Tweeting to the Top: Twitter Conversation Style and the 2013 Edmonton Civic Election

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Abstract

Politicians are often considered to be communicators, although a background in communications is not necessary for the job. Social tools like Twitter are so new that little research has been done on how politicians use Twitter to communicate during elections. This paper studies how politicians' communication styles, exemplified by their Twitter conversations, relate to their success in elections. Using the mayoral candidates' tweets from the Edmonton 2013 civic election, a relationship is found between tweeting using authentic conversational practices and greater success in the election. However, this relationship is not causal, and one candidate's Twitter activity suggests a reason. A successful Twitter campaign must be run in conjunction with a successful overall campaign in order to find success in an election.

Keywords: authenticity, conversation, election, politicians, social media, Twitter
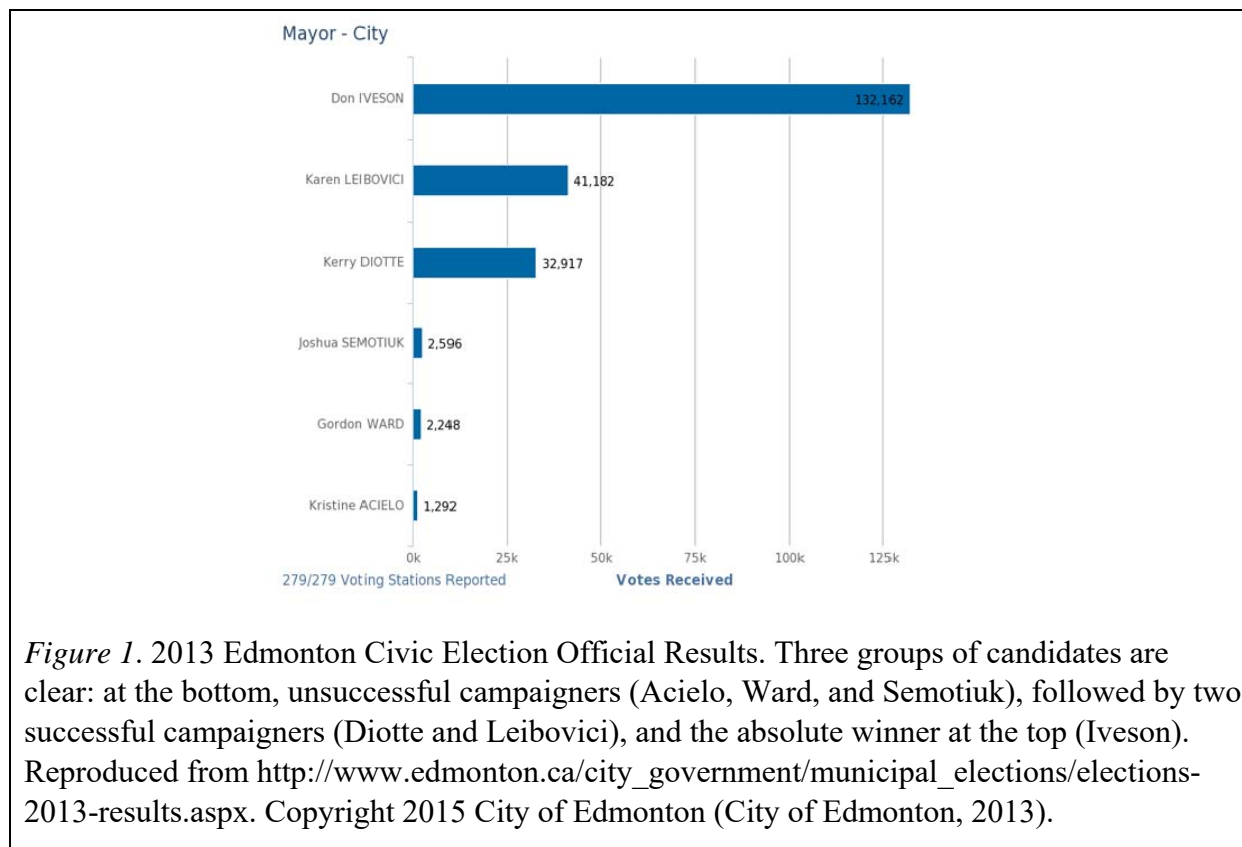
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Introduction and Background

"I don't really use twitter [sic] very much because I still don't really get the point," my sister wrote to me in an email this week (Meghan Dougherty, [personal communication], 2015, July 20). Perhaps she hasn't been listening to my enthusiastic spiels on the merits of Twitter. Her attitude is not uncommon and is perfectly acceptable. I, for instance, don't really get the point of professional wrestling. Her opinion on Twitter hit a nerve, though, because it sums up the behaviours, if not the attitudes, of many politicians, the subject for this paper. In the literature review, I explore several studies showing that tweeting is now a required activity for politicians. However, these studies also show that the level of engagement of the politician (or his or her social media team) determines whether the audience—the electorate—is also engaged, and whether they believe the politician is showing an authentic self.

Twitter is a social networking service used for microblogging; users can submit written statements of up to 140 characters, with the option of including weblinks, photographs, or hashtagged search references. Since its release in 2006, Twitter has grown from an often-mocked platform (Dolfing, 2009, August 5; Will, 2013, February 7) to a respected tool for organizing, communicating, spurring social change, and providing data to social scientists. In fact, Twitter was shown to predict a swine flu outbreak one week before physicians were able to identify the trend (Szomszor, Kostkova, & de Quincey, 2012, p. 25). This evolution from the original use of Twitter as a microblogging platform, a means for users to simply broadcast ideas, to a conversational tool, is the backbone of this study. The results of this research are not predictive; instead, they explore the mechanics behind conversational phenomena by asking whether particular characteristics of Twitter—or Twitter users—relate to particular outcomes. Considering tweets as speech acts, this study uses the 2013 Edmonton civic election as a

cross-sectional example to explore whether a relationship can be established between Twitter

conversation style and a candidate's result in a municipal election, and whether there is evidence

to suggest that tweeting using authentic conversation styles versus basic conversation styles is a

characteristic of a winning engagement strategy for a campaign.

Edmonton's Candidates

Edmonton's 2013 civic election was a historic abnormality. Mayor Stephen Mandel was

Edmonton's first mayor to retire in 24 years. The 24 year gap is significant; the age group 19- to

24-year-olds, or 10.6% of Edmonton's voting population, is a demographic too young to have

experienced a mayor retiring, while also being the average demographic for Twitter use (City of

Edmonton, 2012; Duggan & Brenner, 2013). While six people ran for mayor, three former

councillors were considered frontrunners: Kerry Diotte, Don Iveson, and Karen Leibovici.

Stephen Mandel had been a popular mayor with a vision for Edmonton which included working

with Naheed Nenshi, the mayor of Calgary, Alberta. Together they created a memorandum of

understanding with the provincial government that would see both major cities draft a "big city

charter … to help meet the challenges of growth" (Zickefoose, 2012). Diotte, Iveson, and

Leibovici each had visions of their own for Edmonton, and the public quickly fragmented into

three major camps. While the other three candidates, Joshua Semotiuk, Gordon Ward, and

Kristine Acielo ran campaigns until the day of the election, their total votes netted only 6,136 of

212,397 ballots cast, a meagre 2.89%. In the end, Iveson won with 62.2% support (Figure 1).

The results of the election provide three sub-groups within the candidates: unsuccessful

campaigners, successful campaigners, and an absolute winner. This provides a unique scenario in

which to do content analysis: not only can the content be analysed person-to-person, but broken

down further and compared by group and within groups.

Figure 1. 2013 Edmonton Civic Election Official Results. Three groups of candidates are clear: at the bottom, unsuccessful campaigners (Acielo, Ward, and Semotiuk), followed by two successful campaigners (Diotte and Leibovici), and the absolute winner at the top (Iveson). Reproduced from http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/municipal_elections/elections-2013-results.aspx. Copyright 2015 City of Edmonton (City of Edmonton, 2013).

The mayoral candidate pool from the 2013 Edmonton civic election is a relevant and exciting research sample because of its heavy use of Twitter. To consider what might constitute heavy use of Twitter, I compared the Edmonton mayoral candidates to average Twitter users and five major candidates in the 2012 Queensland state election, studied by Bruns and Highfield (2013). Average Twitter users tweet 0.3 times per day[1]. Using the data collected from Bruns and Highfield's analysis of tweets, these top tweeters averaged 3.7 tweets per day (2013).

The mayoral candidates averaged 1.4 tweets per day[2]. Given the raw numbers, it is clear that the mayoral candidates tweeted much more (4.0 times as often) as the average Twitter user, though only 0.2 times as often as the Queensland candidates. To appropriately compare depth of use to

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[1] Calculations done on data from Statistic Brain Research Institute (2015).

[2] Calculations done on data from City of Edmonton (2012).

the Queensland candidates, the population of the audience must be considered. Population

statistics for the exact years of the relative elections are unavailable, so the closest data has been

chosen for the ratio calculation: in 2013, the population of Queensland was 4.66 million, and in

2012, the population of Edmonton was 817,498 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014; City of

Edmonton, 2012). Queensland's population is 5.7 times that of Edmonton. Applying the

population ratio to the number of tweets sent by politicians, the Queensland politicians would

only tweet an average of 0.7 times per day given a population similar to Edmonton's, or, the

Edmonton politicians would tweet an average of 8.0 times per day: these Edmonton candidates

prioritized Twitter. As outlined in the literature review, such heavy Twitter use certainly led to

the pressures of authenticity, pull of social capital, and potential for engagement of people not

usually interested in civic politics (Frame and Brachotte, 2015; Riedl, Köbler, Goswami and

Krcmar, 2013; Kruikemeier, 2014).

The Nenshi Effect

Calgary, the province of Alberta's other large city, had a similarly disruptive election in

recent memory. In October 2010, Naheed Nenshi won the Calgary civic election in a sweep

dubbed the Purple Revolution. Many pundits credit this to social media. However, according to

those who worked on Nenshi's campaign, it wasn't just social media at work: it was

conversation. Nenshi had his volunteers hold coffee parties in their homes to help spread his

message via word-of-mouth. Volunteers were encouraged to contribute not just their time to the

campaign, but their ideas, too. Funny and personal YouTube videos—ones not based on talking

points—"trumped rival efforts" (Cryderman, 2010, October 23, p. 3). And yes, Twitter, the use

of which Nenshi is famous for, was a major part of his campaign. "Nobody but Nenshi ever

touched his Twitter account" (Cryderman, 2010, October 23, p. 3). Nenshi's campaign was so

successful and unconventional that it had an effect throughout Alberta: Diotte and Iveson were

both noted by the media for their use of Twitter to communicate with their constituents during

council meetings in the 2010–2013 term ("Edmonton councillors," 2010, December 15). For

candidates running in the 2013 Edmonton civic election to dismiss Twitter, as Nenshi's

opponents had, as a "waste [of] time … because the young, heavy online users don't vote" would

have been a dialling down of their already social media-savvy and effective communication

strategies—in short, a mistake (Cryderman, 2010, October 23, p. 3). With Iveson labelled by

some as the "Nenshi of the North,"[3] many Edmontonians wondered whether Edmonton would

have its own Purple Revolution.

Theoretical Context

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory looks at communication acts as they appear in a set place and time.

Interestingly, as sociocultural theory developed in Britain, it matured as predicted by its own

internal logic: adapting and changing as society and culture changed (Kellner, 2001). The British

school added important ideas to sociocultural theory, such as having an active, not passive

audience, and that the audience was able to interpret meaning differently from the projected

meaning (Kellner, 2001). American theorist George Herbert Mead took the idea of audience

further, arguing that when ideas are communicated correctly, it is because the communicator is

able to conceive of him or herself in the role of the other (2007). The onus for understanding,

then, relies on both the communicator and the listener to cooperate in the communication act.

