

Design

A quantitative survey was the best method to use due to the convenience and ease of analysis it offered the current study. Surveys allowed the researcher to administer the survey to a large number of students. It also gave the current study the ability to group individuals based on demographic and compare them to one another. Surveys are useful for conducting research because they allow for a breadth of data that can be utilized to show statistical significance. This survey was also useful for explaining certain characteristics of certain populations. Additionally, surveys offer a greater representation of a certain population, which allowed the researcher to generalize the results. This method was selected because it can determine a potential correlation, between key variables using regression analysis. Although this statistical test could not be completely certain of causality, it showed a higher level of prediction than just an average Pearson correlation test.

Data Analysis

This data was collected and entered via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. Reliability tests were conducted before other analysis to ensure internal consistency with the scales (Table 1). The scales proved to be extremely reliable because several pretests were performed to examine the reliability of the scales. Results of the pretests indicated that items initially reverse coded in original scales needed to be altered to stay consistent with other formatted responses to obtain higher reliability scores. Performing several pretests coupled with obtaining 350 participants and

modifying some of the original scales is what produced the high reliability score. In order to determine the validity of the research questions descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were conducted.

Table 1. Reliability of Donald Trump's tweets, Donald Trump's perceived credibility, participant media usage, participant civic engagement, Donald Trump's perceived qualification and participant political information scales.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Donald Trump's Tweets	.78	5
Civic Engagement	.97	18
Expertise	.95	5
Participant Media Usage	.94	2
Credibility	.97	18

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter explains the findings from the statistical analysis of the data. Based on these results, some important and useful information can be gathered in terms of understanding the population.

Demographic Information

Table 2 shows the demographic background information collected from the participants. The average age of the sample was 21 (SD=4.5). All of the participants were between the age of 18 and 46. The sample was made up of 26.9% male, 72.3% female and .9% who did not wish to specify. Furthermore 82.9% of participants reported frequently using social media. Politically identifying one's self as Democrat had the highest percentage at 41.8%, followed by Nonpartisan at 17.7%, Republican at 12.9%, Other at 11.4%, Very Liberal at 11.1% and Very Conservative at 4.9%. The average of the political identification questions was 3.76 (SD=1.28). The majority of respondents were Juniors in college at 33.7%, followed by Seniors at 27.4%, Freshmen at 23.1%, Sophomores at 13.7% and Graduate students at 2%. The average year in school is 3 (SD=1.16). Most respondents reported being Hispanic at 49.7%, followed by Caucasian at 33.1%, Other at 7.4%, Asian at 5.7%, 2.3% did not wish to specify and 1.7% were African American.

Table 2. Demographic Information (N=350)

Year in School	Male	Female	Total
Freshmen	23	57	81
Sophomore	11	37	48
Junior	24	94	118
Senior	33	61	96
Graduate	3	4	7

Political Affiliation	Male	Female	Total
Very Conservative	3	14	17
Republican	12	33	45
Nonpartisan	25	36	62
Democrat	37	107	146
Very Liberal	8	31	39
Other	9	31	40

Table 2. Demographic Information (N=350)

Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total
White/Caucasian	38	78	116
Hispanic	41	131	174
Asian	6	14	20
African American	1	5	6
Other	7	19	26

Table 2. Demographic Information (N=350)

Age	Male	Female	Total
18-25	79	225	304
26	2	4	6
27	3	5	8
28	1	4	5
29	2	3	5
30	3	1	4
31	0	4	4
32	0	1	1
33	2	2	4
34	1	0	1
35	1	0	1
36	0	1	1
40	1	0	1
42	0	1	1
43	0	1	1
45	2	0	2
46	0	1	1

Independent Variables and Dependent Variables (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables in the proposed research questions. The mean score for Donald Trump's tweets was (M= 3.55). The standard deviation was .88 (Donald Trump's tweets). Stand deviation is a measure of variability. The tweets were measured on a 5 point Likert type scale measuring from 1 strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree which could explain why the standard deviation was low amongst the tweets.

