

TWITTER, WENDY DAVIS, AND THE TEXAS SENATE BILL 5: A USES AND
GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Theory	9
Literature Review	12
Twitter and Hashtag Usage	12
Wendy Davis’ Filibuster and the Texas Senate Bill 5	16
Women’s Health Care, Pro-life, and Pro-choice Arguments	19
3. METHODOLOGY	22
Research Questions	22
Content Analysis	23
Coding	24
Definition of Terms	25
4. RESULTS	32
RQ1: Levels of Engagement	33
RQ2: Types of Content	34

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	49
Contributions.....	50
APPENDIX SECTION.....	56
REFERENCE LIST	57

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Levels of Engagement.....	33
2. Retweets or Original Content.....	36
3. Commentary and Information Sharing	38
4. Visuals and Hyperlinks	40
5. Average Engagement Levels for Tweets Containing Visuals or Hyperlinks	41
6. Content Themes	44
7. Multiple Theme Frequencies	47

1. INTRODUCTION

The women's rights movement began in the 1800s and has been waging war against the status quo ever since. At the time, women could not own property, enter contracts, sue, or vote. Women were subservient to men, whether a male relative or a husband, to the extent that a man may beat his woman to punish her without receiving any punishment himself (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a handful of friends met for tea in the afternoon and discussed the situation of women in America, and from this meeting, the first Women's Rights Convention was born (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). The convention drafted a Declaration of Sentiments which included calling for women's enfranchisement (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). The Sentiments were immediately met with criticism and ridicule, but the movement grew nonetheless (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). Finally, in 1920, women gained the right to vote, but the fight was far from over (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). Women still did not have equal access to higher education or jobs, the ability to purchase birth control pills, or to even have a credit card (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998; McLaughlin, 2014). A "second wave" of feminism flourished in the 1960s and 1970s because of these inequalities, which were slowly improved thanks to legislation like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ruling of 1968 that stopped jobs as being advertised solely for men or women, and Title IX of the Education Codes of 1972 which addressed inequalities in admissions for higher education and professional schools (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998).

Today we are experiencing the "third wave" of feminism according to the National Women's History Project. Women now fight for reproductive rights and equal

pay, but also fight against sexual harassment. Of these, reproductive rights is arguably the most controversial topic.

Though the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* of 1973 struck down a Texas law denying abortions to women to protect a woman's right to privacy, the decision treated each of the trimesters differently, allowing states to place additional restrictions in the second and third trimesters that would not be considered constitutional in the first (Masci, Lupu, Elward, and Davis, 2013). Subsequent decisions in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* (1989) and *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* (1992) began to unravel the *Roe v. Wade* decision, allowing states to more heavily and restrictively regulate abortion services (Masci, et. al 2013). In many states, laws have passed and are being passed that carry dire consequences for the resources and services available to women.

While Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her friends met in a living room to have tea and discuss what is happening in the world, women today have many more ways to connect with each other. Oftentimes, they turn to social media. These networks have quickly become an arena for discussion among individuals about all topics, not the least of which are reproductive rights. As more and more individuals take their beliefs and thoughts to social media, various causes and organizations are meeting these individuals there. Several research studies have focused on social media such as its capacity to connect individuals to each other and to brands or causes, how individuals use social media, what they share, and advertising and branding on social media. This study investigates the interactions that take place among individuals on the social media platform Twitter regarding the women's rights movement.

Twitter was founded in 2006 and at the time had only employees as users (Bennett, 2014). At the end of the second quarter of 2013, Twitter had 218 million active users, not including users who had registered and did not use the platform regularly (Statista, 2016). Twitter is different from other social media sites like Facebook and Instagram in that the content shared is limited to 140-character microblogs referred to as tweets as opposed to images or longer statuses. Tweets can then be “favorited”, indicating that another user likes the content of the tweet, or “retweeted” which is essentially reblogging the content of the original tweet. Content may include hyperlinks, previous tweets, videos, gifs, or images. Users may also include hashtags in the content of the tweet which is denoted by the pound sign (#hashtag). These tags are then searchable by the Twitter community to catalogue conversations about the same topics. Hashtags can be created by any users, and are not controlled by the site in anyway, though Twitter will display “trending” hashtags and topics to let users know what topics are most popular with other users.

WENDY DAVIS AND THE TEXAS SENATE BILL 5

The focus of this research will be an event that happened in Texas in 2013 when Texas Senator Wendy Davis attempted to filibuster Texas Senate Bill 5, a bill that the opposition argued would be detrimental to women’s rights if passed. The bill would force women’s health clinics in smaller towns throughout the state to close their doors unless facilities made expensive renovations, most of which non-profit organizations would struggle to afford (Mildenberg, Deprez, 2013). Those opposed to the bill argued that in a state as large as Texas, closing smaller town clinics would force individuals to drive hours to the large metropolitan areas not just for abortions, but also for many other

typical women's health care appointments which would ultimately put women's health at risk (Mildenberg, 2013). At the time of the vote, there were 42 clinics operating in Texas, and only five met the guidelines proposed by the bill. Other states like Mississippi had passed similar bills and had cut down the number of clinics so drastically that only one remained in operation for the entire state (Mildeberg, 2013). On June 25, 2013, Wendy Davis filibustered the bill for 11 hours to postpone the vote and try to convince others to vote against the bill (Mildenberg, 2013). Senator Davis's attempt drew attention from all over the country with marchers traveling to the capital of Texas, and widespread support was shown on social media using a variety of hashtags. The opposition took to social media to make their voices heard as well. Supporters and protestors from both sides attended the legislative session, and at the end of the day, the senate passed the bill in a controversial vote that allegedly took place after midnight, thus breaking the law (Weber, 2013). The vote was rendered inadmissible, but it was a short victory. On July 12, 2013, the bill was passed in a second special session called by Governor Rick Perry (Smith, Aaronson, & Luthra, 2013). Technically, the filibuster was a failure.

Twitter, however, was abuzz with conversation about the filibuster. Some studies have looked at why users choose to use Twitter, conversation content and motivations, and how hashtags are used, but at this point no studies have directly addressed Davis' filibuster and the different groups that interacted together. These interactions and conversations that took place on Twitter are the primary focus of this study. Though there were are number of hashtags used in reference to the filibuster, the two with the highest number of responses were #StandWithWendy and #SitDownWendy with 210,806 and 20,746 tweets respectively during the eight days following the filibuster, including June

26 – July 3, 2013 (Phillips, 2016). These two have been selected to evaluate because they were the most popular and because one seems to clearly represent support and the other seems to clearly represent opposition. There are two main research questions that will be addressed:

RQ1: Is there a difference in the levels of engagement between users who support the filibuster and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the types of content shared by users who support the filibuster and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

To answer these questions, a content analysis was performed. The level of engagement was measured by the numbers of likes and retweets each tweet received. The goal of analyzing the level of engagement these users exhibited when using hashtags, was to learn more about how users connect with online content and what may trigger an increased level of engagement both online and in real life. Types of content were defined by the themes of the content, whether the tweet was original content or a retweet, whether the tweet contained a visual or hyperlink, and if the tweet contained commentary or not. More details are discussed in the methodology chapter.

For a user to make the choice to create their own tweet and to use specific hashtags there has to be some sort of gratification enticing the user. The uses and gratifications theory helps explain this choice and the gratifications associated with it. The theory relies on the concept of an active audience and claims that individual users choose to use specific media to satisfy a need. Uses and gratifications research is primarily concerned with:

"(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3)

expectations from (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Katz, 1973, p. 510).

The uses and gratifications theory focuses on an individual's use and gratifications and can therefore vary greatly from person to person, but there should be a larger consensus concerning gratifications within a society or population (Simon, 2015). Social media, for example, can offer many different gratifications including peer support, companionship, a sense of belonging, peer pressure, entertainment, developing a career, achieving political goals, forming groups and organizations, finding knowledge, and finding and recirculating information (Simon, 2015). Though this theory was originally applied to traditional media like newspapers and radio, Sundar and Limperos (2013) claim that the theory applies equally to digital and social media.

The study results will contribute research to a growing body of work surrounding social media use in general, and in particular, hashtag activism or "slacktivism." The term "slacktivism" refers to the use of hashtags as a means of social activism. Individuals are quick to retweet or engage with hashtags online to "spread awareness" but translating these interactions into real world actions has proven difficult. Additionally, social media has become a catalyst to discussions on controversial topics and for cause advocacy because of its widespread reach and how easy it is for individuals to use (Saxton, et. al 2015). This means that individuals hear about events and happenings that they may have otherwise never knew existed, and are able to form and share an opinion concerning these events. Analyzing the level of engagement that users exhibit on either side of the issue

will allow us to make assumptions about whether or not Twitter users are more likely to engage with a cause that they support or oppose. Analyzing the different types of content shared will allow us to determine how individuals are interacting with the content they are sharing on Twitter, and to determine if certain types of content receive more shares.

