Social Media Reactions to Women in Public Office
Morgan Johnstonbaugh (Ph.D. Candidate)

Women’s underrepresentation in public office is a persistent problem in the United States, and it serves as a barrier to the introduction and passage of legislation that focuses on women’s issues and interests. Social media platforms like Twitter are rapidly emerging tools that women can use to enter the public discourse and public office. This research project explores how gender influences politicians’ engagement in online discourse. Studying the tweets written by members of the 114th House of Representatives about defunding Planned Parenthood, a controversial and highly publicized women’s issue, and passing the Iran deal, a controversial and highly publicized security issue, will illuminate how female politicians use rhetorical strategies to deal with prescriptive stereotyping around issue expertise, personality, and communication. Quantitative and network analyses will be performed on a data set consisting of roughly 4,000 tweets written during a three-month timespan.

1 What the student will be doing

My undergraduate research assistant will engage in two activities. First, we will work together to qualitatively code all the tweets. We will document the number of retweets and likes that each tweet receives and categorize the content of the tweet. More specifically, we will examine the subtopic and the civility of the content. Although I have already developed coding categories, I hope that we can brainstorm new ways of categorizing information that may be innovative and useful. The second part of this research process will include cleaning the data and running quantitative analyses. If they are not already familiar, the undergraduate will be introduced to STATA and assist with the analysis. Finally, we will run network analyses using UCINET. These will be basic analyses that introduce students to a new way of understanding social relations.

2 What the student will learn

The student will learn a variety of new skills by participating in this research project. The process of qualitative content coding teaches students how to engage with concepts while processing data. In addition to applying codes that I have created, the student will be encouraged to develop new categories, reorganize existing categories, and improve their critical thinking skills. They will also learn basic skills in two programs: STATA and UCINET. Learning how to use STATA will help the student understand regression analysis. Creating analyses in UCINET will allow students to
visualize data in a new way and contribute to a qualitative analysis of the relationships that appear in the data.

3 Meetings

I will meet with the student once to twice a week at the beginning of the semester (January - February) so that we can code the tweets in a timely manner. I would like the student to work for 4-5 hours per week during this period. The times that we meet are flexible. During the months of March and April we will meet once a week in order to clean data and perform and discuss analyses. These meetings will last for approximately 1-2 hours depending on how many credits the student would like to earn.

To register for SOC 394

1. Contact Morgan Johnstonbaugh at mjohnst2@email.arizona.edu
2. Complete the Soc 394 Practicum registration form. It must be signed by you as the student, the Graduate Student Advisor and by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Louise Roth.
3. Once the form has been completed and signed by all, submit it to Raquel Fareio in the School of Sociology, room 400 in the Social Sciences building.

Reminder: The last day to register for courses without a $250 late charge in the Fall/Spring Semesters is the 21st day after the first day of classes; for Winter/Summer Sessions (to avoid a $50 late charge) register by the day before the last day to drop with deletion from the record.