The mean score for the dependent variables included credibility (M=5.83), followed by expertise (M=5.71) and civic engagement (M=2.33). Standard deviations were 1.56 (expertise), and 1.38 (credibility) and .56 (civic engagement). As previously mentioned, stand deviation is a measure of variability. The reason why stand deviations were high for expertise and credibility is because expertise and credibility were measured on a 7 point Likert type scale in which participants circled an adjective they felt most closely aligned with Donald Trump. The standard deviation score for civic engagement was lower because it was measured on a 5 point Likert type scale which contained statements that participants had to answer using 1 strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Independent Variable	M	SD	N
Donald Trump's Tweets	3.55	.88	350

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Dependent Variable	M	SD	N
Credibility	5.83	1.38	350
Expertise	5.71	1.56	350
Civic Engagement	2.33	.56	350

Correlation Analysis (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)

A Correlation analysis was run to explore the relationships between the variables in the proposed in the research questions. Table 4 shows a correlation matrix of the bivariate correlations between Donald Trump's tweets and credibility, expertise, and civic engagement. Table 4 demonstrates statistically significant correlations obtained within the study. More precisely, Donald Trump's tweets were significantly positively correlated with his perceived credibility ($r=.60$, $p<.01$). Exposure to Donald Trump's tweets also yielded a significant positive correlation with his perceived expertise ($r=.56$, $p<.01$). Finally, perceived expertise is significantly correlated with perceived credibility ($r=.87$, $p<.01$).

Since Donald Trump's tweets were not significantly correlated with civic engagement, a correlation analysis was employed between individual Donald Trump tweets and the sub constructs of civic engagement (e.g. civic attitudes, civic behaviors). The researcher found that tweet 1 (T1) was significantly negatively correlated with civic attitudes ($r=-$

.11, $p < .05$). Tweet 4 (T4) was significantly negatively correlated with civic behaviors ($r = -.13$, $p < .05$).

The correlations in Table 4 represent how strongly each variable is related to one another. When variables are positively significantly correlated with one another that means that when one variable goes in one direction, then the related variable will move in the same direction. When variables are negatively significantly correlated, that means that when one variable moves in one direction, the related variable will move in the opposite direction. Any variable relations with a significance level of .06 or higher generally translates into a weak relation.

Table 4. Correlations, means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for Donald Trump's tweets, credibility, expertise and civic engagement. (N=350)

Table 4: *Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach's Alphas, and Correlation Matrix*

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Tweets	3.55	.88	.94	--					
2. Credibility	5.83	1.39	.90	.60**	--				
3. Expertise	5.71	1.56	.96	.56**	.87**	--			
4. Civic Engagement	2.23	.56	.89	-.08	-.02	.05	--		
5. Civic Attitude	2.09	.54	.68	-.08	-.09	-.00	.85**	--	
6. Civic Behavior	2.37	.72	.82	-.06	.03	.09	.92**	.57**	--

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, † $p < .001$. One-tailed.

Regression Analysis (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)

A linear regression analysis was conducted, as shown in table 5, in order to investigate the predictors for perceived credibility, perceived expertise, and civic engagement.

Research question 1 stated, "How are Donald Trump's tweets impacting college students' perception of his credibility"? Results of the linear regression analysis deemed a

significant positive relationship amongst Donald Trump's tweets and his perceived credibility. This means that when students are exposed to Donald Trump's tweets, they act as a predictor for student perception of his credibility.

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change of Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.60	.36	.36	1.11	.36	197.89	1	348	.00

a. Predictors: (Constant) Donald Trump's Tweets

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	2.47	.25		10.05	.00
	.95	.07	.60	14.07	.00

a. Dependent Variable: Credibility

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict college student perception of Donald Trump's perceived credibility based on exposure to his tweets. A significant regression equation was determined ($F(1, 348)=197.89$ $p<.00$), with an R^2 of .36. If Donald Trump's tweets have a 1 unit change in Donald Trump's tweets then there is a .95 unit increase in credibility.

Research question 2 stated, "How are Donald Trump's tweets impacting college student perception of his expertise"? Results of the linear regression analysis, shown in table 6, deemed a significant positive relationship amongst Donald Trump's tweets and his

perceived expertise. This means that when students are exposed to Donald Trump's tweets, they act as a predictor for student perception of his expertise.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change of Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.56	.31	.31	1.30	.31	158.90	1	348	.00

a. Predictors: (Constant) Donald Trump's Tweets

Table 6. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	2.19	.29		7.62	.00
	.99	.07	.56	12.61	.00

a. Dependent Variable: Expertise

A simple linear regression was conducted to predict college student perception of Donald Trump's expertise based on exposure to his tweets. A significant regression equation was determined ($F(1, 348)=158.89$ $p<.00$), with an R^2 of .31. If Donald Trump's tweets have a 1 unit change there is a .99 unit increase in expertise.

