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## Meet Your Audience Where They Are: The Dissemination and Reception of Political Messaging Among Young Voters [PowerPoint Presentation]

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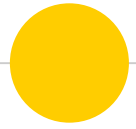
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# Meet Your Audience Where They Are

The dissemination and reception of political  
messaging among young voters.





# Background



# Terms to Define

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***Viral Moment:*** phenomena of organic content being “redistributed continuously online and becomes fodder for the news”

***Organic content:*** typical post on social media including shares and retweets

***Paid content:*** advertisements, ‘sponsored by,’ ‘paid for by’



# Terms to Define

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***Social media:*** dynamic, cost-effective “platforms that allow individuals to create and share content as well as view and comment on other users’ content, whether text, images or video”

***New media:*** all emerging mediums including social media but also streaming sites like Netflix and Hulu where an average user cannot post their own content

***Traditional media:*** original communication mediums: television, radio, newspaper, etc.



# Study Design

## Candidate Twitter

- top polling candidates leading up to the Iowa Caucuses: Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg
- analyzing tweets from period of two weeks before and to caucus day
- categorizations of analyses
  - message concentration
  - For each candidate, issues addressed and candidate traits

## Oral Interviews with students

- Variety of questions to understand media habits and knowledge about candidates
- Where do you get your information?
- Is the information you see on social media paid or organic content?
- What do you know about the candidate's background and character traits?
- What issues do this candidate emphasize in their campaign? What issues do they care about?
- Name a viral moment of this campaign.

# Young Voters:

## What do we know?

- historically less engaged in politics
- not spending time following government intricacies or politics
- first to embrace the internet
- more likely to share and receive news via social media
  - perceive social media as a useful source for political information
- read online news→ more political knowledge, though less issue-related
- *issue publics* we pay attention to the information that affects us



# The Media Landscape

- saturation of information for everything, especially politics
  - over-informed voters, not uninformed
  - constantly sifting through information
- 24 hour news cycle
- Social media provides new platforms for even more information
  - brings it right to the voters, at low costs
    - superficial or less useful information
  - impossible to sift through and process it all.
- Does Uncle Dan factcheck the post before he shares it on Facebook?
  - individuals spreading content that does not face typical journalistic fact checking standards of news





# The Evolution of Politics and New Media

2004	Howard Dean: first campaign to integrate technology as a means of campaigning; utilized campaign website to connect supporters and mobilize them to volunteer; set the standard for the changing media environment
2004	the launch of Facebook
2006	Twitter is born
2008	Barack Obama: first campaign to utilize social media
2012	Obama and Romney campaigns aggressively incorporated social network tools and utilized them in new and innovative ways
2016	Website, on all major social media platforms; Trumpian Twitter; Hillary Clinton turns to Vine
Today	Success of the campaign relies on new and social media.



