Politics as Performance

Will American Fascination with ‘Trump Style’ Survive the 2018 Midterm Elections?

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Competing communication logics

• Both of these girls are **not spouting bullshit**
  – One actually knows what she is talking about
  – For the other, an imaginary and stylistic strategy (a nascent ‘communication logic’) is in play

• Shall we see…?
  – Find the video at: https://www.dictionary.com/e/kids-know-whats-up-video-playlist/
Backdrop for today’s politics

• Given the complexity and challenges of modern society, a certain amount of BS is unavoidable
  – Today, at all levels, both uncertainty and willful ignorance prevails
  • “Politicians lie and bullshit constantly. When they’re caught in a lie, there’s a big commotion. [But] there is no corresponding response to bullshit.” – H. Frankfurt (2016)
An indifference to facts

Defining Bullshit

Unlike lying, BS is marked by **indifference** to the truth.

**bullshit**

*exclamation, noun [ U ] • UK /ˈbulʃɪt/ US /ˈbulʃɪt/ OFFENSIVE

★ complete nonsense or something that is not true:

_Bullshit! He never said that!_

-us He gave me some excuse but it was a bunch of bullshit.

-uk He gave me some excuse but it was a load of bullshit.

**bullshit**

*verb [ l or T ] • UK /ˈbulʃɪt/ US /ˈbulʃɪt/ -tt- OFFENSIVE

★ to try to persuade someone or make them admire you by saying things that are not true:

_You’re bullshitting me!_

_Quit bullshitting, will you!_
“Politicians have always told some lies. This is different. The people running our government, and their key supporters, have launched a war on honest journalism, on facts, and on freedom of expression in general. They are using misinformation as strategy. They want the public to become so confused by what is true and what is false that people will give up even on the idea that journalism can help sort things out.”

– Dan Gillmor, Medium
15 June 2018
• Where to turn? **Nonverbal indicators**, which can be more reliable (heuristic) than fact-based assessments

• *‘Thin slice’ forecast* studies (still photographs, 10 sec. video clips) show how little it takes to spot a winner (see Todorov et al., 2005)
  – Short duration exposures to image-only conditions can predict election outcomes

• **Sound ruins it**: ability to predict winners decreases with the sound on – even as confidence increases (Benjamin & Shapiro, 2009)
  – Hearing the candidates talk **confuses matters**
Expressing intent

- Expressive leader displays within newscasts and other media evoke a range of emotional and evaluative responses (Bucy, 2000; 2003)
  - Both favorable and unfavorable
  - Affecting viewer attitudes and serving as motivational cues or dispositions to action
    - Whether the leader’s voice is heard or overlaid with a reporter’s narration (Grabe & Bucy, 2009; Masters et al., 1986)

Bill Clinton in response to the Los Angeles riots following the Rodney King verdict (April 1992)
Cutting through the clutter

- Leadership has a large nonverbal component (Bucy, 2011; Grabe & Bucy, 2009; Masters et al., 1986)
  - Myriad **character traits** are manifested nonverbally, both enduring and situational
  - Dominant individuals have an ‘attention binding’ quality
    - Literally the most watched (Chance, 1976)

- Humans neurologically **wired for visual processing**
  - Visuals contribute to political learning, are **their own form of knowledge**
    - Readily encoded, easily retrieved

Obama in Berlin, July 2008 communicating affinity
• Like radar images of clear weather patterns and incoming storms, political visuals can serve as reliable sources of information (Bucy, 2003; Grabe & Bucy, 2009)
  – Require minimal literacy, or background understanding of politics
  – Enable quick inferences of politically relevant traits
  – Equalize some knowledge gaps in the electorate, e.g., ‘visual knowledge’ (see Prior, 2014)

Are top and bottom panels equally valid forms of information?
Expressions and gestures

- Facial expressions work with gestures and voice tone to communicate **emotion and motivational intent**
  - Anger/threat
  - Happiness/reassurance
  - Fear/evasion
  - Sadness/appeasement
- **Reassurance** discourages aggressive or flight responses
  - Thereby promoting bonding
- **Threat displays** strengthen dominance attributions; also,
  - Promote bonding, esp. among followers (Bucy & Bradley, 2004)