This thesis will be organized into the following chapters:

1. Introduction – This chapter provides a general overview of the women’s rights movement, the Texas Senate Bill 5 and Wendy Davis’ filibuster, and the framework that this study will use to evaluate its results.
2. Theory and Literature Review – This chapter will begin with an in-depth look at the uses and gratifications theory, its origins, and how the theory has evolved and been applied to media communication since its conception. Next, the chapter will discuss previous studies conducted on Twitter and hashtag usage, and the relevant studies that have specifically researched this filibuster in the past. A short section reviews the central arguments to both the pro-choice and pro-life stances because they are central to some of the themes evaluated during the coding. The significance of this specific study is also addressed in relation to the previous research.
3. Methodology – The methodology chapter describes the content analysis that was performed and defines each term that is involved with the topic and was considered as part of the content analysis.
4. Results - The results section details the findings of the study.
5. Discussion and Conclusions - Finally, the discussion and conclusion section addresses how the findings connect to the research questions and the significance of these findings.

The strengths and limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research are discussed.

2. THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will be divided into five parts. The first part reviews the uses and gratifications theory which will be used as the framework to evaluate the results of this study. The second part reviews past research surrounding Twitter and hashtag usage and their findings. The following part will focus on Wendy Davis' filibuster, the bill itself, and the circumstances and specifics of the event. Next, popular pro-choice and pro-life arguments are discussed. These arguments are worth discussing because they were central to developing some of the themes that were used in coding. The next part reviews this study's research questions in light of the previous research discussed. The final part reviews the research questions for this study.

Theory

The uses and gratifications theory is the theory that will be applied to the results of this study. This theory is one of the basic theories included in mass communication research, is audience centered, and focuses on the motivations behind a user choosing a specific medium and what a user gets out of using a specific medium (Katz, et. al. 1973). The theory was developed in the 1950s and 60s to examine the effects of political messaging on behavior (Ruggiero, 2000). Early studies had little in common other than their method, their qualitative approach, and their lack of connection between gratifications and psychological needs (Katz, 1973). Ruggiero describes early research involving the theory as primarily descriptive, but heavily criticized for its lack of sophistication, its reliance on individuals to self-report their preferences and motivations, and for a lack of criticism of society using the theory (Ruggiero, 2000). Also, at this stage of the theory's development, the only difference between media effects research and uses

and gratifications research was whether the researcher put emphasis on the media, or the audience (Katz, 1973). In the 1980s, though, the theory began to gain respect and a following as researchers began to answer some of these criticisms (Ruggiero, 2000). Some of these solutions was to join forces with the media effects researchers and to start using content analysis as a method instead of self-reporting (Ruggiero, 2000).

In addition, researchers decided that media provides four types of gratifications: diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance (Katz, 1973). These gratifications could be traced back to specific psychological needs using Maslow's Hierarchy, but not much research has taken this additional step at the time. These gratifications are provided in three different ways: "media content itself, exposure to the media per se, and the social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media" (Katz, 1973). The way these gratifications are provided is determined in large part to the content and to the specific characteristics of each medium (Katz, 1973).

The theory was originally applied to traditional media and has subsequently been provided to each new media over time. Throughout the years, the theory has received intense criticism from researchers who argue that there is not enough consistency between projects and applications for the theory to be credible, or that the approach researchers take seems to be too individualistic for the findings to matter (Ruggiero, 2000). These criticisms have attempted to be answered by implementing specific typologies of personality traits that can be used by studies, but also because the way we interact with media has changed (Ruggiero, 2000). There are now six user-oriented dimensions of interactivity that have been defined and widely used as gratifications in this type of research: 1) threats, 2) benefits, 3) sociability, 4) isolation, 5) involvement,

and 6) inconvenience (Ruggiero, 2000). Sundar and Limperos (2013) and Ruggiero, among other researchers, all assert that the uses and gratifications theory can be successfully applied to new media, including Twitter and can generate substantial findings (Sundar & Limperos 2013; Ruggiero, 2000). In fact, many still regard the theory as one of the most influential in the mass communication field (Ruggiero, 2000). Some such studies are discussed below.

Chen's (2010) study applied the uses and gratifications theory specifically to Twitter by surveying users online (Chen, 2010). Users who did not have a Twitter account were removed from the sample. Results showed a positive correlation between the time that users spent on Twitter and the connectedness that users reported feeling with their Twitter peers (Chen, 2010).

Kraft's (2010) master's thesis also lends credibility to the application of the uses and gratifications theory to Twitter. Kraft posted a survey to several sections of Craigslist, an online board for job postings, discussions, and buying and selling, regarding perceptions of credibility online and motivations for Twitter usage. Kraft found that 57.2% of respondents use Twitter because it is entertaining, 47.1% used it "to find out what other people think are important issues", and 44.7% of respondents used Twitter for up to date news information (Kraft, p.33).

Herdagdelen et. al (2013) also applied the uses and gratifications theory to Twitter and user's social identity. The study evaluated tweets that shared a specific article from the New York Times over a 15-day period (Herdagdelen, et al. 2013). The users who posted the tweets and each of their followers relationships were then graphed (Herdagdelen, et al. 2013). Additionally, the full twitter accounts of each of the users

were evaluated to find what topics were most frequently tweeted about. Results showed that users tend to group together less by locality, but by the topics of interest that they share (Herdagdelen, et al. 2013). These findings reinforce the argument that users select Twitter and participate in different discussions based on the gratifications they receive.

Ratcliff et al.'s (2017) study attempted to connect social media usage to religiosity and posits that there will be a high correlation between perceiving oneself as highly religious and a negative outlook on technology (Ratcliff, et al. 2017).

Additionally, the study hypothesized that the usage of social media would accurately predict attitudes related to religion and the needs that religion is intended to fill (Ratcliff, 2017). The study distributed an online survey to 423 individuals, and considered only respondents who used a social media outlet (Ratcliff, 2017). The survey results confirmed that individuals who described themselves as more religious also had more negative feelings about technology and that there was a weak correlation between individual social media use and expectations of religion meeting needs (Ratcliff, 2017). This study established a link between religiosity and social media usage which may factor in to some of the results found in this study.

Literature Review

Twitter and Hashtag Usage

Since Twitter's founding in 2006, the platform gained such a large number of followers and became very influential so that many researchers have focused on the platform.

Morello's article (2014) discusses the fact that not only lower class women or minorities are discriminated against, but women scientists are as well. This particular article examines two "twitterstorms": one in which a woman biologist's paper was rejected by a well-renowned journal in England with the suggestion that she add a male coauthor so that her paper would have more clout, and the other when scientist Matt Taylor of the European Space Agency appeared in a press conference to discuss a historical landing on a comet wearing a Hawaiian shirt covered in half-naked women and made several sexist comments (Morello, 2014). Both twitterstorms created unique hashtags and went viral, however, the article found that this "hashtag activism" typically does not translate to real world action (Morello, 2014). The article cites a study at Wilfred Laurier University, though, which found that tweeting about experiences and injustices may serve the same purpose as writing in a diary or journal but magnified. Individuals who do post their experiences report a heightened sense of well-being afterwards, especially if they connect with others who feel the same way (Morello, 2014).

Harris (2011) suggests that young women are using the internet and social media differently than other groups and the government and other organizations should take note. The author claims that women are typically cast as consumers or "for display" which characterizes the sexualization of women, but young women are not necessarily buying into that role (Harris, 2011). Instead, Harris claims that young women are simply becoming engaged in different ways than generations before them (Harris 2011). These women are engaged in what Harris refers to as "everyday politics", not politics in the traditional sense, but are still learning to be citizens, occupying public space, and discussing what is important to them (Harris, 2011). Though some argue that this

engagement online may serve as a stepping stone to more traditional involvement, Harris encourages meeting these young women where they are now and molding politics to fit these individuals.

Herman's article (2014) looked specifically at several different hashtag movements to evaluate the tactics used by each of the hashtags and determined its success. Both #Kony2012 and #BringBackOurGirls raised awareness and forced governments to address these specific issues, but for the general public, defining goals and objectives was too difficult. No solutions were offered, and no one knew what the next steps were. These were both early examples of "slactivism", "arm-chair activism", or "clicktivism" where many people were involved in the conversation, but not much was achieved. On the other hand, the #YesAllWomen hashtag was wildly successful because it allowed users to participate in a shared narrative, and exposed the universality of women's experiences with sexism, discrimination, misogyny, and violence. This shared narrative concept is echoed in other studies.

Chang's 2010 study applied the diffusion of innovation theory to hashtag adoption. Chang claims that "Twitter hashtag adoption is a unique form of folksonomy since the initiating adaptors of the hashtag can be viewed as innovators and they attract or influence another group of users, namely imitators, to conform [to] the same hashtag" (Chang, 2010, p. 3). Additionally, Chang proposes applying the Bass Forecasting model, which details the adoption process of an innovation and the conversation between early adaptors and potential adaptors, to more specifically evaluate the "hashtag life cycle" (Chang, 2010, p. 4). Using this model would allow marketers and other researchers to determine how successful a hashtag will be, and for how long.