Research question 3 stated, "How are Donald Trump's tweets impacting college student civic engagement"? Results of the linear regression analysis deemed that there was a marginally significant relationship amongst each of Donald Trump's tweets and college student civic behaviors.

Research question 4 stated, "How will the form of media that college students use most to collect information about current events or news effect their civic engagement"? Results

of a linear regression analysis deemed that there was a negative significant relationship between which form of media that college students use the most to collect information on current events and news and college student civic engagement ($r = -.15$, $p < .01$). The majority of students claimed that they used the following forms of media the most to collect information about current events or news: 43.3% reported using social media, 35.1% reported using the internet to research multiple sites to references and cross reference information, 14.6% reported watching Television to collect their information, 5.4% reported using print media to collect their information, and 1.4% claimed to use other sources to collect their information about current events or news. Shockingly enough, when students were asked to identify which form of media they believe to be the most credible for collecting information on current events or news, their responses were not linear to their previous selections (e.g. where they go the most to collect their information on the same topics); students thought that using the Internet to research multiple sites and cross reference information was the most credible at 41.4%, followed by Television at 20.9%, Print media at 20.6%, Social Media at 10.3% and Other at 6.9%.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Implications

It would appear that the greatest contribution of this study to the area of mass communication and political communication would be that there is something to be said of the way Donald Trump conveys his messages, both professional and personal, on Twitter. The research was able to produce strong Cronbach's Alpha on the scales including: tweets (.78), credibility (.97), expertise (.95), and civic engagement (.97). The fact that the scales were so reliable gave confidence to responses provided within the study. According to the research, the tweets are having an affect on how participants view Donald Trump's level of credibility and expertise as President of the United States. According to Boykoff and Goodman's (2009) definition of celebrity type Donald Trump initially, and still might, fall into the category of celebrity businessperson. One potential reason for these findings might be due to the fact that many citizens perceive him to be a celebrity businessperson, rather than an official qualified of being President of the United States. Meyer and Gamson (1995) conducted a study, which reared results indicating that celebrity credibility played marginal to no role in the political process. Though Donald Trump might be considered an expert who was a credible source in his previous endeavors, it may not be translating in his new position. It is also noteworthy to mention that several individuals who identified as "very conservative" and reported Donald Trump to be a highly credible expert in his field responded to section one of the survey

(i.e. Donald Trump's tweets) by not indicating if they agreed or disagreed with his tweet(s). They simply answered "neutral" to the questions. This was interesting because supporting the idea that Donald Trump is a highly credible expert as President of the United States would seemingly translate into support or agreeance of his tweets. This could be interpreted as outward support of him as a highly credible expert, but lack of agreeance with his Twitter etiquette. By responding to section one with "neutral", participants who identified as "very conservative" may feel that though they did not directly comment on his tweets, marking "neutral" may protect him from scrutiny. Marking "neutral" could also be interpreted as a way of keeping opposers from forming valid arguments against Donald Trump supporters. For example, supporters may not agree with the tweets, but indicating that they do not agree with the tweets would allow individuals who do not support Donald Trump to pose a valid question: how could they support him and not agree with his tweets? This would be a difficult question for a Donald Trump supporter to answer.

Furthermore this study showed that though there those who like and dislike Donald Trump, there is no denying that his tweets are having an effect on the way he is perceived. Research questions 1 and 2 both contributed results which stated that at $p < .01$, Donald Trump's tweets are significantly positively correlated with perceived credibility and expertise. Marsh, Hart and Tindall (2010) recognized that credibility and status of a celebrity were important, but not more important than how the general population perceived them. Though the tweets were not significantly correlated with college student civic engagement, further examination concluded that T1 (see APPENDICES) was significantly negatively correlated with civic attitudes at $p < .05$.

This was interesting because T1 includes aggressive and threatening verbiage towards Afghanistan. Questions in the civic engagement scale that are geared towards civic attitudes include phrases like: I believe in promoting social justice locally and globally and I believe I have a responsibility to help those in need. The researcher suspects that the verbiage in the tweets may have sparked the correlation within the civic attitude measurement within the civic engagement scale. If the participant agreed with the tweet then their civic attitude was reported to be lower, if they did not agree with the tweet then their civic attitude was reported to be higher. This may have been because participants felt a personal responsibility to step in and change their civic attitude depending on whether or not they agreed with Donald Trump's tweet.