Ronald Reagan, c. 1984: The ‘Great Communicator’?
### Major display types showing emotion/behavioral intention

**Table 1. Criteria for classifying facial displays.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anger/threat</th>
<th>Fear/evasion</th>
<th>Happiness/reassurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eyelids</strong></td>
<td>Opened wide</td>
<td>Upper raised/lower tightened</td>
<td>Wide, normal, or slightly closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eyebrows</strong></td>
<td>Lowered</td>
<td>Lowered and furrowed</td>
<td>Raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye orientation</strong></td>
<td>Staring</td>
<td>Averted</td>
<td>Focused then cut off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mouth corners</strong></td>
<td>Forward or lowered</td>
<td>Retracted, normal</td>
<td>Retracted and/or raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teeth showing</strong></td>
<td>Lower or none</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Upper or both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Head motion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lateral</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Side-to-side</td>
<td>Side-to-side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vertical</strong></td>
<td>Upward</td>
<td>Up-down</td>
<td>Up-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Head orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To body</strong></td>
<td>Forward from trunk</td>
<td>Turned from vertical</td>
<td>Tilted from vertical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angle to vertical</strong></td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prototypical displays

Happiness/Reassurance

Neutral Expression

Fear/Evasion

Anger/Threat

Bucy & Gong (2016)
Prototypical displays

Bucy & Gong (2016)
Key concepts

Integrating different literatures

• **Display appropriateness** defined as situational nonverbal behavior that is compatible with the message and tone of the setting in which it occurs
  – Congruency between the candidate’s expressions and immediate rhetorical context
  – **Inappropriate displays** defined as evasive and socially submissive nonverbal behavior in juxtaposition to verbal attacks (see Bucy, 2000; 2011)

• Nonverbal behaviors that fall outside of what’s considered appropriate and typical for a particular setting or purpose constitute **expectancy violations** (Burgoon & Hale, 1988)

• In politics, evaluations of appropriate behavior often turn on questions of **social dominance** (see Bucy, 2016b; Bucy & Gong, 2018)
  – Ability to assert authority while avoiding signs of submission, evasion, or appeasement in the face of challenge

• **Contentious politics** literature, which finds that viewing incivility in TV talk shows increases interest but erodes trust
  – Amplified by production choices, effects increase when close-ups are used (see Grabe & Bucy, 2009)
Inappropriate: avoidance

Obama-Romney, 2012 Debate 1
Appropriate: engagement

Obama-Romney, 2012 Debate 3
### Appropriate Displays Rated More Favorably

**With higher dial test (CRM) and self-report scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Obama</th>
<th>Romney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Self-Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate</strong></td>
<td>56.40</td>
<td>11.83  4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inappropriate</strong></td>
<td>48.79</td>
<td>12.61  3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CRM ($t(59) = 6.25$, $p < .001$), self-report evaluation ($t(59) = 8.40$, $p < .001$)

*Gong & Bucy (2016)*
Inappropriate displays watched more

Gaze Fixations and Durations by Partisanship
Both are higher for inappropriate displays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democratic</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Independent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate Displays</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean duration (in seconds)</td>
<td>26.25 (SD = 22.45)</td>
<td>30.37 (SD = 16.89)</td>
<td>38.44 (SD = 14.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixation Frequency</td>
<td>15.47 (SD = 12.99)</td>
<td>16.50 (SD = 8.52)</td>
<td>20.64 (SD = 6.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inappropriate Displays</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean duration (in seconds)</td>
<td>43.50 (SD = 14.65)</td>
<td>38.83 (SD = 22.27)</td>
<td>48.81 (SD = 14.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixation Frequency</td>
<td>23.90 (SD = 8.81)</td>
<td>22.61 (SD = 11.14)</td>
<td>26.12 (SD = 7.16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gong & Bucy (2016)
Look of losing, 2012 edition