If, as Kellner suggests, youth and subcultures are a potential source of new cultural change,

communication within the existing cultural milieu will only be successful with "the existence of

common interests" (Kellner, 2001, p. 297, Mead, 2007, p. 373). Leadership, Mead espouses, is

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[3] For example, see Warnica (2013, November 25)

developed when one person (a) is more able to consider the attitudes or ways of being of others than another person (b) is (Mead, 2007, p. 373).

A sociocultural analysis of tweets during the 2013 Edmonton Civic Election, then, would take into account both the *time* and *place* of the election, as well as the ability of each candidate to successfully communicate through Twitter, and has a precedent: "[t]he campaign itself must be seen in the wider context of Queensland and Australian politics, of course: the ALP state government in Queensland had been in power since … 1998," which mirrors Edmonton's disruptive election with the retirement of Mandel (Bruns and Highfield, 2013, p. 674). A full understanding of the issues relevant to the constituents of Edmonton in this context would be demonstrated, then, by a reciprocal conversational return on Twitter and a consequential higher rank in the end poll. This is supported by the cross-sectional method I will be using to conduct the research.

Supplemental Ideas

Critical communication theorists like Habermas ask us to approach truth through validity; speech acts are valid and right when they fulfill a norm (Habermas, 2007, p. 448). Phenomenology sees truthful communication as being an authentic engagement in the communication act (Montague, 2012, p. 400). Together, these two ideas from very different theories suggest that people may expect in speech acts a mixture of norm-fulfillment as well as authenticity. Given 21st century norms regarding online conversation, constituents will be looking for authentic speech acts through Twitter as well as through face-to-face interactions; any sociocultural analysis of tweets must consider not only whether the communication was successful, but whether the constituent was satisfied with the response: the crux of basic versus authentic communication.

Literature Review

The topics chosen here—**Twitter as a Communication Platform**, **Political Use of Twitter**, **Social Capital**, and **The New Media Difference**—define and map a substantive, focused selection of literature related to the research problem: "Considering tweets as speech acts, what relationship can be established between mayoral candidates' communication styles, exemplified by their Twitter conversations in the 2013 Edmonton civic election, and their standing post-election?" The literature provides a clear background for my research, emphasizing the theory of presentation of self and how it must be adapted to authentic online communications. Gaps in the literature present themselves as opportunities for further research that neatly fall into the purview of my study: authentic conversational approaches have been verified on Twitter, but no study has been done on the effectiveness of chosen approaches. Social media has been defined as "authentic" by users, but a follow-up on what that means and whether it has an actual effect has yet to be conducted; and where some of the processes of authentic political conversation have been studied and defined, their efficacy has not been.

The first topic reports on research that relates dialogic elements from face-to-face interactions to online situations. It investigates how dialogue and conversation work on Twitter, and the problem of whether true communication can happen in an online world. The literature grouped in the second topic builds on the theoretical and empirical conclusions of the literature in the first section: how politicians use Twitter is reliant on an understanding of the mechanics of conversation. Broken down into three subtopics, it explores how Twitter can mobilise people, how politicians have to deal with the presentation of self, and how they can use Twitter to address political authenticity. Topic three developed as a separate category as my reading of the literature progressed. It became clear that where politics were concerned, conversation was deeply embedded in social capital and a review of literature on online social capital would be

required for a complete understanding of my research problem. Leading directly to the research

problem is literature on the difference new media (mass communications using digital

technology) makes in political communications: it explores the history of political use of new

media and how it is being used today.

Twitter as a Communication Platform

"In the twenty-first century, the proliferation of electronic social media portals, such as

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn … are new, powerful communication tools capable

of influencing users' opinions in the realms of politics and policy" (Auer, 2011, p. 709). Twitter

has been praised in recent years as a means of communicating social change (as in the countries

of Moldova and Iran) and humanitarian efforts (in Haiti) (Auer, 2011). However, the journey

from Twitter's original designation as microblog to its now common use as communication

platform has been gruelling. In 2010, "most tweeters follow the notion of promotion by talking

about themselves, a behaviour that may fit well within norms of political communication"

(Jackson & Lilleker, 2010, p. 87). For example, the two tweets sent out by Canadian Prime

Minister Stephen Harper's Twitter account during the month of May 2010, were tweets about

what he did (Harper, 2010, May 2; 2010, May 17). That same year, boyd, Golder and Lotan

began researching how communication is possible on Twitter; I'll go into greater depth on their

research shortly.

According to Montague's research, completed using open-ended qualitative individual

interviews, conversation, for example, occurs via an inviting-accepting cycle (2012). By sending

a message via social media, one is sending an invitation. By replying, one is accepting the

invitation and sending a new invitation. The conversation does not exist face-to-face and

continues until one participant stops answering: refusing an invitation (2012). Using Twitter is

not as simple as just sending messages and creating a revolving door of dialogic opportunity. Limitations on the conversational value of a tweet sent out into the ether are described in other literature, such as that of Ferguson et al. and Montgomery. They describe the impression metric, which measures how many times a tweet may be seen: and is complicated due to the networking nature of Twitter and its algorithms for who views what (2014; 2001)[4]. Hashtagged messages also cannot be taken as conversations without follow-up from another user (Bruns, 2012, pp. 1325–1326). Bruns also adds an important caveat: @ mentions which deliberately include a popular hashtag may have been tweeted not for a conversational purpose, but merely for visibility: "to be engaged in a public performance of conversation" (2012, p. 1346). A tweet sent out for visibility only is defined in my study as a broadcast. Although Twitter's platform allows for the possibility of any message being the invitation to a conversation, the content of the message is not necessarily an invitation to converse.

Another limitation to the ability of a tweet to be by itself an invitation to converse is that any politician entering the Twittersphere will face the same attitudes he or she faced in the real world, such as a presumption by the electorate that politicians "usually have something to hide and so do not spontaneously give straight answers to questions" (Montgomery, 2001, p. 450). Montgomery continues to explain that politicians are expected to have moral and ideological convictions that they will truthfully express if asked, and, politicians tend to be more accountable for their words than their actions (2001, p. 450).

Another paper addresses the issues of Montague's and Montgomery's studies by defining political communications as a "problem" (2012; 2001). Gaber lists several factors that make up

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[4] For example, when you tweet "@username" someone, that person will see it, and it is possible that so will all the people who read their feed who are subscribed to both of you. However, if the "@username" has a character before it (most users insert a period), then anyone who reads that user's stream will see it.

the problem of political communications. They can be reduced to a tension between the

electorate wanting honest and accountable politicians, and politicians responding to that want by

providing communications "produced largely to achieve a positive impact rather than public

enlightenment" (2007, p. 221). Gaber's analysis indicates that this creates two dangerous

potential effects: one, that politicians will be concerned only with delivering vast amounts of

unimportant, pro-them information, and two, once this breaks down, trust in politicians and the

democratic system falls apart.

The research conducted by boyd, Golder and Lotan contrasts with the generally

prevailing view that conversation on social media is difficult. They note that Twitter's capacity

for dispersing conversation to all actors in a network gives the sense of being surrounded by

conversation, even if one is not an active contributor (2010). Furthermore, as boyd, Golder, and

Lotan, as well as Shi, Rui, and Whinston's research both illustrate, retweeting acts as a method

of sharing information and participating in conversation, thereby broadcasting tweets to a new

audience as well as engaging with others (2010; 2014). Although the studies use different

methodologies (boyd, Golder and Lotan use content analysis, while Shi, Rui, and Whinston use a

quantitative, statistical method), both indicate that retweeting is a structured process. "The varied

approaches users take in addressing constraints reveal what they value in specific messages and

in Twitter as a conversational environment" (boyd, Golder and Lotan, 2010, p. 1666). Left out,

however, is any study of the effect of chosen conversational approaches.

Meanwhile, Carruthers and Ballsun-Stanton identify the public and open nature of

Twitter, comparing it to an agora (2010, p. 166). They argue that it is a medium for discourse,

and point out that businesses and marketers are "starting to see Twitter as an important

communications platform that enables them to speak directly with their consumers and other

stakeholders" (2010, p. 167). Combined with that, Chang's analysis determines that Twitter creates a public network for ordinary people, too, giving them a global reach (2011). These two ideas combined lead to a logical conclusion: big people (like corporations, celebrities, and politicians) and little people (regular folk) can talk to each other on Twitter. "Some people connect to celebrities and bands they do not know personally, or to people they simply find cool" (Utz, 2009, p. 222). And, as Lee and Jang investigated in their study on affiliative tendency, celebrities' social network-based communication has a much higher perceived authenticity than their traditional communication (2011).

Twitter is valuable as a communication platform, but the user must actively engage in dialogue in order to take his or her tweets beyond mere broadcasts. Politicians, especially, can take advantage of Twitter's communicative properties to increase conversation, but they must be wary of falling into the trap of self-glamorization. Used well, Twitter can be helpful for politicians: those who tweet authentically can reach their constituents and engage with them on a personal level.

Political Use of Twitter
Much of the literature on the political use of Twitter emphasises the same two themes: the mobilising effect of Twitter, or, how Twitter motivates people to become involved in politics; and, how Twitter can be used (or abused) in the name of political authenticity. Before developing the notion of political authenticity, I briefly discuss Goffman's idea of the presentation of self and how Twitter can be used to break down the edifices of presentation that contribute to politics' stodgy and inauthentic reputation.

Subtopic 1—Twitter's mobilising effect. Kruikemeier, in her mixed methods study, discovered a significant mobilising effect inherent in new media (2014). The information is

flexible, it is easy for people to get involved, and the cost of participation is low, so citizens embrace the opportunity to do so. In fact, according to Gibson and Cantijoch in their analysis of the UK's 2010 general election, there is now a group of voters who only participate in the online political ecosystem (2011, October 26). Bruns and Highfield postulate that the growth of social media has the potential to increase interactions between citizens and politicians, thereby raising the level of participation in public debate (2013).

A Dutch study set out to determine whether the Internet can be empirically shown to increase participation in politics by combining two experiments, one using surveys about a fabricated political website, and the second, a laboratory experiment where participants interacted with real political websites (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenthart, & de Vreese, 2013). The study showed that citizens who visit a politician's website "feel more politically involved than citizens who visit a website focused on a political party" (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenthart, & de Vreese, 2013, p. 59). In fact, websites with interactive features also showed a positive effect, demonstrating that "interactive, personalized online communication has a positive effect on citizens' … feelings of closeness to politics," leading the authors to suggest that an effective strategy for mobilising voters would be to combine the features of being online and interactivity (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenthart, & de Vreese, 2013, p. 60). While Twitter was originally designed as a broadcasting platform, it has since been refurbished, with the addition of the retweet and hashtag features, into an online, interactive program. "Research into the motives of users following politicians on Twitter indicates that Twitter serves as a channel for … interacting with political elites, as well as a platform for expressing political convictions" (Jungherr, 2014, p. 242).

Gibson and Cantijoch note that Internet users are a growing demographic, especially among young people (2011, October 26). Their survey indicates that even older people are beginning to use the Internet every day for news; in the UK, the Internet's "electoral relevance" may lose minority status by 2015[5] (2011, October 26, para. 17). Dumitrica finds that young social media users are especially confident in their experience and ability to determine the validity and authenticity of posts. However, among these young users, there is an assumption about social media use: out of her 86 respondents, only one mentioned the idea that not everyone uses social media (2014).

Subtopic 2—Presentation of self. One of the potential difficulties when using Twitter effectively as a communication platform is the lack of the complete set of social structures necessary for the presentation of self which is the idea that when one is in the presence of others, a person will set up a "front" in order to filter the information acquired by those others (Goffman, 1956). This front is comprised of and dependent on two things: the setting and the personal front (or clothing, gender, mannerisms, and so on) of the speaker (Goffman, 1956, p. 14). A politician must maintain a professional personal front that includes his or her choice of dress, manner of speech, and alignment to political principles. The presentation of self is a necessity for politicians. The negative effects of a politician's dropping a personal front are clearly evidenced by Toronto Mayor Rob Ford during his tenure from 2010–2014. He was ridiculed expansively across Canada and became known internationally for his impolitic behaviour (Tucker, 2013, November 15). He stepped down from the 2014 mayoral race due to a cancerous tumour, but according to the most recent poll before his departure, he was in a distant

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[5] Although the UK held their general election on May 7, 2015, at the time of this writing initial analysis only indicates that all parties were highly involved in Internet campaigning. Without academic study, the simple numbers remain "a highly inaccurate picture" (Oxford Internet Institute, 2015).

second place to John Tory, who would later win (Wolfe, 2014). Rob Ford is currently sitting on city council in Toronto and sold the tie he wore when he confessed to smoking crack cocaine on eBay—literally and symbolically freeing himself of one of the aspects of the personal front that most politicians require to do their jobs (Mangione, 2015, April 21).