Additionally T4 (see APPENDICES) was significantly negatively correlated with civic behavior at $p < .05$. This was also interesting because T4 was about Donald Trump mentioning that he did not want to help out an American citizen because they seemed ungrateful. This may have upset participants and explained why civic behaviors may have been correlated to the tweet in the way it had. Questions in the civic engagement scale that are geared toward civic behavior include phrases like: I oppose some US policies because I care about my country and I want to improve it and I often think about doing things, so that people in the future can have things better. Carpini (2000) found that youth are less trusting of their fellow citizens, so this may also explain why students are reluctant to agree with Donald Trump's tweets and determined to behave in a more civic manner. If participants agreed with the tweet then their civic behavior was reported to be lower, if they did not agree with the tweet then their civic behavior was reported to

be higher. This may be explained for reasons similar to the correlation between T1 and civic attitude.

Furthermore Donald Trump's tweets did have predicting influence over his perceived credibility and expertise, which answered research questions 1 and 2. The results were not surprising since previous research pointed towards this inevitable finding (Marsh, Hart & Tindall, 2010; Meyer & Gamson, 1995; Nisbett & DeWalt, 2016; Wen & Cui, 2014). The tweets unfortunately had no predicting influence on civic engagement, though as previously mentioned, the two were significantly correlated. The researcher performed further analysis to see if individual tweets had predicting influence on civic engagement. The researcher found that the T4 had marginal predicting power on civic behaviors. Nisbett and DeWalt (2016) initially questioned whether or not celebrity recognition could bolster civic engagement amongst youth and some of Donald Trump's tweets have the ability to do so, but perhaps not in the way he was hoping. Since Twitter is considered 2-way communication, unlike legacy media, participants of this study may feel that they are conversing with Donald Trump at a more personal level. Because of this, they might feel like they must behave more civically because they do not agree with his tweet(s). Austin, Vord, Pinkleton and Epstein's (2008) study is similar to that of the researcher and could explain why T4 displayed predicting power. Though the current study is not examining political motivation, the tweets could be used to explain why participants are motivated to behavior in a civic manner.

Further correlation analysis deemed that there was a negative significant relationship between which form of media students use and their civic engagement (i.e. RQ4). These responses could be because students may be accidentally using media

sources that are biased to collect their information on current events or news. Ho, Binder, Becker, Moy, Scheufele, Brossard and Gunther (2011) found that people were suspicious of media impartiality and this resulted in people having negative attitudes towards politics. Because of this, participants could be getting negative feelings about media, which is bolstering their civic engagement. The findings of this study are beneficial to media use in correlation to real life behaviors. This study creates further evidence that Twitter usage from a President is something that is relevant to college student civic engagement and how citizens perceive his level of expertise and credibility. This study also reaffirms that college students are more likely to have political interest and that media usage does in fact have an affect on their lived behaviors and attitudes (e.g. civic engagement).

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory was also a good framework to use in analyzing the subject matter because college students obviously use different forms of media to collect their information on current events and news, but the method used to find this information and what they are being exposed to once they find the information is having an effect on their authentic life. If students are exposed to Donald Trump's tweets too much, they might grow desensitized to his messages and begin to lose trust in the abilities of our country to select someone who they believe is well equipped to perform the job of President of the United States. Outside of this media has a large influence on consumer behavior. This theory was appropriate to use because Donald Trump's use of media (Twitter) had an affect on consumer behavior (civic behavior). Whether or not participants agreed with the tweets does not matter because the tweets demonstrated an ability to change civic behavior. Paired with this being exposed to the tweets so often,

intentionally or not, shaped participant perception of Donald Trump's credibility as an expert. The findings of this study contribute to social cognitive theory because it broadens one's understand that tweets can in fact influence or socialize an entire population.

Additionally HCI was equally useful in this body of research because it allowed the researcher to examine how individual tweets effected civic attitude and civic behavior. Because college students may become too dependent on technology to inform and guide their everyday decisions, media use in this manner can have negative effects on how one lives their everyday life. It also has the ability to significantly alter one's perceptions, which may be what is occurring when students view Donald Trump's tweets (Tripathi, 2016). HCI was appropriate for this body of research because it illuminated how technology (e.g. Twitter) was able to educate participants on matters expressed by Donald Trump. The tweets affected participant civic attitude and civic behavior. They also affected the attitudes that participants had regarding their perception of Donald Trump as a credible expert, which is why the theory was so useful to the study. The results of the study confirm how HCI functions as a theory. Because participants use technology so often, being exposed to the tweets outside of the study is affecting their civic attitudes and civic behaviors. It is also affecting how they interact with others in a face-to- face setting. The studied population in question is one that constantly turns to media to inform them on important news and current events in the country. Some of the participants do not like Donald Trump based off of his demeanor and tweets. Perceptions that participants have about him might change if they looked into policies he is promoting or changing; they may find that they agree with what he is doing and come to disregard

his tweets. Even if they do not, they are becoming too dependent on their regularly used methods of information seeking to inform them on important issues.

