Borderless Publics:
Scandinavian participation in the
2016 American election via Twitter

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Master's Thesis in Nordic Media
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Winter 2018
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Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo
Abstract

The presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in 2016 played out not only across newspaper pages and television screens, but on Facebook walls, YouTube channels, and in Twitter feeds. Stories, memes, and videos from the unusual race were amplified through vast user networks, demonstrating that social media have become deeply embedded in politics and participatory practices. Yet the same affordances of online networks that facilitate citizen participation also open up participatory opportunities to another group that is not traditionally considered within the bounds of the national public sphere: non-citizens.

This quantitative study takes up the question of how these affordances are being used for transnational political participation by examining the use of Twitter by Scandinavians in the 2016 American election. Drawing on a massive keyword-based collection of tweets made during the run-up to the election, user metadata is analyzed to find users in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Over a quarter of a million tweets sent by these users are analyzed, looking at communicative patterns, use of language, media sharing, hashtag use, and attempts to interact with Americans – as well as the degree to which Americans interacted with Scandinavians. A combination of comparative analysis, content analysis, and network analysis is employed. The findings suggest that, while limited in overall numbers, Scandinavians actively participated in the American sphere through Twitter, often in ways very similar to Americans. Although most of these foreign users gained little traction within the American public sphere, the findings also show that those who did have transnational exchanges with Americans were disproportionately Trump-leaning, pointing to the use of Twitter for the formation of cosmopolitan nationalist networks.
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Acknowledgements

This thesis has been one of the richest learning experiences I have ever had, and to that I owe many thank yous to other people. First, an immense thank you to my adviser, Gunn Enli, for her encouragement and guidance, and for her confidence when I was lacking it. Steffen Krüger and Charles Ess for their respective classes, which together helped me think about social media and citizenship in a new light. Thank you to my dad, Tom Robinson, for his transnational advice and periodic reminders that history predates the internet. Also, Alex Robinson, my uncle, for saving me when I was in over my head in computer programming. Thank you to my mom, Barbara Robinson, for badly needed support in the final days of this project. A big thank you to Kristine Løkken Nilsen, my wife, for being my own personal Scandinavian reference point and for periodically asking reasonable questions like, “Does anyone actually use Twitter?” And finally, thanks to Kate Pashevich, my academic co-conspirator and an invaluable Russian influence.

Additionally, I would like to thank the Fritt Ord Foundation and the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Oslo for their financial support, which was critical to the technical infrastructure needed for this project.
Preface

This project began with an observation. In early 2016, as the presidential primaries were unfolding in spectacular fashion, I was on Facebook and noticed friends from different parts of the world sharing posts about the election. Much of what they were sharing was very similar: the same news sources, the same memes, the same videos. They were equally well-versed on Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton, and Donald Trump, Super Tuesday, and super delegates. In many ways, they were all doing the same things and experiencing the election in the same mediated fashion – except, of course, not all of them were citizens. Not only that, but as an American recently transplanted to Norway, I realized my own experience with my country’s election was not so different from that of the foreigners around me.

These observations crystallized into a research project after I read an article by John Hartley called *Silly Citizenship*, in which observed that the remix and DIY culture of the internet was turning politics into something more accessible to people not previously considered citizens. He was primarily interested in youth, but as the strange and fascinating presidential election continued, I saw that foreign citizens might also be participating in new ways.

But then I was sure I had misread the room. By the fall of 2016, European politics were in full swing to the right in the wake of the “migration crisis” in Europe, British voters had just chosen to leave the E.U., and at home, it was clear Trump had either tapped into or inspired a nationalist mood that stunned political experts. Here I was, reading about cosmopolitanism and global villages, while the words *alt-right, deplorables, and anti-globalist* entered the lexicon. As Nigel Farage would later declare, 2016 was the year “nation-state democracy made a comeback.” We were in a nation-state moment, not a cosmopolitan moment. Surely, no one cared if a bunch of foreigners were using social media to participate in the public sphere.

Of course, that has changed. Thanks to revelations about the efforts of the Russian government, foreign involvement has now become front and center in Western democracies. Cosmopolitanism and nationalism turned out to be connected in unexpected ways – in the news, as well as in the my own data. I did not anticipate how these two concepts would work in tandem in my own findings, making me see the relationship between two seemingly opposing forces. Ultimately, I believe the findings I present here do not paint the idea of “borderlessness” in either a utopian or dystopian tone, but make it clear that it is now an element of political discourse, and to the degree that something like a transnational public sphere can exist, it will likely be just as messy and imperfect as the domestic version.
Introduction

“Global cooperation, dealing with other countries, getting along with other countries is good. It’s very important. But there is no such thing as a global anthem, a global currency, or a global flag. This is the United States of America that I am representing. I’m not representing the globe.”

– President Donald J. Trump, Feb. 24, 2017 speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC)

“The [public realm] comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government. … Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.”

– Hannah Arendt (1958, pp. 199-200)

On Nov. 8, 2016, American voters elected Donald Trump the 45th president of the United States. That Tuesday was an act of political participation clearly delineated by borders and national citizenship. But the campaign over the preceding months had taken place on a global stage. The race, which unfurled over the course of more than a year, had attracted attention from around the world, unprecedented even for American elections (AP Global Media Services, 2016; Nord, Mancini, & Gerli, 2017). There were obvious reasons: Donald Trump, a wealthy businessman and reality TV star, faced off against Hillary Clinton, a former first lady once described as the “most famous woman in the world” (Parry-Giles, 2014, p. 24). Beyond name recognition, the race also offered dramatic representations of views on gender, race, world trade and treaties, religion, trust in democratic institutions, and perhaps more than anything else, what it meant to be a citizen. An international survey in 45 countries found that three-quarters of respondents thought the outcome of the election would have a high or very high impact on their own country (WIN/Gallup International, 2016) – up from less than a quarter in the 2008 election (Gallup, 2008). The members of these foreign publics couldn't cast a ballot on Election Day of course. But the public realm in which the run-up to the election took place was not bound by the same rules.

An important digital space in the 2016 election was Twitter – called “one of the stars” of the election at the time.¹ The social media platform was already an important channel for political chatter and information sharing (Rogers, 2014), and had been credited with playing a role in political movements

and popular uprisings (Dean, 2010; Howard et al., 2011; Khiabany, 2016; Papacharissi, 2015). But in 2016, the candidates’ use of the platform – particularly Trump’s – placed it squarely in the infrastructure of American public discussion. Trump regularly tweeted as a means of expressing what he felt the traditional media would not – an extension of his anti-elite, break-the-rules approach at campaign rallies and in debates. Other candidates used the platform just as actively though (Pew, 2016). When announcing her candidacy, Clinton eschewed the traditional announcement speech and instead tweeted out a link to a video – a form of mass broadcast that didn’t rely on a single member of her press pool. Yet the candidates were not the only ones who used Twitter to bypass traditional gatekeepers. Twitter became a popular site for individual citizens to respond to candidates, comment on the race, argue with other people, and disseminate information. And importantly, it was also a place for non-citizens to participate.

Since the election, Twitter’s “star” status has come to be seen through a different lens. Details emerged about foreign interference and the Russian government’s use of the platform in its “information warfare” campaign. It was discovered that teams of Russian trolls and bot accounts sought to spread hoaxes and polarizing information aimed at influencing or disrupting the election. The equalizing effects of the internet, heralded in other contexts for their democratizing potential (Coleman & Blumler, 2009), had blurred the lines between legitimate and illegitimate participant. “People are not always who they appear to be on the internet,” as U.S. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said.² It is hard to tell the foreigner and the citizen apart.

Foreign influence by another name

The openness of the public sphere as it exists on Twitter and other digital platforms has been framed as a risk, opening up democracies to foreign influence and meddling. However, this paper will examine these same characteristics of digital media through a different lens, taking up what Hannerz (2005) calls the “growing realization of a transnational civil society, or a global public sphere” (p. 202). In this thesis, I examine the use of Twitter in the 2016 election for transnational participation among Scandinavians – their attempts to engage in the public sphere, join conversation with Americans, spread information, and even contribute to the live discussions about the presidential debates. The aim of this research is to address the larger issue of how individuals are using digital networked media to

reimagine their practices of citizenship in an interconnected society and expand the public arena in which political participation takes place. Although digital media provide the capacity for citizens to engage transnationally, it is an open question as to how these capacities are actually used.

Research questions

I pose two research questions. They separate the issue of transnational participation (RQ1) from transnational exchange with Americans (RQ2). Here I will present the questions and explain the rationale behind them.

RQ1: How did Scandinavians engage with the U.S. presidential election via Twitter, and to what degree did they participate on a transnational level?

a) (language) What language(s) did Scandinavians use to discuss the election?
b) (communicative patterns) What kinds of tweets did Scandinavians send?
c) (temporality) When did Scandinavians tweet?
d) (media) What media did Scandinavians link to?
e) (conversational markers) What hashtags did Scandinavians use?
f) (addressivity) Who did Scandinavians retweet and direct their tweets to?

The main question first acknowledges that Scandinavian Twitter users may not have tweeted about the American election on any significant scale, or that most of the tweeting remained in their domestic spheres. Although it could be argued that any public tweet about Donald Trump is an act of political participation, the primary interest here is in the use of transnational affordances of Twitter.

The subparts of RQ1 establish the data that will be used to answer the main question. These are drawn from the literature on social media and the public sphere. Shared language, temporality – that is, the sense of simultaneous experience – and media have historically been seen forming the basis of communication in national public spheres (Anderson, 1983; Dayan & Katz, 1992; Habermas, 1991 [1962]). They establish touchstones and points of affinity between strangers. In this case, use of English rather than national languages; similar temporal patterns, particularly during live debates; and the use of similar news sources would point to participation at a transnational level. Meanwhile, communicative patterns, conversational markers, and addressivity get at the interactive aspects of participation. I have borrowed the terms “conversational markers” and “addressivity” from Papacharissi (2015), who writes that hashtags (which connect users’ messages to others on the same topic), mentions (used to talk to another user), and retweets (sharing another user’s message) are “essential to the formation and direction of information flows via Twitter” (p. 34). If Scandinavians are participating in the American sphere, we would expect them to join in the same conversations as Americans and address American users. Finally, “communicative patterns” is adapted from Bruns and Stieglitz (2012), who find that the
rates of hashtag use, mentions, and retweets, as well as URL sharing, are not consistent across the platform, and in fact are useful ways of describing particular conversations.

The second research question tackles the online problem that it is not difficult to find the chance to speak but to be heard (Hindman, 2009). While it cannot be determined how many American users read tweets written by Scandinavians about the election, an approximation of reception can be made by looking interactions:

**RQ2: To what degree did American Twitter users interact with Scandinavian users in discussing the U.S. presidential election, and what characteristics are prevalent among the Scandinavians who were successful in their attempts to engage in transnational exchange?**

This addresses the issue of reciprocal exchange of opinions, a central aspect of the public sphere (Habermas, 1991 [1962]). To answer this question, I will again use addressivity, but going in the other direction, looking at the degree to which American users mentioned and retweeted Scandinavian users. I then examine the characteristics of the Scandinavian users who were addressed – in particular, metrics of their eliteness and their political orientation. Although there are many potential characteristics that could be examined, eliteness and ideology relate to core issues of political power and influence, and these have often been used to assess political conversations on Twitter (e.g. Conover, Gonçalves, Flammini, & Menczer, 2012; Jensen, Örmen, & Lomborg, 2016; Larsson, 2014; Larsson, Kalsnes, & Christiansen, 2017).

Based on these two research questions, it will be argued that Scandinavians did participate transnationally to a large degree, while transnational exchange is much more limited. Even so, within these limits, the findings point to ways that the public sphere and practices of citizenship are expanding, although not entirely along the ideological lines some might expect.

**Putting this thesis in context**

Although the internet appears to erase previously definitive boundaries, the idea of blurred lines between foreigner and citizen is an old idea. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant (1917 [1795]) observed that human interaction had increased so steadily between nations that “a violation of right in one part of the world is felt all over it” (p. 142). Marshall McLuhan’s (2011 [1962]) described the formation of a “global village” through television. The internet is seen as a continuation of this, allowing communication to flow easily across borders, knocking out barriers of class and status, including national status (boyd, 2010; Hartley, 2010). Scholarship on the intersection of media and politics now regularly considers the effects of global media flows on citizenship and identity (e.g., Bennett, 2003a; Crack, 2008;
Compounding this is the real or perceived loss of control by national governments – whether as the result of formal supranational agreements or informal practices by companies and consumers (Freedman, 2008; Padovani & Pavan, 2011). The ease with which products, capital, people, technology, environmental disaster, and disease spread across borders – along with increasing access to information on their impacts – has led many scholars to argue that the actions undertaken in one nation state increasingly affect people in other places (Beck, 2006; Castells, 2010 [1997]; Calhoun, 2007; Linklater, 2002). Fraser (2007) observes that today “the idea that citizenship can serve as a proxy for affectedness is no longer plausible” (p. 21). Scholars have observed how identities have become blurred and multiple (Livingstone, 2009) as people form new connections through their interests and ideologies (Bennett, 2003b; Keck & Sikkink, 1999). As these identities become less bound to the nation-state, citizens may also feel less constrained in their civic activities, opening up the possibility of a what has been called a “transnational public sphere” (Crack, 2008).

Of course, political movements have always spilled over national borders. The 19th century women’s suffragists did not need a hashtag to form trans-Atlantic connections. International opposition to slavery in the United States was not inspired by satellite television. At the turn of the century, anarchists who assassinated numerous heads of state were not “radicalized” by YouTube videos (Nacos, 2016). Although events like #MeToo, the multi-country protests during the Iraq War, ISIS, and the Arab Spring appear to be examples of what has been called the “global network society” (Volkmer, 2003) it is also the case that societies have historically been networked. What is different now?

Scholars argue digital networked media do offer features that – at least potentially – create fundamentally different opportunities for transnational communication. These “affordances” of digital media, as Baym (2010) calls them, shape – though do not determine – communicative practices. (p. 17). Users have the potential geographic reach that has historically been afforded only to the traditional mass media. A citizen of one country can “speak” in near real time to a citizen of another, without having ever met, without having to travel, and without the filter of the news media or other intermediaries. Chadwick (2006) argues that although transnational political communication between groups of citizens is not itself new, “the levels of transnational cooperation and coordination that now occur as a matter of routine far exceed those of the pre-Internet era” (p. 124, emphasis added).

Yet these are only potentials. Scholars also note that transnational communication must compete with the strong tendencies for users to stay within their national borders (Hafez, 2007), leaving the transnational affordances of digital information are underutilized (Ghemawat, 2016); that globalization
has only made the comfort of national borders more central to the lives of citizens (Calhoun, 2007); and that social media are largely governed by the same properties of power and insularity that govern offline communication – if not more so (Hindman, 2009; Sunstein, 2007). Thus, this thesis seeks to go beyond the potential and ask how – and in fact if – people are using one-to-many communication platforms for citizen participation on a transnational scale.

Research gaps

Despite significant theoretical interest in the transnational public sphere, and simultaneous scholarly work on the use of social media in public debates leading up to elections, there is little documentation of the use of social media for individual transnational participation in elections or other domestic politics – occasions when public opinion formation in the public sphere has clear outcomes. Work on online transnational political participation has often focused on organized movements such as the transnational support of the Zapatista movement (Castells, 2010b; Tarrow, 2005); protests against meetings of the WTO (DeLuca, Sun, & Peeples, 2011) and the IMF (Yüksel & Yüksel (2011); opposition to the Iraq War (Langman, 2005; Pickerill, Gillan, & Webster, 2011); and the environmental movement (Crack, 2008). This research often examines channels of communication specific to that particular movement, such as Crack’s study of a Greenpeace internet forum or Bennett’s (2003a) work on Netaction.org, where generally likeminded people gather more for the purpose of mobilizing than debate in the public sphere. Studies of the Arab Spring uprisings have tracked communication on more general platforms (Howard et al., 2011; Papacharissi & Blasiola, 2016), however, to the extent that transnational participation played a part, the studies suggest it was more for “amplifying” events on the ground through support (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 62).

Meanwhile, significant empirical research has been done on the use of social media in public debate during election campaigns (Conover et al., 2012; Dang-Xuan, Stieglitz, Wladarsch, & Neuberger, 2013; D'Arma, 2015; Enli & Skogerbo, 2013; Klinger, 2013; Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013), but this research generally focuses on the national public sphere. To the extent that studies have examined participation in elections or other political debates from afar, it is often participation among groups with close ethnic or national ties (e.g. Bauböck, 2007; Cheng & Chen, 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2001). Even within regard to the 2016 American contest, little research has come out on the transnational aspects of the event, beyond Russian involvement. Furthermore, studies on social media in elections often focuses on the candidates, journalists, and party elites. Wright, Graham, and Jackson (2016) note that surprisingly little research has been done on “informal political talk amongst everyday citizens” and “the extent to which participants are actually reading and replying to each other's posts” (p. 76).
Thus, while this project draws on all the previous work mentioned, it also appears that there is space in the literature for investigating transnational political participation in the public debate leading up to elections, particularly American elections, and particularly among everyday citizens.

The Case

This thesis focuses on the 2016 American election. Elections in general are vital democratic moments of public participation where quantified public opinion has a measurable effect (Ormrod, Henneberg, & O'Shaughnessy, 2013). When Americans vote, arguably the effects may be not only national but international. Reese (2011) has argued, “The world doesn't have veto power over U.S. decisions, but in a globalized public sphere those decisions and their legitimacy will be more closely scrutinized than ever” (p. 79). The outsized influence of American military, economic, and cultural power means its politics have wide resonance (Nye, 2004) – to the point that some have suggested that “globalization” is really a term for “Americanization,” particularly in Europe (Hafez, 2007). The United States is also the site of considerable informational power, being the host of much of the online infrastructure that people the world over use (Jin, D. Y., 2013) and the dominant entity of the global news cycle (Segev & Blondheim, 2013). Additionally, the aperture of American politics has narrowed to a national focal point, where the most salient issues and politicians are far from the average voter and must be experienced through the media (Meyrowitz, 1985; Schudson, 1998). Especially as the internet challenges broadcast as Americans’ dominant source of political information (Gottfried & Shearer, 2017), this means many of the same mediated experiences available to Americans are available to non-Americans. This thesis puts that to the test.