Figure 3. Nonverbal Display Frequencies, Debate 1

- Anger/threat face
- Happiness/reassurance face
- Fear/evasion face
- Anger/threat tone
- Happiness/reassurance tone
- Fear/evasion tone
- Affinity gestures
- Defiance gestures

Legend:
- Romney
- Obama
Look of losing, 2012 edition

Figure 4. Nonverbal Display Frequencies, Debate 3

- Anger/threat face
- Happiness/reassurance face
- Fear/evasion face
- Anger/threat tone
- Happiness/reassurance tone
- Fear/evasion tone
- Affinity gestures
- Defiance gestures

Legend:
- Romney
- Obama
And along comes Trump
Attacks rally partisans

Overlay from dial tests conducted at the CCR lab, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX (Bucy, 2016a).
Identifying a populist (verbal) style

- Populism described as a thin, fragmented, or unelaborated ideology (Engesser et al., 2017)
  - With a communication logic that encompasses ideology (content), strategy (aims), style (form), messengers

- Populist discourse marked by key stylistic features
  - Drama, polarization, moralizing, ostracism, directness, mass appeal, vulgarity, (Bos et al., 2017)

- Core elements of a populist style (Engesser et al., 2017)
  - Simplification
  - Emotionalization
  - Negativity
Identifying a populist (nonverbal) style

- Nonverbal behavior and televised presidential debate dynamics
  - e.g., signs of “losing” in 1960 vs. 2012 (Bucy, 2016b)
- Thinking about nonverbal indicators of populism, we would expect
  - **Simplification** to manifest as easy to understand displays, even nonfluencies
  - **Emotionalization** in anger/threat displays, defiance gestures, tone of voice, interruptions (impatience), inappropriate displays
  - **Negativity** to manifest as the valence in each of the above indicators—and in character attacks
Variable definitions

Key variables

- **Anger/threat displays** include frowning, fixed stares, negative and rigid facial expressions that have a hostile feel (biobehavior)

- **Defiance gestures** signal an antagonistic relationship between the candidate, opponent or an implied enemy “out there” (raised fist, finger shaking, pointing, etc.)

- **Nonverbal disagreement** illustrated by head shaking, finger wagging, etc.

- **Inappropriate displays** includes nonverbal behavior that is compatible with the message and tone of the setting in which it occurs
  - Congruency between the candidate’s expressions and immediate rhetorical context

- **Hostile interruptions** are designed to disrupt and feature *interjections, hostile takeovers*, and instances of *verbal chicken*
Variable definitions

Key variables (cont.)

- **Verbal nonfluencies** include broken phrases, incomplete sentences, repeated words, stammering, mispronunciations, *non sequiturs* or unrelated comments
- **Character attacks** include personal put downs and assertions about the opponent’s character, not policies
- **Angry/threatening tone** when the speaker’s voice tone has a menacing, accusatory, or hostile feel; also, revealing a desire to fight, do political battle
- **Sophistication** is indexed by percentage of 6+ letter words in transcript
- **I/They** scores derived from LIWC coding, relative to each candidate’s baseline
- **Blame** constructed from DICTION scores, also relative to candidate baselines

*Bucy (2016c)*
‘Populist’ candidate behaviors

2016 Debate 1: Trump vs. Clinton (%)

- **Nonverbal displays**
  - Anger/threat facial expressions: 12.93%
  - Defiance gestures: 11.13%
  - Inappropriate displays: 4.13%

- **Interruptions**
  - Visual interruptions: 0.38%
  - Hostile interruptions: 1.89%

- **Verbal behavior**
  - Verbal nonfluencies: 2.64%
  - Character attacks: 8.68%
  - Anger/threat tone: 17.06%

Percent occurrence within 10-second intervals, *N = 533* (Bucy et al., 2018).
### 2016 Debate 3: Trump vs. Clinton (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonverbal displays</th>
<th>Hillary</th>
<th>Trump</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger/threat facial expressions</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>56.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defiance gestures</td>
<td>23.81</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate displays</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interruptions</th>
<th>Hillary</th>
<th>Trump</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual interruptions</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile interruptions</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal behavior</th>
<th>Hillary</th>
<th>Trump</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal nonfluencies</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character attacks</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger/threat tone</td>
<td>27.29</td>
<td>37.36</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Percent occurrence within 10-second intervals, N = 533 (Bucy et al., 2018).
‘Populist’ candidate behaviors