Communicating via the Internet is communicating with a very different kind of personal front from the one most politicians are used to: they do not have access to a chosen wardrobe, facial expression, selection of people around them, and so on.
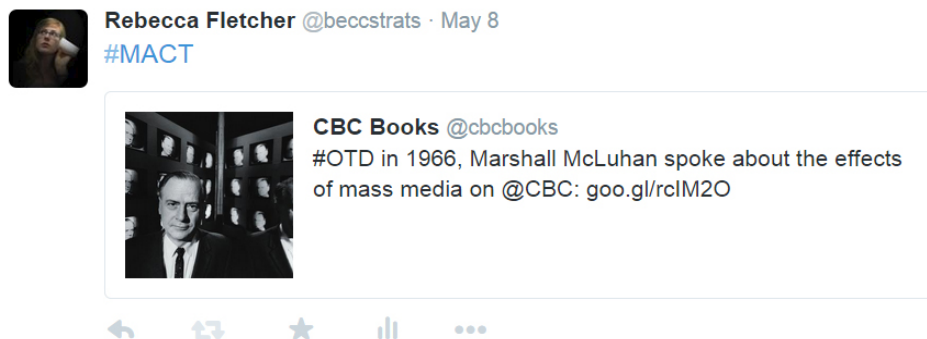
> [C]andidates using Twitter also need to adapt themselves to this new personal, informal communication landscape. When we talk about *personal style* on Twitter, we are referring to a new political campaigning model that is emerging. … through the *personal-style campaign* using social networks, candidates can strategically share any comment including those unrelated to politics (Medina & Muñoz, 2014, p. 90).

Some scholars, such as Coleman and Moss, argue this is fortunate, suggesting that "politicians as a group suffer from a pervasive failure to inspire confidence in their sincerity and trustworthiness" (2008, p. 9) and Gibson, who argues that the media (acting as the setting half of the personal front) "serve to deepen the culture of contempt towards politicians in the long run, … as the 'default' message transmitted to the public is that politicians are withholding the truth from you, the listener/viewer" (2009, p. 290). Interestingly, rather than increasing a sense of distance between the listener/viewer and the politician (as may be expected when we are not communicating face-to-face), Twitter seems to break down the structures that lead to the perception of a veneer associated with Goffman's front. The setting is now online, and the personal front is composed of only an avatar, a 160-character biography, and a homepage background. Stripped down in this manner, Twitter provides a platform whereby politicians can
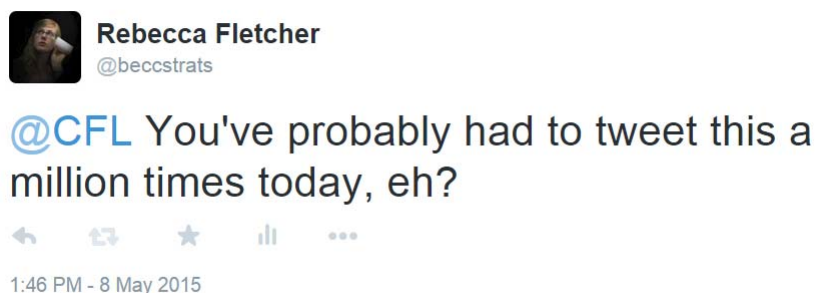
be held accountable only for what they say, not for the people they are with, or the tie they are

wearing. Instead of what may be perceived as an elaborate ruse, a simple narrative can be

constructed (Carruthers & Ballsun-Stanton, 2010, p. 161). Twitter creates a space wherein

transparency and authenticity can flourish—but as has been learned from examples like Ford—

politicians must remember that they are still politicians, separate from the public with whom they

seek to establish authentic relationships.

      Subtopic 3—Political authenticity on Twitter. While Twitter provides the opportunity

for authenticity and transparency, it is important to note that it does not cause transparency and

authenticity. In the case of politics on Twitter, we may deconstruct Marshall McLuhan's famous

contention that the medium is the message (McLuhan, 2011). Twitter, the medium, does not

indicate that the message is a short burst of possibly interesting news; furthermore, the message

does not rely on the medium of Twitter to exist. There are other microblogging services,

including Instagram and Snapchat, which could carry the same message. A single tweet may be

any of a variety of communicative structures, from a simple broadcast to part of an authentic

conversation. In Figure 2, this is illustrated with two tweets, one of which is a retweet with

commentary, and one of which is part of a conversation. However, it is impossible to tell by

looking at these tweets by themselves what is happening. Without intent, Twitter is not a

guarantor of authenticity.

Tweet 1 (Fletcher, 2015, May 8a).

Rebecca Fletcher @beccstrats · May 8
#MACT

CBC Books @cbcbooks
#OTD in 1966, Marshall McLuhan spoke about the effects
of mass media on @CBC: goo.gl/rcIM2O

Tweet 2 (Fletcher, 2015, May 8b).

Rebecca Fletcher
@beccstrats

@CFL You've probably had to tweet this a
million times today, eh?

1:46 PM - 8 May 2015

Figure 2. The medium is not necessarily the message. Tweet 1 is retweet with a comment.
Tweet 2 is a single tweet from a conversation about the naming convention of the Grey Cup.
Tweet 2 demonstrates that an out-of-context message cannot necessarily be described or
understood by the medium in which it is communicated.

In some cases, as "contemporary politics is increasingly celebritised both in terms of how

politicians are folded into specific celebrity frames in the news media and in the way politicians

'perform' their own professional and private identities through frequent use of social media"

Twitter can be used by politicians to "showcase images of their successful and glamorous lives"

(Ekman & Widholm, 2014, p. 518). To empirically demonstrate the converse of this, Frame and

Brachotte surveyed French politicians to determine how they see, use, and interpret the logic of

Twitter (2015, p. 2). Rather than using Twitter as a celebritising platform, these politicians

tended to see it as a platform for "monitoring, dissemination, [and] interaction … with

institutionally, socially, or self-imposed limits to its use" (2014, p. 8). The tweets reflect the

individual politician. While it is easy to imagine that some politicians might, in fact, use Twitter

to "perform," the literature suggests that it is far more likely that they will use it to communicate

authentically, by critically assessing how they can use it to reach their constituents in a

meaningful way.

Concerning the audience, Dumitrica's study found that participants had a mental idea of

an "authentic" politician. Her results indicate that, for her research population, social media is a

guarantor of sincerity. Sincerity, measured here, is "the result of an exchange between the parties

involved in communication" (Dumitrica, 2014, p. 63). Social media, then, is where political

authenticity happens and was what promised its integrity. This research was conducted via a

qualitative thematic analysis of undergraduate essays; although it tells us what people think

about social media, it does not show how they came to that conclusion nor whether it is a valid

one.

To delve into the question of why humans tend to trust social media, Osatuyi created a

five-question research project (2013). Using an online survey, he gathered data on social

networking, microblogs, wikis, forums, and blogs, to create a big-picture view of perceived

authentic communication on the web. He concludes, "[t]he exploratory analysis conducted in this

study revealed that information producers use different cues to indicate credibility of information

they share on different social media sites," and that there is a "difference in the use of social

media technologies to share information due to the type of information shared, suggest[ing] that

there are other contextual factors that contribute to the decision to share information with social

technologies" (2013, p. 2629). Thus, users have developed mental systems for content sharing

that allows them to know what content is reliable or not based on where it is shared and the content of the post.

Medina and Muñoz conclude their paper with a call to action regarding political authenticity on Twitter to which my research endeavours to respond:

> Although more empirical studies are needed on the effectiveness of Twitter use on elections results and its relationship with the traditional offline campaign strategy, a greater use of participatory communication and open dialogue made available by Twitter can certainly encourage the achievement of a modern campaign style that can bring people together at the same time as offering a new tool for message positioning (2014, p. 102).

Caveats with using Twitter in politics. One potential complication in political use of Twitter, identified by Kruikemeier, is that communication on Twitter can easily become more about the politician's private life than it is about political issues (2014). Bruns and Highfield discuss the possibility of politicians avoiding Twitter in order to avoid embarrassing themselves (2013). Those who do use Twitter find themselves faced with other serious problems, such as: politicians may be cast as "customer relations" specialists; the public's relationship with politicians may be miscast as intimate and individualized; the immediacy of the Twitter exchange may give the citizen a false sense of empowerment; and, these expectations may filter private people from entering into politics (Dumitrica, 2014, p. 67).

Twitter must be used as a communication platform, not just a broadcast medium. In Medina and Muñoz's study of campaign tweets in the 2011 Spanish general election, Twitter was mainly used as a "short-term propaganda device" (2014, p. 101). They found that

"the opportunity Twitter presented for greater specificity, proximity, empathy, and humanization was overlooked, and these goals remained forgotten aspects in the traditional mediated campaigns" (2014, p. 102). Dumitrica's research indicates that politicians can use new media to demonstrate they understand citizens and are only "one click away" (2014, p. 62).

The limitations on this, Margaretten and Gaber found in their analysis of Scottish MPs from 2008–2010, are that politicians who have tweeted fewer than 500 times have not developed a rapport with their followers yet. These politicians use Twitter as an extension of old media (television, radio, print). Twitter is only effective if it is used as a new medium; simply broadcasting does not "address the larger social problem of mistrust or civic engagement" which creates "an apparent rapport … unlikely to be achieved by traditional means of political communication" (2014, pp. 345–346). Margaretten and Gaber's results parallel the deconstruction of McLuhan's adage: "political communication is only effective if the content, rather than the form of the communication takes on new forms, not if the old forms are just conducted faster" (2014, p. 346). Margaretten and Gaber used a computer to code the tweets of Scottish MPs, analysing the number of hashtags, mentions, retweets, URLs and @ signs used during a given period (2014. p. 337). They found evidence of authentic conversation and identified some of the mechanisms behind it, but my study takes this further and identifies the most effective forms of authentic political communication used on Twitter.

One final caveat important to my study is, as stated by one of Dumitrica's participants, not everyone uses or has access to social media (2014). Young people are more likely to use social media, with Twitter being especially appealing to people in the 18–29 age group (Duggan & Brenner, 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, younger politicians are more likely to adopt it as a strategy (Peterson, 2012).

Social Capital

Social capital is used and measured differently in traditional media and in new media. Park's study, which used an emailed questionnaire method, determined that traditional opinion leaders tend to have higher socio-economic status, more "gregariousness," more social contacts, and more exposure to news media. On Twitter, opinion leaders (those high in social capital) swap socio-economic status for expertise; networking for chatter; social contacts for followers; and news media for dissemination of information (Park, 2013). Opinion leaders are integral to getting non-users onto Twitter (2013, p. 1646). Hofer and Aubert's research findings agree: the use of Twitter indicates better online bridging capital (2013).

Ye, Fang, He, and Hsieh reached similar conclusions in their study, though they remarked that their data collection using TwitterHolic and Google used cross-sectional data, providing a snapshot in time of the phenomenon, prompting the need for further research. Their empirical research, achieved by comparing Twitter networking results of celebrities to real-life Google results, determined that online social networks are often much larger than offline social networks (2012). On Twitter, in particular, popularity can be counted by the number of people who follow a particular user: this can be considered a person's base social capital (2012). Ye, Fang, He, and Hsieh also concluded that while frequent updating and providing useful content is "positively associated with the user's social capital in the Twitter world," a person's offline social capital can also be transferred online into Twitter (2012, p. 150). More evidence to support this comes from Hong and Nadler's study which counted and coded tweets from the 2012 United States presidential candidates, and compared that data to mentions in traditional media. They found that for an average 10% increase in traditional media mentions, the candidate gained 4–6% in Twitter mentions (2012, p. 459). My research takes this a step further and applies the online social capital to the real-life metric of rank in the final election results.