Focusing specifically on foreign publics in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, this quantitative study analyzes more than a quarter of a million tweets that users in these countries sent out publicly on Twitter during the months leading up to the 2016 election. While not home to large populations, Scandinavian societies do have high levels of internet use (Syvertsen, Enli, Mjøs, & Moe, 2014), speak national languages while also possessing high English skills (English Proficiency Index, 2015), house liberal democracies that support open political expression (Freedom House, 2017), and have a legacy of international cooperation (Ingebritsen, 2006), as well as historic ties to the United States specifically (Skard, 1976).

Methodological approaches

The primary data for this project were collected during four weeks in September, October, and November, 2016. Nearly 1 billion election-related tweets were collected worldwide, with the bulk of
these tweets being picked up through a keyword search for the words *Trump* and *Clinton*. Sets of Scandinavian and American users were then created through criteria based on location and, in the case of the Scandinavians, language. The analysis uses comparative approaches between Scandinavians and Americans, as well as Scandinavians discussing the election compared with themselves in another time period. Content analysis is also used to establish political orientation and network analysis is used to examine interactions.

**Structure**

Following this Introduction, I will turn to the Theory chapter, which delves deeper into the concept of political participation on a transnational scale, including the many challenges to what can too easily be presented in utopian terms. This chapter will also examine the dynamics of the public sphere as it occurs on social media. Following this, I will present my case study in the context of relevant literature in the Case Background chapter, describing the 2016 election, Twitter, and Scandinavian societies.

Having presented this background, I turn to the Methods chapter, where I explain how I went about investigating transnational participation. This chapter will go through the steps of how I collected the data, as well as how I determined who is a Scandinavian and an American online, how I calculated the variables for each research question, and finally the steps I took to ensure validity and reliability, and ethical soundness. Next, I present the results in the Findings chapter, which lays out the nature of Scandinavians’ participation in quantitative terms, following the structure of my research questions. The interpretation of these data points and what they say about the larger themes of democratic participation comes in the Discussion chapter. Here I connect the findings to relevant theory and previous empirical work, arguing that the data do show evidence of transnational participation, and to a lesser degree, transnational exchange. In this chapter I will also discuss the limitations of my study and areas for further research. Finally, I end with a Conclusion that summarizes this project and its contributions.
Theory

Political participation has traditionally referred to actions in a national public sphere. We act as citizens – as members – of a country. Transnational politics have traditionally fallen under the umbrella of international relations, where nations, not citizens, act as the “units” of international cooperation (Calhoun, 2007, p. 148). Yet clearly we are not entirely bound by national borders – perhaps at no point, but particularly not in the age of digital communication. Citizens give to international organizations, they read international news, and, thanks to the affordances of digital media platforms, they may engage in participatory speech with other citizens in transnational contexts as well (Jensen, Jorba, & Anduiza, 2012).

In this chapter, I lay out the key concepts that provide the theoretical framework for this project. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first presents the fundamental concepts of political participation. I explore the development of citizenship and the public sphere as ideas historically embedded in the nation-state, with a particular focus on the role of media. Next, I examine the potential breakdown of the historic association between political participation and the nation. This is in some ways an ancient idea, but scholars suggest globalization and global information flows have altered the modern bonds between publics, potentially opening up a global public sphere. I explore these ideas in the second section of the chapter, as well as the literature that problematizes the notion of scaling up political participation to a global level. Finally, the last section of the chapter turns toward scholarship specifically on social media. Here I discuss the emergence of these sites as platforms for participation – but also platforms that may perpetuate hindrances to participation.

PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation is a central component of democratic societies. It is the means through which members of political community seek change. As such, political participation is more than interest in politics (Conge, 1988). It is action – “actions taken by citizens to influence political outcomes” write Jensen, et al. (2012, p. 4). Classic examples might include highly visible forms such as voting and protesting in the street. However, at the core of political participation, including those two examples, is speech.

The role of speech in political participation was articulated from the earliest days of political thinking. Aristotle argued that it was through the ability to express moral arguments that humans became “political animals” (Miller, 2017), and speech, whether verbal or written, continues to be essential to
most accepted definitions of political participation (Conge, 1988). Far from being “just words,” Arendt (1958) wrote that speech provides the symbolic and persuasive power to begin to affect fellow members of a political community. It is how people influence each other. The mechanism through which this occurs is the public sphere – a concept most influentially laid out by Habermas. The public sphere, as Habermas saw it, is the mediating space between private individual and state. It where public opinion is formed and where individuals gather as a body to “program” the state (Habermas, Lennox, & Lennox, 1974, p. 50). Although, this space need not be a physical space. “A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (Habermas, Lennox, & Lennox, 1974, p. 49). To Habermas, elections are merely an expression of the real work of reciprocal exchange that plays out in the public sphere (1996 [1992], p. 217). Yet Habermas’ original definition of the public sphere emphasized another aspect of political participation that I will next turn to: that the participants are citizens in a nation-state.

Why is political participation tied to the nation-state?

Political actions require a context – some sort of delineated arena in which we understand the presence of others, if not physically then at least psychologically. Even in Aristotle’s view that political speech is at the core of human nature, this practice did not exist free-floating in the world. It took place within the walls of the city-state, which he saw as a natural outgrowth of human relationships (Miller, 2017). In the 17th and 18th centuries, however, the nation-state rose as the proper “container” of society (Beck, 2006, p. 2). The medieval localism that had characterized Europe morphed into larger collections of people, sorted by defined national boundaries (Calhoun, 2007). Communities – the people who are “like us” (Watkins, 1991) – grew from the immediate surroundings of the city to a national community, which became the dominant arena of democratic participation (Calhoun, 2007; Heater, 2004; Schudson, 1998). The nation-state has remained the assumed context both in popular discourse and in academic literature (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). In this section, I will briefly examine why.

State citizenship

First, we are legally tied to sovereign states. As legal citizens, we vote in elections, pay taxes, receive benefits, and ensure our rights are protected through national governments. State membership organizes the people of the world. To be stateless is not to be free, but to be in need of a state (Butler &
Spivak, 2007) – a refugee or alien in transition from one state to another. In liberal democracies, Enlightenment principles of political participation are intertwined with the legal status of citizen, a departure from the medieval status of subject (Bauböck, 2006; Faulks, 2000; Marshall, 1992 [1950]). Heater (2004) writes, “the notions of autonomy, equality of status, and citizenly participation in the affairs of the polity set citizenship theoretically apart from the feudal, monarchical, and tyrannical forms of socio-political identity” (p. 2). The “rights of man” may have been God-given but they were legitimated through legal membership in the society. Citizens were those who had a stake in political outcomes – they were the ones affected by state decisions – and thus had a legitimate claim on participation (Hartley, 2010; Faulks, 2000; Fraser, 2007; Schudson, 1998).

National affinity

Yet we have more than simply legal ties to fellow citizens. We also have mutual affinity – “a sense of commonality and trust” (Dahlgren, 2002, p. 21). We feel an affinity with a faraway fellow citizen that we do not with a faraway foreigner – even if we will never meet either (Anderson, 1983; Watkins, 1991). Built into the concept of the nation-state is a sense of shared history and fate (Calhoun, 2007). These ties have been forged not just by geographical closeness, but by common media and language (Anderson, 1983; Calhoun, 2007), military and law enforcement (Giddens, 1987), economic systems (Habermas, 1991 [1962]; Marshall, 1992 [1950]; Watkins, 1991), public education (Marshall, 1992 [1950]), art and literature (Calhoun, 2007), as well as surveillance such as census-taking, citizen registrations, and passports (Torpey, 2000). So strong are these ties that scholars argue nation-state since the 19th century has competed with even religious and familial ties as a source of identity (Beck, 2006; Calhoun, 2007; Marshall, 1992 [1950]). These ties cut across distance, to the point that children living on the Norwegian–Swedish border are more familiar with cities many kilometers away than the town just across the national divide (Gould & White, 1986, p. 111). The nation-state helps define who is similar to us, shares our goals, and therefore outlines the boundaries of the political community.

To Habermas, participation in the public sphere relied on both citizenship and this sense of affinity. Shared knowledge, and a shared stake in the outcome, are necessary to establish the common ground that meaningful exchange relies on (Habermas, 1998a). This is what ensured the public sphere

3 Citizenship in this legal sense is often called nationality by scholars (e.g. Faulks, 2000), although in many countries these are not interchangeable legal terms.
would be more than just a mass of voices. Yet in large societies, neither this shared affinity, nor the communicative practices themselves, can come to be without means of mass communication. Next, I will turn to the role of the media in facilitating political participation in the nation-state.

The mediated public sphere

Political communities today are too vast to rely on the face-to-face participation of Aristotle’s ideal city-state. The national public sphere requires the press. “Only a newspaper can succeed in putting the same thought in a thousand minds at the same instant” wrote de Tocqueville (2010 [1840], p. 906). Early newspapers were read aloud and discussed in the coffeehouses of 17th century Paris and London and in American colonial taverns (Ellis, 2011; Schudson, 1998, p. 39). Later, broadcast became a critical means of distributing information among large populations and instilling common knowledge “beyond the scope of immediate personal experience and oral traditions” (Calhoun, 2007, p. 64). So embedded are media in democratic processes that Chadwick (2006) writes that each new technology that gives citizens another way of connecting to each other – from conference calls to the web – has been talked of in grand terms of democratization (p. 83).

In addition to the direct informational function that media play in political participation, the media wield an important cohesive power (Weber, 1946a), connecting citizens with what Giddens (1990) called the “absent others” (p. 18). Benedict Anderson (1983) argued the “imagined community” of the nation was made possible through newspapers and novels, which allowed citizens to see themselves as part of “steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity” (p. 26). The role of temporal simultaneity in electronic media was further articulated by Katz and Dayan (1985) in their studies of “media events.” They described these as the coronations, funerals, inaugurations, political debates, and spaceship launches whose live broadcast “transform individuated and stratified masses into the communitas of whole societies” (p. 305). Not surprisingly, many countries saw the potential of radio and later television to “a narrative of community” (Price, 1995, p. 234), and sought to establish national broadcasters and other protective media policies (Chakravartty & Sarikakis, 2006; Scannell, 1989). Today media themselves are important national political institutions in their own right (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995), delineating not only the arena of political participation, but helping to define what it means to be a participant. Situated in newspapers and terrestrial broadcast, this arena has generally followed the nation-state, and the definition of participant has generally meant legal citizens. However, the public sphere has also demonstrated that these do not always align.
Boundary problems

Nation-states rely on the enforcement of boundaries – both geographic and legal divides between its authority and other nations’, its people and the Other (Anderson, 1983; Benhabib, 2004; Faulks, 2000). Calhoun (2007) describes how in the 18th century cartography morphed from defining regions according to landmarks to creating maps divided neatly into defined multi-colored nations – a “visual representation of a world organized into a system of states” (p. 75). Meanwhile, through education systems, common language, and identification systems, nations established psychological boundaries around citizenship. By World War I, the passport became not only a document for travel but a symbolic stamp of national membership (Lloyd, 2005). Such activities of boundary enforcement helped give the illusion that people could be clearly divided into nation-states.

In practice, however, national boundaries have often been blurry, both legally and psychologically (Bauböck, 2015; C. Robertson, 2010; Whelan, 1983). Non-citizen immigrants at various points have had the right to vote, including in the United States (C. Robertson, 2010; Schudson, 1998), while at the same time, legal members of society have been denied participatory rights (Blom, 2016). The differences between citizen and non-citizen have at times been hard to make out – as 19th century American border agents discovered when they attempted to discern the citizenship of Chinese-Americans by judging the “Americanness” of their clothes (C. Robertson, 2010, p. 179). Today, these struggles continue on a different plane as multiculturalism in formerly homogenous countries expose the continued schism between citizenship and national identity (Oommen, 1997).

Often, the public sphere itself has been a porous spot in the border of the nation-state. “Citizenship engagement does not necessarily begin from settled understandings of the category of citizen” (Asen, 2004, p. 204). Women entered the public sphere before they entered the voting booth (Blom, 2016; Schudson, 1998). Immigrant movements have earned rights through the public sphere (Butler & Spivak, 2007). In the past, the public sphere has been at least geographically confined, with reasonably clear distinctions between “national” and “international” (Calhoun, 2007; Tomlinson, 1999). However, globalization has highlighted the confusion between what is national and what is international, and lifted the veil on the illusion that nation-states are fixed entities.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND NATIONAL BOUNDARIES

When asked where he was from, the Greek philosopher Diogenes supposedly declared that he was not a member of any polis, but a kosmopolite – a “citizen of the world” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2014;
Nussbaum, 1994). Diogenes captured the idea that the established socio-political boundaries do not fully contain the extent of people’s affinity and sense of obligation to others. Cosmopolitanism is an idea that has been reinvigorated over the last half century (Appiah, 2007). Scholars of globalization argue that money, people, power, and information now flow more easily across national borders (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 2000), rendering the nation-state less influential as a source of both institutional and psychological power (Sassen, 2002). While these global flows change the equation of who is affected by government decisions, global communication technology opens up opportunities for political participation to take place across borders (Castells, 2008; Tarrow, 2005). Some scholars have theorized that the public sphere and citizenship have become global or transnational in scope (Beck, 2006; Crack, 2008). Borderless communication technology helps connect people previously separated by nation-state borders, and as Sassen (2002) suggests, have “engendered or strengthened alternative notions of community of membership” (p. 277). However, the world is not borderless (Ghemawat, 2016; Hafez, 2007), and short of a global government, the nation-state remains the necessary source of citizen protection and authority (Arendt, 1958; Calhoun, 2007). In fact, globalization may be having another effect that contradicts ideals of kosmopolites: entrenching nationalist sentiment. In this section, I will examine the potential and the impediments for political participation on a transnational level.

Globalization

The idea that the world is interconnected through communication and commerce did not arrive recently. John Maynard Keynes suggested that in the early 20th century, someone in London could order “the various products of the whole earth” by telephone and “reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep” (1920, p. 11). However, scholars argue that in the latter half of the 20th century, changes in communication technology enabled interactions to flourish at previously impossible speeds and across previously prohibitive distances (Chadwick, 2006; Harvey, 1990). Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton (2000) define globalization as

a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and power. (p. 15; cited in Chadwick, 2006 and Ghemawat, 2016)

National economies, which helped the nation-state establish national bonds (Calhoun, 2007; Torpey, 2000), are more internationally influenced (Beck, 2000; Cerny, 1995; Ghemawat, 2016). Sassen (2002) argues supranational economic organizations like the E.U., the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO “can determine key features of domestic economic performance,” influencing even the decision to go
to war (p. 280). The nation-state’s “monopoly on legitimate violence” through its military and legal system (Giddens, 1987) is challenged by international bodies like the United Nations, the Court of Human Rights, and NATO (Isin & Turner, 2002). Mass surveillance is no longer the task of government tax collectors, criminal investigators, and census takers, but also multinational credit card companies, social networking sites, search engines, and data collection firms (Braman, 2006; Nissenbaum, 2010). Media policies that seek to shape national standards and create national cohesion are easily bypassed by digital global media (Pauwels & Donders, 2011). Yet digital media also open up new opportunities to citizens. Since 1999, the portion of internet users worldwide has grown from 5 percent of the world’s population to almost 50 percent (World Bank, 2018). Millions of people for the first time in the same space, or at least the same virtual space. These conditions create a push and pull that threatens to alter two conditions that tie political participation to the nation-state: the all-affected principle of membership and national affinity.

All-affected principle

Nancy Fraser (2007) writes it can no longer be assumed that what most affects people’s lives is the territory in which they have legal citizenship:

Globalization is driving a widening wedge between affectedness and political membership. As those two notions increasingly diverge, the effect is to reveal the former as an inadequate surrogate for the latter.

(p. 21)

In other words, the “all-affected” principle, the wedge that helped form the basis for divisions between citizen and non-citizen, is coming loose (Lagerspetz, 2015). People may be influenced by decisions made in other countries, by decisions made by supranational bodies, and by decisions made not by governmental bodies at all but by companies (Tarrow, 2005). Linklater (2002) argues “individuals have a moral right to be consulted about any decisions which may affect or harm them wherever these decisions may be made” (p. 327). Even when not truly affected, we perceive the influence of distant events “unfolding simultaneously on screen in our homes” (Gillespie, 1995, p. 3). Beck (2008) has proposed the concept of the “global risk society” – a helpless sense that man-made threats like climate change, financial crises, disease, and terrorism are at once within the power of the world to resolve, and yet outside authority of any one nation. Sassen (2002) argues this may undermine confidence in the nation-state, but it also gives citizens both a stake in decisions outside the nation-state arena – rendering it necessary that people “learn how to practice democracy across borders” (p. 287).
Deterritorialized affinity

In addition to changes in institutional power, scholars argue that globalization has altered people’s sources of shared identity and their sense of who is like them (Hartley, 2010; Appadurai, 1996). The same principles that underlie the formation of national imagined communities now play out on media detached from the nation-state as people consume movies, music, news, and other “symbolic resources” no longer grounded in the domestic sphere (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 175). Digital media give people access to a wider range of what Charles Taylor (1989) described as “interlocutors” – the people through whom new identities are formed (p. 36). It is believed this is aiding in what Crack (2008) calls “recognition politics” across borders (p. 126) – connections that have little to do with nationality, but instead emphasize lifestyle, tastes, and media practices as more salient forms of group identification (Faulks, 2000, Langman, 2005; Livingstone, 2009). Bennett (2012) argues that in contrast to movements of previous eras that formed around pre-established collective identities such as race, gender, or sexual orientation, political affiliations are now more “personalized,” mobilizing rapidly around parties and candidates, brands, and values (p. 37). Scholars have noted that subcultures and counterculture are no longer local “underground” communities, but have moved online, where they blend the local and the global (Miller, et al., 2016; Stahl, 2003). “One perceives the ‘world as a single place,’” writes Reese (2011, p. 80). The stranger 30,000 km away may feel more “like me” than the stranger next door. Citizen participation may no longer mean participating within the boundaries of legal citizenship.

