The promise of social media in political engagement: Examining the presence and engagement of monitorial citizens

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INTRODUCTION
• During the rise of social media and its use in politics since the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election, there has been speculation of social media becoming the definitive medium for re-engaging citizens in politics. This may be due to social capital.
• In terms of political engagement, social networks generate the connections that allow individuals to act.

However, voter turnout for the U.S. Presidential Election of 2012 decreased from the U.S. Presidential Election of 2008.

Yet, minority and youth turnout remained high.

There is a possibility of the monitorial citizen.

METHOD
• Obtained tweets from Gnip
• Tweets were from #Election2012, #Obama, and #Romney
• Date range: 10/31/2012 to 11/5/2012
• Excel was used to sort, graph, and statistically analyze tweets.
• Affective Norms for English Words (ANEW)
• The network is fragmented (4260 weakly connected communities out of 5354 nodes/users)
• Lack of connected communities (Average clustering coefficient: 0)

Hypothesis 2: There will be a greater frequency of Twitter communications in the battleground states (FL, IA, WI, OH, CO, NV, and NH) and as Election Day approaches [Stark & Roberts, 2012].

Hypothesis 2a: There will be greater sentiments of urgency, efficacy, and positive valence in the battleground states and as Election Day approaches.

RESULTS
• Steady increase as Election Day approached
• Steep increase of activity on the day before the election
• Battleground States: 28% (instead of 16%).

More prominent positive sentiment trend.

More prominent trend indicating sentiment between calmness and urgency (excited) as Election Day approached.

Very prominent efficacy (in control) trend.

Standardized residuals of the proportions of Twitter sentiment including all 50 states and the Federal District of Washington D.C. did not show a pattern of significant instances of any of the categories of urgency, valence, and efficacy in the battleground states.

REFERENCES