An implication of this study is that Twitter use from a President has a powerful impact on perception. We have not previously had a President who has used Twitter so freely for both professional and shared public persona use alike. Corner (2000) recognized that these two spheres should be operating independent of one another rather than together. For example, Donald Trump has two separate Twitter accounts: one for his use as President of the United States and the other for his personal use. Though he does not directly post anything the public would deem questionable from his presidential Twitter account, he does retweet posts from his personal account onto his presidential account. Therefore, this study is helpful because it shows how large of an impact Twitter messages from a President can have on perception and civic engagement on college campuses. Perhaps President Trump should stick to only using his presidential Twitter account and refrain from having a personal account altogether. He needs to change how he uses Twitter so that he refrains from seeming inadequate in his capabilities to do his job.

Limitations and Future Research

Although significant findings were reported, there were still some limitations in the study. Future research should examine how specific Donald Trump tweets or similar tweets impact college student perceptions of his credibility, expertise as well as college student civic engagement. Especially since the tweets selected were randomly chosen and were not similar in nature to one another. 41.8% of the participants identified as Democrats and very few identified themselves as being Republicans; their perceptions of

Donald Trump's tweets may be influenced by the fact that Democrats may have a bias toward Donald Trump simply because he is a Republican. That said upperclassmen, which consisted of 61.1% of the participants, might have a better understanding of the body of research because they are older and have been in school longer than the underclassmen; so they may have skewed the results of the study as well. Another limitation included the tweets available to the researcher. At the time of the collection the researcher was only able to go back as far as mid November on Donald Trump's Twitter profile. A better collection of tweets would have consisted of tweets collected from the beginning of his election to the present. If possible, future research should do a content analysis to examine Donald Trump's tweets before he decided to run for office and after. The difference in content may contribute to the understanding of how he may or may not have separated his professional self from his personal self and what sort of effect it had on his perceived credibility and expertise then and now.

Since the study was exploratory in nature, future research should also examine what other areas of behavior and perception Donald Trump's tweets may be influencing. For example, are the tweets affecting political participation or voter efficacy? Future research should collect additional information about the type of celebrity people may perceive him to be. This is extremely important as it pertains to the connection to his perceived level of credibility and expertise. Has he made the transition from celebrity businessperson to celebrity politician person? Before the Presidential election were people familiar with whom Donald Trump was? If so, how did they know of him? Since the mean response for the tweets was 3.55, which leans more towards disagreeing with the tweets, it was surprising to see that the mean response for his perceived level of

credibility was 5.83 and 5.71 for expertise. Future research would also want to examine why people leaned more towards disagreeing with his tweets but still reported him to high/moderately high levels of credibility and expertise.

Sections 4 and section 7 of the survey (see APPENDIX) also provided some interesting responses that future research should examine. Participants were asked which form of media they use most often to inform them on current events and news, they were also asked to identify which form of media they believed to be the most credible. Most participants answered the two questions by providing inverse responses. The participants realize that they are not doing their part to ensure that they are informing themselves in an unbiased manner, but continue to exercise the same behavior that they realize is not productive to the case at hand (e.g. gathering unbiased information on current events and news). Future research may want to examine why this phenomenon is occurring.

A small limitation with this study was that data was only collected from one institution, specifically a private institution. Aside from this, students who attend a private institute might have higher expectations of how the President of the United States should behave and how they decide to interact with one another. So that may have hindered the responses gathered for this body of research. Future research should collect a larger number of participants from various regions and university backgrounds. A larger scope of participants may affect the understanding of the subject, which could change the results of the study. Collecting data from junior colleges, four-year universities, private institutions and so forth would make the results more generalizable.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to understand how Donald Trump's tweets impacted his perceived credibility, perceived expertise, and civic engagement amongst college students. After running statistical analysis in SPSS, there was statistical significance between Donald Trump's tweets and his perceived credibility, expertise and college student civic engagement. This study may not have produced as significant of findings as desired between all of the collective tweets and each dependent variable, but there is something to be said of correlations that were found. Since Donald Trump's tweets do in fact have a significant impact on his perceived credibility and expertise, these critical findings should be researched even further. The thesis is highly exploratory in nature because no other previous research has been conducted to examine the affects of Donald Trump's tweets on his public perception in general or how this may affect an entire population's behavior.