Transnational practices of citizenship

Theories of citizenship now distinguish between citizenship as a legal status and citizenship as a broader, more dynamic practice related to equality, rights, participation, and relational identities in various forms (Asen, 2002; Cottle, 2011; Hartley, 2010; Heater, 2004; Miller, 2002). Isin and Turner (2002) write:

If rather than merely focusing on citizenship as legal rights, there is now agreement that citizenship must also be defined as a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights. (p. 4)

This social process is aided by the very technological developments that enabled globalization. Scholars have observed a process of “globalization from below” (Falk, 1994; Smit & Guarnizo, 1998), where digital communications are used to interact directly across borders, without the scaffolding of the state
or the mass media that gave the state a “monopoly” on international relations (Beck, 2006, p. 37). Kabeer (2005) argues this reinforces citizenship in a “horizontal” sense, meaning as a tie between citizens, in addition to the traditional status-oriented “vertical” sense that stresses the tie between state and citizen (p. 23). Since the early days of the internet, scholars have chronicled ways in which these horizontal connections are taking place.

Transnational activism

The breakthrough moment for what has become known as transnational activism was in the mid-1990s when the Zapatistas, a militant revolutionary group in southern Mexico, sought to block the Mexican government from enacting parts of the 1994 North American Free-Trade Agreement, or NAFTA (Crack, 2008; Kabeer, 2005; Langman, 2005, p. 69). The Zapatistas went from a local group to the subject of international email networks and listservs after a supporter in the United States set up a webpage, translating the Zapatista manifesto into English (Tarrow, 2005, p. 114). Under international pressure the Mexican government eventually agreed to talks with the insurgents. As Castells (2010a [1997]) writes, the Zapatistas became “the first informational guerrilla movement” (p. 75).

Glimmers of the Zapatistas can be found in many online movements today. Papacharissi and Blasiola (2016) reviewing studies on the Egyptian Revolution, found that “external non-Arabic speaking observers became participants in the Twitter discussions when they chimed in or showed support” (p. 215). Howard et al. (2011) report that domestic political websites in the country took advantage of the borderless web to attract attention from the outside world, and use the “Zapatista effect” to put pressure on their own regimes. Reese (2011), looking at the European and American protests against the Iraq War, argues “National elites must increasingly take world opinion into account, since their own citizens are part of those networks and have easy access to coverage of major events” (p. 75-76). Hayes and Guardino (2011) found that foreign countries’ criticism of the Iraq War influenced people on the left in the United States, where there was a vacuum of domestic criticism by Democratic leaders.

It is not just a matter of the outside looking in. Crack (2008) studied Greenpeace's use of a cyber-activist network to connect transnationally over environmental issues, as well as feminists’ use of online forums to discuss issues and make connections. Protesters in dozens of cities around the world coordinated the “Carnival Against Capitalism” and the anti-World Trade Organization protests in Seattle (Langman; Chadwick, 2006; Kahn & Kellner, 2003) and protests against the Iraq War (Pickerill,
Gillan, & Webster, 2011). Scholars find other transnational activists have used online networks to coordinate across continents in favor of action on climate change and in support of human rights (e.g. Bennett, 2012; Crack, 2008; Lester & Cottle, 2011; Tarrow, 2005).

Scholars propose that as political decision-making and feelings of affinity lose their tethering to nation-states, a global or transnational public sphere is emerging, often acting in response to the effects of globalization. Media allow people to “tune into events they are physically removed from by imagining what these might feel like for people directly experiencing them” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 4). Reese (2011) argues that global media have created “the sense that there is an increasingly well-defined agenda of news and issues circulating around the globe” (p. 80-81). National events now turn into international issues as hashtags like #JeSuisCharlie, #OccupyWallStreet, #BringBackOurGirls, #BlackLivesMatter, and #MeToo circulate through global networks – forms of what (Zappavigna, 2011) calls “ambient affiliation.” This has given rise to hopes that communication technologies will help facilitate a public sphere in which Diogenes’ ancient idea of “citizens of the world” is revived.

**Cosmopolitanism**

As Appiah (2007) writes, this new cosmopolitanism is more than speaking French, or having a taste for exotic food. The modern cosmopolitan prescription entails not just an interest but a sense of allegiance to people in other countries. Nussbaum (1994) explains: “Why should we think of people from China as our fellows the minute they dwell in the United States, but not when they dwell in a certain other place, namely China?” (sec. 3.4, para. 2). Such views are bolstered by the liberal principles that helped build the nation-state (Faulks, 2000). It is the logical endpoint of “rights of man” and “inalienable rights” that such rights should not be bound by arbitrary borders, particularly as other delineations of the legal rights of citizenship – such as property ownership, race, and gender – have been removed. Few scholars propose actual legal world citizenship, but rather, argue that the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship captures practices that traditional definitions of citizenship do not (Cottle, 2011; Linklater, 2002; Tarrow, 2005).

Yet critics argue visions of cosmopolitanism, and the supposed transnational public sphere in which these practices occur, are not grounded in the realities of how people actually use digital media – that in fact these uses adhere much more strongly to the nation-state. In the next section, I will examine these critiques.
Challenges for transnational political participation

Despite instances of transnational participation, and considerable technological capacity to engage across borders, the evidence that citizens regularly take part in a transnational public sphere also falls short in many regards. Critics argue interest in transnational politics are in reality limited to a few “info-elites” (Hafez, 2007) whose participation is of “elusive and ephemeral nature” (Coleman & Blumler, 2009) which may have symbolic power but rarely results in major real-world outcomes. For example, Pickerill, et al. (2011) found that while Americans and British citizens against the war did find each other online, global action was overall disjoined (p. 45) and ultimately face-to-face communication was more fruitful. Crack (2008) notes that the anonymous participants in the Greenpeace forum were at times talking past each other, and were disconnected from the outside world activists needed to convince (p. 181). These problems highlight some of the empirical and theoretical problems of transnational participation.

Globalization is not global

Many scholars have pointed out that the term globalization itself hides the asymmetries in global flows. One country in particular, the United States, often exercises disproportionate institutional, economic, and cultural power – both through formal arrangements in supranational bodies and agreements, and less formally through the export of American brands, cultural products, digital products, and its influence on the news cycle (Jin, 2013; Naji, 2011). As Grant (2011) notes, “much of the trade in cultural products is seen as largely one way” (p. 337). Rather than cosmopolitanism, it is feared that globalization will instead lead to homogenization through Americanization. Yet this influence itself is not evenly distributed. Although the United States and the dollar may hold significant global economic and institutional power, Hafez (2007) argues that much of what has been called American cultural imperialism is often concentrated in European countries. Ghemawat’s (2016) analysis of the global flows of people, information, capital, and goods finds that regionalization is a better characterization of what is often referred to as globalization. Often, he finds that flows of information follow familiar patterns of shared media and language.

Language

Despite the dominance of English online and the development of translation technologies, language differences “believe the notion of anything like a single global public sphere” (Jorba & Bimber, 2012, p. 18). The Egyptian Revolution, for example, may have been globally visible thanks to English-
language messages, as studied by Papacharissi (2015), but Hafez (2013) argues it was in fact largely
driven by local efforts conducted in Arabic (p. 325). Language is not only the means of commu-
nication, but also of affinity (Anderson, 1983; Joppke, 2002) – the feeling of who is “like us” (Watkins,
1991, p. 170). In a 2017 study of 14 countries, Pew found that more than religion, place of birth, or tra-
ditions, *speaking the national language* was seen as the true marker of being American, Swedish, Ca-
nadian, or other nationality (Stokes, 2017). Early studies estimated English made up 80 percent of
online content, but that portion has fallen to around 50 percent (Pimienta, Prado, & Blanco, 2009;
UNESCO, 2015). This is no doubt a positive sign of diversity, but it also means that the material is less
accessible. As the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein famously said, “The limits of my language means
the limits of my world.” Appadurai (1996) points out that participatory exchange requires more than
just understanding the words as well – it requires a certain cultural fluency to understand that different
words may be subject “to very different sets of contextual conventions” (p. 36). Even the word “de-
mocracy” may have very different connotations in different countries.

Weak global networks

Among the types of flows that characterize globalization – information, people, capital, and goods – information should face the least friction. Text, audio, and visual communication are easily duplic-
cated and, much to the frustration of copyright holders, instantly transmitted. Yet Ghemawat (2016)
finds that even though information is more likely to be shared across borders, it travels shorter dis-
tances than other types of flows. In other words, it sticks to the same regions, and even this has de-
creased slightly in recent years (Ghemawat & Altman, 2016, p. 17). Research on social media has simi-
larly finds that people’s networks tend to reflect geography. Ugander, Karrer, Backstrom, and Marlow
(2011) report that only about a fifth of Facebook friends are in other countries. On Twitter, Takhteyev,
Gruzd and Wellman (2012) found about a quarter of followers cross national borders, however, most of
these are people in countries with the same dominant language. Eric Gordon and Adriana de Souza e
Silva (2011) have argued that contrary to assertions that the internet would render geography obsolete,
location-conscious technology like GPS and geotagging have made location a fundamental organizing
principle of the web.

No global media

Film, TV series, and especially music do enjoy a significant degree of global circulation, however,
people tend to stay within their domestic spheres when it comes to news (Ghemawat, 2016; Kevin &
Ene, 2015; A. Robertson, 2010). This is significant because even when national broadcasters cover the
same international event, they often do it through a national prism (Lee, Chan, Pan, & So, 2005; A.
Robertson, 2010). Hafez argues that so-called “global” broadcasters that might transmit identical coverage, such as CNN, Al Jazeera, and the BBC, in reality have minimal shares abroad and don't necessarily offer the same broadcast lineup in every jurisdiction. Americans, for example, watch CNN, not CNN International (p. 13). As media use becomes more digital, Cottle (2011) notes fragmentation has threatened cohesion in the national public sphere, making the idea of scaling up to a transnational public sphere “even more improbable” (p. 35).

Audiences interpret

Even when people do watch identical content, media research has long found that they do not see it the same way (Katz & Liebes, 1990; Smith, 1990). They interpret, critique, and adapt it to their own perspectives. While this is good news for those who fear homogenization, it may pose a challenge to the formation of transnational affinities. With foreign news especially, viewers often rely on heuristics – such as “good” and “evil” – to understand complex dynamics (Peffley & Hurrwitz, 1992). As Khia-bany (2016) writes, new technologies may expose users to other places, but these technologies “by themselves cannot bypass assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes” (p. 231). Hafez argues that a true transnational public sphere, where people feel a sense of common cause, would require more than just “peering through the keyhole” at foreign content – it demands understanding the worldview of domestic discourses (p. 20). Thus, media may bring images from faraway places home, but media does not ensure events are felt in the same way.

Who cares what the world thinks?

Scholars of globalization, media, and politics point out that even when political participation does occur at a transnational level, action generally continues to require a nation-state government. As Arendt pointed out, it is the nation-state that ensures the “right to have rights.” Even international law is only enforced through the authority and acquiescence of nation-states (Calhoun, 2007). Despite the role of transnational companies and supranational organizations, Fraser (2007) argues these do not have the authority, or often the obligation, to give global public opinion political force. But this puts global public opinion in a no man’s land of legitimacy: nation-state authorities do not have the obligation to bend to a global demos. In some cases, the “Zapatista effect” may induce government officials to respond through international pressure. But governments and citizens may also be highly resistant to “outside influence” – a tendency some scholars write is particularly strong in the United States (Mermin, 1999, pp. 13-14). Entman (2004) argues U.S. political culture “encourages Americans to disregard foreign criticism of the United States” (p. 55). Although Hayes and Guardino (2011) found that Democrats
were influenced by foreign leaders’ early criticism of the Iraq War, Dragojlovic’s (2015) analysis suggests foreign opinion can have the *opposite* effect on other citizens: in his study, Republicans reduced their support for a refugee policy when it was advocated for by British or French sources. Thus, the “transitional stage” that Habermas (1998) described the public sphere to be in does not necessarily result in greater cosmopolitan sentiment (p. 184). In fact, it may further reinforce the importance of nation-state.

Nationalism as a response to globalization

Diogenes’ pronouncement that he was a “citizen of the world” has come to imply a sense of a connection with the world at large. However, the Stoic philosopher who lived in a barrel in the streets of Athens was in fact not taking a point of view of connection, but disconnection. In declaring himself a citizen of the world, he sought to declare himself free of allegiance (Piering, n.d.). Critics of cosmopolitanism say this continues to be a problem of viewing citizenship in any form beyond the nation-state: it is more likely a form of atomization than solidarity. Although nationalism has emerged in destructive forms – in which “cosmopolitan” has been used an epithet against perceived outsiders – Craig Calhoun argues that nationalist sentiment plays an important role in creating ties between people that enable them to work toward political change. Rather than “mitigate against conflicts based on nationalistic urges” as Reese (2011, p. 79) writes, globalization may in fact renders national ties all the more important. Calhoun (2007) writes:

> Analysts correctly observe that states are having difficulty organizing and controlling global markets, multinational corporations, large-scale migration flows, and internal 'tribalism.' Yet these analysts seldom consider the possibility that, rather than spelling the end of nationalism, all these trends and difficulties are its occasion. All encourage the renewal and continuing production of nationalism because nationalism is the rhetoric of identity and solidarity in which citizens of the modern world most readily deal with the problematic nature of state power and with problems of inclusion and exclusion. (p. 78)

The nation-state, after all, continues to operate the structures of citizenship – it collects taxes, exercises the rule of law, protects the rights of citizens, and operates public welfare programs. While Calhoun does not see this as precluding the existence of cross-border affinity and transnational political activities, he cautions against assuming that these activities occur simply because the technology is available, or that such participation is “fatally weakening the nation-state” when it does take place (p. 105).
Beck’s Cosmopolitan Vision

The philosopher Ulrich Beck picked up this line of thinking, argued that it was in fact not incompatible with cosmopolitanism – at least, cosmopolitanism defined in a certain way. In *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (2006) Beck argued that globalization was a form of “the cosmopolitanization of reality” (p. 112) – by which he meant not that people are becoming necessarily more sympathetic but that they are acquiring more awareness of the simultaneous presence of foreign others. In the same way globalization creates anti-globalization movements, he argued cosmopolitanization promotes resistance to cosmopolitan ideals “in an attempt to fix the blurred and shifting boundaries between internal and external, us and them” (p. 4). But in the process, it also perpetuates them. This can be seen in perhaps the most infamous example of transnational activism: the 9/11 attacks. Beck argues extremists sought to fight the effects of transnational influences in the Arab world through the effective use of transnational networks (p. 113). “The prophets of anti-cosmopolitanism are forced to operate on the terrain of cosmopolitanization – this is what makes them so dangerous” (p. 112). In opposing globalization, they globalize. Beck anticipated that globalization would incite resistance and a desire to reinforce national identity, as well as foster transnational communication through a shared sense of fate. Moreover, he argued this communication would increasingly emphasize the individual – an idea I will turn to next.

Political Participation on Social Media

The political potential of the internet was clear from the outset. In 1999, the United Nations issued a glowing report in which its experts asserted that for perhaps the first time in the history of liberal democracy, the internet might

recreate the perfect information arena, the *agora* of Ancient Greece, a meeting place where citizens could go to be fully informed and to participate directly, with no intermediary, in the government of the city, exercising all their political rights unconditionally and without restriction. (quoted in Coleman & Blumler, 2009, p. 8)

Yet the particular forms that this “meeting place” took received less glowing reviews. Initially, social media platforms were seen as banal and narcissistic (Rogers, 2014). When Twitter launched in 2006 as a group texting service called Twttr, the technology news site TechCrunch remarked that the typical
Twttr message was “cleaning my apartment” and “hungry.” It wasn’t clear what the point was. “I imagine most users are not going to want to have all of their Twttr messages published on a public website,” TechCrunch wrote.4

Khiabany (2016) argues that in the same way live coverage of the Gulf War turned CNN into a serious news brand, uprisings like Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring shifted social media brands from perceived tools of narcissism to tools of democracy (p. 244). The ability to send rapid-fire public messages in real time and follow specific topics through hashtags helped turn social media into important information sources (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2017). By 2012, Twitter billed itself as the “global town square” and in 2016 the company reported it had 310 million active monthly users worldwide.5

Yet social media have not become the perfect agora that 1999 U.N. report described either. Rather than informing citizens, social media are seen as spreading misinformation. The intermediaries who exercise power offline tend to also be powerful online, and the commercial platforms themselves exert considerable influence on what people see. In this section, I will examine the literature on use of social media for political participation.

What are social media?

Although the net did not “become” social with social media – as Turkle (1995) chronicled, it was used socially from early on – social media were a departure from the earlier “static” webpages (Chadwick, 2009, p. 20). These user-friendly sites allowed people to easily create their own content, connect to others, and share information widely (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2012). Sites like MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, and later Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Snapchat have turned the traditional divisions between media producer and media user on their head (Bruns, 2008). “Produsers,” as Bruns calls them, take videos, text, and photos – created by them, mainstream media outlets, other users, or through some mix of efforts – and disseminate them to their network. Meraz and Papacharissi (2013) termed these processes of dissemination “networked gatekeeping” in which users “blend broadcasting with social conventions” in order to curate and amplify content (p. 5). Although no universal definition of social media can capture each individual site’s capabilities, they can be seen as offering “online scalable sociability” (Miller, et al., 2016, p. 3), which has important implications for political participation.

Social media and political participation

The mediated public sphere has historically entailed one-way communication for audiences. In 1995, Blumler and Gurevitch described the political communication system in terms of horizontal and vertical relationships: horizontal communication took place between political and media organizations, while vertical communication took place between these organizations and the “mass citizenry” (p. 12). Two decades later, the vertical hierarchy is looking shaky. The “mass citizenry” now have individual powers of dissemination. Rather than dividing the public sphere between “a minority of experts and journalists” on one side and “a silently observing majority” on the other (Rasmussen, 2014, p. 1320), scholars suggest “digital media have opened new modes of engagement ... that can be used by citizens to express their political views and convey their interests” (Jensen, et al., 2012, p. 1). Despite early concerns that “slacktivism” on social media would undermine real world participation (Morozov, 2009; Putnam, 2001), recent studies suggest that social media use does not replace offline participation (Christensen, 2011; 2012), and in fact may be positively associated with increased political and civic involvement (Boulianne, 2015), including voting (Bond, et al., 2012; Bright, et al., 2017). Offline protests are often organized and publicized with the help of social media (DeLuca, et al., 2011). And survey data suggests that online interaction can even change people’s minds (Duggan & Smith, 2016; Lee & Myers, 2016).