# Where are the young voters?

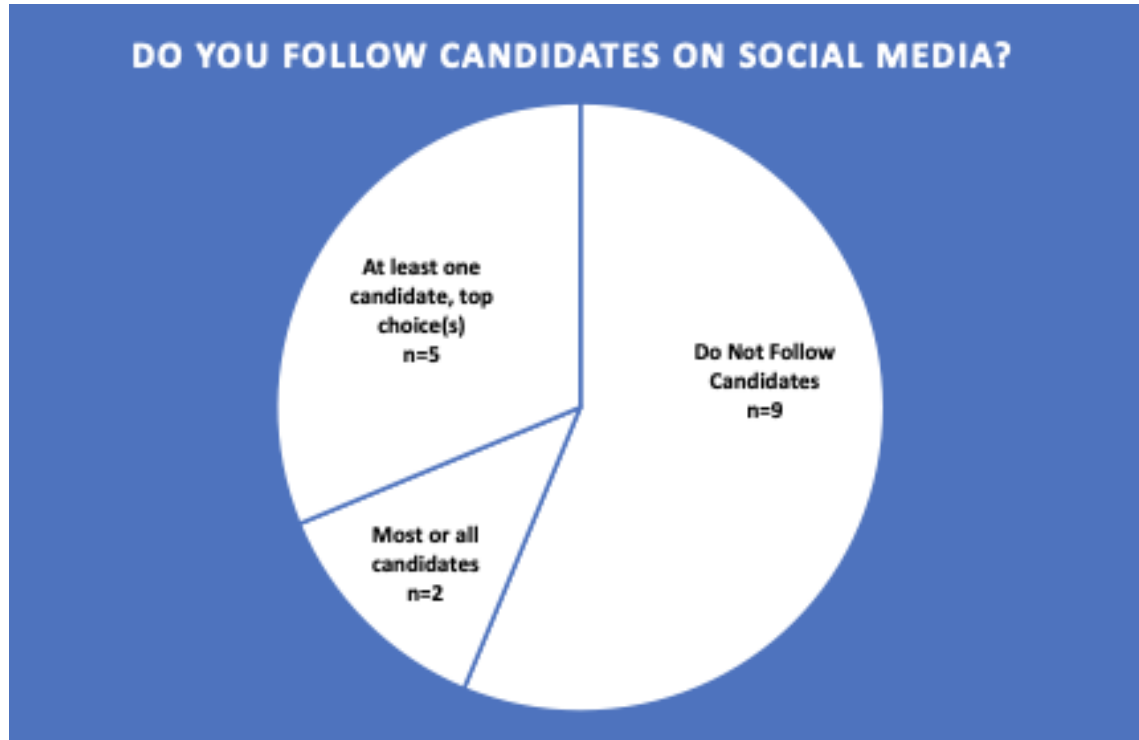


# Where They Are

Information Sources	
social media	15
word of mouth	7
news organizations (app, website or podcast)	6
candidate websites	6
streaming apps (Hulu, HBO, Amazon,etc).	6
candidate visits	5
Podcasts other than news	2

Social Media		
	<i>Organic</i>	<i>Paid</i>
Twitter	9	3
YouTube	0	10
Facebook	5	1
Instagram	4	1

# Where They Are

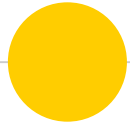




# What do they think?

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- too much Tom Steyer
- influence of organic followers/social circle
  - 'virtual endorsement'
  - imagine if 100 people shared a message with 100 of their friends/followers
- decline in importance campaign websites

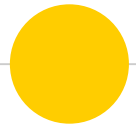


**Tweeting, even the  
candidates do it**



## Just how many tweets?

	<i>Bernie Sanders</i>	<i>Elizabeth Warren</i>	<i>Joe Biden</i>	<i>Pete Buttigieg</i>
TOTAL TWEETS	237	300	107	246



# Messages



# ● Electability

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- newer idea
- candidate “best poised to win” in November
- particularly important in re-election year



# Bernie Sanders

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- issues, issues, issues
  - workers rights/middle class
  - 'the 1%'
  - Medicare for All
  - climate change
- candidate trait
  - long-time activist



# Elizabeth Warren

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- ◎ issues, issues, issues and then more issues
  - corruption
  - Big Structural Change; Dream Big, Fight Hard; She's got a plan for that
  - immigration
  - workers rights
  - women's rights
- ◎ electability
- ◎ candidate trait
  - her dog, Bailey



# Joe Biden

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- Electability first
- 'issues'
  - beating Trump
  - soul of the nation



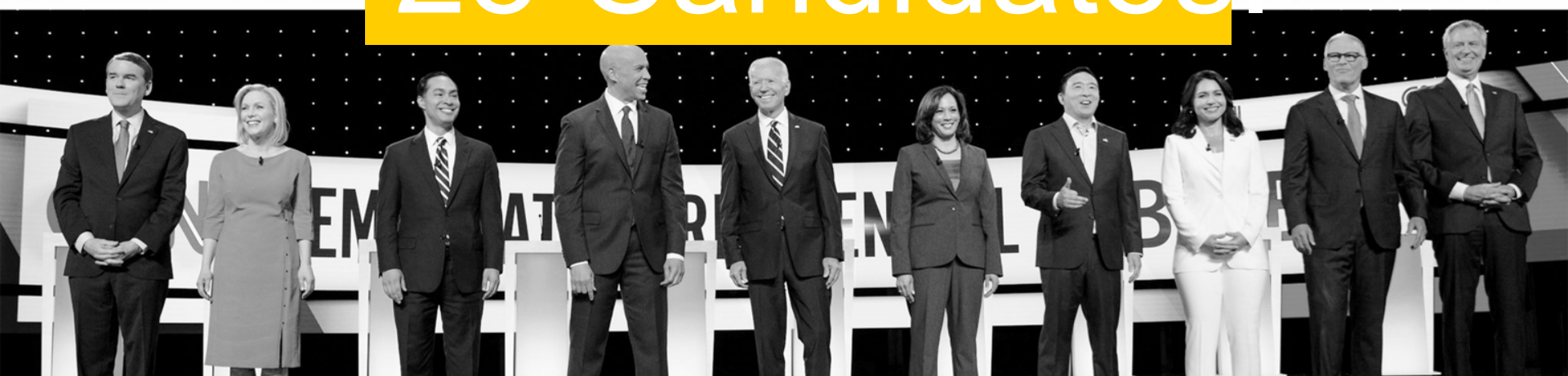
# Pete Buttigieg

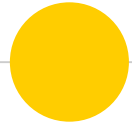
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- Electability first
- Issues
  - Emphasis on campaign specific messaging in connection with issues
    - New Generation; Turn the page in history



# 28 Candidates





# Breaking Through and Being Remembered

What are young voters noticing and remembering?