Studies about Twitter usage have been conducted by researchers across the globe, focusing on many different regions, not just the United States. In the Middle East, social media is especially liberating for women and many studies have focused specifically on the role of social media in these countries. The study written by Agarwal, et al. (2015) focuses on two different movements: the “Women to Drive” movement from Saudi Arabia, and the “Sexual Harassment” movement that has slowly grown to include the entire Middle Eastern region. The study examined Twitter postings and blogs and coded each of them based on what language the piece or tweet was written in (either English or Arabic), if it was user created or a repost/retweet, what time and from where was the post created, and who was posting the item. This information was then compared between the two causes to determine if they were cooperating or if there was mutual support for each of the causes.

The study found that Twitter was the most popular platform for the movements to gain and organize supporters, and that supporters of one movement typically supported the other as well (Agarwal, et. al. 2015). The most interesting finding from this study concerned the language of hashtags. The study determined that a hashtag written in Arabic was most likely to be applied to a post or tweet concerning local factors and would draw local support (Agarwal, et. al. 2015). A hashtag written in English, though, would draw transnational support including support from other human rights and women’s rights organizations (Agarwal, et. al. 2015).

Another study concerning women in the Middle East was published by M. Odine (2013) that discusses the use of social media in a broader sense and how it may affect other aspects of life for Arab women through the use of the hypodermic needle, two-step

flow, and agenda setting theories. The article claims that social media is one of the only places that these women do not constantly feel discriminated against, so they use these platforms to speak out and to connect to and encourage one another (Oline, 2013). This article also claims that the continued empowerment of women through social media will enact a sort of domino effect because if the women continue to feel empowered online, then they will begin to seek out education, and then assume higher positions within communities and eventually become valuable contributors to society in all facets (Oline, 2013).

Carr and Cowen focused on a “Bedroom Tax” issue that arose in Britain in 2014. The study conducted phone interviews with four major influencers who were passionate about the bedroom tax issue which involved a reduction in housing benefits provided to individuals due to the “under-occupation of a property in the social sector” (Carr, 2016, p. 419). Carr and Cowen found that the best hashtags were developed organically among users who cared about the topic and were not directed by a politician or information officer (Carr, 2016). Additionally, Twitter essentially “flatten[ed] power structures and spatial imaginations” so that users spoke more freely about the issue (Carr, 2016, p. 441).

Wendy Davis’ Filibuster and the Texas Senate Bill 5

In 2013, a bill was introduced during a special session of the Texas State Legislature that required women’s health clinics that offered abortion services to comply with new regulations concerning hospital admission privileges along with many building codes (Mildenburg, 2013). Proponents of the bill argued that these regulations would make the procedure safer for women, while opponents argued that the bill was a thinly

veiled attempt to restrict women's access to the procedure in general. Most of the 42 clinics operating in Texas would either have to stop offering the service, close their doors, or complete costly renovations to comply with the new code (Mildenburg). Of the 42 clinics, only five met the guidelines the bill proposed. Opponents of the bill claimed that closing this number of clinics in a state as large as Texas placed an undue burden on women seeking abortion services (Mildenburg). Senator Wendy Davis stepped up in a big way to combat this bill. Davis attempted to filibuster the bill on June 25, 2013 and after 11 hours was unsuccessful when the Legislature voted to approve the bill late that night (Weber, 2013). In fact, the bill was voted on at 12:02 a.m., essentially ruling the vote inadmissible because the session legally must end at midnight (Weber, 2013). It was unclear for some time whether the bill had been passed or if the vote was considered inadmissible for some time after, but the legislature conceded that the bill did not pass around 3 a.m. (Weber, 2013). An additional special session was called, and the bill was voted on and approved shortly after the filibuster on July 12, 2013 (Smith, Aaronson, and Luthra, 2013). This bill and filibuster attracted national attention, so unsurprisingly there were a few studies that were directly related to this event.

Stevenson's (2014) study was conducted to find who was tweeting about the event and where they were located. The study first looked at any hashtag associated with the bill or in support of or opposed to Wendy Davis that was used more than five times (Stevenson, 2014). In total the study found 1.66 million tweets were posted about the event between June 19th and July 14th of 2013 (Stevenson, 2014). After locations were found for each of the tweets, the locations were put on a map both the United States and of Texas. The results showed that Texans sent 48.8% of the tweets, and the majority of

the remaining tweets were generated from the rest of the United States (Stevenson 2014).

Another study that correlates directly to the study proposed below was written as a master's thesis by L. Garcia (2014) titled "The Revolution May Be Tweeted: Digital Social Media, Contentious Politics, and the Wendy Davis Filibuster" (Garcia, 2014). This study focused on the communities of supporters that were formed from the event and how they were formed, despite geographical distance and differences from the individual users within the community. Garcia claimed that members of these communities use social media to bring up new points of view that may not be discussed through mainstream media and create new discussions around counter points (Garcia, 2014, p. 13). These communities also lend context to the event and helps the users unite through a shared narrative (Garcia, 2014). These communities were only found among the supporters, and not found within either the opposing or neutral groups. Garcia took a case-study approach and analyzed tweets collected from news articles and comments posted on news articles and blogs concerning the filibuster. By using a qualitative data analysis software, content trends were labeled. Garcia found that a shared visual and textual language by using hashtags and popular images was prevalent and helped to bring the digital community together despite geographic distances (Garcia, 2014).

Following the passing of the bill, Gerdt, et al. (2016), surveyed women to find out what actual impact the bill had on women seeking these types of services. Researchers distributed a survey through clinics still providing abortion services to women as they were in the waiting room prior to receiving care. Respondents were then broken into two groups: those whose closest clinic had been closed due to the bill, and those whose closest clinic remained open. The study found that the average distance a

woman traveled to the clinic increased by 20 miles between April 2013 and July 2014. Additionally, respondents whose nearest clinic had closed reported an increased perception of hardship in order to receive the care, meaning they had to take more time off of work, it cost more money because they had to stay somewhere overnight, inability to schedule the type of termination they wanted or having to schedule services later than they would like.

Women's Health Care, Pro-life and Pro-choice Arguments

Though the topic of abortion is a touchy and complex subject, it is important to understand the arguments on each side. Pro-life supporters stand against abortion, while pro-choice supporters fight for the woman's right to choose to carry the child to term.

Murchison's (2016) article argues that the reason this topic is so complex is because it is not a political issue, but a moral one and references recurring themes in arguments both for and against abortions like mortality, life and personhood, and religion (Murchison, 2016). He argues that politicians are trying to address these themes without taking their own morality into consideration, and thus we are at a never-ending stalemate (Murchison, 2016). These themes may recur in tweets that are sent using the hashtags #StandWithWendy and #SitDownWendy in support of and opposed to the filibuster.

Whitmore proposes in a 1996 opinion piece that both sides begin to work together toward common goals. Some of these goals include a need for better prenatal care, to somehow reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, and to deliver aid to drug-addicted pregnant women (Whitmore, 1996).

Other studies focus more on the current atmosphere of reproductive health in

America. In the commentary by Zucker (2014), the American view of pregnancy and childbirth has been “medicalized”. The article claims that the current healthcare system is sexist, racist, and classist, which explains why so many U.S. women experience die from complications in childbirth though the United States spends more money on healthcare per capita than any other country in the world (Zucker, 2014). This piece also suggests that due to a lack of resources and other pressures, American women do not have the “choice” that neoliberalism tends to describe in women’s care, especially minority women.

Australian Caro (2014) claims in her opinion piece that this connection via social media is extremely important for women, despite any type of backlash that may be received. Caro says that there is a fear in all parts of the world because women can now connect and join together in ways that they haven’t been able to before, which should lead to more activism and equality between the sexes. She also claims that the world is still stuck in the old dichotomy, classifying women as either the “angel” or the “whore” with no middle ground, which makes navigating life as a woman very difficult. Caro claims that it is important for woman to continue to speak out against injustice and band together via social media so that this thought process can begin to change (Caro, 2014).

The previous research has found that the uses and gratifications theory is a viable theory to apply to Twitter usage through multiple studies. Studies focusing on specific hashtags and events, as well as multiple articles and opinion pieces, have asserted that social media usage is imperative to the advancement of women due to the visibility they offer each cause and the ability to connect with like-minded individuals across the world. Additionally, studies concerning Twitter and hashtag usage by the general public (not just

women) have continuously revealed themes of connectedness and a shared narrative between users. Particular to this event, this shared narrative theme has been revealed in tweets from news outlets and comments on news stories concerning the filibuster.