It's been suggested that these new modes have made politics more accessible, and even more fun (Hartley, 2010), and that the public sphere has been opened up to people not previously invited in (Thorseth, 2011) – such as children (Livingstone, 2009), minorities (Cantey & Robinson, 2015), and immigrants (Midtbøen, Steen-Johnsen, & Thorbjørnsrud, 2017). Papacharissi and Blasiola (2016) argue social media used in tandem with on-the-ground planning during the Arab Spring amplified the voices of people “in a manner much grander, versatile, and diverse than previous media permitted” (p. 218). Although scholars are weary of attributing the cause of these movements to social media sites, many have argued that they served as an important tool for mobilization (Khiabany, 2016; Papacharissi & Blasiola, 2016). Papacharissi (2015) writes they are not “forces of change” but “environments,” where people gather, share information, and engage in storytelling (p. 121).

Social media and elections

These environments are also critical sites where elections play out. Stromer-Galley (2014) argues the 2004 American presidential campaign marked a paradigm shift for the use of internet in politics, when candidates created interactive blogs, online fundraising campaigns targeted to small donors,
shared campaign videos, organized online chats, and importantly, turned over campaign tools to supporters. Four years later, Barack Obama’s campaign fully cemented social media into campaign strategy (Stromer-Galley, 2014, p. 133). In their study of the 2011 German election, Dang-Xuan, et al. (2013) observed that social media have “changed the physics of information diffusion which is no longer controlled by a small number of ‘gatekeepers’” (p. 796). Citizens can take a self-defined role in campaigning, by creating memes, sharing information, mocking the opposition’s gaffes, and encouraging their friends or followers to vote. During televised political debates, they serve as a “backchannel” for simultaneous running commentary (Kalsnes, Krumsvik, & Storsul, 2014). The traditional dynamics between media and campaign have shifted as social media have facilitated what Chadwick, Dennis, and Smith (2016) refer as a “hybrid” media system, where citizens both receive and contribute.

Critiques of social media as a public sphere

Based on these affordances, social media might seem to be the answer to many of the participatory problems that scholars saw in the public sphere in the 20th century. Audiences are no longer merely “receivers of political information” (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 14) whose only means of political expression are through official channels organized by interest groups, parties, and the media (Habermas, 1991 [1962], p. 232). Social media are generally free platforms, where “access is guaranteed to all citizens” (Habermas, et al., 1974). “Full and moving communication” (Dewey, 2012 [1927]) is unleashed each time conversations form ad hoc around events (Bruns & Highfield, 2016), providing real-time public debate on matters of the public interest. Yet social media have not been the cure to what ails democratic participation. Here I will examine some of the key debates.

Polarized

In contrast to the cohesive imagined communities Anderson (1983) argued formed from common mass media, it is feared social media and personalized content create isolated communities of people’s own design (Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Dalberg, 2001). Self-selecting “echo chambers” (Sunstein, 2007) and algorithmically built “filter bubbles” (Pariser, 2011) pose a risk to public debate being based on common information. “People restrict themselves to their own points of view – liberals watching and reading mostly or only liberals; moderates, moderates; conservatives, conservatives; Neo-Nazis, Neo-Nazis” writes Sunstein (2007, p. 2). It is feared that the democratization of information is not creating a “perfect information environment” as the U.N hoped, but is instead allowing users to ignore contradictory ideas, pushing them to ideological extremes, and making them more susceptible to “fake news” (Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2018).
Indeed, research finds internet users do tend choose information online that supports their beliefs (Bessi, et al., 2016), and this is particularly true among users who are politically active (Prior, 2013). Social media users generally – although not exclusively – prefer to interact with people who share their ideology (Conover, et al., 2011a; Gruzd & Roy, 2014; Smith, Rainie, Shneiderman, & Himelboim, 2014). However, it is not clear whether social media consumption drives polarization – or reflects it (Boxell, Gentzkow, & Shapiro, 2017). Offline media consumption, particularly in the United States, is often ideologically driven as well (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley, & Matsa, 2014). Friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers create echo chambers (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010) as does geographic location (Bishop, 2008). In fact, some research finds social media, aggregators, and search engines may be better at exposing users to competing viewpoints than when users go directly to their preferred source (Newman, et al., 2017). Flaxman, Goel, and Rao (2016) find social networks and search engines do contribute to polarization, moderately, yet they also expose people to more diverse viewpoints – again moderately. Thus, research so far suggestions polarization is a dynamic of online interactions, although social media do not appear to create hermetically sealed chambers of likemindedness.

Spectatorship

Despite the interactivity of social media platforms, scholars have also suggested that they may exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, the turning of politics into entertainment. Before social media, Habermas described this phenomenon as the “refeudalization” of the public sphere, where citizens resemble medieval spectators watching the king come through town (Habermas, 1991 [1962]). Kellner (2003) similarly argued the use of “spectacle” in politics strips elections of their policy implications and turns them into a story of win or lose played out by individual personalities. Kellner (2016) has suggested that social media’s emphasis on personal branding, combined with the crowd-driven interest in scandal, merely fuels politics as spectacle (see also Hindman, 2009). Social media accounts collapse the private and the public into one space, demanding one “authentic” brand (Enli, 2015). Italy’s Matteo Renzi, Canada’s Justin Trudeau, and Norway’s Erna Solberg have been noted for their use of social media more because of how they portraying themselves, than for promoting policy positions. Meanwhile, research has consistently found that politicians rarely use their accounts for interactions with members of their audience (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff, & van ‘t Haar, 2013; Pew, 2016). The news media’s attention to candidates’ personalities and foibles has been accused of contributing to declining trust in institutions and participation (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Habermas, 1991
[1962]; Hart, 1999; Meyrowitz, 1985; Putnam, 2001), and social media appear to only put the candidates’ personalities in a more shareable form.

However, the detrimental effects of politics as entertainment is not a settled debate in the literature. Scholars argue the flip side is that politics have been made more accessible – less boring. Even if celebrity candidates do not talk back, the memes, gifs, and jokes that regularly populate online political debate have removed some of the previous inaccessibility of “serious” political discourse. Jorba and Bimber (2012) argue the new “sociality of politics” allows for a higher degree of “horizontal” communication and makes the public sphere more welcoming to a wider swath of the public (p. 27). Taking a historic look, Schudson (1998) notes that prior to the 20th century, politics were often social affairs, full of parades, barbecues, brass bands, and other spectacles (p. 136). “The Lincoln–Douglas debates were show biz, too, the best entertainment around,” he writes (p. 139). Politics being entertaining, the argument goes, is not necessarily a sign that politics is broken (Van Zoonen, 2005).

Affective publics

In addition to the quality of information, social media also face serious questions about the quality of debate they produce. As Gentzkow (2016) notes, “a look at any internet comment thread or message board reveals a level of vitriol and unabashed partisanship that one would never see in an old-fashioned letter to the editor or op-ed piece” (p. 18). The outrage and outrageous language clearly fails against the yardstick of “rational” political debate that has been held up as the standard of democratic discourse (Habermas, 1991 [1962]). Here again, social media highlight a longer running normative question over democratic participation. Sociologists and political scientists note that it is hard to find examples of discourse that meets the rational standard outside of small homogenous groups (Schudson, 1998). Achen and Bartels (2016), examining nearly a century of American election data, write that voters are more often mobilized by their sense of group identity than a careful assessment of the issues. Meanwhile, political theorists such as Jane Mansbridge (1999) and Chantal Mouffe (2005) charge that rational model is not even desirable because it relies on narrow views of who is allowed to be included and how they should express themselves. Papacharissi, taking up these threads specifically with regard to social media, argues for thinking of social media as “affective” publics. She argues emotion and experience are important drivers of social media discussion, and while online harassment should not be disregarded, the civic potential of social media should also not be ignored because the platforms do not fit democratic ideals (p. 26).
Too elite – or not elite enough

Social media platforms are, theoretically, all-inclusive and unrestricted. Ordinary people enter on same level as elites: the president doesn’t get any more characters than anyone else on Twitter. However, in practice, social media often reflect rather than disrupt the status quo. Traditional media outlets – newspapers and television channels – tend to dominate online as well (Hindman, 2009) and they largely maintain their hold on the agenda setting power. Offline political elites are often political elites online, even in political uprisings (Christensen, 2015). In many ways, this is not surprising – offline and online distinctions after all are increasingly meaningless (Baym, 2010). However, the declining numbers of people posting to Facebook and tweeting on Twitter (Burgess, 2015) point to possible declines in overall interactivity among ordinary people. Hindman (2009) writes:

> If we consider the ability of ordinary citizens to write things that other people will see, the Internet has fallen far short of the claims that continue to be made about it. It may be easy to speak in cyberspace, but it remains difficult to be heard. (p. 142)

The platforms themselves have become objects of political engagement (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 180), as their commercial interests dictate how content is promoted. Or restricted, as in Facebook’s removal of the Vietnam War “napalm girl” photo because the victim’s nudity violated Facebook’s decency standards. This is hardly a public sphere free from the commercial interests that Habermas envisioned.

However, social media now confront the seemingly contradictory concern that the information-sharing properties of the platforms are not elite enough. Without the benefit of a discerning gatekeeper, the wisdom of the crowd – aided by bots – has advanced “fake news” – a catch-all term for extremist, sensationalist, conspiratorial, masked commentary, and other form of “junk news” (Howard, Kollanyi, Bradshaw, & Neudert, 2017). On social media, it becomes part of the single stream, presented with the same prominence as any other bit of information (Bunz, 2016). One researcher found that searching for “Is the earth flat or round?” on YouTube returned more videos promoting the flat earth theory. Although misinformation is hardly a new phenomenon in democracies, the ease with which it spreads and

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blends in online has raised the question of whether the platforms themselves should take on gatekeeping roles now usually associated with traditional media.

Thus, whether social media in general, and Twitter in particular, meet the normative requirements of a public sphere is a matter of ongoing debate – both in the academic literature and in the popular press. While there are not high barriers to entry, there are barriers to be heard. Social media are algorithmic, commercial, oriented toward personality and emotion, and can be manipulated by bots and trolls. Fragmentation and personalization take it far from the “intact” public that Habermas prescribed (1991 [1962], p. 232). In response, many scholars have attempted to find better terms for the digital forms that the public sphere now takes (DeLuca, et al., 2011). Bruns and Highfield (2016), for example, have argued that “sphericules” might be a better term on Twitter, given the fragmentation of publics online (p. 70). This study takes as a point of departure that Twitter and its ilk are part of the public sphere. This is not to suggest that the quality of deliberation is not important. But the term public sphere remains too useful a term for describing the arena in which participatory conversation occurs, flawed or not. As Schudson (1998) writes, the public sphere “is the playing field for citizenship” (p. 12). Therefore, this study leaves aside the project of determining the Habermasian public sphere-iness of Twitter, and instead seeks to understand how citizenship plays out there.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Political participation is often associated with citizenship in the nation-state, but its particular borders have historically been blurry. As the speed of information compresses space and time, the imagined communities that once formed through national media have the potential to expand across national borders. Changes in media technology and use create deterritorialized spaces that put less emphasis on where or who the speaker is, suggesting citizen-to-citizen communication can now occur in a broad-based way. This at least has the potential to open up the public sphere in a way that can give different voices more access to participation. Yet the degree to which this actually occurs is unclear. Information and media may be technically frictionless, but they are still largely bound by social friction to the nation-state. Furthermore, the digital platforms on which much national political participation now takes

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place present their own limitations to public communication, including polarization and eliteness, as well as the possibility that social media users are drawn more by the spectacle than participatory opportunity. In summary, the literature suggests that digital media have the potential to extend to new people democratic roles traditionally attributed to citizens. However, whether they are used this way is an open question. In the next section, I will present the particular context in which I pose this question.
Case Background: Trump, Twitter, and Scandinavia

This paper uses the case of how Scandinavians used Twitter to participate in the 2016 American presidential election. While this case speaks to the larger questions of transnational publics, it also presents its own unique set of circumstances. Table 1 shows the relevant population and user statistics specific to the case. In the section that follows, I first lay out the relevant features of the American election, including elements that made it particularly engaging and controversial, and how it fits into broader trends in American and world politics. Then, I examine previous studies on Twitter in politics, including in Scandinavian countries. Finally, I explore the political context that the Scandinavian users are situated in, and the Scandinavian countries’ relationship to the United States.

<table>
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<th>Table 1: American and Scandinavian populations and Twitter use</th>
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<td>Population in 2016</td>
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<td>Twitter use % (of internet users)</td>
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<td>Estimated Twitter users</td>
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Sources: Population figures are from national statistics bureaus. Twitter use percentages from Newman, et al. (2017). Twitter user estimates are calculated from Twitter use percentages, after first calculating the population of internet users.

THE ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP

Republican Donald Trump’s victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton has been described as one of the biggest upsets in American election history. Reportedly, few people even on Trump’s campaign team expected to win by Election Day – thanks in part to a whopper of an “October surprise.” The Washington Post had published an old recording of Trump before an appearance on the tabloid television show Access Hollywood, boasting about what amounted to sexual assault. But in fact, the campaign had been full of surprises, as Trump said things that for any other politician would have been serious gaffes. He accused Mexican immigrants of being rapists and proposed building a wall along the entire southern border; he promised a ban on all Muslims entering the U.S.; and he expressed sympathies toward Russia and hostility toward NATO. Trump also strayed from the traditional playbook of social media use. He wielded Twitter not in a perfunctory or stilted manner as previous candidates had, but in a personal and spontaneous way (Enli, 2017), often involving insults of his opponents and critics.
“He has used Twitter as a tool to foment culturewide rage – it’s his big, inescapable bullhorn,” wrote the New York Times.9

Perhaps among Donald Trump’s remarkable campaign feats was that Hillary Clinton was not the most covered politician in the race (Nord, Mancini, & Gerli, 2017; Patterson, 2016). Clinton was the wife of a former president, a former U.S. Senator and Secretary of State, and was poised to become the first female U.S. president. Clinton had once been known as the “celebrity candidate” (Parry-Giles, 2014), who journalist Carl Bernstein having described as “the most famous woman in the world” (p. 24). Yet in stark contrast to Trump, Clinton was seen as being cautious and calculated. Her social media feeds were a much more carefully curated by staff members. In fact, Clinton’s guarded use of technology was the source of her own scandal. Her campaign was dogged by her use as Secretary of State of a personal email account set up on a server at her home, seemingly in an effort to evade federal transparency laws. Later, another email scandal loomed over her campaign: Wikileaks published thousands of emails by her campaign chairman, John Podesta. For both Clinton and Trump, the affordances of media technology – for storage and for dissemination – were a mixed blessing.

Celebrity and spectacle

Although the 2016 pairing of reality show/real estate magnate with former first lady was certainly unusual, in other ways it continued the tradition in American politics of emphasizing the personality of the candidate – particularly presidential candidates (Gibson, 2009). Voters are now familiar with celebrity-style profile interviews of politicians, in which family members become part of the relevant information about the candidate (Enli, 2015). Singh (2017) argues these personal details and personality traits have become heuristics for assessing politics:

What David Axelrod observed of Obama in 2007 applied to Trump: ‘he is his own vision.’ In different ways, both attracted a personal vote and pursued relentlessly self-referential careers, campaigns and presidencies, preoccupied as much by their own singularity as their nation’s. (p. 25)

The emphasis on the candidates in 2016 can also be seen in the news coverage of the race, which Patterson (2016) found mainly focused on the horserace or scandal. This was not unique to U.S. media either. Nord, Mancini, and Gerli (2017) found that scandal and polls dominated coverage of the election

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in Sweden, Italy, and the United Kingdom as well. The authors concluded the coverage overall was not very informative, “while it probably met most entertainment and excitement criteria” (p. 12). Additionally, just as in the U.S., Trump was considered much more newsworthy than Clinton and although his coverage was more negative, it was more frequent.

In a book titled *American Nightmare*, published in the midst of the campaign, Douglas Kellner argued that Trump’s rise was “bound up with his use of media spectacle” (2016, p. 1). Kellner draws from his earlier research on media spectacles, arguing Trump was effective because he ran his campaign like another season of his reality competition show *The Apprentice*. Kellner’s point can be seen when Trump stated one of his biggest assets was his “winning temperament. I know how to win.”

In July 2016, a survey by the Pew Research Center found record levels of interest in the race despite (or perhaps because of) the historic unpopularity of the two candidates. However, it is not clear what effect the spectacle had on participation. Turnout in the 2016 election was around 60 percent of eligible voters, which was lower than in 2008 and 2004, but higher than 2012 and higher in fact than any election from 1972 to 2000 (Pillsbury & Johannesen, 2017).

**Outsiderism and nationalism**

Despite Trump’s success among Republican primary voters, he was an outsider candidate (Enli, 2017). He faced significant opposition among the Republican Party establishment – the hashtag #NeverTrump represented the wing of the party that claimed they would not vote for him, lead by previous members of the Bush administration. Trump likewise criticized the former Republican president – and Hillary Clinton – for the decision to go to war in Iraq and advanced a protectionist, anti-immigration agenda under the banner of Make America Great Again. He became a hero of the so-called “alt-right,” an internet-savvy manifestation of white nationalist ideology that advocates for the “protection of the western European and American way of life.”

Heikkilä (2017) writes that in the 2016 election this movement “capitalized on the anti-immigration and anti-establishment campaign themes of Donald Trump to thrust its ideas into the political mainstream” (para. 1). When Hillary Clinton characterized half of Trump’s supporters as a “basket of deplorables,” his supporters eagerly reclaimed the term as

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their own. For the Deplorables, Trump was expressing the views of the silent majority that the elite—the “globalists” and “cosmopolitans”—refused to acknowledge. On Nov. 9, in the early morning hours after election night, Trump tweeted, “Such a beautiful and important evening! The forgotten man and woman will never be forgotten again. We will all come together as never before.”

American politics had been seen by some as immune to such nationalist–populism, the legacy of immigration having formed a key component of American national identity (Miller, 2002, p. 235). However, his candidacy fit a larger pattern seen elsewhere in the world. In recent years, nationalist and anti-immigration parties have gained traction in many Western European countries, including in the Scandinavian region (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Lundby & Repstad, forthcoming). In the summer of 2016, British citizens voted to leave the European Union. After Trump’s win, Nigel Farage, one of the architects of Brexit, tweeted that 2016 was “the year of political revolution.” When Time interviewed Trump for its Person of the Year cover, Trump himself mused over the contradiction that a self-styled billionaire would be the representative of “the workers of the world.”