# Bernie Sanders

	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Candidate Traits</i>	
81% (13)	Medicare for All	democratic socialism	63% (10)
56% (9)	College plans	long-time activist/politician	50% (8)
50% (8)	Climate Change	senator	44% (7)
44% (7)	Worker's Rights/Middle Class	left/more liberal	44% (7)
25% (4)	Women's Rights	ran in 2016	44% (7)
19% (3)	The 1 Percent	independent	44% (7)
		heart attack	25% (4)





# Elizabeth Warren

	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Candidate Traits</i>	
69% (11)	Corruption/Wall Street/Billionaires	senator	56% (9)
63% (10)	plans for education (Preschool-Higher Ed)	law grad/professor	19% (3)
44% (7)	Medicare for all	left/progressive	19% (3)
31% (5)	Campaign specific messages: Dream Big Fight Hard, she's got a plan for that, Big Structural Change, Unity Candidate	Bailey, her dog	19% (3)
25% (4)	climate change	caring	19% (3)
25% (4)	women's rights**	"strong grandma vibes"	13% (2)
25% (4)	LGBTQ+	best woman running	13% (2)



# Joe Biden

	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Candidate Traits</i>	
25% (4)	experience	former VP	100% (16)
19% (3)	public option/expanding Obamacare	moderate/center	50% (8)
19% (3)	foreign policy	expanding on Obama's success	44% (7)
6% (1)	electability/ability to beat Trump**	stutter	25% (4)
		son's relationship with Ukraine	25% (4)
		creepy/touchy	25% (4)
		led Anita Hill hearings	13% (2)



# Pete Buttigieg

	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Candidate Traits</i>	
44% (7)	Medicare for All Who Want it	gay	100% (16)
38% (6)	LGBTQ+ **	mayor	94% (15)
19% (3)	Electability*	South Bend/ Indiana	50% (8)
19% (3)	New Generation	veteran	50% (8)
13% (2)	Veteran Affairs	young	38% (6)
6% (1)	Cheaper College	affluent	31% (5)
		moderate	31% (5)



# Unpredictable Messages





# Unpredictable Messages: Virality

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- phenomena of organic content being “redistributed continuously online and becomes fodder for the news”
- viral moments are impossible to predict and hard to create...
  - ANYTHING can go viral
- Campaigns want to stand out, campaigns want a viral moment that will set their campaign out from the rest
  - manufacturing virality
  - “overwhelming majority of campaign content doesn’t go viral”



# Unpredictable Messages: Virality

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- not all virality is good virality.
- microscope for gaffe-prone politicians
- “campaigns think these viral moments usually help more than they harm, reinforcing the old adage that any publicity is good publicity”
- Democratization of social media→ campaigns cannot control all the messages about their campaign, especially the negative ones that go viral

"I wrote the damn bill"	Bernie Sanders	Positive
Warren vs. Bernie		Negative
If you can find one	Elizabeth Warren	Positive
Warren confronts John Delaney	Elizabeth Warren	Positive
Women win	Elizabeth Warren	Positive
Wine Cave debacle	Elizabeth Warren & Pete Buttigieg	
African American Voters/Race Issues	Pete Buttigieg	Negative



## *Joe Biden*

<i>Campaign Moments</i>	<i>Sentiment</i>
"No malarkey"	Neutral
Stutters/Foot-in-Mouth (3)	Negative
Poor Debate Performance (5)	Negative
Sexual Misconduct claims (5)	Negative
Son's Ukraine conflicts (2)	Negative
Debate Moment: Interaction with Kamala Harris (2)	Negative
Canvassers forced out in the snow	Negative
Buy My Book	Neutral



## Key Findings

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- campaign's strongest citizen supporters
- Progressive vs. moderate
- Joe Biden “wishy-washy” “doesn’t want to step on any toes”

How can campaigns really reach voters, particularly younger voters as they grow to become a larger and larger bloc of the electorate?



The answer, it is  
complicated, difficult  
and unpredictable.



“

## What can we learn?

- take notes from Warren (campaign messages) and Sanders (issue-oriented)
- “every scandal multiplied”
- consistent content to engage strong supporters
  - can candidate messaging overpower negative messages?

# Why does it matter?

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- old tricks don't work
- create, disseminate, evaluate, adapt
- acknowledge failures, learn from successes

# Why does it matter?

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- unprecedented investments by Donald Trump and his campaign on new and social media
- information overload world
- reach the growing voting bloc with positive messages





# Thanks!

*Any **questions** ?*

*Let's chat about it!*