None of the studies, however, have compared multiple shared narratives, or have detailed what exactly is included in the narrative. This study will look more in-depth into the three attitudes that separate individuals regarding the filibuster and how these attitude groups differ. Specifically, this study will investigate the different levels of engagement within each group, and the different types of content shared by each group.

Research Questions

Based on the gaps in the previous research, this study's research questions were developed. The questions are listed below.

RQ1: Is there a difference in the levels of engagement between users who support the filibuster and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the types of content shared by users who support the filibuster and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

The following chapter discusses definitions associated with these research questions and the methodology this study used to answer these questions.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Texas Senate Bill 5 of 2013 was surrounded by conflict almost immediately. Pro-choice proponents argued that the bill would be detrimental to a woman's right to choose to carry her child to term and would make it significantly more difficult for some women to receive abortion services in addition to general women's health services. Proponents of the bill argued that the restrictions imposed would make the process safer for women, and more humane for the fetus. Senator Wendy Davis took a stand, literally, to fight against the bill and block the vote to pass it. Davis's filibuster of the bill drew a national audience. The popular social media platform, Twitter, quickly became a main channel for discussion of the filibuster denoted by the use of several hashtags. Proponents of the bill argue that the stipulations included would protect the health of women, but the opposition argued that the bill was really meant to restrict access to abortions and important medical care for women (Mildenberg and Deprez, 2013).

The filibuster attracted hundreds of thousands of tweets during the week following the event (June 26 – July 3, 2013) (Phillips, 2016). News outlets, elected officials, and unaffiliated individuals all joined the conversation. The content varied greatly between the tweets and presented every emotion from anger to humor.

Research Questions

The research questions that this study will answer are listed below:

RQ1: Is there a difference in the levels of engagement between users who support the filibuster and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the types of content shared by users who support the filibuster, and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

Content Analysis

To assess the levels of engagement users exhibited and the types of content shared using the hashtags #StandWithWendy and #SitDownWendy and to determine the differences in content that each supporting group shared, this study conducted a content analysis of the tweets in the sample.

Sample

A data set of these tweets was located from University of North Texas Professor, Mark Phillips (Phillips, 2013). Phillips collected tweets for eight days following the filibuster (June 26 – July 3, 2013) which used a variety of hashtags including #PissedAtPerry, #SB5, #istandwithwendy, #sitdownwendy, #standwithwendy, and #txlege (Phillips). The hashtags #PissedAtPerry, #istandwithwendy, and #standwithwendy all seem to support the filibuster. The hashtag #sitdownwendy seems to be the only hashtag used strictly to oppose the cause. Both #SB5 and #txlege seem to be neutral hashtags, as #txlege is often used by news outlets to cover the legislature in general and #SB5 only refers to the specific bill.

Of these hashtags, the one with the overwhelmingly majority of tweets using the selected timeframe (June 26 – July 3, 2013) is #StandWithWendy with 210,805 tweets (Phillips). The only hashtag seemingly opposed to the filibuster is #SitDownWendy with 20,745 tweets (Phillips). Because #StandWithWendy has the largest number of tweets for the entire selection, and #sitdownwendy seems to be the only opposition in the discussion, these two hashtags are the focus of this study.

A random sampling of 250 tweets from each of the hashtags was selected using the same random integer generator. This number represents approximately ten percent of

the total tweets using the least popular hashtag, #SitDownWendy and so was used as a convenience sample for the #StandWithWendy hashtag as well. The sample then consisted of a total of 500 tweets.

Coding

A coding sheet was created to categorize tweets into the following categories: valence, levels of engagement, and types of content. Initially, 25 tweets were randomly selected from each hashtag using a random integer generator. These tweets were coded to test the coding sheet. In order to determine the themes, the entirety of the tweets containing either #StandWithWendy or #SitDownWendy were processed through Nvivo, a text analysis program, to generate a list of the most popular words used in each entry. Based on the results of this analysis as well as the pre-test conducted by the researcher and another coder, it was determined that additional themes should be added. These themes were gender references and political parties or ideologies.

VALENCE

Because hashtags can be used at the discretion of the user, some users may have used a hashtag that seemed to support the filibuster, but they are actually opposed to the movement. For example, one user tweeted “#SitDownWendy and rest. I am so full of gratitude”. Though the hashtag used would seem to imply that the tweet would oppose the filibuster, in context, the tweet is clearly supporting the event. To control for this, tweets were coded for their valence toward the filibuster. In addition to the three categories of support and opposition, two other categories emerged during the preliminary coding: neutral and unclear. All category definitions are listed below.

- Support:** Defined by the use of words that are considered positive in reference to the filibuster or Wendy Davis (ex: hero, good, great, keep it up, inspire, etc.) or words that are considered negative in valence toward the Texas Senate, the bill, or Rick Perry.
- Opposition:** Defined by the use of words that are considered negative in reference toward Wendy Davis, the filibuster, or abortion (ex: murder, “abortion hurts women”, right to life, etc.) or words that are positive toward the Texas Senate or the bill.
- Neutral:** Tweets that did not use clearly positive or clearly negative words were classified as neutral. For example, “A sit-in is starting at the capital”, lacks either positive or negative wording.
- Unclear:** Tweets that were extremely difficult to categorize as either

supporting or opposing the event were labeled as unclear.

Most of these examples were caused by Twitter API cutting off part of the end of the tweet, so there is no way to be sure what the user intended to say.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Levels of engagement refers to the interaction the valence group (support, opposed, or neutral) had within itself. The engagement that was measured here was between members of the same group, meaning supporters engaging with supporters, or opposition engaging with other members of the opposition. This was not intended to measure how each group interacted or engaged with other groups. Both the numbers of retweets and favorites were recorded.

TYPES OF CONTENT

Tweets were additionally coded for types of content included. Types of content were broken into three main categories: Retweets, original content, or a combination; Commentary, Non-commentary, or both; and Visuals and Hyperlinks.

Retweets or Original Content

Retweets (RTs): The tweet which include “RT” within the tweet and include no other information outside of the quotation marks.

Original Content: The tweet did not contain an “RT”.

Combination: The tweet included “RT” within the tweet and additional content was included outside of the quotation marks of the RT.

Commentary or Non-commentary

- Commentary:** The tweet focused on the individual's reaction to the event. For example, a tweet that read, "Thank God I am not working in downtown Austin today. But just to voice my political opinion, #SitDownWendy #ProLife" was considered commentary because an opinion was expressed.
- Non-commentary:** Tweet that does not include some type of opinion. An example of a non-commentary tweet would be, "In many euro countries, you can't get an abortion past 12 weeks." The tweet has no opinion, and seems to state fact, though the validity of the statement is not of importance.
- Both:** Any tweet that seems to contain both fact and opinion. One tweet read, "60% of Women in the US oppose 2nd trimester abortions 80% oppose 3rd trimester. 20 week abortion = UNACCEPTABLE." Because the first part of the tweet seems to present verifiable statistics, and because the end of the tweet clearly contains opinion, it would have been coded as both.

Visuals and Hyperlinks

Because this particular data set displays the data in an excel spreadsheet and not in a web browser, the tweet content does not automatically display any picture, gif, video, or hyperlink in the same way that a tweet would show the imbedded content. Hence, the researcher had to manually enter any hyperlink or code into a web browser to display the content.

- Contained visuals:** The link returned an image, gif, or video.
- Hyperlinks:** The link brought up a separate webpage and not a lone image. In some cases, Twitter may display a “rich link” that will include an image found on the hyperlink within the tweet. However, if the address contained in the tweet is at all associated with a separate web page and not an individual image, it was still coded as “containing a hyperlink”.
- Undetermined address:** Because these tweets were published more than three years ago now, some images may have been deleted or hyperlink pages may no longer be active. If the link could not be loaded for any reason, the tweet was coded as containing an “undetermined address”.
- No image or hyperlink:** The tweet did not contain any type of web address or hyperlink.

Themes

Finally, tweets were coded for the abstract themes that the content contained. To determine which themes might appear in the results, themes that were central to the pro-choice and pro-life sides of the argument were included. These themes included religion, safety, rights, gender references and political parties/ideologies.

- Religion:** The tweet includes a reference to a specific religious belief system, denomination, or deity. Examples of belief systems include Christianity, Judaism, Agnosticism, Islam,

Atheism, etc. Denominations could include any of the smaller denominations of churches such as Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Orthodox Judaism, Greek Orthodox, Sunni, or Shia. Deity includes figures such as God, Allah, Jesus, Christ, and Mohammed.

Safety:

The tweet uses words such as “safe”, “safety”, “dangerous”, “harmful”, or “unsafe”. It does not matter what the word is in reference to. One tweet may reference the safety of the procedure itself. Another tweet may reference the danger of letting government regulate these services. In any case that these words are used, the tweet will be labeled as containing this theme.

Rights:

Both the pro-choice and pro-life sides of the abortion argument discuss rights to some extent, though different rights are more important to each side. A tweet will be classified as containing the “rights” theme if the words “right(s)”, “ability”, “deserve”, or “power” are used within the text.