The backlash in the U.S. and Europe against so-called “globalists” and “cosmopolitans” appeared to be a form of economic revolt. Across many of the world’s major economies, unemployment had recovered following the Great Recession, but wages remained stagnant. In 2016, Bernie Sanders, whose campaign focused on democratic socialist economic reforms, came close to earning the Democratic Party nomination. However, further research has revised the initial economic hardship hypothesis. Survey analyses by Inglehart and Norris (2016; 2017) suggest that in the United States and in Europe, the animating force behind the populist–nationalist rise has more to do with the free flow of people than the free flow of goods. Pre-election opinion polls as well as election day exit polls showed American voters who said the economy was their biggest concern favored Clinton; those most concerned about immigration favored Trump (2017, p. 446; see also Rothwell & Diego-Rosell, 2016). Inglehart and Norris (2017) suggest that for voters concerned with cultural change, “unlike most politicians, Donald Trump provides emotional support when he openly expresses racist and xenophobic feelings” (p. 452). Oliver and Rahn (2017) find that in addition to ethnocentric attitudes, Trump supporters expressed high levels of anti-elitism and mistrust in experts. Analysts continue to debate whether economic or cultural

factors played a bigger role in Trump’s success. It is also certain that Trump could not have won without the immense power of partisan identity in American politics – a force Achen and Bartels (2016) find has a reach even broader than social identities (p. 268). Whatever the reasons, Sunstein (2017) argues Trump “unleashed” views previously hidden from the public sphere by changing the norms of what was socially acceptable to express.

**TWITTER**

Donald Trump’s largest and longest running campaign rally is arguably on his personal Twitter account, @realDonaldTrump. “Twitter is a perfect vehicle for Trump as you can use its 140 character framework for attack, bragging, and getting out simple messages or posts that engage receivers who feel they are in the know and involved in Trump World,” writes Kellner (2016, p. 9). Trump defied the notion that politicians' tweets had to be “the best tweets ever written by 17 people,” as Mitt Romney's digital strategist described the 2012 candidate’s feed (quoted in Kreiss & Jasinski, 2016, p. 14). Instead, Trump bolstered his authentic image by using the platform like an amateur, complete with all caps and exclamation points (Enli, 2017). Clinton’s feed was much more professional, but she – or a staffer – tweeted just as often as Trump (Pew, 2016). Bernie Sanders also used his account actively both during his primary campaign and into the general election.

For candidates, social media have become campaign fixtures for brand building and information sharing (Stromer-Galley, 2014). In 2016, the candidates’ presence on Twitter helped fuel its role as the “election cycle’s heartbeat.” For citizens (and non-citizens), Twitter provides a place to talk about the candidates, if not interact with them. In this section, I will first describe the architecture of Twitter, including its research affordances, and then examine the literature on its use in politics. The section ends with a look at the ways Twitter may have been manipulated in the 2016 election.

**Architecture**

Twitter allows users to post tweets, or short messages that were up until recently limited to 140 characters. Networks are made up of a non-reciprocal followee-follower structure (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). Unlike Facebook, users may be anonymous, and they do not have to have a preexisting follower relationship to interact with each other. Users can tag other users in their messages using a mention.

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16 This changed in November 2017 to 280 characters.
reply is a direct response to another user. Users can also redistribute a tweet by “retweeting” it. Papa-
charissi (2015) calls these the “addressivity” properties, which allow users to interact with each other
(p. 33-34). Hashtags began unofficially by users, but Twitter has since integrated them into the plat-
form structure. These simultaneously tag the topic of the tweet and also allow others to find the tweet if
they search for that hashtag, making “visible relationships that would not otherwise be recognizable”
writes Zappavigna (2011, p. 804). Users may also geotag their tweets with a latitude and longitude so
that they can be found by nearby users.

From a research perspective, Twitter is unusual in that user accounts are publicly visible by default
and few people make their account private. Twitter also makes much of their data available through an
API. Burgess and Bruns (2015) suggest

   the comparative openness of Twitter as a platform (from both a user and a developer perspective) has
   both produced an unprecedented wealth of social media data and stimulated rapid and significant
   innovation in computational tools to gather, analyse, and visualise this data in the digital humanities and
   social sciences. (p. 2-3)

Researchers may collect data in real time through the Streaming API or make retrospective searches
through its Search API. However, the amount of data researchers can get without paying has been lim-
ited to collect no more than 1 percent of the total Twitter traffic (Gaffney & Puschmann, 2014).

User practices

   Twitter use is strongly associated with news reading and sharing (Rid, 2017). In 2017, 70 percent
of American Twitter users said they used the site for news (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017). Users fre-
quently include URLs in tweets, which Suh, Hong, Pirolli, and Chi (2010) found improves the chances
of being retweeted. The practice of using hashtags, retweeting, mentioning, or replying to other users
are seen as indicators of participation in a particular subject. Bruns and Stieglitz (2012) found that these
“communicative metrics” even have predictable patterns for different types of topics; users engage in
less information sharing (retweets and URL linking) about live television shows than they do for natu-
ral disasters and breaking news events. Bruns and Stieglitz write, “Twitter activities, especially around
defined themes and events, are far from random, but instead appear to be governed by a number of
standard practices” (p. 178). Faltesek (2015) argues that one of the most important conversational fea-
tures of Twitter in comparison with other social networking sites is that interactions occur in near real-
time. This has enabled “audiencing” – or a “public performance of belonging” (Highfield, Harrington,
& Bruns, 2013, p. 336) – as when dispersed fans of a television show watch and comment live. Twitter users favor not only spontaneity but affect. Kim and Yoo (2012) and Dang-Xuan et al. (2013) found emotional content is more likely to elicit retweets and replies. Interactions are also typically characterized by homophily, where “celebrities overwhelmingly pay attention to other celebrities, media actors pay attention to other media actors, and so on” (Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011, p. 710).

Twitter and politics

In the United States, the Pew Research Center found that political conversations are also characterized by strong political homophily:

> Frequently these are recognizably liberal or conservative groups. The participants within each separate group commonly mention very different collections of website URLs and use distinct hashtags and words. (Smith, et al., 2014, p. 1)

This appears to be more the case in election-related discussions than other issues (Barbera, Jost, Nagler, Tucker, & Bonneau; 2015), although Conover, et al. (2011a) note users tend to retweet people they agree with, while mentions are more heterogeneous than polarization implies. Jungherr, Schoen, Posegga, & Jürgens (2017) found Twitter was not a reliable predictor of election results, but that it did reflect increased interest in politics. Studies find Twitter also does not set the agenda, but rather tends to follow the cycle of the established media (Groshek & Groshek, 2013). Often Twitter acts as a “back-channel” for discussions about content in the traditional media, including sports games, television series, disasters, and political debates (Kalsnes, et al., 2014). In the U.S., the “dual screening” of televised presidential debates has become a frequent practice (Kohut, Doherty, Dimock, & Keeter, 2012). In Norway, Erickson (2016) showed that Twitter was also a useful backchannel in the wake of the 2011 attack by Anders Breivik on Oslo and Utøya.

However, the early hopes that Twitter might have an “equalizing” effect on democratic discourse have given way to evidence that existing hierarchies have instead “normalized” these tools. As elsewhere on the internet, elites that dominate offline also tend to dominate on Twitter (Hindman, 2009; Wu, et al., 2011). In terms of the number of tweets, activity on Twitter typically follows a power-law distribution, “where a few elites receive the attention of many and thus have a disproportionate amount of influence” (Nahon, 2016, p. 48). Larsson (2014) found that in Sweden and Norway, established political actors – politicians and journalists – as well as far-right users were the major actors on Twitter, although Larsson and Moe (2014) report that during Norwegian elections, there was space for lesser known political actors to have an influence. Moe and Larsson (2013) found that across Scandinavian
countries, linking practices tended to favor content from the established media and political parties, though Danish users shared more satirical and humorous content.

While being generally elite, Twitter may also push marginalized voices in from the edges. Twitter give little-covered third parties a way of publicizing issues considered “marginal” in the mainstream press (Christensen, 2013). Young African Americans are more likely to be on Twitter than their white peers, and Cantey and Robinson (2015) argue that “Black Twitter” has been surprisingly effective at moving marginal issues into the larger public dialogue. Yet political discussions also invite the most opinionated. Preotiuc-Pietro, Liu, Hopkins, & Ungar (2017) found that people who tweet about politics tend to be either “very liberal” or “very conservative.” It has also been accused of bringing extreme views into the mainstream (Benkler, Roberts, Faris, Etling, Zuckerman, & Bourassa, 2017; Heikkilä, 2017). Writer Umair Haque (2015) has suggested the company’s failure to better police hostility on the site had undermined his democratic potential: “Twitter could have been a town square. But now it’s more like a drunken, heaving mosh pit.” Thus Twitter gives people on the margins more visibility in public discourse, both in ways that may be seen as constructive and detrimental.

Twitter across borders

Although Twitter is less widely used than Facebook, Ghemawat and Altman (2016) find Twitter users have more international connections than Facebook, with about a quarter of Twitter users located in different countries from the people they follow (p. 21). Leetaru, Wang, Padmanabhan, and Shook (2013) report that users’ geographic location plays a minimal role with regard to who users interact with. Cheng and Chen (2016) found that overseas Chinese speakers were a significant presence in Twitter commentary on Taiwan's presidential election in 2012. Research has also found that many Twitter users tweet in multiple languages (Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013; Hale, 2014; Sloan & Morgan, 2015). Bruns, Highfield, and Burgess (2013) found that in Egypt and in the Libyan civil war, largely separate Twitter communities sprung up in Arabic and in English, but a minority of mix-language users played a bridging function. Meanwhile, Hong, Convertino, and Chi's (2011) found conver-

sational practices on Twitter may vary between nations and cultures. Their study of 10 different language groups determined that key behaviors, including use of URLs, hashtags, replies, mentions, and retweets, “differed considerably” across the groups (p. 521).

**Manipulation of Twitter**

The “myth that platforms are neutral” (Nahon, 2016, p. 52), was further dispelled in the year following the 2016 election. It is now clear that targeted content, bots, trolls, and Russian operatives attempted to manipulate the contours of online discourse, helped along by Twitter’s algorithmic preference for popular content. These “fake” accounts are believed to have helped spread conspiracy theories and misinformation that made emotional appeals to Americans’ prejudices. In January 2017, the U.S. intelligence community released a report saying that, among other cyber tactics, the Kremlin had attempted to disrupt the election through social media networks (National Intelligence Council, 2017). In November 2017, Twitter gave Congress a list of 2,572 user names it had determined were linked to Russia’s Internet Research Agency.18 The tech news outlet Recode found tweets from those accounts quoted in hundreds of news articles, including stories by the Washington Post, the Miami Herald, and local ABC affiliates.19

Jonathan Albright has documented automated “bot” accounts that sent out hundreds a day in coordinated relays, often promoting anti-Clinton and pro-Trump hashtags (Albright, 2016). In the U.K., Bastos and Mercea (2017) found botnets that promoted hyperpartisan news before the Brexit vote. Varol, Ferrara, Davis, Menczer, and Flammini (2017) estimate that between 9 and 15 percent of accounts are bots. However, these distortions can’t all be attributed to automation. Although it can be difficult to tell the “real” accounts from automated “bot” accounts, Albright argues that much of the misinformation was shared “organically” by users seeking out the content. He found it was further amplified through what he calls the “micro-propaganda machine” – networks of primarily right-wing accounts that spread extremist information and conspiracies (Albright, 2016).

Whether through bots or human-operated accounts, Howard, et al. (2017) found that so-called “fake” news was shared more often in swing states, suggesting that voters there may have been targeted by accounts pushing misinformation. However, the findings on exposure are mixed. While the authors

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found that questionable sources accounted for nearly a quarter of news items shared on Twitter – the same as professional news items – Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) found that compared with professional news most adults read very few fake news stories on social media, and even fewer remembered them. Guess, et al. (2018) found that the people most likely to click on fake news sites were a minority of very conservative Americans.

SCANDINAVIA

Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, located in the upper reaches of northern Europe, comprise the Scandinavian region. While Scandinavia is not an official administrative demarcation, these countries share similar culture, language, systems of government, and history. Population-wise, these are small countries, but have achieved what Nye (2004) might call considerable “soft power.” Elsewhere in the world, “Scandinavia” conjures up positive images of furniture design, wool sweaters, crime fiction, metal music, Olympic skiers, the Nobel Prizes, Kirkegaard’s philosophy, Strindberg’s plays, or Grieg’s symphonies. In politics, Scandinavian countries are known for having generous welfare states and egalitarian societies. At the first Democratic Party debate during the 2016 U.S. presidential primaries, candidate Bernie Sanders told the audience, “I think we should look to countries like Denmark, like Sweden and Norway and learn what they have accomplished for their working people.” Although Norway, Sweden, and Denmark diverge in many policy respects, the concept of “Scandinavia” continues to have popular and academic resonance (Hilson, 2008).

Denmark, Sweden, and Norway all have multi-party parliamentary systems, with hereditary monarchies largely serving as figureheads. In 2017, the watchdog organization Freedom House ranked Norway, Sweden, and Denmark among the 10 freest countries in the world based on free and fair electoral process, a political system that invites participation and pluralism, transparent and functional government, and freedom of expression (Freedom House, 2017).20 Scandinavian populations generally are highly educated, are avid news readers, and have high levels of access to the internet (Syvertsen, et al., 2014). As in most Western countries, voter turnout fell between the 1970s and the 2000s. Even so, people in the three Scandinavian countries vote at relatively high rates – around 80 percent in recent years.21 Figures from the European Social Survey show Scandinavians generally possess a strong sense

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20 Out of a possible score of 100, Norway and Sweden had scores of 100 and Denmark 98. The United States scored 90.
of political efficacy – meaning, they believe they have influence over their political system (ESS Round 7, 2014).

Ghemawat and Altman (2016) write that “countries that are small, rich, on the sea, fluent in major languages and close to major markets tend to have deeper global connectedness than those that are not” (p. 57). This is borne out in Scandinavia. “Scandinavia has always been connected to other parts of the globe – from the Viking age to the Internet era” writes Ingebritsen (2006, p. 101). Scandinavian efforts toward multilateralism in peace negotiations and environmental policy have given the countries a collective authority that exceeds their relative size and military might (Ingebritsen, 2006; Nye, 2004). Scandinavian countries in different ways also maintain their distance from organized global alliances. All three were neutral in World War I and sought the same in World War II, though Denmark and Norway were occupied by Germany. Sweden is not part of NATO and Norway has not followed its Scandinavian neighbors into the E.U., although it participates in other ways through the European Economic Agreement (Skeie, 2014).

Scandinavian public sphere

In the late 1700s, the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft took a trip through Sweden, Norway and Denmark, which at that time were considered a remote and relatively unknown part of Europe. Wollstonecraft was surprised by what she found:

From all I can gather, the inhabitants of Denmark and Norway are the least oppressed people of Europe. The press is free. They translate any of the French publications of the day, deliver their opinion on the subject ... and without fearing to displease the government. (1987 [1796], p. 105)

The groundwork for an open public sphere was laid early on in Scandinavian society. Sweden passed the world's first law protecting freedom of the press in 1766. In contrast to more industrialized parts of northern Europe, the Scandinavian press was less geared toward relaying market information to commercial interests (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 146). Early newspaper readership was less socially stratified. Syvertsen, et al. (2014) write that this universalist approach continues to be a dominant feature of news production and consumption in Scandinavian countries, aided by different forms of state support for the media. In all three countries, public service radio and television broadcast grew into powerful unifying forces in the public sphere with mandates to promote civic values and national culture (Syvertsen, et al., 2014).

Scandinavians have often been early adapters of technology, including the use of social media platforms (Newman, et al., 2017). Ohlsson (2015) notes that Scandinavians’ penchant for new media has
diverted viewership away from television and toward global content on YouTube and Netflix. But even with near-universal digital citizenship, national media maintain strong positions both online and off. Media polarization is also not nearly as pronounced as in the United States, where researchers have warned that people of different political ideologies increasingly “inhabit different worlds” (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 1). The Reuters Institute found that in Sweden and Norway, and to slightly lesser extent in Denmark, the major news brands attract large shares of the population, regardless of political ideology (Newman et al., 2017).

Scandinavian countries also have high social trust. Habermas’ idea that the public sphere must be separate from government support to maintain integrity is “an analytical challenge from the point of view of Scandinavian citizenship” (Hernes, 1988, p. 210). Likewise, American models of citizenship that emphasize watchful skepticism of government do not translate to Scandinavian countries, according to Hooghe and Dejaeghere (2007). In analyses of Scandinavian survey data, they found that those most critical of government also had high political trust and willingness to participate in traditional organizations. Hernes (1988) suggests that consensus-oriented public policy approaches in Scandinavia have often allowed political movements to mobilize within rather than against the political system.

Immigration and cultural conflict

Historically, Scandinavian countries were ethnically homogenous countries with low net in-migration (Nordstrom, 2000). “Diversity” in these countries denoted more a difference in social class than in ethnicity (Bay, Strömblad, & Bengtsson, 2010). But this changed after the mid-20th century, as people from eastern Europe, southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East sought jobs or asylum. Nordstrom writes immigration had significant impacts on Scandinavia,

especially when they were coupled with the relatively low birthrates of the native populations. The impacts were most noticeable in Sweden, where nearly one in five Swedes was either foreign-born or the child of foreign-born parents in the 1990s. Ethnic diversity made Scandinavians more aware of the world as a global community. (2000, p. 349)

Ethnic diversity also reconfigured notions of what it meant to be Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish. Brochmann and Seland (2010) argue that historically, citizenship in these countries have relied on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or citizenship by blood – in contrast to the United States, where the dominant principle of citizenship is *jus soli*, meaning citizenship by virtue of birth within the territory. Brochmann and Seland (2010) write that this has put subtle emphasis on ethnic aspects of national
identity and resulted in difficulty in integrating newcomers into Scandinavian countries – creating tension with Scandinavians’ egalitarian and pluralistic principles. The public perception of what it means to be Swedish for example continues to be closely tied to “looking” Swedish (p. 435).