Riedl, Köbler, Goswami and Krcmar's research demonstrated evidence that social awareness and presence are enhanced when Twitter messages are exchanged, influencing social connectedness, which in turn is an indicator for social capital (2013). By first collecting Twitter network information from anonymized Twitter users, they coded tweets to determine message content and investigated usage behaviour by analyzing the frequency of Twitter use in users' last 200 tweets. They determine that a large social network leads to increased feelings of connectedness, and it's not just frequent usage, but the motivation for the usage of Twitter that leads to connectedness and a growth of social capital (2013).

The New Media Difference

Before Twitter was invented in 2006, politicians were already attempting to use new media to connect with voters. The transition from traditional media to online media to social media, especially Twitter, is traced by studies on visionary politicians who actively sought the best ways to communicate with their constituents. The first forays into new media were campaign websites and blog posts.

Subtopic 1—Blogging. Online media, like online social capital, is different from traditional media. Kruikemeier defines this difference as being "one-way communication" (2014, p. 132). Unlike offline communication, it's possible to communicate using new media without immediately receiving a message back. Early work by Gibson demonstrated that online tools do create benefits, with the caveat that the content needs to be relevant (2009, p. 290). Political websites were the first cyber-campaign tools used by politicians, and D'Alessio completed a comprehensive study of the sites used in the 1996 US General election. He found that having a website increases a politician's votes by about 9,300 (D'Alessio, 1997, p. 499). Gibson and McAllister ran a similar study using data from the 2004 Australian Candidate and Election

studies, and determined that, as of 2004, having a website provided a moderate 2% boost to a

candidate's support, "[meaning] that almost one in two of those visiting the website were then

persuaded to vote for the candidate" (2006, p. 256). Gibson's 2012 work maintains this trend:

"net of a range of other factors such as resources, party support and mainstream media exposure,

a web campaign site is consistently and significantly linked to higher electoral support levels"

(2012, p. 80).

Coleman and Moss used immanent critique to analyse blogs by European politicians

(2008). While researching blogging behaviour as a precursor for their study, they identify

Tom Watson as the first British MP to set up a blog. They quote him as saying that blog content

"has to come from the heart" and "you've got to be frank" (Coleman & Moss, 2008, p. 8).

Their research indicates that because of the "profound disconnection" between politicians and

the electorate, political messages fail when their "tone, style, and commitment are distrusted by

the message receivers" (2008, p. 19). Blogging, then, is a way to communicate naturally and to

present the possibility of dialogue with readers (2008).

Coleman's previous study found that blogging as a communication tactic is insufficient:

the public's default position, prior to the dawn of the social media age, was "non-participation"

and a propensity to complain about politicians not listening to them (Coleman, 2005, p. 272).

Blogging, then, to be used effectively, cannot only be about communication outwards and the

possibility of dialogue, but must also create actual conversations between the electorate and the

politician. According to Ferguson and Griffiths, blogging inspired the media far more than it did

the general population (2006, p. 366). They found that even if people visit a blog, they will not

return unless it contains content that engages the reader as an active participant (2006, p. 370).

When London mayor, Boris Johnson, used his blog to host a debate, the blog received 729

comments "from people thankful of an opportunity to get involved" (2006, p. 370). The back-and-forth exchange in the comments, though not nearly as elegant as Twitter, was an important foreshadowing to how microblogging works, compared to blogging, where "bloggers have congregated around entrenched and static views, rarely stepping into a deliberative environment where their views are exposed to experiences, ideas or information that differ from those they have generated themselves" (Ferguson & Griffiths, 2006, p. 370).

  Subtopic 2—Microblogging. Kruikemeier also points out that two major communication styles used by politicians are interactive ("reacting on comments and posting tweets") and personal ("exchang[ing] information about their private lives and personal emotions") (2014, p. 131). Twitter, in contrast to offline communication, is a global conversation, in real time, combining the private and the public, according to research by Margaretten and Gaber (2014). Gibson found that Web 2.0 technologies acted as a "serious challenge, if not an antidote, to current anti-politics woes" (2009, p. 291). Such a renewal in interest, paired with "citizen campaigning," has the potential to create, "if engaged in extensively and consistently enough" a sense of connection between voters and candidates (Gibson, 2009, p. 294).

  Twitter is also useful for immediate communication: it "provides a platform on which discussions on various topics can be detected sooner than other standard information channels" (Rill, Reinel, Scheidt, & Zicari, 2014, p. 24). Because of this, conversations can be started as events unfold. Shrewd politicians can use this to start and direct conversations.

Summary of the Literature

The literature has several implications for how politicians can authentically communicate through Twitter. If politicians use Twitter too much, they run the danger of oversaturating the electorate with information, revealing too much information, or burning themselves out. The literature indicates that despite Twitter's potential for genuine conversation, it is extremely easy *not* to have genuine conversation on Twitter. The use of Twitter, a new medium, opens possibilities for engaging citizens who might not otherwise bother with political discussion, and may spur them to action. Furthermore, social capital gained offline and online may be interchangeable, especially when a user is new to Twitter.

With the exception of Gaber and Montgomery, who wrote before Twitter existed, the studies discussed in the literature review all have one central problem: Twitter was only released in 2006 and popularized in 2008. As Gibson and Cantijoch point out, even in 2010 in the UK, Twitter only held a small share of new media users' attention. Because of this, almost every study is new. While some studies build on prior research, all the literature reviewed here breaks new ground. Empirical research is possible and useful, as demonstrated by Bruns and Highfield:

> [We distinguished] three groups of participants amongst the 8,973 unique contributors to #qldvotes whom we observed over the course of February and March 2012: the least active 90 per cent of participants, the next 9 per cent of highly active users, and a final 1 per cent of most active contributors (2013, p. 685).

Much more research is needed, to verify the claims made by the literature presented here, to verify the need for further research, and to determine the direction in which the research should progress.

My research will take a first step in that direction. Where Dumitrica qualitatively measured respondents' reactions to a mayor's authenticity on Twitter, my research will quantitatively, by totalling conversational tweets, and qualitatively, by coding them, determine the conversational output of mayoral candidates. Where the literature has considered "conversation," "authenticity," and "social capital" as concepts whose existence must be verified or classified, my research will be the first to begin defining and quantifying the types of tweets that actually construct these ideas.

Methodology

The research is focussed around a central research problem and broken down into smaller questions in order to fully explore Twitter conversation in context of the 2013 Edmonton civic election. A relationship will be explored between the conversational styles of the mayoral candidates in order to explore whether conversational style in tweets may be an indicator of rank in an election (a measurable unit of social capital) by exploring the problem statement, "considering tweets as speech acts, what relationship can be established between mayoral candidates' communication styles, exemplified by their Twitter conversations in the 2013 Edmonton civic election, and their standing post-election?" After describing my research questions and hypotheses, I explain how I chose a cross-sectional research design and concept-driven coding to work with the data, and I explain the coding frame. The subjects of my study, the mayoral candidates from Edmonton's 2013 civic election, are listed, and their unique position as non-participatory contributors is explained. Finally, the choice of Edmonton in 2013 for the setting—an interesting political event—is elucidated before I explain my data gathering method, my coding procedures, and how I explored the candidates' Twitter engagement levels.

Research Questions

The following questions are explored by this study:

1. Can a relationship be established between Twitter conversation style and a candidate's result in a municipal election? Specifically, is there evidence to suggest that tweeting using authentic conversation styles versus basic conversation styles is a characteristic of a winning engagement strategy for a campaign?

2. Is there evidence to suggest that a particular conversation style encourages more engagement among Twitter users than others?

Research Design

Design. This study will be conducted according to a cross-sectional research design. Cross-sectional studies are described as studies where "data is collected at one point in time" (Merrigan, Huston, & Johnston, 2012, p. 76). Despite my data's spanning approximately three months, that time period can be considered as one focal point: the Edmonton 2013 civic election campaign period. The cross-sectional design will allow me to collect a "'snapshot' view of the phenomenon" (Merrigan, Huston, & Johnston, 2012, p. 108). Whereas a longitudinal method, where data is collected for the same set of participants periodically during a given chronological set, is often chosen when data spans a specified timeframe, it was rejected here because all three months' worth of data are required to answer the research question. Sampling tweets at different points within this time period would not provide sufficient data. A case study was rejected although the campaign is technically a case: my research question is very specific, whereas case studies seek a holistic understanding (Merrigan, Huston, & Johnston, 2012, p. 144). I employ a mixed-methods approach, first, sorting the data using coding, then analysing the results using an explanatory strategy, "the goal [of which] is to elucidate the processes at work in one case, or a

small number of cases, using in-depth intensive analysis and a narrative presentation of the

argument" (Given, 2008, p. 324). This research will stand as a starting point and reference for

other research as well as for users of social media, politicians in particular. Then, a tweet

analyser called twitonomy[6] is used to compare metrics of influence across Twitter.

The coding frame. The coding frame, a "structure … through which you view your

material" chosen here is based on a deductive qualitative analysis model (Schreier, 2012, p. 63).

As guided by the identified gaps in the literature, the coding frame is designed to test authentic

communication via conversation on Twitter. The conversational (using Montague's inviting-

accepting cycle definition (2012)) prowess of Twitter has been proven by multiple studies, from

boyd, Golder and Lotan (2010) and Shi, Rui, and Whinston (2014) who studied how retweets

create conversation, to Riedl, Köbler, Goswami and Krcmar's study on how Twitter creates

feelings of connectedness between users (2013). The term *authentic communication* is used to

describe messages that the reader connects with and trusts. Rather than showboating, as Ekman

and Widholm describe, Twitter can be used to reach out to people, particularly in politics (2014;

Frame & Brachotte, 2015). However, politicians may neglect Twitter's humanizing powers

(Medina & Muñoz 2014).

These studies suggested a sorting category for the tweets in my dataset. Given that all

tweets may prompt conversation, it made sense to sort the tweets into authentically

conversational and basically conversational. The tweets that reach out and connect with people

will go into one category, and the tweets that may or may not prompt conversation form the

other. The selection of codes for the subset were developed partly inductively and partly

deductively, a concept-driven coding frame: entirely inductive "coding frames are rare, simply

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[6] twitonomy is branded as spelled without any capitalization.

because [the] research question already specifies certain dimensions" and "deductive categories

emerge directly from what you already know" (Schreier, 2012, p. 87, 90). The code *anomalies*

evolved inductively.

Definitions. This paper uses the following definitions:

- @ mention—tweet with a person's Twitter username included; "mechanism for addressing their public tweets specifically at particular users" (Bruns, 2012, p. 1324).

- Authentically conversational—a category used to define tweets that encourage a connection with the reader by containing interactive elements or by showing an interaction by the author (an inductive categorization process, based on the content and structure of the tweet only, and not its context)

- Basically conversational—a category used to define tweets that may or may not invite conversation, but do not encourage a direct connection with the reader and do not show interaction (an inductive categorization process, based on the content and structure of the tweet only, and not its context)

- Broadcast tweets—tweets directed to a broad audience; considered to be basically conversational. Used as a code.

- Hashtag—"a hashtag '#' denotes a topic … and is an invitation to followers to follow that topic and read the tweets discussing it" (Margaretten & Gaber, 2014, p. 334). Adding a hashtag to a tweet makes the hashtagged term searchable.

- Policy—a code for tweets informed by Medina and Muñoz's research, where "the meta-campaign became by far their priority issue in both cases" (2014, p. 101). A policy tweet is restricted to something stated as part of the candidate's official policy or campaign materials, including links to their campaign website, blogs, or videos.

- Retweet—a reposted or forwarded message on Twitter; automated or manual. Manual retweets are prefaced by the abbreviation "RT" when content is not changed. Used as a code.

- Tweet—any message posted on Twitter.