Per cent occurrence within 10-second intervals, \( N = 533 \) (Bucy et al., 2018).
‘Populist’ candidate behaviors

Trump vs. Trump 2016: Debate 1 – Debate 3 (%)

Percent occurrence within 10-second intervals, N = 533 (Bucy et al., 2018).
‘Populist’ candidate behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facial displays</th>
<th>Trump 2016</th>
<th>Obama 2012</th>
<th>Romney 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger/threat</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>71.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Happiness/reassurance</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear/evasion</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>39.5</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal tone</th>
<th>Trump 2016</th>
<th>Obama 2012</th>
<th>Romney 2012</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger/threat</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>94.6</td>
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<td>Happiness/reassurance</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>53.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear/evasion</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gestures</th>
<th>Trump 2016</th>
<th>Obama 2012</th>
<th>Romney 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affinity</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defiance</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent occurrence within 30-second intervals, N = 177 (Bucy et al., 2018).
‘Populist’ candidate behaviors

Trump 2016 vs. Obama and Romney 2012: Debate 3 (%)

Facial displays
- Anger/threat
  - TRUMP: 72.0%
  - OBAMA: 35.9%
  - ROMNEY: 32.6%
- Happiness/reassurance
  - TRUMP: 11.5%
  - OBAMA: 16.0%
  - ROMNEY: 37.0%
- Fear/evasion
  - TRUMP: 2.2%
  - OBAMA: 4.3%
  - ROMNEY: 5.4%

Verbal tone
- Anger/threat
  - TRUMP: 94.5%
  - OBAMA: 44.2%
  - ROMNEY: 49.7%
- Happiness/reassurance
  - TRUMP: 22.1%
  - OBAMA: 31.5%
  - ROMNEY: 63.7%
- Fear/evasion
  - TRUMP: 0.0%
  - OBAMA: 1.1%
  - ROMNEY: 0.0%

Gestures
- Affinity
  - TRUMP: 2.2%
  - OBAMA: 10.5%
  - ROMNEY: 28.2%
- Defiance
  - TRUMP: 17.1%
  - OBAMA: 37.6%
  - ROMNEY: 50.0%

Percent occurrence within 30-second intervals, N = 177 (Bucy et al., 2018).
Trump aggresses, Clinton waits it out

Overlay from dial tests conducted at the CCR lab, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX (Bucy, 2016a).
Characterizing ‘Trump style’

• **Trump’s display repertoires**
  – A melange of anger, threat, aggression + defiance, punctuated by interruptions and protestations
    • Betrayed signs of stress in his tics: sniffing, fidgeting, water gulping (aka, leakage)
    • Attempted to modulate the sound of his voice early in the debates but couldn’t sustain it
  – Ultimately, a **challenger style**

• **In which Trump engages in inappropriate aggression**
  – An equal opportunity offender except when it comes to other authoritarians

Trump won the nomination with the early acquiescence of his opponents.
Clinton’s softer approach

- **Clinton’s display repertoires**
  - A softer, more fluid and reassuring style, more typical of incumbents, e.g., the ‘happy warrior’
    - Also more verbally and policy oriented—reassuring to the world
    - But **beholden to the rules** of televised debate (and establishment politics more generally)
  - The more experienced and articulate debater in 2016, but **not able to sustain** audience attention (Bucy et al., 2018)
    - A point that becomes evident in Twitter analysis of viewer activity during the 1st debate

Clinton approached the debates with a lawyer’s outlook, perhaps restrained by gender stereotypes that penalize women for aggression.
‘Trump style’ in action

Panel A
Debate 2 – Visual interruption

Panel B
Debate 3 – Anger/threat display

Debate 2 – Hovering in the background

Debate 3 – Defiance gesture

Bucy & Gong (2018)
“This is not okay, I thought.”