Although the three Scandinavian countries have taken very different approaches to immigration and integration (Brochmann & Seland, 2010), right-wing populist parties have made gains in recent years in each of the three nations (Lövheim & Lied, forthcoming). However, members often put their opposition to immigration in terms of “culture” rather than race (Gullestad, 2002), with particular emphasis on Christian Lutheran culture. Reliance on Christianity might seem like an unexpected tactic given Scandinavian countries’ standing as the most secular in the world. However, Lövheim and Lied write that it is in line with a line of argument among right-wing parties across Europe that pits Islam against Christianity on “civilizationist” rather than religious grounds (see also Brubaker, 2017). Sweden in particular has become symbolic for the ills of liberal immigration policies. At a rally a month after his inauguration, President Trump attacked European countries for admitting refugees, claiming (incorrectly) that Sweden had been struck by a terrorist attack the previous night. “Sweden, who would believe this?” he said. Nevertheless, Swedes did not share his solidarity. Polls during the U.S. election showed overwhelming opposition to Trump: when asked who they would vote if they could vote, 71 percent of Swedes, 81 percent of Danes, and 73 percent of Norwegians responded Hillary Clinton (YouGov, 2016).

Scandinavian heritage in the United States

The United States and Scandinavian countries have historic ties that have influenced the development of culture, media, and political systems – going both ways. Around 10 million people in the U.S. report Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish ancestry (Brittingham & Cruz, 2004). This includes President Donald Trump, who claimed Swedish roots in his book Trump: The Art of the Deal. Most of America’s Scandinavian heritage dates to the 1830s when waves of people, first from the rural areas and later

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25 This appears to be inaccurate. Trump’s father, an immigrant from Germany, likely wanted to avoid stigma during the second world war. See: Aftonbladet. (2015, Aug. 18). Trump ljög om svenskt ursprung. Retrieved from https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21271068.ab
the cities, began emigrating from Scandinavian countries for economic as well as religious opportunities (Nordstrom, 2000, p. 231-232). The portion of immigrants from Norway and Sweden was particularly high. Only Ireland lost a larger share of its population to emigration during this time (J. Rogers, 2007). Letters from immigrants in the United States had their own term in Norwegian – *Amerikabrev* – and contained accounts from the prærie of the American Midwest where Scandinavian immigrants established settlements (Øverland, 2012, p. 20). Lovoll (2014) has documented how Swedish and Dano-Norwegian language immigrant newspapers were sent from Scandinavian settlements to the homeland, establishing an early form of transnational media.

**Americanization**

Before Bernie Sanders cited the Nordic Model, the “American example” was a frequent example in the 19th century in debates about social privilege, religious tolerance, the limited sale of alcohol, women’s emancipation, universal education, and international peace (Koht, 1949, p. 37; Skard, 1976, p. 27). When parliamentarism was established in Norway in 1884, the conservatives who had opposed the reform called it “a victory for Americanization” (Skard, 1976, p. 27). The concept of “Americanization” became even more salient in the 20th century, particularly after the post-war Marshall Plan. In his 1949 book *The American Spirit in Europe*, the Norwegian scholar Halvdan Koht described the apprehension with which Europeans regarded the growing influence of the U.S. on international relations, political thought, economic development, literature and journalism, and daily life in general. “Indeed, it is scarcely possible to point to a single aspect of modern civilization in which America has not exerted a certain degree of influence” he wrote (p. v). American media and brands have since become omnipresent, with everything from *Donald Duck* comic books to cornflakes, hip-hop to McDonalds, being accused of being forms of “cultural imperialism” (Blanck, 2006; Skard, 1976; Sørensen & Petersen, 2006).

For small, English-fluent countries in particular, the availability and affordability of American media threaten the dominance of national media products, which have been such an important source of “collective self-understanding” (Nestingen, 2008, p. 14). Blanck (2006) recounts the Swedish journalist Herman Lindqvist’s assessment in 1996:

> [he] claimed that American culture had descended on Sweden like a ‘heavy and slippery blanket’ preventing all ‘spiritual and intellectual development,’ and that the ‘masses were kept hypnotized’ in front of their TV sets until they fell asleep, ‘dreaming the American dream, duped by the American myth.’ (p. 98).
Although anti-American sentiment has not been as strong as in other parts of Europe, both the left and the right in Scandinavian countries have in various ways attempted to block the import of American pop culture (Blanck, 2006; Sørensen & Petersen, 2006) though historically with poor rates of success (Sundholm, et al., 2012). Today the rotation of American products on Scandinavian commercial television channels is relatively high compared to other European countries: around 80 percent in Sweden and Denmark compared to a European average of 62 percent (Kevin & Ene, 2015). Although, it might not be the “heavy and slippery blanket” that Lindqvist described, the United States looms large as a source of entertainment and subject of news in Scandinavia. In the days before the 2016 election, Google Trends data showed that people in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden took more interest in Donald Trump than most other countries. Only Canada and Ireland were ahead of the Scandinavian countries for Google searches, proportionate to the country’s population.26

Methods

This chapter describes the methods I used to collect the data from Twitter for this research project, as well as the approaches I used to analyze this data collection. Because the initial data collection was a large, general scrape of election-related tweets, an important part of the methodology was narrowing down the data to tweets that I wanted to study – most critically, finding the Scandinavians in the collection. Here I will explain these two phases: the data collection and then the data processing. I also describe how I calculate the variables (for example, language, addressivity measures, similarities to the American sphere, etc.). At the end of this chapter, I will briefly discuss validity and reliability, as well as the ethical considerations this project raises.

OVERVIEW

This paper takes a quantitative approach to understanding transnational political participation in the 2016 election. The data used are publicly available tweets scraped from Twitter in the fall of 2016 and one week in May 2017. A quantitative method was chosen for this project because, as Berger (2013) writes, it allows media researchers to ask questions of “how much?” and “how many?” (p. 26). A qualitative approach – for example, interviews with social media users – might explain why Scandinavians were interested in the election, but it would not reveal beyond an anecdotal level the overall nature of that participation – or indeed whether it was occurring at all on any meaningful scale.

Twitter in turn was chosen for theoretical and methodological considerations. From a theoretical perspective, Twitter’s architecture and use mirror aspects of the classic public sphere: it is oriented toward news (Rogers, 2014), allows rapid interaction (Al-Saqaf & Christensen, 2017), and affords more stranger interaction than Facebook. Around 95 percent of users choose to make their tweets public (Bruns & Highfield, 2016) and communication does not require that users follow each other, in the way that much of the communication on Facebook requires mutual friendship (Schmidt, 2014). Although fewer people worldwide use Twitter, Ghemawat (2016) argues that in terms of networks, “Twitter is probably more ‘globalized’ than Facebook because of the tendency to follow news rather than friends” (p. 40). From a methodological perspective, the public availability of communication on Twitter, combined with the openness of its application programming interface (API), gives researchers access to rich data on users’ networks and communication (Burgess & Bruns, 2015, p. 12).
PHASE 1: DATA COLLECTION

I collected the tweets using the DMI-TCAT, a Twitter scraping tool developed by the Digital Methods Initiative at the University of Amsterdam (Borra & Rieder, 2014). The DMI-TCAT code was installed on virtual servers based in Frankfurt, Germany, rented through Amazon Web Services. All data collections were made using Twitter’s Streaming API. This method effectively taps into the live flow of tweets coming through the platform (Gaffney & Puschmann, 2014) – as opposed to requesting already existing tweets. The Streaming API was used because Twitter places more restrictions on scrapes that retroactively retrieving tweets (p. 59). This method returns the tweet itself, as well as 35 other fields of data. These fields include the time and date the tweet was sent, the name and handle of the user who wrote it, and the language of the tweet. It also includes information about the user, including how many people follow them, how many people they follow, the location and biography they give on their profile, what timezone they have set their account in, and what language they have set their Twitter interface to.

Challenges of location-based Twitter research

As a project about transnational communication, establishing location is critical. Yet the internet’s “lack of territoriality” (Chadwick, 2006) makes it difficult to study territoriality online. On Twitter, location often must be inferred from other user information (Wilken, 2014). Twitter does allow users to “geotag” their tweets with a tweets with the latitude and longitude, but this is an opt-in function, and few people have chosen to volunteer this information. Leetaru et al. (2013) found that just a little over 2 percent of tweets on a given day included geographic metadata. I found in my own research that the number of geotagged tweets on any topic from all three Scandinavian countries averaged 4,504 tweets per day – with election-related tweets being even more scarce. Furthermore, as Sloan and Morgan (2013) suggested, these tweets did not appear to be representative of Scandinavian Twitter users in general (a problem I discuss in more detail below). Thus, using geotagged tweets was not a viable option for this project.

Instead, I had to take a different approach. I established location through other clues available in the tweet metadata. These include the location the user provides, if any, on their profile page; the timezone they have selected for their Twitter interface; the language of their user interface; and the language of their tweet. This approach has been used in previous studies on the geography of Twitter (including Bruns, 2016; Bruns, Burgess, & Highfield, 2014; Kulshrestha, Kooti, Nikravesh, & Gummadi, 2012; Leetaru, et al., 2013; Sloan & Morgan, 2015). Unfortunately, the Streaming API does not allow these as parameters for gathering tweets – it is not possible, for example, to request only tweets coming
from users with a Copenhagen timezone. For that reason, it was necessary to reverse the logical order of data gathering: I first gathered election-related tweets, and then looked for the users in Scandinavia. In other words, I asked for all tweets worldwide related to the election. The added benefit of this was that it also gave me access to tweets from other locations, including the United States, which I used as a reference point in the analysis.

**Election keyword collection**

Tweets were collected over four week-long periods in the fall of 2016. These collection periods encompassed each of the presidential debates on Sept. 26, Oct. 9, and Oct. 19, and the day of the election, Nov. 8. I targeted these dates based on previous studies that show peak times for Twitter use during elections are typically during televised debates and election day (Larsson & Moe, 2016). Twitter studies have frequently used hashtags as the basis for collection (e.g. Bruns & Stiegli, 2012; Papacharissi, 2015). However, in this case, one of the questions at hand was which hashtags Scandinavians used. The data was instead collected using two keywords: trump and clinton. These keywords were chosen because U.S. presidential campaigns tend to be candidate-focused rather than party-focused (Gibson, 2009). In addition, the candidates’ names cross language barriers, while words like “vote,” “debate,” “election,” and “American” are different in different languages. This name-based collection served as the primary data set, used in the analysis of Scandinavians' participation (RQ1).

**Supplementary election collection**

The keyword search has limitations, including that it omits tweets that comment on the election without overtly referring to one of the two leading candidates. Therefore, a secondary data set based on Twitter's official election-related hashtags (eg. #debatenight and #electionday) and the candidates' Twitter handles (@realDonaldTrump and @HillaryClinton) was collected separately. This collection was not used when examining the Scandinavian engagement patterns (RQ1) so as to avoid skewing the results, for example in favor of hashtag use. However, this collection did create a more robust base to

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27 This approach also captures tweets where the candidate's name was in hashtag form (eg. #trump), although not embedded in a longer phrase (eg. #dumptrump or @realDonaldTrump). It was not case sensitive.

28 It was common practice to use the candidates' handles in place of their names. However, the primary keyword-based search would miss these tweets unless "trump" or "clinton" appeared elsewhere in the tweet.
draw from when looking for interactions between U.S. and Scandinavian users. Therefore, for RQ2, I used both the keyword and the supplementary collections.

**Geotagged baseline collection**

In addition to the election-related data collections, a separate scrape ran continuously between Aug. 18 and Dec. 3 that gathered tweets geotagged within the Scandinavian region. I had hoped to use this collection as a baseline for Scandinavian activity on Twitter to compare the election-related tweets to – to see, for example, whether Scandinavians discussing the U.S. election tweeted English-language content more than usual. However, this collection ultimately proved unusable. First, Twitter does not geotag retweets, as these are not considered “original” content (Sloan & Morgan, 2015). Second, an examination of the geotagged data revealed that many of the most active geotaggers appeared to be bots – Twitter accounts programmed to automatically send out information (Bastos & Mercea, 2017; Howard, Kollanyi, & Woolley, 2016). For example, the most prolific account in the collection tweeted the weather forecast from Gothenburg, Sweden every 10 minutes and was alone responsible for 22 percent of the entire collection. Other top geotagging users included accounts that tweeted job openings at Lego and an account set up to tweet every word in the Finnish language until the year 2020. In all, the top 0.1 percent of users in the geotagged collection were responsible for more than 40 percent of the tweets. Yet as Bastos and Mercea (2017) have pointed out, telling the difference between a bot and an exceptionally prolific user is difficult and would have been largely subjective in this case. For these reasons, I rejected the geotagged collection as a valid source of information about Scandinavians’ Twitter use.

**Post-election baseline collection**

As an alternative baseline collection, between May 2 and May 9, I used the DMI-TCAT to collect 1 percent of the global Twitter stream. I then drew a Scandinavian set from this collection using the same criteria applied to the election-related tweets (to be discussed in the next section, Phase 2: Data processing).

To summarize, four data collections were made: (1) an election keyword collection, based on global searches for the words *trump* or *clinton*; (2) a supplementary election collection, based on candidate mentions and official event-related hashtags; (3) a topic-neutral geotagged collection, based on tweets geotagged within the three Scandinavian countries, which was rejected; and (4) a Baseline collection that drew 1 percent of the tweets worldwide. These collections are shown in Table 2.
PHASE 2: DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The next step was to find the users I wanted to study. Throughout the data collection process, the tweets were downloaded from the DMI-TCAT as .csv files, each containing between 500,000 and 800,000 tweets. I then uploaded these files to Google Cloud Storage and used Google BigQuery to combine the files and remove duplicates, creating a single database for each collection. BigQuery is a web service that allows researchers to analyze extremely large data sets using SQL queries. For example, I used the following query to return all tweets from the election keywords collection that were written in Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian:

```
SELECT *
FROM [All.ALL_ALL_NODUPES]
WHERE lang = 'sv'
OR lang = 'da'
OR lang = 'no'
```

This allowed me to work with the extremely large collections of tweets and create more manageable sets according to specific criteria. Here I will explain these criteria.

Finding the Scandinavian users

Defining the parameters of who is a Norwegian, Dane, or Swede in this context ran into larger theoretical issues that scholars have noted about drawing strict lines around nationality (Gillespie, 2000; Livingstone, 2009; Oommen, 1997). Citizenship does not always align with identity or location. Because it is not possible to check the passport of people on Twitter, I decided to use criteria that would
capture users who might better be described as Scandinavia-affiliated. This drawn from Axel Bruns’ (2014) approach for determining “Australianness” in mapping the Australian Twittersphere. Here, a user is considered Scandinavian here if he or she uses a Scandinavian language, identifies as being from a Scandinavian country, or lists a Scandinavian location or timezone (with caveats). The use of the Swedish language as a criterion means some users in Finland were included, were around 290,000 people speak Swedish as their first language. It also includes Scandinavian users who live in the U.S. and Americans who live in Scandinavian countries. Although these users should arguably be excluded – since Scandinavians in the U.S. have other means of participating in the public sphere and Americans in Scandinavia can vote in the election – I found that their numbers were marginal, trying to exclude them was a subjective task, and their inclusion ultimately reflects the realities of transnational communication.

In my first attempt, I used the following criteria identify Scandinavian users:

- The user selected Copenhagen or Stockholm for their timezone.

or

- The user set the interface language of their account to Norwegian (no or nb), Swedish (sv), or Danish (da).

or

- The user wrote a country-specific term in the description field of their profile (e.g. “Norway,” “Norge,” “Norwegian,” “norsk,” or “nordmann”) or referenced one of the 5 largest cities in each Scandinavian country.

or

- The user entered a Scandinavian place in the location field. This was established by checking the location against a list of 5,137 Scandinavian place names, including country names, regions, historic regions, provinces, cities, and the neighborhoods and suburbs of major cities, compiled from tables on Wikipedia, Airbnb.com, and national census bureaus. Where applicable, both the English and Scandinavian language versions were included, for example Göteborg and Gothenburg.

or

- The user tweeted in Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish at some point in the data


30 For Norway, national, regional, and country-level names in nynorsk (New Norwegian) were also included.
collection, based on the *tweet language* field coded by Twitter.

The tweet language, timezone, and interface language fields are fixed by Twitter. The description and location fields allow users to type in any combination of numbers and letters. Due to this variability and potential for unintended matches, these criteria underwent several rounds of refining. First, I manually reviewed the most frequent locations; this led to rewriting the SQL query to exclude variations of Bergen County, New Jersey, and to include “sthlm” (Stockholm). Second, I divided users into three language groups: (1) those who tweeted in English but never in a Scandinavian language; (2) those who tweeted in a Scandinavian language but never in English; and (3) those who sometimes tweeted in English and sometimes in a Scandinavian language. The English-Only users were given particular scrutiny; about 500 names were removed through a manual review in the data visualization program Tableau. These names were then examined for patterns that could be used to tighten the criteria.31 Among the users who used Scandinavian languages, I discovered that using tweet language alone as a criterion led to the inclusion of a huge number of users who had in fact written only one tweet that Twitter misidentified as Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish. Ultimately, a more complex criteria map was developed based on these patterns, outlined in Figure 1. Among criteria added for ambiguous cases was a test for the presence of a Scandinavian vowel (å, ø, æ, ä, or ö) in the user’s profile information. I also discovered that “Europe/Oslo” had at one time been an available timezone option on Twitter. The criteria in Error! Reference source not found. were applied to the election keyword collection, as well as the baseline collection. The final user and tweet count of these sets are shown in Table 3.

Finding the American users

I generated a set of American users using the same principles used to create the Scandinavian collection. In this case, however, only the location field was queried, as the United States does not have a unique national language and most U.S. timezones are shared by Mexico and Canada. (Pacific Time appears to be the Twitter default too.) A list of 481 places and variations of place names was made from U.S. Census Bureau data. This list included the names of states, different versions of state and

31 Examples of the false positives in this group included Americans who referred to their Scandinavian heritage in their bio, listed a Scandinavian city as a place they once lived, or used a Scandinavian demonym for something unrelated (eg. “Swedish Fish” and “Great Dane”).
country abbreviations, and the names of U.S. cities with populations over 100,000. Like the Scandinavian criteria, these locations were also refined through several rounds, excluding, for example, British cities with the same name, and locations that contain state abbreviations (e.g. “M.I.A”). This led to a
set of 21,997,898 tweets – far too large a data set to be analyzed in Tableau or Excel. Therefore, I extracted a uniform distribution random sample (n = 771,248) in Google BigQuery.