Validity and reliability. Codes must be mutually exclusive to be valid. In order to ensure

that a tweet does not fall into two subcategories, the distinction between the sorting categories of

authentic and basic conversation must be clear. Otherwise, a tweet could be tagged as a

broadcast tweet and as a reply as original content. Without the line between authentic and basic,

there is nothing preventing a reply to one person also being valid (and potentially authentic) for a wide audience. Without the context of the tweets (whether they are replies, the beginnings of conversations, or the ends of them), this difficulty was overcome by assigning certain attributes to authentically conversational and basically conversational tweets. Authentically conversational tweets, for example, contain interactive elements or show interaction by the user. A broadcast, then, would not be sent "@" someone. However, if a tweet is sent "@" many people, although it contains interactive components, it may be coded as a basically conversational broadcast tweet. In these cases, the @ users tagged are used as labels, not as invitations to converse.

Figure 3: Screencap of a tweet showing an @ mention used as a label rather than as a direct invitation to converse (Semotiuk, 2013, October 21).

Because my codes were selected almost exclusively deductively, and not inductively, it was especially important that they related specifically to the data and not just my working theories. To ensure coding consistency, which

> boils down to documenting the extent to which the coding decision made by one coder
>
> would be made by another coder about the same element of content or by the first coder

when coding the same content element on a second occasion—that is, the consistency of

coding across coders (intercoder reliability) and by the same coder (intracoder reliability),

I set up a three-part test of my coding frame (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p. 272). First, I selected

five tweets from each candidate and entered them into a blank coding sheet. I made two copies:

one for a colleague, and one for myself for later. The colleague and I coded the data, separately,

and two weeks later, I re-coded, then compared the data sets and refined my codes and

definitions for the final analysis. The codes and the structure of the coding sheet are included

under the heading **Coding**.

Category: Authentically conversational. Informed by Bruns and Highfield, *authentically*

conversational tweets follow Montague's inviting-accepting cycle, where one user extends an

invitation to communicate and another accepts that invitation (2013; 2012). Accepting the

invitation is done by tweeting a reply, which acts as another invitation. "Essentially, each time a

person accepts an invitation, that acceptance acts as yet another invitation being extended back to

the other. … It is not until someone denies an invitation that the dialogic moment ceases to exist"

(Montague, 2012, p.404). For tweets categorized as authentically conversational, the invitation is

not seen. A user has already tweeted a politician; that was the invitation. For the purposes of this

study, the politician has accepted the invitation to the conversation and replied in an

authentically conversational manner if he or she has created original text in the reply.

The authentically conversational codes are as follows:
- Answers to questions including original content
- Original content as a reply to a previous message or invitation to conversation by including the user's @ name (not including answers to questions)
- Retweet by request

- Modified retweet without extra content added except for hashtags or other @ mentions, prefaced with MT.

Category: Basically conversational. *Basically conversational* tweets may send an invitation to conversation, but stop there. These tweets do not actively engage with a conversational partner, and are exemplified by broadcasts, retweets, or by requiring so little effort (such as replying to questions with a link) that they do not actively engage conversation, as seen in the 2011 Spanish general election studied by Medina and Muñoz (2014). They found that the politicians whose tweets they parsed "did not understand the potential of Twitter to reach other communicative objectives with voters beyond electoral ones [and that] Twitter is a tool focused on the candidate as a person rather than as part of a political institution" (2014, p. 101).

Such tweets where the user fails to "take advantage of the potential of Twitter to interact and dialogue with the public, but [add to] an additional impersonal presence" do not allow for authentic conversation (Medina & Muñoz, 2014, p. 101). However, since any tweet can be replied to and used to spark a conversation if the user is interested, all remaining these types of tweets are considered basically conversational.

The basically conversational codes are as follows:
- Broadcast tweet
- Policy
- Answers to questions (links only)
- Retweet

Study population and setting. The population for this study consists of the six mayoral candidates from Edmonton's 2013 civic election: Kristine Acielo, Don Iveson, Karen Leibovici, Kerry Diotte, Joshua (Josh) Semotiuk, and Gordon Ward. Don Iveson and Kerry Diotte were known for using Twitter during their term as councillors before the election ("Edmonton

councillors," 2010, December 15). The six mayoral candidates are not study participants in the

usual sense. I am using their data, but they are not actively participating in the study. Since I

have not contacted any people directly, and the data I have accessed is in the public domain,

this research did not require approval from the Ethics Review Board[7]. I lived in Edmonton in

2013 and followed the election; I consider myself an insider for the purposes of this study. I was

part of the demographic that each candidate wanted to reach as they tweeted.

The study took place in Edmonton, Alberta, using data collected from the period of the

campaign for the 2013 civic election (August 1, 2013–October 21, 2013). This election is worth

studying for two reasons: the incumbent mayor was retiring, and Edmonton voters had to select a

new mayor from candidates with vastly different visions for the city (Kent, 2013, October 20).

It also marked the first time Twitter was used extensively as a communication tool for mayoral

candidates in Edmonton; Twitter was not a factor in the 2009 Edmonton civic election, and

exiting mayor Stephen Mandel did not join Twitter until November, 2010, partway into his final

term as mayor.

Data gathering method. I required data for six Twitter users: @doniveson,

@gordon4mayor, @josh4yegmayor, @karenleibovici, @kerrydiotte and @kristinekacielo, and

this data was required for the time frame of August 1 2013–21 October 2013. The decision to

include and code all tweets was made once the entire data set was collected: 1,920 tweets is a

manageable sample to code, and by coding all tweets rather than by taking a random sample, a

more complete analysis can be made. However, in contrast to Medina and Muñoz's study, I only

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[7] Approval was requested from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board and upon their review, it was
determined that approval was not required.

collected personal Twitter accounts and did not look at the candidates' campaign accounts,

which would have been primarily run by their campaign teams (2014).

The data has been contributed to the public domain. To collect the data, it was necessary

use software to extract information from Twitter for the required tweets, a technique known as

scraping. Other studies, such as Bruns and Stieglitz (2013) used yourTwapperKeeper, an open

code engine designed to specifically to scrape Twitter, to collect tweets. However, after the 2012

acquisition of TwapperKeeper by HootSuite, yourTwapperKeeper has now been limited to

scraping Twitter only for your own personal Twitter username. I chose to use a paid-for service

called twitonomy, which collected the tweets as well as other data such as retweets and

favourites (see Figure 4). The only problem I encountered was that Twitter is only able to return

up to 3,200 of a user's most recent tweets through an app, making Iveson's most recent available

tweet from October 22, 2014. For him, I had to search his page manually and copy and paste

each tweet into the spreadsheet.

Figure 4: Screencap of Twitter scrape results for @josh4yegmayor (Semotiuk) in spreadsheet format.

To ensure validity of the results from twitonomy, I tested it on my own tweets for a known time frame by running it and manually counting the tweets shown on twitter.com. I then compared the selection of tweets scraped from the API to the tweets scraped. Having acquired a satisfactory result, I still expected a small margin of error for my data: any temporary, however unlikely, pause in transmission of data due to server interruptions might leave some tweets out. Given the large volume of data consisting of almost 2,000 tweets I will, as recommended, "treat the resulting data-set as [a] close approximation" (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013 p. 93).

Coding. The coding catalogue is a spreadsheet with one page for each candidate. The categories and codes are in columns, and the raw data are entered in the first column. See Figure 5.
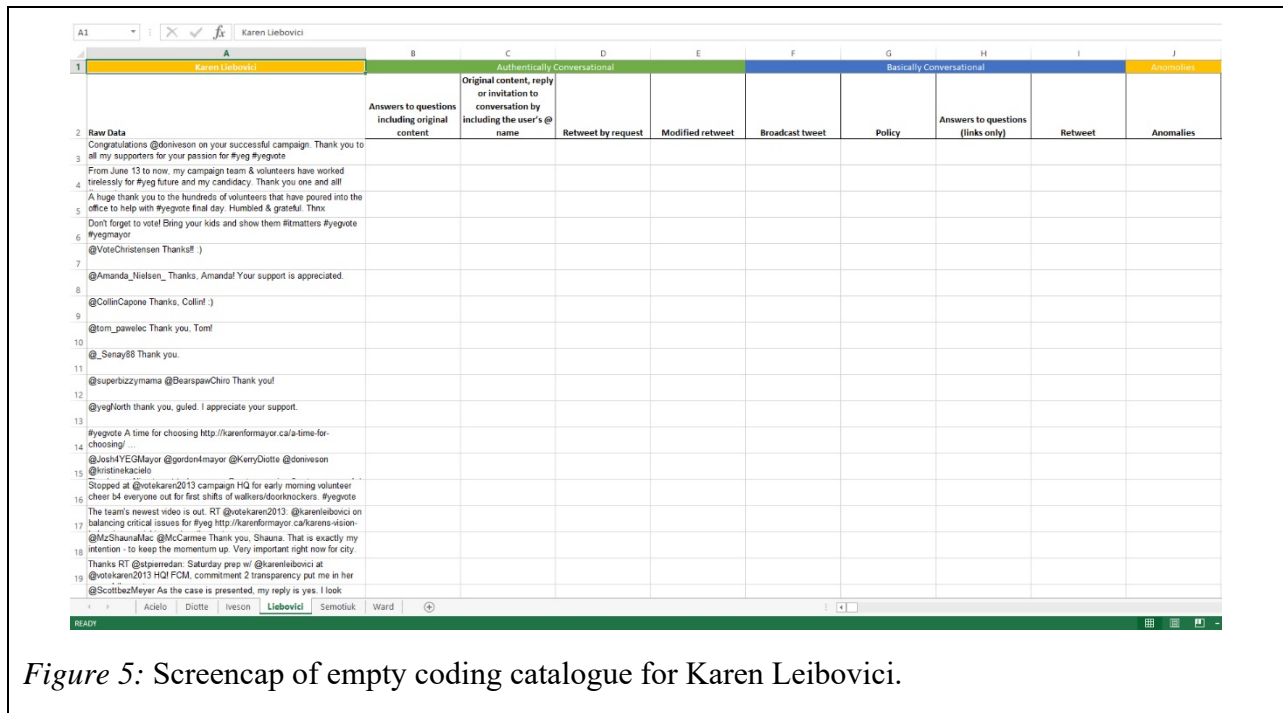

Figure 5: Screencap of empty coding catalogue for Karen Leibovici.

Tweets were coded given their content and structure, ignoring whether they were at the beginning, middle, or end of the inviting-accepting cycle. Context relating to the election and the

city of Edmonton was considered according to sociocultural theory, according to the background

described in **Introduction and Background**. As I proceeded, I realized that one new category

would be necessary: anomalies. One of the candidates, Kristine Acielo, engaged in a spamming

practice of tweeting that I had not encountered in the literature review.

> A message is Spam only if it is both unsolicited and bulk. An electronic message is
>
> "spam" if (A) the recipient's personal identity and context are irrelevant because the
>
> message is equally applicable to many other potential recipients; AND (B) the recipient
>
> has not verifiably granted deliberate, explicit, and still-revocable permission for it to be
>
> sent ("The definition of spam," n.d.).

While it is clear that Acielo must have thought her tweets would be welcome, they did not

function as an act of invitation to conversation because she sent them in bulk; instead, they were

just a call to action (asking for retweets and views for her video). Very few were retweeted.

Furthermore, she was not selective in whom should receive these messages, sending many of

them to people or public Twitter accounts who would have no interest in the Edmonton civic

election:

> @justinbieber http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/election-2013/mayoral-candidates/kristine-
>
> acielo-mayoral- please pass on to your followers, could help me out,[8] [note:
>
> @justinbieber's account did not retweet] (2013, October 5d)

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[8] Although the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed) suggests editing end punctuation in quotations for clarity, I have preserved the punctuation of all the tweets in this document (whether correct, incorrect, or missing) (2012 p. 172). The manual also suggests adding [*sic*] to indicate original errors in grammar and syntax which might be confusing to the reader (2012 p. 172).. However, I have chosen to omit this since it will harm the readability of the tweets. The only edits that I have included are line breaks.