“It was the second presidential debate and Donald Trump was looming behind me. Two days before, the world heard him brag about groping women. Now we were on a small stage and no matter where I walked, he followed me closely, staring at me, making faces. It was incredibly uncomfortable. He was literally breathing down my neck. My skin crawled.”

Inappropriate physicality

- Theme
  - **Physicality as leverage to interrupt, steal attention, intimidate**

- “He was over her shoulder the entire time and trying to make her stress or trying to apply some pressure to mess with her delivery.” (Diana, age 19)

- “He hovered over her the entire time. It’s a bullying tactic.” (James, age 24)

- “I was really trying to listen to her, but I couldn’t because he was just standing there... If everybody’s just looking at him like, What is he doing? [and] not listening to her, nobody can hear what she has to say.” (Madison, age 20)

Analyzed in Bucy & Gong (2018), *The Facial Displays of Leaders* (Ch. 4)
Carl Senior, Ed.
Observations

- Trump presents a perplexing, menacing presence, demanding attention + deference
- Hijacks the process of idea exchange by relying on character attacks and attempts to dominate

“Trump sends so many messed up signals. It’s very confusing to watch him. Like, I have a hard time reading him as a person—and it scares me. Admittedly, Clinton isn’t the most personable [candidate], either.” (Bruce, age 22)
A Reese’s moment

Delicious!

Hershey Community Archives

2 CUPS 10¢
Social media as a **generator of Big Data**—until recently, did not exist, at least not in usable form

- Allows real-time, **moment-to-moment tracking** of communication behavior by audiences
- Particularly during moments of national focus and conversation, e.g., presidential debates
- An outcome variable not restricted to the lab that enables **analysis of continuous response** on a mass scale (see Shah et al., 2015)
Considerations

- Identifying the key variables that show the most promise in predicting viewer response
  - Whittling a long coding instrument down to the essentials
- Addressing the technical issue of synchronizing Twitter responses with our debate coding
  - Using each segment’s start/stop time
- Determining the right “lag” or delay to fit an effects model
- Running complicated time series models so as to isolate the variance of different communication elements
1. Characterize behavioral landscape of the debates
   - 1st and 3rd debates of hand-coded at 10-sec. intervals
     - 90 min. debates parsed into approx. 530 segments
     - Variables coded nominally: present or absent in any 10-sec. interval (1, 0)
     - 10 percent of the content double-coded for intercoder reliability
   - Coding instrument had other variables
     - Happiness/reassurance, fear/evasion
       - Voice tone, display emotion
     - Gesture valence (affinity, defiance)
     - Memes, rhetorical functions
     - Communal, agentic style
     - Nonverbal tics (stress indicators)
     - Blink rate (mean and SD)

2. Link biobehavior + rhetorical coding with comp. data
   - Twitter harvesting and analysis
     - Purchases data from GNIP: All Tweets during 90 minutes of each debate mentioning Clinton or Trump
     - Approximately 5 million tweets from Debate 1 and 3 million tweets for Debate 3 that meet search criteria
     - Still misses debate tweeting that does not mention of the two candidates
   - Outcome measures
   - Volume of mentions
     - Tweets that only mentioned Trump or Clinton, not both
   - Sentiment of tweets
     - To be determined
Modeling the Twitter data

Volume of mentions

Tweets from 1st Presidential Debate (2016) - Trump

Tweets from 1st Presidential Debate (2016) - Clinton

Bucy et al. (2018)
Trump’s visuals significant across all lag times

Table 3: Regression of Trump Twitter Mentions Using Synchronous to 60-Second Lags: Sub-indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>t-1</th>
<th>t-2</th>
<th>t-3</th>
<th>t-4</th>
<th>t-5</th>
<th>t-6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinton Mentions</td>
<td>1.657**</td>
<td>1.396**</td>
<td>1.435**</td>
<td>1.446**</td>
<td>1.375**</td>
<td>1.424**</td>
<td>1.402**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.073)</td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
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<td>Visual Pop. Index</td>
<td>24.845</td>
<td>41.265**</td>
<td>71.127**</td>
<td>68.640**</td>
<td>38.928**</td>
<td>54.417**</td>
<td>51.115**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonal Pop. Index</td>
<td>58.861*</td>
<td>9.764</td>
<td>-32.102</td>
<td>1.783</td>
<td>97.866**</td>
<td>33.272</td>
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<td>0.440</td>
<td>0.458</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>0.437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses; ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Bucy et al. (2018)
Verbals slower on the uptake