Gender References:

The text analysis revealed that many of the tweets used the words or variations of the words “men” and “women”. A tweet was considered to have referenced gender roles when using the words, men or man, women or woman, and feminine or masculine.

Political Parties/Ideologies: The analysis also showed repeated references to Republicans and the GOP, but the words Democrats, democratic, and liberal did not appear in the top used words. This theme was created to address any tweet that may have referenced a political ideology, regardless of which ideology it might express. Tweets that included references to either of the major parties or minor parties and their ideologies would fall into this category. Trigger words for this classification included Democrat, democratic, Republican, GOP, liberal, conservative, the green party, and independent.

Solidarity: Tweets that demonstrated that the user not only supported the filibuster but also identified with the cause or with Davis were coded in the Solidarity theme. Words like “we”, “us”, and “all women” were trigger words.

Multiple themes: If at any time there was more than one theme present, these tweets were classified as containing multiple themes.

4. RESULTS

In 2013, the Texas Senate threatened to pass a bill known as Senate Bill 5. The name is unassuming, but the debate that it sparked was intense and historic. The bill required clinics and doctors who provided abortion services to have admitting privileges to nearby hospitals and to meet a laundry list of building codes, or to close their doors. Proponents of the bill claimed that these requirements were proposed to keep everyone as safe as possible, while others claimed that the bill was targeting abortion providers in an effort to make the service less accessible. Senator Wendy Davis took a stand for pro-choice sympathizers and attempted a 13-hour filibuster of the bill. After 11 hours, the Senate shutdown the filibuster on a parliamentary procedure technicality, but other pro-choice senators were successful in postponing the vote for the additional two hours.

The filibuster earned thousands of tweets during the eight days after its completion featuring multiple hashtags. This study, a content analysis, focused on the hashtags #StandWithWendy because it gained the majority of tweets, and #SitDownWendy, because it was the only hashtag that appeared to oppose the filibuster. A sample of 500 tweets were coded for valence, levels of engagement, and types of content shared to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a difference in the levels of engagement between users who support the filibuster and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the types of content shared by users who support the filibuster and users who are opposed to the filibuster?

As the preliminary coding began, a third category of neutral users became clear, so it was added to the study. The majority of tweets (406) analyzed were supporters of

the bill, followed by neutral tweets (41), and those opposed to the bill (24). There were 32 unclear tweets which were not considered. The remaining sample size was 468 tweets.

It is interesting that tweets opposing the filibuster were so few, even though half of the sample came from the #SitDownWendy hashtag which was understood to be the hashtag created by the opposition. During the preliminary coding, it became clear that the hashtag was created during the filibuster, so it was earlier in its process of adoption than the #StandWithWendy hashtag. Also, it seems that the hashtag was taken over or “hijacked” by supporters, which seems to be a unique phenomenon that hasn’t been seen in other hashtags researched in previous studies. This phenomenon is further discussed in the Discussion and Conclusions chapter.

RQ1: Levels of Engagement

The levels of engagement were determined by the number of favorites and retweets each group had. Supporters exhibited the highest levels of engagement, though retweets were much more popular than favorites. Results are presented in Table 1 below. Retweets ranged from zero to 12,624 The tweet with the highest number of retweets was originally sent from Barack Obama’s account, and said:

“RT @BarackObama: Something special is happening in Austin tonight:

<http://t.co/RpbnCbO6zw> #StandWithWendy.”

Table 1: Levels of Engagement

Groups	Favorites		Retweets	
	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest
Support	0	13	0	12624
Opposed	0	1	0	55
Neutral	0	3	0	473

The link included in this tweet took users to a livestream of the filibuster. Favorites ranged from zero to 13.

Opponents had the lowest levels of engagement. Retweets ranged from zero to 55, and favorites ranged from zero to one. The most popular of the retweets was posted by an individual and did not contain a hyperlink or image of any kind, but attempted to juxtapose the #StandWithWendy hashtag with the rights of an unborn daughter:

“RT @DLoesch: #standwithwendy but #dontstandwithunbornbabygirls.”

Finally, neutral retweets ranged from zero to 473, and favorites ranged from zero to 3. Unsurprisingly, the most retweeted neutral tweet originated with a news organization, the Huffington Post:

“RT @HuffPostPol: This Texas Democrat is speaking for 13 hours straight to kill an anti-abortion bill <http://t.co/coXsTrGojw> #StandWithWendy.”

The link took users to an article by the Huffington Post about the filibuster, as it was taking place.

These results show that based on this sample, there is a difference in the levels of engagement between supporters of the filibuster, those opposed to the filibuster, and those who remained neutral. Supporters exhibited the highest level of engagement, neutral statements gained a much lower level of engagement, and opponents exhibited the lowest level. Amongst all groups, retweeting was much more popular than favoriting.

RQ2: Types of Content

The second research question surrounds the types of content included in each tweet, and asks if the types of content varied between the three groups. Several different subcategories of content were distinguished to fully evaluate the differences between the

groups.

Retweets, Original Content, or Both

Supporters retweeted content more often than writing their own content or adding their own content to a retweet. Of the 406 supporting tweets, 314 were strictly retweets. Further results are represented in Table 2. Some of the content made fun of some parts of the process, like the following tweet:

“RT @ggreeneva: What confuses Texas Republicans:

- 1) Women
- 2) Science
- 3) Clocks

#StandWithWendy” (Phillips, 2013?)

Other tweets called other supporters to action. Here’s an example:

“RT @AMomBlogs: Ladies we will not be told what to do with our own bodies!

RT to support #standwithwendy”.

Eighty-two tweets were solely original content and varied from a simple show of solidarity (“I #standwithwendy”) to more passionate commentary, such as:

“Is this 1973? Men & religion need to stay out of my uterus thank you.

#StandWithWendy.”

As seen in Table 2, only 7 tweets were retweets with original content added, like the following tweet:

“RT @chaneldubofsky: "check the tape so we don't make a mockery of the Texas Senate." Ha. HA. #sb5 #txlege #standwithwendy.”

Table 2: Retweets or Original Content

Groups	Retweet	Original Content	Both
Support	314	81	7
Oppose	13	10	1
Neutral	19	22	0

The opposition tweeted 24 times total. Thirteen of these were retweets, 9 were original content, and only one was a combination of the two. One of the most popular retweets is shown here:

“RT @lutheranlaura: Wendy Davis DOES NOT speak for me! #SB5
#saveallthebabies #saveallthewomen #sitdownwendy #txlege <http://t.co/17JI4tdklK>.”

The original content tweets typically reiterated why they supported the bill and opposed Davis’s filibuster:

“On July 1st, Texans will NOT #standwithwendy, they will vote to support LIFE for 5mos old BABIES instead of MURDER.”

In this tweet, July 1st refers to the following special legislative session that was called immediately following the filibuster. The only tweet that combined both retweet and original commentary is listed here:

“SO TRUE (sorry for yelling, it's just SO true) RT @scrowder: Abortion is human sacrifice at the altar of self. #StandWithWendy.”

Neutral tweets were sent 41 times, and did not follow the trend that supporters and opposition did in favoring retweets over original content. Instead neutral tweets favored original content, sending a total of 22 original tweets and only 19 retweets. One of the original content neutral tweets was:

“If you are by a computer and not watching this, you are missing incredible political theater #standwithwendy <http://t.co/PTWhNIogdz>” -

The link in this tweet takes users to The Texas Tribune website which was providing a live feed of the event. The following is an example of a retweet that was considered neutral:

“RT @MattHowerton: #SitDownWendy trending on Twitter as Governor Perry calls for 2nd special legislative session.”

There were no examples of neutral tweets that consisted of a retweet and additional original content.

Commentary, Information Sharing, or Both

One of the issues that bubbled to the forefront of discussion surrounding the filibuster was the fact that mainstream media did not cover the filibuster as adequately as the people would have liked (if at all). So, it was important to analyze how much information sharing was taking place on Twitter as a form of self-coverage. Twitter is a personal micro-blogging site, though, so unsurprisingly, the majority of tweets sent were commentary instead of information sharing.

Supporters sent 364 strictly commentary tweets, five information sharing tweets, and 20 tweets that contained both information sharing and commentary elements.

Similarly, those opposed to the bill sent 20 commentary tweets, one information sharing tweet, and two tweets that combined the two. Neutral tweets followed a different model.

These tweets were mostly information or fact sharing (26), with 13 tweets staying strictly commentary and two tweets combining commentary and information sharing (see Table 3).

Table 3: Commentary and Information Sharing

Groups	Commentary	Information Sharing	Both
Support	364	5	20
Oppose	20	1	2
Neutral	13	26	2

Visuals and Hyperlinks

Though other social media like Instagram and Snapchat rely almost entirely on visuals, Twitter gives individuals the option to add a visual, but does not require it.