This is noteworthy because this study illuminates the power Presidential Twitter usage has on an entire population of people. Prior to this, many may have assumed that the tweets were nothing but a few characters typed into a text box and posted on a social media platform, but as we have come to find this is far from the case. The tweets play a critical role in shaping the way an entire population behaves and how they come to form their agendas on how they process things occurring in the United States. The power of this may be used in both positive and negative ways. Maybe it is a good thing that he is a polarizing figure in the United States. He could be mobilizing youth to think about the country in a way they had not previously considered because he is reaching out to them on a platform that they are familiar with. He could also be creating a psychological stress

in people that could otherwise cause them to lose faith in the United States' ability to ethically and morally function as a country.

Jacoby and Ehrlich (2009), Justus, Webber, and Mattor (2016) predicted that students being civically engaged would result in student motivation to study and improved community relationships. We must continue to understand the potential affects of Presidential Twitter usage and how it affects real life behavior, as it will contribute to research related to mass media communication and political communication. This body of research opens up a lot of new ideas and leaves room for some unanswered questions. The research conducted demonstrates that Donald Trump's tweets influence the way people are civically socialized. This study is the first of its kind and is merely the first step toward further examining what other affects Donald Trump's tweets are having on society. Since the tweets are affecting his perceived expertise and credibility and having an effect on college student civic engagement, what other areas may they be affecting? Future research will surely examine this phenomenon. This thesis has the ability to offer new insight to research that has never been considered. This study and similar bodies of research will largely contribute to the understanding of the way Americans shape their views on this country and how they choose to engage with others in their everyday life. Donald Trump is significantly socializing an entire population's behavior and he probably does not know it; how is that for fake news?

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Appendix A

Scales	Pages
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Tweets Scale

1. The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!
2. North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the “Nuclear button is on his desk at all times.” Will someone from this depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & powerful one than his, and my Button works!
3. My warmest condolences and sympathies to victims and families of the terrible Las Vegas shooting. God bless you!
4. Now that the three basketball players are out of China and saved from years of jail, LaVar Ball, the father of LiAngelo, is unaccepting of what I did for his son and that shoplifting is no big deal. I should have left them in jail!
5. Why would Kim Jong-un insult me by calling me “old”, when I would NEVER call him “short and fat?” Oh well, I try so hard to be his friend – and maybe some day that will happen!

Credibility Scale (McCroskey & Teven, 1999)

Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Trained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Untrained
Expert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Inexpert
Informed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninformed
Competent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Incompetent
Bright	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stupid
Cares about me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Doesn't care about me
Has my interests at heart	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Doesn't have my interests at heart
Not self-centered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Self-centered
Concerned with me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unconcerned with me
Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Insensitive
Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not understanding
Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonest
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Untrustworthy
Honorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonorable
Moral	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Immoral
Ethical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unethical
Genuine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Phoney

Expertise Scale (Ohanian, 1990)

Expert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not an Expert
Experienced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Inexperienced
Very knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not knowledgeable
Qualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unqualified
Skilled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unskilled

Media Scale

1. I use social media.
2. Which form of media do you believe is the *most credible* when it comes to information on current events or news?

Civic Engagement Scale (Bobek, Zaff & Lerner, 2009; Doolittle & Faul, 2014; Flanagan, Syvertsen & Stout, 2007; Jacoby & Ehrlich, 2009; and Justus, Weber & Mator, 2016).

1. I believe in promoting social justice locally and globally.
2. I believe that I have a responsibility to help those in need.
3. I believe in recognizing and appreciating human diversity and commonality.
4. I believe that it is important to volunteer.
5. I feel sorry for other people who aren't as fortunate as I am.
6. Being actively involved in community issues is my responsibility.
7. America is a fair society where everyone has an equal chance to get ahead.
8. Being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everyone.
9. I often think about doing things, so that people in the future can have things better.
10. I listen to people talk about politics, even when I know I don't agree with them.
11. When I see or read a news story about an issue, I try to figure out if they're telling one side of the story.
12. When I hear news about politics, I try to figure out what is really going on.
13. I oppose some US policies because I care about my country and I want to improve it.
14. I keep up to date with political affairs.
15. I occupy leadership or membership roles in organizations.
16. I participate in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility.