Clinton’s arguments take longer to resonate

Table 4: Regression of Clinton Twitter Mentions Using Synchronous to 60-Second Lags: Sub-indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>t-1</th>
<th>t-2</th>
<th>t-3</th>
<th>t-4</th>
<th>t-5</th>
<th>t-6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trump Mentions</td>
<td>0.288**</td>
<td>0.299**</td>
<td>0.306**</td>
<td>0.306**</td>
<td>0.292**</td>
<td>0.296**</td>
<td>0.304**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Pop. Index</td>
<td>9.774</td>
<td>10.834</td>
<td>19.871</td>
<td><strong>37.675</strong></td>
<td>50.259**</td>
<td>50.715**</td>
<td>35.045**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses; ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Bucy et al. (2018)
Preferences by party

Champion the people, have a vision, avoid aggression

### Preferences by ideology

Centrists attuned to experience, compromise, *calm*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing up for &quot;the people&quot;</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A clear vision for the country</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience and qualifications</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth talk about the issues</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An outlook that involves compromise</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak passionately, from the heart</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A calm and collected style</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An &quot;in your face&quot; communication style</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An aggressive temperament</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics as a winner-take-all struggle</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking to next Tuesday’s election

• “There was an overflow of 300 people when he spoke the other day IN LUBBOCK. He went outside and spoke for another 15 mins to those who couldn’t enter.” (TTU colleague)

Signs for Beto O’Rourke in Lubbock, TX, in a conservative part of the state (Oct. 2018).
Takeaways

- Along with its grievances and resentments, populism can be seen as a **nonverbal communication phenomenon**
- Responses to **populism’s performance** can be observed in second-screen expression
- Twitter-using public reactive to **aggressive debate behavior**, even if the overall public prefers a ‘kinder, gentler’ politics
  - Responses to nonverbal behaviors significant at every time lag
  - Arguments/rhetorical tactics take longer to draw a response
- In the face of populist attacks, waiting only **lessens your resonance** and effectiveness
Neutralizing populist attacks

American candidates hoping to neutralize populist attacks and claims could learn from Emmanuel Macron in France.
‘Visual bullshit’ as an emerging form

Finally, viewing ‘visual bullshit’ as an emerging form, part of the communication logic of populism

- Important to document, given heavy audience reliance on visuals and forms of social information
- A major pillar, perhaps, of populism’s stylistic appeal

The gestures, expressions, and nonfluencies often don’t add up or fit the rhetorical setting

- But work on a more primitive level

Visual BS is short on words but long on disruptive theatrics—and threatening intent

- Understanding its resonance is key to countering an outsized influence
Rolling up our sleeves

Erik Bucy @erikpbucy · Aug 20
Important race to watch, with potential implications for 2020

Beto O’Rourke: can the upstart Texas Democrat eject Ted Cruz?
Cruz paints him as ‘hard-left like Bernie Sanders’ but the challenger for the Senate seat is drawing crowds in conservative suburbs
amp.theguardian.com
Collaborators

• Intensive nature of this work suggests the **importance of collaboration** and team-based approaches to multi-methods research
  - Key to finding new modes of communication influence

• Co-authors, collaborators, students
  - **Maria Grabe, Younei Soe, James Ball**
    • *Indiana University*
  - **Harrison Gong, Bingbing Zhang, Duncan Prettyman, Riley Davis, Shawn Hughes**
    • *Texas Tech University*
  - **Dhavan Shah, Chris Wells, Alex Hanna, plus many UW-SMAD + MCRC student collaborators**
    • *Wisconsin-Madison, Boston U., Google*
  - **Jungseock Joo, Patrick Stewart**
    • *UCLA, University of Arkansas*
Thank you.

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References + further readings

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