**Table 3: Scandinavian and American data sets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavians discussing U.S. election</td>
<td>54,978</td>
<td>265,836</td>
<td>Election keyword collection (Sept-Nov 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian baseline</td>
<td>19,294</td>
<td>30,629</td>
<td>1 percent collection (May 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans discussing U.S. election</td>
<td>1,658,713</td>
<td>21,997,898</td>
<td>Election keyword collection (Sept-Nov 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American random sample</td>
<td>242,372</td>
<td>771,248</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finding Scandinavian–American interactions

This data set was developed to answer RQ2, dealing with American response to Scandinavians. Interactions here are defined as retweets, direct replies, or mentions. Whether users “liked” or “favorited” a tweet is not available in the data. Here I drew from the election keyword collection as well as the supplemental collection based on common hashtags and mentions of the candidates. This means that tweets did not have to use the words *clinton* or *trump* to be included. This analysis relied the DMI-TCAT’s mention function, which creates a file that breaks out the users each tweet addressed through retweet, reply, or mention. These files were loaded into Google BigQuery, where a SQL script was used to look for matches between the users Americans addressed and the users in the Election-Scans set. A total of 10,865 tweets addressed from American users to Scandinavian users were found.

Calculating types of tweets

This project examines not just whether Scandinavians tweeted about the election, but how: their use of hashtags, mentions, retweeting, links, etc. How frequently did they include a hashtag or mention or retweet other users? (RQ1-b) And which hashtags did they use, what sources did they link to, and who did they mention and retweet? – and how does this compare with the Americans? (RQ1-d,e,f) In order to make these assessments, I had to have consistent definitions for the different forms tweets take. The suite of analytical tools in the DMI-TCAT were used in conjunction with the software Tableau.

**TWEETS CONTAINING HASHTAGS.** Hashtags are used to identify the topic of the tweet in a way that links it with tweets on the same topic. A tweet may contain multiple hashtags. For the purposes of assessing overall rates, hashtag use was determined through the presence of a pound sign (#) followed by one or more alphanumeric characters within the body of the tweet. For the purposes of finding which
hashtag were used, I used the hashtag export function in the DMI-TCAT, which extracts the alphanumeric characters after the # into a separate data file.

RETWEETS. Users can share the tweet of another user by “retweeting” it. This shares the original user’s tweet, while also tagging them in a mention. Retweeting is considered an addressive tweet (Papacharissi, 2015) and a form of information sharing (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012). Retweet rates were calculated based on the number of tweets that contained “RT,” “Retweeted” or “via” in the text of the tweet. (Since Twitter integrated a retweet button, retweets no longer appear this way in the online user interface. However, this text is still present on the API.) For the purposes of finding who was retweeted, I used a function in the DMI-TCAT that extracts the twitter handle of the user who was retweeted into a separate data file.

MENTIONS. Mentioning a user entails using their Twitter handle with the @ symbol. This is an addressive form of tweeting because it alerts the user to the tweet – it is a way of talking to them. These tweets were identified through the presence of the at symbol (@) in the text of a non-retweet tweet. To find out who users mentioned, I used the function of the DMI-TCAT that extracts the twitter handle of the user mentioned into a separate data file, using the retweet criteria to exclude mentions in retweets.

REPLIES. This is a particular type of mention. Users can directly address another user by putting an mention at the beginning of the tweet. This often occurs in extended exchanges between users, when users are responding to something that was just said and implies a more direct form of communication. Rates of replying were measured based on the number of tweets with the at symbol (@) at the beginning of the text. However, it was not possible to computationally generate reliable data on who users replied to. Replies are often directed at multiple users who are part of a conversation, and it was not possible to identify who these users were beyond the first user. For this reason, replies only appears as a rate in RQ1-b.

TWEETS CONTAINING URLs. Users commenting on news events often include links to outside sources in the body of their tweet for the purpose of commenting or information sharing (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012). These tweets were identified through the presence of “http” (which also captures “https”) in the body of the tweet.32 For the analysis of which sites users linked, the URL expander script was used in the DMI-TCAT, generating a list of the links as they appeared in the original tweets, along with the full URL – as most links have been shortened either by Twitter or through a URL shortener to

32 Retweets often contain a URL to the original tweet on twitter.com. Links to twitter.com were removed from all URL analyses.
reduce the character count. I then simplified the links further in Tableau using coding language that eliminated all but the domain. I exported this data into Excel and performed a series of manual search and replace commands to consolidate different versions of the same domain (e.g. combining wpa.st and wp.me with washingtonpost.com). Not all the URLs could be followed to their original source by the DMI-TCAT script, meaning that they remained in the shortened version, such as bit.ly, rather than revealing the actual link. These were consolidated under “URL shorteners” and removed from the final lists.

It should also be noted that many URLs get shared through retweeting: the URL in the original tweet is re-distributed by the user retweeting it. However, the user has then not actively chosen to share the URL. When assessing rates of URL sharing, I have therefore considered both cases: URL sharing including those embedded in retweets, and “active” URL sharing that excludes those in retweets (although here I keep “vias” because this typically implies the user has shared an article directly from the news outlet’s website).

ORIGINAL TWEETS. These are tweets where the user is sending out a message they composed – as opposed to a retweet – and also without being part of an exchange with another user (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012, p. 166). These tweets were identified through the lack of criteria for retweets or replies. (They may include other mentions within the body of the tweet though, or hashtags.) Original tweets are part of communicative patterns (RQ1-b).

BROADCAST TWEETS. Users “broadcast” when they sent out messages with no conversational markers – no hashtags or mentions, and not a retweet. That is, these do not attempt to connect to a larger discussion on Twitter. Graham, et al. (2013) developed the concept broadcast tweeting to refer to the “unidirectional communication” by British politicians during elections. However, I have adapted it here to capture the practices of any user. These tweets were identified through the lack of the criteria for hashtags, retweets, mentions or replies, and are reported in communicative patterns (RQ1-b).

Average overlap

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) point out that “one of the most significant payoffs of the comparative approach lies in its capacity to render the invisible visible” (p. 76). I discovered early on that my data on Scandinavians alone would be difficult to assess without something to compare it to. Therefore, I have relied on the U.S. random sample, as well as the Scandinavian baseline set, to provide a kind of
yardstick. In the case of communicative patterns, this entails comparisons between descriptive statistics. However, making quantitative assessments of qualitative information – the hashtags used, the users mentioned – required a different strategy. Here I have largely used comparisons of ranked lists.

Webber, Moffat, and Zobel (2010) point out that ranked lists have become familiar means of assessing internet use. We often see top ranked sites, top ranked stories, trending topics, etc. However, pure comparisons – for example, are the lists identical? – fail to capture items that may appear at different positions on two lists. Meanwhile, simple percentages – how many of the items on this list are on the other – do not give the same credit to items at the top and at the bottom. Here I use what Webber, Moffat, and Zobel (2010) call “average overlap,” a cumulative measure where “rank 1 is included in every subset” (p. 13). Fagin et al. (2003) call this the “intersection metric” and Wu and Crestani (2003) call it “average accuracy.” The metric returns a value between 0 and 1.0, with 1.0 being a perfect match, much like a percentage. Of course, when the list of items goes on indefinitely, as any internet data does, it is up to the researcher to make a decision about how long to make the list. Twitter analyses have used different cutoffs for analyzing and reporting data: top 20 most visited sites (Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016), top 20 mentions (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013), top 25 clusters (Takhteyev, Gruzd, & Wellman, 2012); top 20 languages (Sloan & Morgan, 2015), top 60 words (Kumar, Morstatter, & Liu, 2014). For the purpose of mathematical comparison here I use the top 20. The average overlap does not change greatly beyond this cutoff because the metric privileges items higher on the list.

Determining political orientation

As part of assessing interactions between Scandinavians and Americans, I coded several groups of users for their political orientation through a content analysis of tweets. Political orientation was determined by reading all tweets available in my data collection from the user and their self-description, which sometimes expressed support for a candidate. Thus, the unit of analysis was the user (Neuendorf, 2016). This method of taking into account a body of tweets is similar to the approach used by Conover et al. (2011a) and Conover, Gonçalves, Ratkiewicz, Flammini, & Menczer (2011b) in their study of polarization among Twitter users in the run-up to the 2010 U.S. mid-term elections. The purpose was not to intuit a user's political ideology on a left–right scale, but rather describe their public expressions in the context of the race between Clinton and Trump. I used four mutually exclusive categories:

TRUMP-LEANING. This category applies to users who expressed explicit support for Trump's candidacy and/or explicit opposition to Clinton's. In some cases, this amounted to tepid support for Trump due to strong dislike for Clinton.
CLINTON-LEANING. This category applies to users who expressed explicit support for Clinton's candidacy and/or explicit opposition to Trump's. In some cases, this amounted to tepid support for Clinton due to strong dislike for Trump.

MEDIA. Accounts belonging to news media outlets and their reporters automatically went in this category.

UNKNOWN/NEITHER. This category applies to users whose tweets expressed opposition – or occasionally support – to both candidates or whose tweets were purely informational or apolitical. The most frequent example of an apolitical tweet was a link to a humorous YouTube video called “if Trump and Clinton were in love” which spliced together debate clips. Users whose available tweets were inscrutable also fell into this category.

This schema is limited, particularly in an election when both candidates were so unpopular (see Preotiuc-Pietro et al. for discussion of limitations of dichotomous schemes.) As one user tweeted: “Newsflash, just because someone posts a joke about Hillary it doesn't mean that they automatically support Trump.” Thus, the terms “Clinton-leaning” and “Trump-leaning” are used in place of “Clinton-supporting” and “Trump-supporting” to acknowledge the spectrum of views that may be captured in each category. This schema was applied to three different groups: a random sample of Scandinavian users (n = 440), the Scandinavian users who received 10 or more addressive tweets from American users (n = 143), and a random sample of the Americans who addressed tweets to Scandinavians (n = 400).

Determining eliteness

Eliteness is one of the characteristics of the Scandinavians users Americans interacted with, as part of RQ2. Although elites play an important role online (Hindman, 2009), the term does not have an established definition. Typically it refers to journalists, politicians, and celebrities (Wu, et al., 2011), although some users have cultivated a Twitter following without having these established roles outside the platform and may be considered to have elite influence (Dubois & Gaffney, 2014). In this case, a combination of these two factors was used. Elite status was determined through the presence of one of two conditions:

- The user was verified. These are accounts – denoted by a blue check-mark badge – that Twitter has determined “to be an account of public interest.” According to Twitter, these tend to be accounts maintained by prominent figures and organization, particularly those in the entertainment field, media, sports, and government. The purpose of verification is to certify that

the account is authentic.

or

- The user's follower count was in the top 5 percent. This threshold was determined by first separating out the follower counts of all Scandinavians (follower count is contained in the metadata of each tweet). As follower count changes over time, for each individual user the most recent tweet available was used. Users with follower counts in the 95th percentile – above 3,159 – were coded as “elite.”

Bakshy, Hofman, Mason, and Watts (2011) note that prior research suggests that follower count alone is not necessarily a strong indicator of influence, and in fact Ghosh et al. (2012) find evidence that spam accounts have a higher than average number of followers. However, follower count in this case is not meant to measure influence, but rather provide a quantitative measure for the reach you might expect from a user that does not rely on Twitter’s verified status alone.

**Gephi**

In parts of the Findings chapter I use the network analysis software Gephi to present data in visual forms. For these visualizations I applied the Force Atlas 2 algorithm, which visualizes communication spatially by simulating a gravitational-like pull between the nodes, or users, based on their edges, or the interactions with each other (Jacomy, Venturini, Heymann, & Bastian, 2014). Additionally, I used Gephi to draw conclusions about the political orientation of the American users who interacted with Scandinavians. For this, I used the program’s modularity class function to find communities, or “sets of highly interconnected nodes” (Blondel, Guillaume, Lambiotte, & Lefebvre, 2008, p. 2). Two major communities dominated the data: users more clustered around Donald Trump and conservative media, and users more clustered around Hillary Clinton and mainstream media. I then compared these examined the users in these groupings whose political orientation I already knew from manual coding (see above: Political orientation). Here I found that Gephi’s algorithmic sorting of Americans into communities was a reliable measure of their political orientation (Cohen’s kappa = .735).34 This is similar to the approach to algorithmic coding used by Conover et al. (2011a; 2011b; 2012). Users who were not part of the clearly partisan modularity classes are classified as “other.” However, I found that a similar

34 I found Gephi’s algorithm achieved the highest accuracy in predicting user political orientation if I removed mentions of the candidates’ accounts, @HillaryClinton and @realDonaldTrump. Mentions were unreliable predictors of political orientation because users often mentioned the candidate they opposed. Retweets of the candidates’ accounts, however, were accurate predictors.
approach to Scandinavian users was less successful and below the accepted level of inter-coder reliability (Cohen’s kappa = .675).

Fake news

Part way through this research project the role of “fake news” in the 2016 became a salient feature of analyses of the election. Although not the main focus of this study, I have included findings on how this phenomenon played into the Scandinavians’ participation. To do this, I used the list of “fake” news sources from Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Albright (2016) and matched the domains to the domains in links shared by Scandinavians.35 This analysis is now included in RQ1-d.

VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND CAVEATS

Validity, writes Neuendorf (2016), refers to measuring what you want to measure, while reliability is “the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials” (p. 122). As I described in the previous sections, I attempted to ensure validity and reliability at every stage of data collection and data processing. In this section I will describe additional steps and concerns related to the overall quality of this research, including how I ensured the reliability of computer and manual data coding, the reliability of data collection from Twitter, and the validity of my original search terms. Finally, I will address a standing question about any social media data from the 2016 election: the role of Russians and bots.

Twitter’s language detection

Unlike the language of the user’s interface, the language of the tweet is determined after the fact through machine detection (Phillips & Davis, 2009; Twitter, 2016). Because language features so centrally to this project, the reliability of this field to tell the difference between English and the Scandinavian languages was crucial. To do this, I manually coded a random sample of 4,100 tweets and found that Twitter had an accuracy rate of 99.7 percent (confidence level = 95%, confidence interval [99.5%, 99.8%]) in telling Scandinavian languages apart from English.36 It was slightly less reliable in

35 I made two changes: I removed the National Review, included by Albright, and the New Yorker, included by Allcott and Gentzkow, from the list of “fake” sources.
36 The 13 tweets that were inaccurately machine-coded either mixed American proper nouns with a Scandinavian language or used two languages (e.g. “Hoppas att Hillary Clinton vinner!! @HillaryClinton Im with you! I hope you win ❤❤ I’m on your side” was also coded as English).
telling the differences between Scandinavian languages. In a random sample of 780 tweets coded by a native Norwegian speaker, Twitter had a 95.9 percent accuracy rate (confidence level = 95%, confidence interval [94.5%, 97.3%]).

Political orientation

All coding was done by me. To ensure the reliability of the coding rubric, I did a test of “intra-coder” reliability. This measures the consistency of one rater by comparing the results from two time points (Neudendorf, 2016, p. 190). I used the random sample of Scandinavians. They were first coded in April 2017 and again in October 2017. Intra-coder reliability achieved a Cohen’s kappa of .907, with disagreement mostly between Clinton-leaning and unknown. The downside of this is that it is more a test of “stability” than a reliability measure, in that the same rater may have the same biases and therefore the same measurement errors are captured both times (Krippendorff, 2012, p. 388). However, without resources to employ additional raters, this helps show internal consistency in the coding schema that was applied to Scandinavians and Americans.

Combining countries into a single region

Although the Scandinavian countries represent different national spheres, the data will be analyzed on a regional basis for technical and mathematical reasons. Technical because the similarity in language, place names, and timezones make it difficult to separate users into three distinct camps. Mathematical because these are small population countries with accordingly small numbers of Twitter users. Moe and Larsson (2013) note that the scale of use, particularly in Norway and Denmark, is limited: “it takes relatively few tweets to create a peak” (p. 790). Combining the tweets from all three countries supplies a larger body of tweets to analyze and assures greater mathematical significance. Finally, as described in the Case Background chapter, it is believed that Norway, Denmark, and Sweden culturally and politically similar enough to justify studying them as a region. However, the Findings chapter will begin with a breakout of country-specific data.

Clinton vs. Hillary

I chose to use the word clinton to parallel the use of trump in my keyword search. However, Clinton often went by “Hillary,” raising the question of how the use of her last name might bias the results. The main concern here is that the choice of her last name biases the results in favor of users from one political orientation or another. Research on Clinton's candidacy in the 2008 presidential race has found that both in print (Falk, 2008) and on television (Uscinski & Goren, 2011) Clinton was more likely to
be referred to by first name than Barack Obama, which the authors attributed this to sexism. Donald Trump repeatedly used the phrase “Crooked Hillary” and sold campaign buttons with the slogan “Hillary for prison.” However, Clinton herself has used the “Hillary” monicker in campaign literature going back to her U.S. Senate race in 2000 (Anderson, 2002, p. 114). My own data is not conclusive – it is not possible to see whether hillary or clinton is more common, given how the data is collected. However, I did find that among both Scandinavians and American Twitter users, Trump-leaners used both clinton and hillary more than Clinton-leaners. Clinton-leaners meanwhile were much more likely to use trump than Trump-leaners. Thus, it is possible that overall, if Trump-leaners in fact preferred the use of hillary to clinton, they may be underrepresented in the data.

**Twitter data limits**

While Twitter offers a relatively open source of data, the company does limit free data collection to – it is believed – only 1 percent of the entire global Twitterverse (Driscoll & Walker, 2014; Gaffney & Puschmann, 2014). In other words, if your query would return more than 1 percent of all tweets everywhere, you will not get them all. Because the U.S. election was such a major event, this means it is certain that I did not collect all tweets that met my search parameters. This is concerning because Morstatter, Pfeffer, Liu and Carley (2013) found that Twitter may not randomly limit the tweets and favor tweets containing links. Moreover, a working paper by Tromble, Stroz, and Stockmann (2017) suggests that, although the Streaming API is more representative of the full Twitter stream than the Search API, highly active users may be overrepresented, along with tweets containing media, hashtags, and mentions. Yet, the bias is not consistent across the board: at Trump’s inauguration, for example, the authors found retweets were underrepresented, while at his first address to Congress retweets were overrepresented.