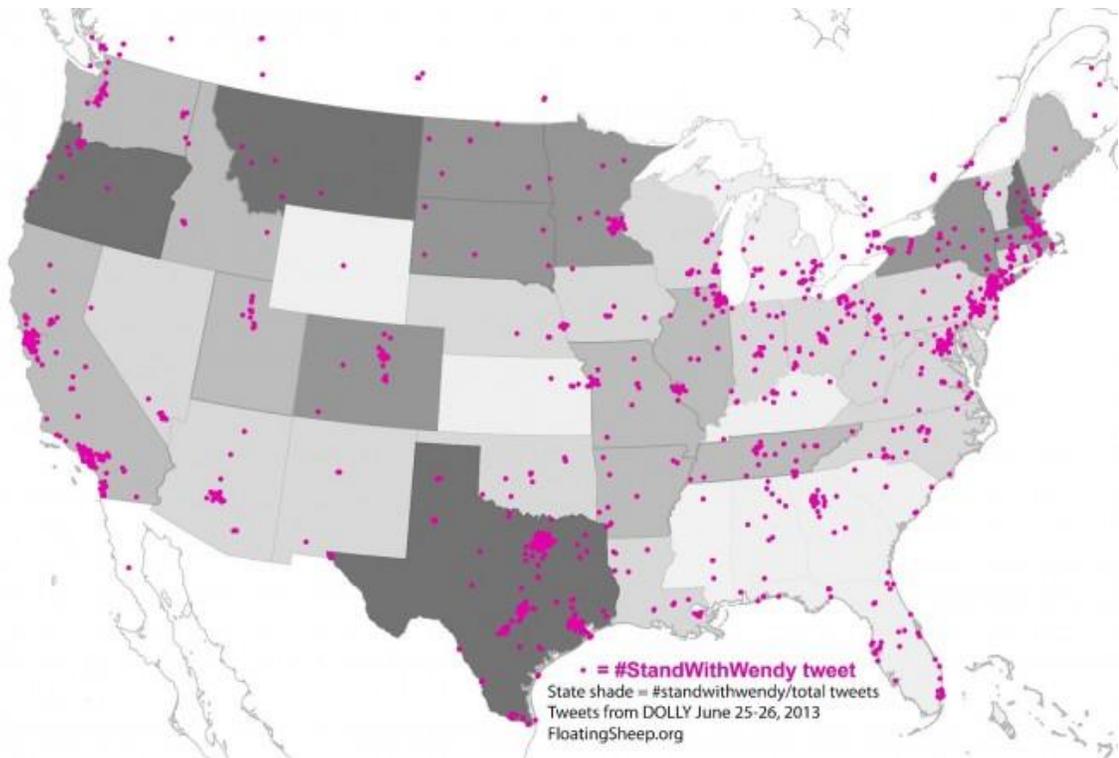
Visuals can include infographics, gifs, video content, or traditional still images.

Hyperlinks are also an option, but not required, and can link to any other content on the web.

Among all of the groups, it was most common to not include any visual or hyperlink at all. Including a visual was about equally as common as including a hyperlink for each of the groups.

Supporters included a visual 7.39% of the time. A specific hyperlink was included in 3.69% of the tweets, and an undetermined address was included in 3.69% of the tweets. The remaining 84.48% of the tweets did not include either a visual or a hyperlink.

One common hyperlink supporters tweeted was to a Wired article that included graphics about the geographic distribution of people interacting with the #StandWithWendy hashtag.



(Wattercutter, 2013)



Figure 1: Photo from #StandWithWendy data set (Phillips, 2013)

One common visual that supporters used was a picture of people attending the rally wearing orange, and holding an umbrella that said “If only my uterus could shoot bullets, then it wouldn’t need regulation.”

Opponents tweeted 24 times and included one visual, and one undetermined address. The remaining 22 tweets did not include a visual or link. No opposing tweets contained a

specific hyperlink.

The tweet that included the image read “Wendy Davis DOES NOT speak for me!
 #SB5 #saveallthebabies #saveallthewomen #sitdownwendy #txlege.”

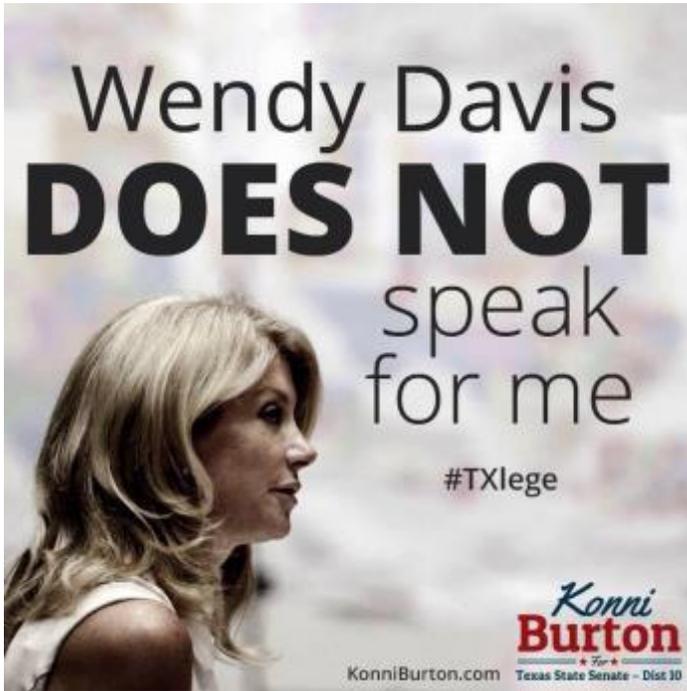


Figure 2: Photo from #SitDownWendy data set (Phillips, 2013).

There were a total of 41 neutral tweets. Of these, 11 (26.83%) included a visual and seven (12.07%) included a hyperlink. There were no tweets that contained an undetermined address. The remaining 23 tweets (56.10%) did not include any visual or hyperlink.

Table 4: Visuals and Hyperlinks

Groups	Visual	Hyperlink	Undetermined Address	No Link
Support	30	15	15	343
	7.39%	3.69%	3.69%	84.48%
Opposed	1	0	1	22
	4.17%	0.00%	4.17%	91.67%
Neutral	11	7	0	23
	26.83%	17.07%	0.00%	56.10%

Including a visual or hyperlink also affected the levels of engagement users demonstrated with that tweet. In Table 5 below, the results show that a tweet that included a hyperlink was less likely to be favorited, but only by a very small margin. Tweets that included a visual or hyperlink were much more likely to be retweeted than

those that did not contain these elements. The average number of retweets received for a tweet that included these elements was 1,248.02 retweets, while a tweet without these elements averaged only 4.80 retweets.

Table 5: Average Engagement Levels for Tweets Containing Visuals or Hyperlinks

Engagements	With Visuals or Hyperlinks	Without Visuals or Hyperlinks
Favorites	.11	.28
Retweets	1248.02	4.80

Themes

The final subcategory for types of content addressed which themes were included in the tweets. Central arguments to both the pro-choice and pro-life were originally included like safety, rights, and religion. Gender references and political ideologies were added as topics following a text analysis of the tweets using NVivo. As final coding began, the final theme-“solidarity” emerged from the tweets. There was also a category for multiple themes occurring in a single tweet and an “other” category for tweets that did not fit into any of the predetermined categories. All results are detailed in Table 5.

Just over a third of supporting tweets fell into the “other” category, making it the most common theme for supporters (34.2%). Tweets in this category covered a wide range of topics. This tweet talked about the lack of mainstream media coverage:

“RT @BitchMedia: Last night, people tweeted #standwithwendy 4,835 times PER MINUTE. Where was the mainstream media coverage? <http://t.co/W1v?>.”

Other tweets in the other category made humorous comments about the filibuster. This tweet references a memorable scene from the Lord of the Rings series where one character blocks a villain from chasing the protagonist across a chasm and yells “you

shall not pass”.

“RT @DrJenGunter: At midnight I want Wendy Davis to bang a gavel and shout, "You shall not pass" #sb5 #standwithwendy”

It was also very common for supporters to include multiple themes in the tweet (29.0%). Themes most often included together were gender references and political ideology or gender references and rights. This tweet featured gender references, political parties, and solidarity.

“RT @PersephoneC: #sitdownwendy & rest a bit, millions of us women are standing for you and our daughters. We saw what you tried to do GOP” (Phillips, 2013)

The third most common theme for supporters was solidarity with 14.4% of the supporting tweets. It is surprising that these tweets didn’t make up more of the supporters tweets, but this may have been attributed to solidarity being combined with another theme most times. The following tweet showed only the solidarity theme:

“RT @JustifiedBagel: #SitDownWendy, you've earned some rest. We've got your back in the meantime.”

Political ideologies followed with 8.2% of the supporting tweets. This tweet came from the #SitDownWendy group and made fun of the Republicans “rebranding” to become a more progressive party that is in-touch with its constituents.