@EFR_Alerts here is my platform, http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/election-

2013/mayoral-candidates/kristine- (2013, October 5b)

@pmharper U did it, view and RT http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=

Q3qg1EEFyww … It's already hit more than almost 13, 000 homes, mwaa thanks

running for Edmonton [note: @pmharper was not asked to tweet this out in the first round

of tweets, so the "U did it" is even more indicative of spamming tactics] (2013,

October 21a)

@TwitterMusic U did it, view and RT http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=

Q3qg1EEFyww … It's already hit hit more than almost 13, 000 homes, mwaa thanks

running for edmonton [note: @TwitterMusic was not asked to tweet this out in the first

round of tweets, so the "U did it" is even more indicative of spamming tactics] (2013,

October 21b).

Additionally, the content of her tweets did not match up with whom she was tweeting,

as evidenced by the tweets to @TwitterMusic and @pmharper. After scanning through her data,

I determined that her tweets did fall into the realm of spam and added the code *anomalies* to each

coding sheet.

I also had the option to remove the three codes *retweet by request*, *modified retweet*, and

answers to questions (links). Although these are behaviours I have witnessed on Twitter, none of

the tweets gathered coded here were sorted into these categories. To be thorough, I decided to

leave the codes in my frame even though they displayed a null result. I believe they may be

useful if another data set is studied and should not be rejected prematurely.

Once I was done coding, I stepped away, and returned to it later, and reviewed each tweet to ensure validity. A few tweets were shuffled around (approximately 2–3 per candidate where the candidates had over 300 tweets). However, these shuffles remained within the overarching categories: I would change a tweet from broadcast to policy, but never from broadcast to original content.

Engagement levels. In order to fairly compare the types of conversation styles that users found most engaging, I calculated 5% of the total number of tweets for each candidate. I chose to use a percentage rather than an absolute number in order to create an even comparison of visibility across the candidates' networks. I then used twitonomy to determine which tweets were most favourited and retweeted, and compared these to the codes I used.

Table 1
The Number of Top Tweets to Use per Candidate, Based on 5% of Their Total Tweets

Candidate	Total Tweets	Number of top tweets to use
Acielo	369	18
Diotte	308	15
Iveson	417	21
Leibovici	310	16
Semotiuk	343	17
Ward	113	7

Findings

This section details the findings of the coding frame for the two categories, authentically conversational, and basically conversational as well as the engagement levels of the top most retweeted tweets for each candidate. Each set of findings is briefly described before being discussed in full in the **Analysis** section. Some codes remained empty of tweets, however, as the codes are concept-driven, as opposed to deriving from the data. Schreier suggests that this is not a saturation problem but rather an opportunity for unexpected findings (2012, pp.77–78).

Category: Authentically Conversational

Authentically conversational tweets are tweets that engage in completing the inviting-accepting cycle. In the context of the Edmonton 2013 civic election, these tweets are authentic in that they show that the politician "respond[s] to comments addressed to him [or her] … [and] disclose[s] her/himself in these responses in a personal and intimate way" thus demonstrating "genuine concern for citizens" (Dumitrica, 2013, pp. 61, 62). The authentic tweets are messages showing that "the authentic politician … encourage[s] citizens to make their opinions public and [that he or she is] taking note of these opinions" (Dumitrica, 2013, pp. 62–63). Although four codes were established in the coding frame, the dataset only contained tweets that fit into two of them: *Answers to questions including original content* and *Original content as a reply to a previous message or invitation to conversation by including the user's @ name (not including answers to questions)*. Overall, only two candidates used a majority of authentically conversational tweets, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Tweets Categorized as Authentically Conversational

Candidate	Total tweets	Ratio[9] of authentically conversational tweets to total tweets	Ratio of categorized tweets to total tweets, not including anomalies
Acielo	223	0.04	0.10
Diotte	308	0.26	
Iveson	417	0.63	
Leibovici	310	0.27	
Semotiuk	343	0.71	
Ward	113	0.12	

[9] All non-absolute values in this and the following tables are rounded to two significant figures and presented as a decimal. Ratios are discussed in terms of decimal or percent where appropriate.

Code: Answers to questions including original content. Tweets coded as answers to questions including original content serve as an indicator of the candidate's willingness to connect with members of the public who have reached out to them. These tweets function as the accepting part of Montague's inviting-accepting cycle (2012). Examples of tweets coded as answers to questions include: "Leave it be, I say. '@RyanHastman: Have [you] made any statements re: increasing the Whitemud speed limit? ... #yegvote #yeg'" and "@RyanHastman needed modern infrastructure due 2 lack of past investment—debt is being managed responsibly #yegvote" (Iveson, 2013, August 21; Leibovici, 2013, August 14).

Table 3 shows the total number of tweets coded as *Answers to questions including original content* for each candidate as well as the ratio of these tweets to the total number of tweets coded as authentically conversational and the ratio of these tweets to all tweets. The row for Kristine Acielo contains additional information for her anomalies.

Table 3

Tweets Coded as Answers to Questions Including Original Content

Candidate	Total tweets coded as *answers to questions including original content*	Ratio of coded tweets to total authentically conversational tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets, not including anomalies
Acielo	5	0.36	0.01	0.03
Diotte	27	0.34	0.09	
Iveson	87	0.33	0.21	
Leibovici	22	0.26	0.07	
Semotiuk	86	0.36	0.25	
Ward	1	0.08	0.01	

Answering questions on Twitter formed a significant part of most candidates' authentic conversation: approximately one third for four candidates and one quarter for a fifth. Gordon Ward is an outlier: only one of his tweets was coded as answering a question.

Code: Original content as a reply to a previous message or invitation to conversation by including the user's @ name (not including answers to questions). Tweets coded as *content as a reply to a previous message or invitation to conversation by including the user's @ name (not including answers to questions)* demonstrate the candidate's willingness to connect with the public in both parts of the accepting-inviting cycle. For example, Kerry Diotte reaches out with this tweet not only to @LSloan_w1, but also to her followers: "Best of luck to my council colleague @LSloan_w1 in her soon-to-be new life. Her passion for #yeg and her principles are beyond reproach" (2013, August 16). In Kristine Acielo's tweet, she sends a thank you and continues the conversation with some personal information: "@ryanjespersen thank you, mwaa i love my supporters, i was very sick in the video with bronchitis, on every cough medicine," (2013, October 19).

Table 4 shows the total number of tweets coded as *Original content as a reply to a previous message or invitation to conversation by including the user's @ name (not including answers to questions)* for each candidate as well as the ratio of these tweets to the total number of tweets coded as authentically conversational and the ratio of these tweets to all tweets. The row for Kristine Acielo contains additional information for her anomalies.

Table 4

Tweets Coded as Original Content as a Reply to a Previous Message or Invitation to Conversation by Including the User's @ Name (not including answers to questions)

Candidate	Total tweets coded as content as a reply to a previous message or invitation to conversation by including the user's @ name (not including answers to questions)	Ratio of coded tweets to total authentically conversational tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets, not including anomalies
Acielo	9	0.64	0.02	0.06
Diotte	53	0.66	0.17	
Iveson	175	0.67	0.42	
Leibovici	62	0.74	0.20	
Semotiuk	156	0.64	0.45	
Ward	12	0.92	0.11	

These tweets made up the remaining authentic tweets for the six candidates. The ratio and volume of these tweets show that this is the candidates' favoured method of communicating authentically on Twitter.

Code: Retweet by request and code: modified retweet without extra content added except for hashtags or other @ mentions. No tweets were found for these codes. This null result suggests two findings: the data set was not large enough to contain this sort of tweet, or, candidates do not find value in tweeting in this manner. Since these are observed behaviours on Twitter, I suggest that further studies do not eliminate considering these codes as part of their studies. See Figure 6 for an example of such a tweet by a general user.

Figure 6: Screencap of a tweet showing a retweet by request (Marmaduke, 2014, September 11).

Category: Basically Conversational

Basically conversational tweets open the door to a conversation, but do not form a connection; in "the ideal of the 'authentic politician' the emphasis … is on the quality of the connection between the two parties involved in the process of communication" (Dumitrica, 2014, p. 63). While useful for sharing information, basically conversational tweets may only hold the potential for a conversation, as in Diotte's tweet: "We're headed to #yeg Heritage Festival. If you go remember to bring Food Bank donation. #yegvote #edmonton http://t.co/7OF4OcrrcW" (2013, August 4). An excess of basically conversational tweets over authentically conversational tweets establishes a pattern of a candidate wanting to speak more than he or she wants to listen, and "respondents feel that on social media, it is easy to figure out if a politician is not truly open to dialogue," (Dumitrica, 2014, p. 64). Table 5 shows the total number of tweets coded as *basically conversational* for each candidate as well as the ratio of these tweets to the total number of all tweets. The row for Kristine Acielo contains additional information for her anomalies.

Table 5
Tweets Categorized as Basically Conversational

Candidate	Total tweets	Ratio of basically conversational tweets to total tweets	Ratio of categorized tweets to total tweets, not including anomalies
Acielo	223	0.036	0.90
Diotte	308	0.74	
Iveson	417	0.37	
Leibovici	310	0.73	
Semotiuk	343	0.29	
Ward	113	0.88	

Semotiuk and Acielo are outliers here: Acielo, because of her heavy use of spam, which skews her results, and Semotiuk, because of his heavy use of authentically conversational tweets. While Iveson also used a majority of authentically conversational tweets, Semotiuk's low number of basically conversational tweets makes his dataset very interesting.

Code: Broadcast tweet. Tweets coded as *broadcast tweets* demonstrate an attempt by the candidate to reach out to the public, by beginning an inviting-accepting cycle. However, without directly connecting to another user, an authentic relationship is not established with tweets such as "Going to be at the Commodore in about an hour if anyone wants to come grab a button. #yegvote #edmonton" and "Wow ... ? Even the Homelessness Advocates promote their choice for Mayor. Once again NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK ! pic.twitter.com/fJ2k2CKngn" (Semotiuk, 2013, October 2; Ward, 2013, October 8).

Some tweets with @ mentions were coded as broadcasts because they used the @ usernames as labels or identifiers, as in Diotte's tweet which uses the @ to tag the person in the photo: "@BeyondTheCrayon Saki and owner Renee join the Chevi Rabbit #yeg From Hate 2 Hope march to Legislature pic.twitter.com/vznfdH3xyK" or because they were talking about people rather than to them, as in as in Leibovici's tweet, about @LSloan_w1: "@LSloan_w1 Her

passion for seniors, natural areas & environmental stewardship will be missed #yegcc. I wish her

the best! #yeg #yegvote" or (2013, August 2; 2013, August 17). Leibovici's tweet about

@LSloan_w1 is an excellent example to compare a broadcast, tweeting *about* a person, to

original content, tweeting *to* a person, when paired with Diotte's earlier quoted tweet to

@LSloan_w1 (2013, August 16).

Table 6
Tweets Coded as Broadcast tweets

Candidate	Total tweets coded as *broadcast tweets*	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets, not including anomalies
Acielo	109	0.23	0.75
Diotte	120	0.39	
Iveson	132	0.32	
Leibovici	131	0.42	
Semotiuk	48	0.14	
Ward	93	0.82	

Table 6 shows the total number of tweets coded as *broadcast tweets* for each candidate as

well as the ratio of these tweets to the total number of all tweets. The row for Kristine Acielo

contains additional information for her anomalies. Most notable in this category is Semotiuk,

who tweeted only 14% as broadcasts.

Code: Policy. Tweets coded as *policy* demonstrate the candidate's desire to communicate

his or her platform via a communicative, rather than traditional, media format. Tweets containing

policy statements may be attractive invitations to conversation for the public because of their

content. An authentic relationship may be established with these tweets, but only if a user

accepts this invitation, tweets back, and then the candidate replies. Such a reply would then be

categorized as authentically conversational. Policy tweets generally include a link to a video or

website, as in these examples: "Im single and loving it, but this campaigning sure keeps me

busy! http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/election-2013/mayoral-candidates/kristine-acielo-mayoral-

candidate …” and “I published my policy on poverty and homelessness in #yeg. Read it here:

http://ow.ly/pOq5b #yegvote” (Acielo, 2013, October 5c; Iveson, 2013, October 14).