Qualification Scale

1. I believe that President Donald Trump is doing a good job as President of the United States.
2. I believe that President Donald Trump is using Twitter effectively to convey his message.
3. Experience in politics should be a qualification for the position of President of the United States.

Political Information Scale

1. Which form of media do you use the *most* to collect information about current events or news?
2. How do you tend to politically identify yourself?
3. Did you vote in the 2012 presidential election (Obama vs. Romney)?
4. Did you vote in the 2016 presidential election (Trump vs. Clinton)?
5. Were you more interested in politics and current events.
- 6a. Before today had you ever seen or heard of President Donald Trump's tweets?
- 6b. *If* you respond "yes" in 6a, please indicate how you heard or saw President Donald Trump's tweet(s).

Demographic Information

1. What is your biological sex?
2. What grade are you in?
3. What ethnicity are you?
4. How old are you?
5. What is your major?

Appendix B

Dear Participant,

The Department of Communication at the University of the Pacific would like to thank you for taking part in this survey; we understand your time is very important. With your help, the data being collected will be used in research pertaining to President Donald Trump's tweets and the impact this may have on college student civic engagement and his perceived credibility. This survey will take no longer than 16 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years or older and a college student to participate in this study. Completion of this survey will indicate your consent in participation. Your involvement in this study will be kept as confidential as legally possible. Please answer all questions as fully and honestly as you can, as failure to do so can alter our results. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer and you may discontinue at any time. There is a potential minimal sociological risk (of loss of respect from others/embarrassment) if in the case you express a strong opinion that is favorable or unfavorable regarding the US President. Outside of this, all precautions are being taken to ensure that the survey remain as confidential as possible such as not including your name on the survey and collecting the survey immediately upon completion. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of the Pacific Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (209) 946-7716. University of the Pacific's Institutional Review Board acknowledgment of this project is on file. If you have any further questions about this study, please contact the Primary Investigator Thalia Bobadilla at, t_bobadilla@u.pacific.edu, (209) 479-4303, or the faculty project advisor Qingwen Dong at, qdong@pacific.edu. Again, we thank you for your time and contribution to our research.

Sincerely,

University of the Pacific
Department of Communications

Instructions: Below are the most retweeted tweets that President Donald Trump has tweeted within the last six months or so. For each statement, please put the appropriate number in the space provided that expresses your response to the following statements.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Neutral 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
---------------------	------------	--------------	---------------	------------------------

1.
The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!

4:12 AM – January 1, 2018

1. ____

2.
North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the “Nuclear button is on his desk at all times.” Will someone from this depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & powerful one than his, and my Button works!

4:49 PM – Jan 2, 2018

2. ____

3.
My warmest condolences and sympathies to victims and families of the terrible Las Vegas shooting. God bless you!

4:11 PM – Oct 2, 2017

3. ____

4.
Now that the three basketball players are out of China and saved from years of jail, LaVar Ball, the father of LiAngelo, is unaccepting of what I did for his son and that shoplifting is no big deal. I should have left them in jail!

9:42 AM – Nov 19, 2017

4. ____

5.
Why would Kim Jong-un insult me by calling me “old”, when I would NEVER call him “short and fat?” Oh well, I try so hard to be his friend – and maybe some day that will happen!

4:48 PM – Nov 11, 2017

5. ____

Please continue onto next page

Measure of Credibility

Instructions: Please indicate your impression of Donald Trump's credibility as President of the United States by circling the appropriate number between the pairs of adjectives below. The closer a number is to an adjective, the more certain you are of your evaluation.

Competence

Intelligent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unintelligent
 Trained 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Untrained
 Expert 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inexpert
 Informed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Uninformed
 Competent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Incompetent
 Bright 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Stupid

Goodwill

Cares about me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't care about me
 Has my interests at heart 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't have my interests at heart
 Not self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Self-centered
 Concerned with me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned with me
 Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
 Understanding 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not understanding

Trustworthiness

Honest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Dishonest
 Trustworthy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Untrustworthy
 Honorable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Dishonorable
 Moral 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Immoral
 Ethical 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unethical
 Genuine 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Phoney

Expertise

Expert 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not an Expert
 Experienced 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inexperienced
 Very knowledgeable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not knowledgeable
 Qualified 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unqualified
 Skilled 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unskilled