“RT@AndySuchorski: So right-wingers actually started the #sitdownwendy hashtag. How's your party rebranding going again?? #LOLGOP.”

This type of commentary was common for tweets that mentioned political parties. They often referred to either Republicans or Democrats and criticized their approach to the issue.

The next most common theme for supporters was gender references at 7.2%. It is interesting that there is such a low percentage of these tweets too because gender references are almost inherent in a topic concerning a woman's body. Again, this may be explained by the multiple themes category. One example of such a tweet is listed below:

“Hey, women of Texas #RICKtheDICK Perry is determined to get all up in your lady bits. Don't let him! #SB5 #FeministArmy #standwithwendy.”

As shown in Table 5, rights was only a theme for supporters 6.5% of the time, which again is surprising for a theme that seems to be inherent to the topic. One short and simple example of a supporting tweet that featured the rights theme was:

“My body, my prerogative. #standwithwendy.”

This tweet references the woman's right to bodily autonomy, a key argument to the pro-choice viewpoint.

Safety was only referenced 3 times out of 403 for a total of 0.7%, and religion was not referenced at all. The theme was not popular with supporters, but the following tweet was one of the few examples:

“RT @AddisonTice: Unable to pass SB5 Texas Reuplicans [sic] console one-another [sic] by killing their 500th inmate, also a woman. #SitDownWendy #backwa?”

In this tweet, the reference to killing an inmate qualified the tweet as the safety theme. Additionally, this tweet was cut off by Twitter API because it was more than the 140 characters allotted after the retweet information was added at the front. This is evident by the word being incomplete (though the word is most likely “backward”) and the question mark at the end of the tweet.

Table 6: Content Themes

Groups	Religion	Safety	Rights	Gender References	Political Ideologies or Parties	Solidarity	Multiple	Other
Support (percent of support tweets)	0	3	26	29	33	58	117	138
	0%	0.7%	6.5%	7.2%	8.2%	14.4%	29.0%	34.2%
Oppose (percent of opposing tweets)	0	9	4	0	2	0	6	2
	0%	39.1%	17.4%	0%	8.7%	0%	26%	8.7%
Neutral (percent of neutral tweets)	3	0	1	1	5	4	0	27
	7.3%	0%	2.4%	2.4%	12.2%	9.8%	0%	65.9%
Totals (percent of total tweets)	3	12	31	30	40	62	86	177
	0.6%	3.2%	6.6%	6.4%	8.5%	31.2%	18.4%	37.8%

People opposed to the filibuster most commonly included the safety theme in their tweets 39.1%, which follows logically because is one of the themes central to the pro-life arguments, and the pro-life group would oppose the filibuster. One such example is shown here:

“@SarahKSilverman Yep #standwithwendy Let’s keep rocking the killing of healthy 5 and 6-month-old healthy babies in their mothers’ stomachs.”

This tweet was sent by celebrity comedian Sarah Silverman, and was written in a sarcastic tone. Obviously the speaker and the individual who retweeted the content did not approve of the filibuster.

It was also very common for users to include multiple themes in these tweets, with 26% of opposing tweets featuring more than one theme. The most common themes paired together were rights and safety, though there were only two instances of this

pairing. One such tweet read as follows:

“RT @Dloesch: #standwithwendy but #dontstandwithunbornbabygirls?”

This tweet seems to implore that baby girls are women too, and should be fought for as well. This type of statement is common with pro-life ideology and argues that the right to life supersedes other rights, such as bodily autonomy. Accordingly, rights were also the third most common theme for the opposition with 17.4% of all opposing tweets. The following tweet talked specifically about the right to life, and also referenced Senate rules that governed the way the filibuster was conducted:

“RT @pharris610: So gallery protesters have no respect for unborn human life or senate rules. Surprised? #nope #sitdownwendy #txlege #sb5 #?”

The next most common theme for opponents were “other themes” with 8.7%. One of the tweets was as simple as the hashtag itself, and the other suggested preventative measures that would make abortions unnecessary:

“How about preventing unwanted pregnancies & educating about birth control? #SitDownWendy #science #criticalThinking #keepItInYourPants.”

Gender references, political ideology, solidarity, and religion were not referenced at all in tweets opposing the filibuster. The lack of references to religion is surprising because churches have been so active in the fight against abortions.

Neutral tweets most frequently fell into the “other themes” category with 65.9% of the neutral tweets. Several of these tweets were either observations or questions concerning the parliamentary procedure taking place around the filibuster. One such tweet read:

“Fascinating display of Roberts Rules of Order in Texas right now

<http://t.co/vaHrK9Azd1> #StandwithWendy.”

The hashtag took users to what was a live video stream of the filibuster.

Political parties were referenced in 12.2% of the neutral tweets, including the following tweet which linked to a MSNBC story about redistricting:

“RT @DafnaLinzer: GOP tried to prevent @WendyDavisTexas reelection. She was saved by Section 5 of VRA <http://t.co/0dNY8vrayl> #standwithwendy.”

Solidarity was referenced in 9.8% of the neutral tweets, often to show that others had expressed solidarity with the cause. One such tweet is below.

“1000s of people already at the capitol making their voices heard. More coming every minute. #KBv2 #standwithwendy.”

Religion was referenced in 7.3% of the neutral tweets, but were indirect and did not serve as arguments either for or against the bill, only commentary for entertainment. One of these tweets makes fun of the parliamentary procedure game that Democrats and Republicans were playing:

“At this moment a budding Christian rock band is changing their name to Motion To Table. #StandWithWendy.”

Both rights and gender references were included only once each, at 2.4% of the neutral tweets. Safety was not mentioned at all, and never was more than one theme included in a neutral tweet.

Overall, the “other themes” category was the most popular between all three of the groups at 37.8% of the total 468 tweets. When attempting to break out the “other” category into additional categories, the researcher found that there were so many smaller themes with only a few references each (Education: 3; Adoption: 3; Humor: 5) that it was

most beneficial to keep leave “other” as its own catch-all theme. Again, this is a symptom of the uncontrollability of Twitter and once a hashtag is created, no one has control over what users contribute to the conversation. This is evidenced in the variety of topics included in each hashtag, and in the highjacking of the #SitDownWendy hashtag by supporters early in the dataset.

Solidarity was the second most popular with 31.2%, carried by the supporting and neutral groups. 18.8% of the overall tweets contained more than one theme. The most popular themes included in the “multiple” category were gender references, political ideologies, and rights, followed by solidarity, safety, and religion. The results for the most common themes may be a little deceiving when considered on their own. When combined with the results for which themes were include in the multiple theme category, the results are more in-line with what was expected. Political Parties and Ideologies and Gender references were most common for supporters. When combined, with each of the individual references, political parties and ideologies were referenced a total of 121 times. Gender was referenced a total of 127 times. In total, these make for 61.08% of the supporters tweets. These results are shown in Table 6.

Table 7: Multiple Theme Frequencies

Groups	Religion	Safety	Rights	Gender References	Political Parties/Ideologies	Solidarity
Support	2	2	29	98	88	26
Oppose	0	4	3	3	2	0
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0	0

Political Ideologies was the next most popular theme with 8.5% of the overall tweets, followed by rights at 6.6% and gender references at 6.4%. The safety theme made

up 3.2% of the tweets, followed by the religion theme, with 0.6%.

To answer RQ2, this study found that in some ways the content did vary between the groups that support, oppose, and are neutral to the filibuster, but in other ways it was the same.

Supporters and opponents both retweeted more than created original content. Neutral tweets, however, were more often original content. Similarly, supporters and opponents both wrote more commentary than information sharing tweets. In fact, supporters and opponents rarely sent information sharing tweets at all, but would only sometimes combine commentary and information. Neutral tweets were more often information sharing than commentary, and would rarely combine the two.

As far as including links go, all groups were most likely to send a tweet without any type of link or visual. Both the support and oppose groups were about equally as likely to send a tweet with a visual as they would with a hyperlink. Again, the neutral group stood apart here, and were more likely to send a tweet including a picture than they would a hyperlink.

Themes were the most varied type of content by group. For all three groups, “other themes” was the most prevalent category, however the remaining hierarchy of themes for each group was extremely varied. Supporters were more likely to send tweets containing multiple themes, followed by the solidarity theme. Opponents were more likely to send tweets referencing safety, followed by tweets with multiple themes. Finally, neutral tweets were more likely to reference political ideologies, followed by the solidarity theme.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The 2013 legislative session to debate and vote on the 2013 Senate Bill 5 was monumental. The proposed bill was painted as a TRAP law or targeted regulation of abortion providers, which required facilities providing abortions to adhere to the same standards as an ambulatory surgical center and required providers to have admitting privileges. The building standards required would require expensive renovations for the clinics to comply, and would cause many clinics to either stop offering the service or close their doors (Mildenberg, 2013). Additionally, gaining admitting privileges at hospitals is also difficult for doctor who do not typically admit patients, which these providers argued that they do not. At the time, there were 42 operating clinics in Texas, and only five met the guidelines (Mildenberg, 2013). Because of the size of Texas, this would force women to travel much farther distances and cause more hardship on the women to access not just abortion services, but a whole host of other well-women's services which would ultimately put Texas women's health at risk (Mildenberg). Proponents of the bill argued that the regulation was being put into place not to restrict access to the service, but to make the procedure as safe as possible (Mildenberg).