Occasionally, a tweet will address a point of policy in a self-contained message, as Leibovici

tweets here: “Made important motion @ #yegcc this wk re:Rossdale redev recognizing hist.

significance of site 4 Aboriginal groups, First Nations & Metis” (2013, August 21).

Tweeting policy is important for candidates in order to share their platforms and policy.

Since policy is available on multiple new media platforms already, including websites, video,

and news websites, as well as traditional media, inundating Twitter with policy may not be the

most effective way to create authentic conversation with the public, as tweeted by Iveson:

“Agreed. What’s on ur mind?“@fkarcha: #yegvote candidates! Twitter is not forum 4 press

releases it is opportunity for citizen engagement… ” (2013, September 27).

Table 7 shows the total number of tweets coded as *policy* for each candidate as well as

the ratio of these tweets to the total number of all tweets. The row for Kristine Acielo contains

additional information for her anomalies.

Table 7
Tweets Coded as Policy

Candidate	Total tweets coded as *policy*	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets, not including anomalies
Acielo	21	0.06	0.14
Diotte	26	0.08	
Iveson	21	0.05	
Leibovici	40	0.13	
Semotiuk	3	0	
Ward	7	0.06	

Code: Answers to questions (links only). This was another null code. When

conversations were begun with questions and the candidates opted to answer with links, the links

were always prefaced by original content.

Code: Retweet. Retweets are a way for a candidate to share information they care about

with minimal effort. While the action on sharing is still conversational per boyd, Golder and

Lotan and Shi, Rui, and Whinston, the lack of active engagement with another user by the

candidate keeps retweets in the basically conversational category (2010; 2014). Examples of

retweets are "'@daveloken: Clareview LRT-Intl Literacy day #yegcc colleague @doniveson &

@DeronBilous giving out books pic.twitter.com/snsQKv7m8p' @EPLdotCA" and "RT

@edmontonjournal: Mayoral hopeful aims to cut through red tape http://edmjr.nl/17iSUwv

#yegvote" (Iveson, 2013, September 9; Leibovici, 2013, August 29). Iveson's retweet is used to

share information and a photo originally posted by a colleague that his followers might be

interested in, while Leibovici's shares a news article outlining some of her policies. Table 8

shows the total number of tweets coded as *retweets* for each candidate as well as the ratio of

these tweets to the total number of all tweets. The row for Kristine Acielo contains additional

information for her anomalies.

Table 8
Tweets Coded as Retweets

Candidate	Total tweets coded as *retweets*	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets, not including anomalies
Acielo	2	0.01	0.01
Diotte	82	0.27	
Iveson	2	0	
Leibovici	55	0.18	
Semotiuk	50	0.15	
Ward	0	0	

Iveson's column may be mostly blank because many of his tweets coded as *Original content as a reply to a previous message ...* contain content from a previous tweet, effectively sharing part or all of the person to whom he was replying's original message: "So sweet-thx! RT '@ashnize: father-daughter door-knocking this afternoon for the @doniveson campaign #yegvote #yegcc http://twitter.com/ashnize/status/371722168100352000/photo/1pic.twitter.com/OZHndkWZqU'" (Iveson, 2013, August 25). Rather than simply retweeting, he added his own content before re-sharing.

Code: Anomalies. As stated previously, I added the new code anomalies as I worked through my data: "in QCA [qualitative content analysis], at least a part of your coding frame will typically be data driven … because qualitative data is so rich, containing much more than you would have anticipated" (Schreier, 2012, p. 87). I certainly did not expect a mayoral candidate to employ spamming tactics as an attempt to get her message to her potential constituents. While Lee, Mahmud, Chen, Zhou, and Nichols, who tested ways to successfully ask for retweets, found that their "approaches were able to at least double the retweeting rates over two baselines," this was only given certain parameters which were not met by Acielo (2015, p. 31:24). Instead, the tweets coded as anomalies appeared to be simply junk mail, as shown in this tweet to Edmonton's Canadian Football League team: "@cfl_esks http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/election-2013/mayoral-candidates/kristine-acielo-mayoral-candidate … please re-tweet this could help me out alot in this city" (Acielo, October 5a). Lee, Mahmud, Chen, Zhou, and Nichols' theories hold true for Acielo in another way: almost all of her requests for retweets were ignored.

Table 9 shows the total number of tweets coded as *anomalies* for each candidate as well as the ratio of these tweets to the total number of all tweets.

Table 9
Tweets Coded as Anomalies

Candidate	Total tweets coded as *anomalies*	Ratio of coded tweets to total authentically conversational tweets	Ratio of coded tweets to total tweets
Acielo	223	16	0.60
Diotte	0		
Iveson	0		
Leibovici	0		
Semotiuk	0		
Ward	0		

The ratio of Acielo's spammy tweets to total tweets is similar to the others candidates' broadcasts to overall tweets, suggesting that Acielo lacked a fundamental understanding of how to use Twitter. In fact, one of her tweets (coded as a broadcast) states as much: "Do YOU ALL READ WHAT I SAY, LOL IM new to this twitter, have had it for over a year, but im not sure what it does... network, i guess," (2013, October 11). This particular tweet garnered a reply one minute later: "@kristinekacielo I'm afraid your "caps lock" button may suffer from water damage." (Brown Emoji, 2013, October 11). This is one of the kinder replies to Acielo's colourfully spelled and formatted Tweets. Acielo's lack of care in spelling and formatting made her tweets the most difficult to code, and it may have contributed to her low level of engagement among users—but that's another study for another day.

Engagement Levels

To determine engagement levels among the public, I analysed retweets and favourites. First, I calculated the 5% of each candidate's total tweets, in order to collect a representative sample from each candidate. I selected the most retweeted and favourited tweets for each candidate and cross-referenced each to its category. Statistics are available as to the total reach of these tweets, but reach is calculated based on the user favouriting and retweeting user's follower count and online social reach. These numbers speak more to the secondary user's social capital

than they do to the candidates'. While this may be an area worth further study, it is beyond the

scope of this project.

Table 10

Top Retweeted Tweets and Their Categories

Candidate	Total retweets	Number of tweets to analyze	Highest retweet count	Tweets coded as authentically conversational	Extrapolated percentage	Tweets coded as basically conversational	Extrapolated percentage
Acielo	92	18	5	0	0	17	94*
Diotte	141	15	13	1	7.1	14	93
Iveson	235	21	65	2	9.5	19	90
Leibovici	157	16	23	0	0	16	100
Semotiuk	37	17	10	2	12	15	88
Ward	27	7	4	0	0	7	100

*One of Acielo's top retweeted tweets (four retweets), her request for Justin Bieber to retweet her video, was coded as an anomaly (2013, October 5d). Bieber himself did not retweet this. One of the retweets was by a follower of Acielo's. It is unknown how the other three decided to retweet this tweet.

Table 11

Top Favourited Tweets and Their Categories

Candidate	Total favourites	Number of tweets to analyze	Highest favourite count	Tweets coded as authentically conversational	Extrapolated percentage	Tweets coded as basically conversational	Extrapolated percentage
Acielo	29	18	5	1	6	15	83*
Diotte	67	15	10	2	13	13	87
Iveson	229	21	62	4	19	17	81
Leibovici	100	16	8	0	0	17	100
Semotiuk	57	17	9	3	18	14	82
Ward	8	7	1	0	0	7	100

*One of Acielo's top favourited tweets was coded as an anomaly. However, it was favourited by the person she sent it to. All eight of this user's tweets were related to the 2013 civic election.

Iveson's tweets were the most popular by a large margin. It is interesting to note that

Semotiuk has the highest percentage of authentically conversational retweets. While Iveson and

Diotte's retweets and favourites are spread almost evenly between broadcast and policy (both

with a slight majority falling into the broadcast code), Leibovici's majority for both retweets and

favourites is policy. Her overall basically conversational tweets did contain more policy tweets

than the other candidates, so one explanation is that her retweets simply came from a larger pool.

Another possibility is that, with the social capital she began accruing with these tweets,

she learned to tweet more about policy.

Summary

The findings tentatively confirm a positive result for research question: yes, a relationship can be established between Twitter conversation style and a candidate's result in a municipal election, and yes, there is evidence to suggest that tweeting using authentic conversation styles versus basic conversation styles is a characteristic of a winning engagement strategy for a campaign. Those tweeting a higher percentage of authentically conversational tweets ranked higher in the final results. Despite this apparent alignment (with one outlier), only two candidates used a majority of authentically conversational tweets, Iveson & Semotiuk (Semotiuk was the outlier, coming in fourth place in the election). I found that volume of tweets is not an indicator of success across a social network if the tweets are not conversational: basically conversational tweets have a much greater likelihood of being retweeted or favourited than spammy tweets, even if the spammy tweets request an RT. In the next section, I look more closely at the apparent relationship established in the findings and consider how substantial that relationship is, and under what circumstances it is most meaningful.

Analysis

A sociocultural background will be used to analyse the findings for the two research questions, "Can a relationship be established between Twitter conversation style and a candidate's result in a municipal election? Is there evidence to suggest that tweeting using authentic conversation styles versus basic conversation styles is a characteristic of a winning engagement strategy for a campaign?" and "Is there evidence to suggest that a particular conversation style encourages more engagement among Twitter users than others?" against the backdrop of Edmonton's 2013 civic election. This analysis will be based on concepts from the literature review including the inviting-accepting cycle, presentation of self, and how Twitter and social capital work together. An idea of political authenticity and how it is enunciated through

Twitter as a communication platform in the context of elections and getting people to vote is

drawn upon in order to illustrate how authentic and basic conversational practices were engaged

in on Twitter and to discuss their effects. Under the heading **Can you win an election if you**

don't tweet authentically? the data is analysed in terms of the first research question, and

Is there a better way to tweet? looks at the data through the lens of the second research

question. **Twitter use overall** ties the data analysis and theories together to explain what it all

means.

Can You Win an Election without Tweeting Authentically?
        A relationship is apparent between the percentage of authentically conversational tweets

and the final election rank of the mayoral candidates with the exception of Semotiuk, the fourth

place candidate. Iveson tweeted 63% authentically conversational tweets, followed by the second

place candidate, Leibovici, with 27%, then the third place candidate, Diotte, at 26%; fifth place

candidate Ward came in with 12% authentic tweets, then last place candidate Acielo with 3.8%.

Fourth place candidate Semotiuk will be discussed in detail later. See Table 12 for final election

results and categorized tweets. This suggests that tweeting authentically alone is not enough to

win an election, which is a common-sense finding: although Gibson and Cantijoch found that

some voters only engage in politics using online tools, they are not the majority (2011,

October 26). This is further supported by Dumitrica's research which reminds us that while the

young electorate may be online, it is important to remember that they do not make up the entire

population (2014).

        Instead, the results offer a picture of the online electorate, a growing group of people

interested in combining social capital from real-life and online. As Riedl, Köbler, Goswami and

Krcmar found, a large social network and its associated feelings of connectedness leads to a

growth of social capital (2013). This in itself may be a motivating factor for engaging in political

activities on Twitter.

Table 12
Final Election Results and Categorized Tweets

Final election results (number of votes)	Candidate	Authentically conversational tweets (%)	Basically conversational tweets (%)
132,162	Iveson	63	37
41,182	Leibovici	27	73
32,917	Diotte	26	74
2,596	Semotiuk	71	29
2,248	Ward	12	88
1,292	Acielo	3.8	96*

*Includes tweets coded as anomalies

The inviting-accepting cycle opens and closes in this dataset in a variety of ways. As each

politician sends out a tweet, the invitation is open for a response and a possibility of

conversation. When a politician initiates a conversation with or responds directly to another user,

he or she creates an opportunity for a real connection. Based on Osatuyi's research, the user can

then determine if the message was truly authentic according to his or her own personal definition

(2013). Each politician attempts authenticity in his or her own manner: an online personal front

is established. This online version of the self, in a

> social context of increasing disaffection with politics and politicians, a turn to the more
>
> human dimensions of a candidate and to the communication of personal messages with
>
> empathy will seem more credible to voters. Through these personal messages, citizens
>
> can have some insight into the private life and interests of a politician (Medina & Muñoz,
>
> 2014, p. 90).