Instructions: Please select only *one* option from the following questions:

1. I use social media (Select *one*):

- All the time
 Frequently
 Sometimes
 Very Unlikely
 Never

Please continue onto next page

2a. Which form of media do you believe is the **most credible** when it comes to information on current events or news? (Select **one**):

- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Apps downloaded on electronic devices, etc.)
- Print Media (Newspapers, Magazines, books)
- Television (CNN, Fox News, Local News Stations, etc.)
- The Internet (researching multiple sites to reference or cross reference information)
- Other (please specify): _____

2b. Please **rank** the following options from most credible source of information on current events and news (1) to least credible source of information on current events and news (5). 1 being the **most** credible and 5 being the **least** credible:

- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Apps downloaded on electronic devices, etc.)
- Print Media (Newspapers, Magazines, books)
- Television (CNN, Fox News, Local News Stations, etc.)
- The Internet (researching multiple sites to reference or cross reference information)

Instructions: Below are some different statements regarding your perceived civic engagement. Please put the appropriate number in the space provided that expresses your response to the following statements.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Neutral 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
----------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	----------------------	-------------------------------

- 1. I believe in promoting social justice locally and globally.
- 2. I believe that I have a responsibility to help those in need.
- 3. I believe in recognizing and appreciating human diversity and commonality.
- 4. I believe that it is important to volunteer.
- 5. I feel sorry for other people who aren't as fortunate as I am.
- 6. Being actively involved in community issues is my responsibility.
- 7. America is a fair society where everyone has an equal chance to get ahead.
- 8. Being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everyone.
- 9. I often think about doing things, so that people in the future can have things better.
- 10. I listen to people talk about politics, even when I know I don't agree with them.
- 11. When I see or read a news story about an issue, I try to figure out if they're telling one side of the story.
- 12. When I hear news about politics, I try to figure out what is really going on.
- 13. I oppose some US policies because I care about my country and I want to improve it.
- 14. I keep up to date with political affairs.
- 15. I occupy leadership or membership roles in organizations.
- 16. I participate in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility.

Instructions: Please put the appropriate number in the space provided that expresses your response to the following statements.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Neutral 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
----------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	----------------------	-------------------------------

- 1. I believe that President Donald Trump is doing a good job as President of the United States.
- 2. I believe that President Donald Trump is using Twitter effectively to convey his message.
- 3. Experience in politics should be a qualification for the position of President of the United States.

Please continue onto next page

Instructions: Please select *one* option from each of the following questions:

1. Which form of media do you use the *most* to collect information about current events or news? (select *one*):

- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Apps downloaded on electronic devices, etc.)
 Print Media (Newspapers, Magazines, books)
 Television (CNN, Fox News, Local News Stations, etc.)
 The Internet (researching multiple sites to reference or cross reference information)
 Other (please specify): _____

2. How do you tend to politically identify yourself? (select *one*):

- Very Conservative
 Republican
 Nonpartisan
 Democrat
 Very Liberal
 Other (please identify): _____

3. Did you vote in the 2012 presidential election (Obama vs. Romney)?

- Yes
 No
 Do not wish to specify

4. Did you vote in the 2016 presidential election (Trump vs. Clinton)?

- Yes
 No
 Do not wish to specify

5. Were you more interested in politics and current events (select *one*):

- Before the last presidential election
 After the last presidential election
 Before *and* after the last presidential election
 I was not ever interested

6a. Before today had you ever seen or heard of President Donald Trump's tweets?

- Yes
 No
 Do not wish to specify

6b. *If* you respond "yes" in 6a é, please indicate how you heard or saw President Donald Trump's tweet(s). (Select *one*):

- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, etc.)
 Print Media (Newspapers, Magazines, books)
 Television (CNN, Fox News, Local News Stations, etc.)
 Multiple Media Platforms
 Other (please specify): _____

(Ex: through a friend, something you heard on the radio, etc.)

Please continue onto next page

Please respond to a few additional items regarding yourself:

1. What is your biological sex?

Male ___ Female ___ Do not wish to specify ___

2. What grade are you in? Please check one:

Freshman ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior ___ Graduate Student ___

3. What ethnicity are you? Please check one:

___ White/Caucasian

___ Hispanic

___ Asian

___ Black/African American

___ Other (please specify): _____

___ Do not wish to specify

4. How old are you? ___

5. What is your major (e.g. HESP, business, communication)? _____

Thank you very much for your participation in this research study!