Individuals on both sides took to social media to air their opinions and make their voices heard. A variety of hashtags were used to show support of the bill, and support of Senator Wendy Davis, who had stepped forward as the pro-choice champion to oppose the bill and filibuster the vote (Mildenberg).

Davis filibustered the bill for 11 hours before the filibuster was terminated based on parliamentary procedure (Weber, 2013). Other Democrats continued to hold off a vote by asking questions and for argument clarification so that the final vote took place after

midnight. Though the bill was passed according to the votes, because the vote took place after midnight, the session was officially over, which rendered the vote null and void (Weber, 2013).

During the filibuster, hundreds of thousands of tweets were sent about the event from all over the world. Users tweeted in support, in opposition, and neutrally toward the filibuster, but used a variety of hashtags to reference the event. The data set used for this study contained hashtags relevant to the filibuster for the eight days following the filibuster. This study focused on the hashtag with the most responses (#StandWithWendy) and the hashtag that appeared to oppose the filibuster (#SitDownWendy).

Contributions

The uses and gratifications theory has been applied to Twitter before, and this study confirmed many of the previous findings. Kraft (2010) found that 47.1% of individuals use Twitter to find out what others think are important issues and 44.7% of individuals reported using Twitter for updated news, which these results support through the high number of engagements that all groups received. Even neutral tweets received a decent amount of engagement, though these tweets were often sharing facts about what was taking place at the capital. The high number of retweets this sample contained may also confirm that one of the reasons that individuals use Twitter is to connect with like-minded people, which seems to fulfill several of Ruggiero's gratifications (2000) including sociability, isolation, and involvement.

One of the strengths of this study, is that it contributes new information to the body of knowledge concerning Twitter usage. This study revealed that users shared

tweets to voice their opinion and included a variety of content like visuals, hyperlinks, and themes based on their opinions.

Multiple studies have applied the uses and gratifications theory to Twitter, in terms of time spent on Twitter and the connections users feel with followers (Chen, 2010), social identity and user groupings (Herdagdelen, 2013), and why individuals reported that they use Twitter (Kraft, 2010).

Studies applying the theory to Twitter are all relatively new since Twitter is only a little over 10 years old. None of these studies located, however, have specifically focused on the content of tweets shared in regards to the filibuster, therefore this study sought to fill that gap.

The resulting Twitter responses for this study are similar to the “twitterstorms” that Morello (2014) examined, however Morello found that hashtag activism did not translate into real world action (Morello, 2014). This study did not directly correlate hashtag activism to real world action either, though there were a handful of tweets that included an explicit call to action. Slacktivism, or the act of advocating for change online and not connecting that effort to real life may be addressed by adding a call to action that asks users to do something in real life like protest, attend a rally, vote, or contact their representatives.

This study also contributed by revealing a new phenomenon of hashtag hijacking. The #SitDownWendy hashtag being taken over by supporters again represents the uncontrollable nature of Twitter. The hashtag was hijacked relatively shortly after its creation, which may have contributed to how quickly it was taken over, and how few tweets this study had representing opponents. This is also interesting in light of the uses

and gratifications theory, as it begs the question, “what gratification did this hijacking provide?” In terms of Ruggiero’s gratifications, it may have served to mitigate his first gratification, threats. Supporters of the filibuster may have seen the #SitDownWendy hashtag as a threat and took it over to de-escalate the threat. It also may have served to gratify the “involvement”, “isolation”, and “sociability” gratifications because no single user could hijack the hashtag on his or her own, but many users had to work together to flood #SitDownWendy with a new type of message.

As Ratcliff (2017) found, there is a connection between individuals who identify as very religious, and a distrust of technology. Religion is also central to many pro-life arguments, and was one of the themes identified in the tweets in this sample. This finding may explain that the low number of opponents found in this sample size, as it is possible that because pro-lifers (who would oppose the filibuster) may be more religious, which may lead them to use technology and Twitter less than other, less religious groups.

The results of this study are important for organizations and lawmakers on either side of the abortion argument to know what is resonating with their constituents. According to this sample, supporters of the filibuster exhibited higher levels of engagement, neutral tweets exhibited a much lower level of engagement, and opponents exhibited much lower level of engagement. This may be because the opposition was not successfully spreading its message, and perhaps because its message was not crafted specifically for Twitter.

Regardless of viewpoint, tweets that contained hyperlinks or visuals averaged higher retweet levels than tweets that did not contain links or visuals. Also, some tweets contained a call to action to ask users to take the next step for their beliefs. Therefore,

campaigns and movements that want to build awareness and gain exposure should consider including one or all of these aspects.

Additionally, themes were important to the results. Carr and Cowen's study (2016) showed that Twitter allows users to speak more freely about issues, which could mean that the themes included are the most sincere to their beliefs. In this study, the "other themes" category was most common to all groups, which tells us that Twitter is highly individualistic. Once a topic becomes popular, individuals create their own tweets concerning the topic and organizations, lawmakers, companies, or other interest groups cannot control the topic from there. This is also evidenced in the "hijacking" of the #SitDownWendy hashtag by the pro-choice group, which is an interesting variation of results from Chang's 2010 study concerning hashtag adoption. The hashtag was intended for the pro-life group to speak out against Wendy Davis, but shortly after its creation, pro-choicers took it over to fill it with positive messages like the following:

"RT @KailiJoy: Yeah, #sitdownwendy. Right in the governor's chair."

News outlets and reporters should also take these results as somewhat reassuring because it shows that neutral tweets still showed a decently high level of engagement (473 retweets). This means that when reporters are in the field or news outlets are covering an event, adding a hashtag to their tweets can send the news directly to the people who care about the topic on all sides of the issue.

Overall, the most important take away from this study is a combination of all of the above. Marketers and causes concerned with these pro-choice and pro-life groups should do the following:

- 1) Embrace the individuality of Twitter and encourage users to tweet their own stories using the hashtag.
- 2) Include hyperlinks or visuals when possible.
- 3) Include a call to action to tell users specifically what they can do next.

These tactics encourage your supporters to retweet and share your message and to create and share their own messages about your cause. These tactics are similar to those suggested by Herman (2014) after the evaluation of several hashtag movements.

It seems that a scale of engagement levels has emerged from this study where favoriting and retweets are at the lowest levels of engagement because they take minimal effort. The next level would include creating original content because it requires a bit more effort from the individual, and then the highest level of engagement would be acting as a result of the messages seen on Twitter. Future studies should zero in on the highest level of engagement to provide more information on how to motivate individuals to engage at this level.

Though this exploratory study did contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning social media, the study also experienced a few limitations. First, the data set was limited to the eight days following the filibuster, and was limited in the selection of the hashtags. Future studies should expand the time period to include one week prior to the filibuster to track types of content shared leading up to the event. Also, additional hashtags should be evaluated. One hashtag that occurred in a few of the opposing tweets was #Stand4Life. Though this hashtag may never have been trending, researchers need to find a way to represent more of the opposition's voice. Additionally, distributing a survey to users that tweeted using one of the hashtags to assess motivations would add another

layer of data and self-reporting which could further explain how Twitter content connects to the uses and gratifications theory.

This study was also a subjective content analysis. It is suggested that future studies using the same categories and themes be performed using two or more coders to ensure validity. Also, because this event occurred in 2013, and because of how quickly the digital world moves, it is relevant to that time frame. Other similar studies ought to be performed using a similar but more recent events. One such event may be the 2016 Texas legislative session that voted to defund Planned Parenthood, or the 2017 reinstatement of the global gag rule by the Trump administration.

Finally, it is difficult to know who these Twitter users are. Only self-reported information was considered, which means that the information may not be correct and in many cases the information offered was clearly fictional (location listed as “anywhere and everywhere”, for example). Age, gender, and socio-economics were also not addressed. Using direct Twitter API data may be able to provide some of this additional information.

APPENDIX SECTION

Codebook

TWEET NUMBER _____ **SPAM** _____

User's location:

Texas Outside of Texas Non-descript No location

Hashtag Used:

#StandWithWendy #SitDownWendy

Engagement

_____ Number of favorites _____ Number of Retweets

Valence

Support Opposed Neutral Unclear

Types of Content

Retweet Original Content Both

Commentary Informational Both

Contains an Image Contains Hyperlink

Undetermined Address Neither

Themes

Religion Safety Rights Gender roles

Political Ideology/Parties Multiple Other

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