Thus, a politician can show his fun side, as Iveson does in his most-retweeted tweet: "Got to try

to out-eyebrow Karl Urban at @edmontonexpo today. 'He's a Dr, not a politician. '

#edmontonexpo #yegvote https://pbs.twimg.com/media/BVRS7m4CYAEmmFk.jpg" or show

his take-no-prisoners side as he drums up outrage, as Ward does in this favourited and twice-

retweeted tweet: "this is a business approach? I'm sorry ... I can't get this as being a positive

campaign #yegvote http://t.co/0Y7qnNGzkV" (Iveson, 2013, September 28; Ward, 2013,

October 16).

Ward had the lowest engagement of the six candidates. Perhaps this is not surprising, as

he tweeted the fewest number of times and 82% of his tweets were broadcasts. With only eight

favourites, all of which were on also-retweeted tweets, he was unable to connect with the public.

Even Acielo, with her 60% spam rate, had better success creating connections (although, as

noted previously, some of these connections were negative in tone).

Acielo had no success at using Twitter to communicate at all, by using it to spam more

than one hundred different users, and by failing to connect with constituents and to broadcast

effectively. With the lowest authentically conversational tweets by percent and her rambling

messages about her personal life: "My uncle passed away, my ex left me for an huge woman,

and well i needed to make new friends, im just glad, i got to make a whole bunch of u," Acielo is

a case study in how not to use Twitter as a politician (2013, October 16).

In third place is Diotte, who retweeted as many times as he communicated authentically.

If I move those retweets to the authentic side, he comes in at 53% authentically conversational.

It is possible that, for him, he saw a retweet (RT) as a way to demonstrate an authentic interest in

someone else's tweet. He may have had higher engagement on Twitter if he had done what

Iveson did and added a quick message to each RT instead of just hitting the retweet button:

a method that garnered Iveson over 100 more RTs and favourites than Diotte.

Leibovici came in second in the election and third in terms of using authentically conversational tweets. Iveson won the mayoral race and had the second highest number of authentically conversational tweets. With Iveson, Leibovici, then Diotte, an apparent pattern is established: the more authentically you tweet, the better you are likely to do in a mayoral race. Semotiuk comes into the picture as an outlier, but works very well as a qualifier to the data, reminding us that the pattern is not necessarily causal and illustrating some of the variables that are required to turn a winning social media strategy into a winning campaign. He tweeted with the highest percentage of authentically conversational tweets and had the third highest total of tweets. With his most retweeted tweet at ten retweets and his most favourited tweet at nine favourites, he places a respectable fourth in terms of comparable social capital. However, Semotiuk is missing one element that prevented him from competing with the front runners: a complete election strategy. Authentic conversation style may be an important part of a campaign, and may be an influencing factor in how well one does, but social media is not enough to win a campaign and is not a significant enough factor to shift a candidate's rank without a complete supporting campaign. Semotiuk had no signs, no paid campaign manager, and a very small budget. Without the essentials of a traditional campaign, effective social media use is little more than a legacy project.

Is there a Better Way to tweet?

Two factors must be taken into account when analysing the better way to tweet: group engagement and individual engagement. Referring to Tables 10 and 11, basically authentic tweets appear to be the most effective ways to tweet in order to reach a larger audience. Broadcasting and policy tweets make up the majority of these most retweeted and favourited tweets. Of course, these are the messages that the candidates wish to disseminate amongst as

large a number of people as possible, so it's good news when broadcasts and policy tweets are

re-broadcast.

However, it is important to also look at total engagement numbers. Don Iveson's tweets

were retweeted 1.5 more times than his nearest follower, Leibovici, and 1.7 times more often

than Diotte. His tweets were favourited 2.3 times more often than Leibovici's, and 3.4 times

more often than Diotte's. Even with 90% of his retweeted and 81% of his favourited tweets

being basically conversational, he still engaged people on a personal level.

Considering Successful Practices

Dividing the candidates into the three groups I suggested in the background to this paper

(unsuccessful campaigners—Acielo, Ward, and Semotiuk—successful campaigners—Diotte and

Leibovici—and an absolute winner—Iveson) gives us more context to look at how Twitter was

used in the election overall. Although ratios and percentages have been used throughout as an

attempt to compare results evenly, grouping the candidates in this manner will allow a look into

detailed, raw numbers.

Unsuccessful campaigners. Acielo's tweeting style has already been discussed

thoroughly. Ward, although he did not tweet any spam, also had some grammatical trouble and

his tweets were often lacking in context. Without context, even in general Twitter use, it is

unlikely a tweet will resonate with a potential dialogic partner (see Figure 2). A more appropriate

tweeting strategy for a mayoral candidate would give the public context—a reason to care—

about what is being tweeted. For example, Ward tweeted the picture shown in Figure 7 with no

message to explain who was in the picture, where it was taken, or what it had to do with his

campaign. Without this important context, his broadcasts were unable to reach the general

public, and were restricted to his followers or followers of relevant hashtags when he used them.

Figure 7: A picture tweeted by Gordon Ward. (Ward, 2013, October 9).

Semotiuk, in contrast, tweeted using a large number of authentically conversational methods. He both reached out to people and responded to them, and was just as likely to use the RT function to create a broadcast as he was to compose an original broadcast tweet. He developed, not a carefully crafted online persona, but one that truly seemed authentic, calling people "dude," "man," and "boss," cracking jokes, and summing up his take on democracy: "@theleanover if you don't like any of the candidates then do what I did. Run." (2013, September 27). Semotiuk would have benefitted from some of the polish of the top three candidates, but his style clearly resonated with the people he reached, with a 16% RT rate overall.

Successful campaigners. Leibovici and Diotte have very similar tweeting datasets, Leibovici tweeting 73% basically conversationally and Diotte, 74%. The major difference

between the two is that 13% of Leibovici's tweets are coded as policy; Diotte only has 8.4% policy tweets. Although Diotte's tweets are by no means frivolous, it is clear that Leibovici found a formula that worked well. People responded well to her policy tweets, and it is a policy tweet that has her highest number of retweets and favourites.

Their tactics diverged when it came to authentically conversational tweets as well. Diotte replied to questions as 34% of his authentically conversational tweets, and Leibovici did this only 26% of the time. This is a difference, then, of their place in the accepting-inviting cycle rather than their personal fronts. Diotte found his niche in replying to questions, and Leibovici, in reaching out.

Absolute winner. Iveson, the winner of the mayoral race by a large margin, also tweeted more times than any other candidate. 63% of his tweets were authentically conversational, demonstrating a desire to connect with the public. Like Semotiuk, he maintained a personal front on Twitter, still casual, though his was more polished. He often tweeted people just to say "thanks" or offer a compliment. Unlike Semotiuk, he also had a full team working for him, including his occasionally-mentioned partner. Iveson also had the support of several prominent Edmontonians: he tweeted a list of them once on his website, and some of them, and others, appear as @ users in his tweets. This mixing of social capital from the real-world to the online world was advantageous. As Park found, opinion leaders can get non-users onto Twitter (2013). These new users can then share the message more in their new online networks, or take it offline, where they may or may not also be opinion leaders.

One more very important aspect of Iveson's Twitter use is his tendency to reply to people who sent him pictures. As Carruthers and Ballsun-Stanton and Chang both find, Twitter can become a marketplace for attention that allows ordinary people to reach out to those who have

been celebritised: people like politicians (2010; 2011). When Iveson retweets a picture with a quick message like "cute," that not only increases the feeling of connectedness for the original poster, but encourages others to attempt to increase their social capital by sending in photos as well. Iveson responded to (thus re-sharing) photos including pictures of lawn signs, people with lawn signs, and people's children, thus satisfying his followers' belief that he cared about them in an authentic manner, and building more social capital for himself. However, Iveson is also young and worked at the University of Alberta before being elected to Edmonton city council. It is possible that his core supporters may be part of a very different demographic from the other candidates': the "young, heavy online users" mentioned by Cryderman in his article on Nenshi (2010, October 23, p. 3).

Summary

Analysing the data gathered to answer the research questions "Can a relationship be established between Twitter conversation style and a candidate's result in a municipal election? Is there evidence to suggest that tweeting using authentic conversation styles versus basic conversation styles is a characteristic of a winning engagement strategy for a campaign?" and "Is there evidence to suggest that a particular conversation style encourages more engagement among Twitter users than others?" in the setting of Edmonton's 2013 civic election provides insight into how Twitter can be used to enhance a political campaign. Basic and authentic conversational practices were both used to create a voice for the candidates, allowing them to either reach a portion of the electorate, or fail to do so. Where some candidates failed to use the inviting-accepting cycle, presentation of self, and networking capabilities of Twitter to augment their campaigns, others did so with panache. The most successful candidates used Twitter as an important part of their complete campaigns.

Conclusion

This study begins with the assumption that tweets can be considered as speech acts, and uses a cross-sectional approach to explore whether a relationship can be established between Twitter conversation style and a candidate's result in a municipal election, and whether there is evidence to suggest that tweeting using authentic versus basic conversation styles is a characteristic of a winning engagement strategy for a campaign. I use the 2013 Edmonton civic election as an example: with six candidates running, all of whom used Twitter, the election provided fascinating data as the candidates broke new political ground in Edmonton.

I collected almost 2,000 tweets from the six candidates during the campaign period (August 1, 2013 to October 21, 2013). I use concept-driven data analysis to code them into one of nine codes and ensured they were mutually exclusive by sorting the codes under the categories of authentically conversational and basically conversational. I also used twitonomy, a web application, to collect data on retweets and favourites. Validity and reliability were ensured by peer and self-review, then I conducted analysis on the data from a sociocultural perspective.

Although Twitter use cannot be considered to be the deciding factor in a civic election, there is a correlation between authentic conversational practices and greater success in the Edmonton 2013 mayoral race (with the caveat that such success depends upon also having a committed campaign plan). Interestingly, there is no evidence to suggest a particular conversation style encourages more engagement among users in terms of multiple retweets and favourites (which would create a greater spread of the information across the network), but there is evidence to suggest that concentrating on authentic conversation may lead to increased Twitter use by followers, who may then spread this social capital to their networks both on- and offline.

The limitations of this study lead directly into future research opportunities. First, the scope of the study limits to showing correlative results which could be used to advise a campaign, but could not be considered a predictor or guarantor of success. Considering the conversation styles of politicians gives only a partial picture of a campaign; it neglects elements such as policy, personality, political skill, and the rest of the campaign program. Duplicating these results in a different election, however, would be useful in directing the social media strategy of future election campaigns.

This study opens numerous new questions for research. First is the question: how far does a politician's online social capital go (in terms of social reach), and how does this function as part of a comprehensive campaign? Second, what effect does authentic communication have—if any—from the politicians' official campaign accounts? Furthermore, how do these accounts compare in terms of style and content to the politicians' personal accounts?

The question that has risen most clearly to the surface as I have worked with this data, however, isn't the question of "What does political authenticity really mean?" as other studies, like Dumitrica's, have researched (2014). Instead, it is "What personality traits are the most useful to exhibit on Twitter in order to gain the most online social capital?" This question looms for me because Iveson and Semotiuk stand out in their use of authentic tweets. This led me to do some mental comparisons of their tweets, and I found superficial similarities. As I looked at who tweeted using broadcasts and who tweeted using policy, I noticed differences between Diotte's and Leibovici's styles. Ward's and Acielo's styles are both very distinct.

Based on this study, the most useful further research I can recommend is a qualitative content analysis of tweets from a campaign, either this one or another one, to determine how

personality and or the personal front express themselves in tweets. What impact does personality

have? Does authentic conversation stem more from tone than it does from method?

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Tables

Figures

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