The data represented here therefore may not be representative of the total Twitter stream. However, it is aggregated over several weeks – something Morstatter et al. (2013) suggested could produce fairly accurate results. In addition, the analysis is based on comparisons between data sets drawn from the same collection, so the bias would presumably exist in both. Finally, the analysis considers a variety of measures, so that the overall question of Scandinavian participation is answered through across a number of data points. So while this is an ongoing question for Twitter researchers, it is believed that the evidence so far on bias in the Streaming API do not indicate the findings here are invalid.
A note on bots and Russians

As I was analyzing the data for this project, information began emerging on the manipulations of Twitter during the 2016 election. It is believed that Russia ran a coordinated effort through at least several thousand Twitter accounts to manipulate trending topics and drive traffic to polarizing news stories. Even when not part of a geopolitical effort, however, it is clear that bots are part of the Twitter ecosystem (Ferrara, et al., 2016; Kollanyi, Howard, & Woolley, 2016; Varol, et al., 2017). This became clear in my own data, leading me to disregard the geotagged collection entirely.

I took several steps to mitigate the potential effects of Twitter manipulations. First, in most cases, I used the number of unique users rather than number of tweets. This avoids the ability of a single prolific account to make a particular hashtag or website appear more prominent. In effect: One user, one vote. Throughout the analysis, I also tested what happened if I removed recently created accounts (2015-16) on the results; recently created accounts are one indication of troll and bot accounts (Bastos & Mercea, 2017). This did not appear to have significant effects.

Finally, in November 2017, the U.S. Congress released a list of 2,753 usernames that Twitter believed had been Russian-controlled “troll” accounts active during the American election.37 I compared the usernames on the list to usernames in my data. None matched the usernames in the Scandinavian set, although Scandinavians did mention and retweet users on the list 491 times (0.02 percent of total tweets by Scandinavians), with @ten_gop and @pamela_moore the most frequent targets. The random sample of American users did contain 68 of the “trolls,” generating 173 tweets (0.02 percent of tweets in the sample). American users in the sample mentioned and retweeted users on the list 3,341 times (0.43 percent of tweets in sample), mainly @ten_gop. One username from the Russian list, @zzzacha-ryzzz, was also found among the U.S. interlocutors; the user tweeted once at what appears to be a Danish account. Overall the alleged trolls did not appear to have a great impact on the data, though their presence reflects the reality of the Twittersphere during the election. I have therefore decided to leave them in.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Working with large sets of social media data brings with it particular ethical considerations. Even when using data the user has allowed to be public, as in this case, the Association of Internet Researchers advises researchers to be cautious. Helen Nissenbaum (2010) has highlighted the role of “contextual integrity” in data use: even when internet users know their information is public they may not expect it to be publicized in other formats. In the case of APIs, information that users may not even be aware exists may be public, and as Larsson (2015) notes, it is not possible to receive consent from all participants when working with Big Data. In advance of the data collection, I applied for and received approval for this project from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Prosjekt n. 49495; see copy of approval in Appendix). However, this project raises ethical questions around expectations of privacy, which I will discuss here, drawing from the frameworks laid out by the Association of Internet Researchers (see AoIR document by Markham & Buchanan, 2012, p. 8-11) and Norway’s Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH, 2014).

Context. As a platform, Twitter promotes itself as “the place to find out about what’s happening in the world right now” and specifically highlights the ability to of users interested in politics to “take a part in communities and social movements.” Twitter’s company vision of course is not binding to user expectation, but researchers have observed a shift on Twitter from a platform for personal connections and more toward public discussions (Burgess, 2015; Rogers 2014). This implies that Twitter users likely have lower expectations of privacy for their tweets than, for example, Facebook users posting a status to their profile. Twitter users do have the option of making their accounts private, and these users’ tweets were not part of the data collection.

Topic sensitivity. The topic of discussion also has bearings on users’ expectations of privacy (McKee & Porter, 2009). This study focuses on users who discussed a presidential election, a matter of public interest. This is not to say that opinions cannot be considered “personal” simply because they deal with a public matter. However, Elgesem (2015) argues individuals discussing political issues in a public forum like online newspaper comment sections or Twitter have lesser claims on consent to use of their non-private comments in research (p. 15). Furthermore, I argue that this research is about an issue of public interest, addressing the issue of free speech and political participation. Based on this,

and the general context of Twitter, data reported in this paper include user handles and occasionally verbatim quotes of tweets.

**Metadata.** The calculus is a bit different, however, when it comes to metadata not visible on users’ public profiles. This data was critical to this research: the language of their Twitter interface and their timezone setting. Technically, all users must agree to Twitter's privacy policy, which explains that this data is publicly available, but it is probably the rare user who has actually read this agreement (Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2016). Recognizing this, ethics bodies, including NESH and AoIR, generally draw a distinction between what users have *legally* made public, and what users *expect* to be public. For that reason, more measures are taken with regard to metadata. I have chosen not to publish any private metadata – by which I mean data that is not publicly visible on their profile – except in aggregate.

**Deleted data.** In some cases I found that accounts in the data had been deleted from Twitter, either by the user or Twitter itself. This phenomenon has been noted by researchers who study Twitter (e.g. Bastos & Mercea, 2017, who make it part of their research). Because data collection using the Streaming API scrapes tweets as they are sent, researchers will inevitably have information in their databases that is no longer publicly available. This raises the question of the researcher’s responsibility to respect the deletion of this data. In many cases it is not possible to check every tweet to see if it is still active – nor, as Bastos and Mercea argue, is it likely in the public interest. In this paper, the users identified appear to still be online, with the exception of @MarcusCarlsson19, a prolific account that was suspended by Twitter. In the interest of reflecting Twitter activity with accuracy and not burdening the data analysis, I have left all accounts in.

**Data storage.** AoIR advises researchers to see ethical decision making as a continual process, where each step in the research may require a different set of considerations (Markham & Buchanan, 2012, p. 5). I took precautions during the time between data collection and data analysis to ensure that the data was safely stored. At no point was it publicly available online. At different times it was stored in Amazon and Google cloud storage. In all cases I chose storage options hosted under the purview of European Union internet data laws.

**The role of the researcher.** This research project required no interaction between myself as the researcher and the subjects of the study. However, as an American living in Norway, my own Twitter activity related could have been part of the data used in this study. For this reason, I abstained from using Twitter in a way that would have been picked up by my own data collection, including interactions with Scandinavians discussing the election.
Findings

In this chapter I present the results of the analysis. This chapter begins with an overview of the Scandinavian users, estimating the country of origin of the user base. Following this, I address RQ1 on Scandinavian participation. These findings are organized by each subpart (a through f) of the question. The last section of this chapter addresses RQ2 on Americans’ interactions with Scandinavians. Here I will examine the degree to which interactions took place, as well as salient characteristics of the Scandinavians that Americans interacted with most. The chapter ends with a summary of the key findings.

OVERVIEW OF USERS

A total of 54,978 Scandinavian users were found in the election keyword collection using the criteria for selection (Figure 1, p. 54). These users sent 265,836 tweets that contained either the word trump or clinton during the collection periods in the fall of 2016. Table 4 shows estimates of where the users are from. The table shows that Denmark (14 percent of users) is highly underrepresented in proportion to its population (27 percent of the population of Scandinavia), as is Norway to a lesser degree (21 percent of users compared with 25 percent of the population), while Sweden is slightly overrepresented (50 percent of users, compared with 47 percent of the population). This may be due relative popularity of Twitter in the countries, interest in the U.S. election, and/or the ease of finding users – for example, if more Swedish users set their Twitter interface to Swedish, tweet in Swedish, or are highly concentrated in major cities that were easy to match. “Ambiguous” users, who were a small but prolific group, could not be placed because their data matched multiple Scandinavian countries. For the purpose of the analysis, all Scandinavian users were combined into one set. However, this country-level overview provides context for the findings that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>ambiguous</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>users</td>
<td>32,802</td>
<td>8,572</td>
<td>11,106</td>
<td>2,498</td>
<td>54,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total users</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tweets</td>
<td>132,235</td>
<td>38,273</td>
<td>54,407</td>
<td>40,901</td>
<td>265,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total tweets</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweet per user</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>16.37</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESEARCH QUESTION 1: SCANDINAVIAN PARTICIPATION

This section addresses the first research question: How did Scandinavians engage with the U.S. presidential election via Twitter, and to what degree did they participate on a transnational level? All election-related data for this section was drawn from the primary keyword collection (scraped from Twitter using the keywords *trump* and *clinton*). This section utilizes comparative analysis, matching Scandinavians’ engagement patterns to that of a sample of American users from the same keyword collection, as well as network analysis, to see who Scandinavians retweeted and mentioned. It also compares Scandinavians’ election-related Twitter patterns to those in a baseline set of Scandinavian tweets collected six months after the election.

a) Language: What language(s) did Scandinavians use to discuss the election?

The majority of the tweets sent by Scandinavians about the U.S. election were in English. Of the total collected, 203,912 were in English (76.7 percent); 38,052 in Swedish (14.3 percent); 8,178 in Danish (3.1 percent); 9,002 in Norwegian (3.4 percent); and 6,692 were in another or undetermined language (2.5 percent). It is not clear from these numbers alone, however, whether this is unusual. As scholars have noted, English is the *lingua franca* of Twitter (Fraser, 2007; Takhteyeva, Gruzdb, & Wellman, 2012). To test whether Scandinavian users were making a choice specific to the topic of the American election, these figures on language use were compared to language use in the baseline set. This revealed that the rate of English use was unusually high. See top two lines of Table 5. While Scandinavians frequently send English-language tweets, it is usually at a lower rate (49.6 percent of tweets in the baseline set). Nor does it appear to be the case that the American election merely attracted the users who tweet in English anyway. I examined users who were picked up in both the election data and the baseline data six months later – there were 5,644 in total, producing 87,671 tweets in election keyword collection and 9,470 tweets in the baseline collection. These “repeat users” (see middle portion of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Scandinavians’ language use (% of tweets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat users: Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat users: Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-retweets: Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-retweets: Baseline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All differences between the election and the baseline are statistically significant (df = 1, p < 0.05).
Table 5) normally tweet in English at a lower rate: 47.1 percent in May compared with 77.4 percent in election tweets.

However, many of the English-language tweets are in fact retweets – which by definition maintain the language of the original. Therefore, it could have been that Scandinavians were not making an active language choice, but had instead increased their English-language output by retweeting a lot of election-related tweets in English. To test this, I removed retweets from both the election set and the baseline (see bottom portion of Table 5). This shows that even when Scandinavians wrote their own tweets, English was still used more than normal during the election: 59.5 percent of election-related tweets, compared with 39.4 percent in the baseline. Overall, these findings suggest that Scandinavian users changed what language they used to discuss the American election.39

**Language groups**

Although English dominated overall in election-related tweets, not all Scandinavian users tweeted in English. To examine the language practices of the users themselves, I divided the Scandinavians into three language groups: those who only sent tweets in English (Eng-Only), those who only sent tweets in the national languages (Scan-Only), and those who sent tweets in English as well as Scandinavian languages (Duo-Lang). These categories can be found in Table 6. Eng-Only users were the largest group, in terms of both the number of users and the number of tweets sent. However, Duo-Lang users were more prolific users. Although they made up 15 percent of the total users, they accounted for 43 percent of the total body of election-related tweets. They also contributed more of the tweets in Scandinavian languages than the Scan-Only users, who represented a larger portion of users but contributed only 8 percent of the total body of tweets. The Duo-Lang users will be used in subsequent questions to

### Table 6: Language groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language group</th>
<th>User names</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>Ave tweets per user</th>
<th>% of total users</th>
<th>% of total tweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eng-Only</td>
<td>33,567</td>
<td>124,955 (en)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scan-Only</td>
<td>12,239</td>
<td>21,437 (sv, da, no)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duo-Lang</td>
<td>8,118</td>
<td>112,752 (en, sv, da, no)</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Duo-Lang in English:** 78,957 (70% of Duo-Lang tweets)

**Duo-Lang in Scan languages:** 33,795 (30% of Duo-Lang tweets)

Note: Tweet numbers include all tweets sent, including retweets.

39 Although outside the scope of this study, it is notable that the baseline data in Table 5 suggests that the Scandinavian Twittersphers are usually quite language diverse. Tweets in languages besides the national languages and English make up close to a quarter of tweets in the baseline data. Nevertheless, like the other Scandinavians, these users also appeared to have switched to English to discuss the U.S. election.
examine not just overall patterns in the tweets, but the way individual users shift their patterns, conversational markers, and addressivity from one language to another.

b) Communicative patterns: What kinds of tweets did Scandinavians send?

Communicative patterns, which I draw from Bruns and Stieglitz’s (2012) model of Twitter metrics, refer to the rates at which users send different kinds of tweets. As the authors note, different forms of tweets reveal different forms of exchange and information sharing. In this case, I have examined eight types of tweets: (1) tweets that contain hashtags, showing the user is trying to connect to a larger conversation; (2) retweets, a form of redistributing information and commentary (which here include “via” tweets, often from media outlets); (3) tweets that contain any mention (including replies) of another user, a sign of interaction; (4) replies specifically, showing tweets that attempt to directly engage in conversation; (5) any tweet that shares a URL, including when the URL is part of a retweet; (6) non-retweets that share a URL, showing the user actively chose the link; (7) original tweets, which are not retweets or replies, showing the user has written their own content intended for a broader audience; and (8) broadcast tweets, similar to original tweets, but in which contain no conversational marker or addressive element that would connect the message to an audience beyond the user’s followers. (These types were also defined in more depth on page 55 in the Methods chapter.)

The communicative patterns by Scandinavians discussing the election are shown in Table 7. They indicate that the majority of the tweets contained some kind conversational or addressive feature. Only 15.5 percent were purely broadcast tweets. Most of the tweets – two-thirds – were retweets or vias. A majority of Scandinavians’ election tweets also contained a URL, although these were usually contained in retweets. About one out of five tweets had a URL the user actively chose. A fifth also made use of a hashtag. And just under one in 10 tweets directly engaged another user in conversation (@replies).

However, it is not clear how to interpret these patterns from this data alone. The data do not show, for example, if Scandinavians shared information at different rates than Americans discussing the

| Table 7: Communicative patterns of Scandinavians discussing the U.S. election |
|-----------------------------|-----|------------|
| Type                        | Tweets | % of all tweets |
| tweets with #hashtags       | 56,173 | 21.1%       |
| retweets (including vias)   | 181,283| 68.2%       |
| @mentions (w/out RT)        | 28,061 | 10.6%       |
| @replies                    | 22,217 | 8.4%        |
| tweets with URL (w/RT)      | 162,395| 61.1%       |
| tweets with URL (w/out RT, vias kept) | 49,098 | 18.5% |
| original tweets (no RTs/@replies) | 56,812 | 21.4% |
| broadcast (no #, RT, @mention) | 41,290 | 15.5% |

70 | Findings
election, or whether this seemingly low rate of replying to other users is typical of Scandinavians on Twitter. Hong, et al. (2011) found key behaviors, including use of URLs, hashtags, replies, mentions, and retweets, “differed considerably” across users from different countries (p. 521). Therefore, further analysis was done, using the baseline Scandinavian set and the American random sample from the same keyword-based election collection. The results are compared in Table 8. These analyses show that Scandinavians discussing the election used hashtags at lower rates than normal and also at a lower rate than Americans discussing the election. They retweeted more frequently than normal about the election, but more similarly to Americans discussing the election. Mentions, as well as replies, were lower than normal and yet higher than Americans also discussing the election. Actively linking to other sources was the same as the baseline for Scandinavian election tweeters, but slightly higher than Americans' use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Baseline Scandinavians</th>
<th>Election % point difference (Table 7)</th>
<th>Scandanavian % point difference (Table 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tweets with #hashtags</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retweets (including vias)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@mentions (w/out RT)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>-15.8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@replies</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>-13.2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tweets with URL (w/RT)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tweets with URL (w/out RT, vias kept)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>-0.4*</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original tweets (no RTs/@replies)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>-12.2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broadcast (no #, RT, @mention)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ave. point difference from Scandinavians discussing the election</td>
<td><strong>11.2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All differences are statistically significant (df = 1, p < 0.05) except where marked (*). This difference is corrected to 0 in calculating the average point difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Tweets in English</th>
<th>Tweets in Scan languages</th>
<th>Duo-Lang users’ tweets, English</th>
<th>Duo-Lang users’ tweets, Scan langs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tweets with #hashtags</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-4.9</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retweets (including vias)</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@mentions (w/out RT)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@replies</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tweets with URL (w/RT)</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tweets with URL (w/out RT, vias kept)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>-0.1*</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original tweets (no RTs/@replies)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broadcast (no #, RT, @mention)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average point difference</td>
<td><strong>1.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All differences are statistically significant (df = 1, p < 0.05) except where marked (*). This is reflected in the average point difference.
of URLs in discussing the election. Original tweets were less frequent than normal by Scandinavians discussing the election, but close to the American rate. Finally, Scandinavians' election broadcast tweets were slightly higher than their American counterparts, but lower than normal for Scandinavians. On average, across all eight types, the analysis finds that the communicative patterns of Scandinavians discussing the election were more similar to that of Americans discussing the election than to the normal Scandinavian patterns.

This provides a snapshot of the communicative patterns of Scandinavians regarding the U.S. presidential race. However, as has already been seen, not all of this discussion was conducted in English. I next examined how Scandinavians' communicative behaviors change based on the audience – when they are communicating within national language communities, versus in a language intelligible to a larger, potentially American, audience. The first two columns of Table 8 shows the results of the analysis of communicative patterns. The figures suggest Scandinavians' overall conversational patterns changed depending on language sphere. In English, the patterns were heavy on retweets and lighter on original content, and overall more similar to Americans (1.8-point difference in English compared to a 16.6-point difference in national languages). Initially, I wondered if this indicated a methodological problem: perhaps the English-language tweeting was similar to Americans because the Scandinavian set in fact contained many Americans. However, here the Duo-Lang users show that the same users

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**Figure 2: Language breakdown of different types of tweets in election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Tweet</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>Danish</th>
<th>Norwegian</th>
<th>Other/Und</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tweets with hashtags (#)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention (w/out RT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL: (w/RT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL: (w/out RT, via kept)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original tweets (no RTs/@replies)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure broadcast (no @, RT or #)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Findings
change their behavior depending on what language they are tweeting in. The last two columns of Table 9 show their patterns are more similar to the Americans in English.

The above patterns might imply that Scandinavians largely retweeted English-language tweets, but did the rest of their tweeting about the election in their national languages. However, this distorts the full picture. In terms of numbers, Scandinavians did more mentioning, replying, active URL sharing, original tweeting, and broadcasting in English than in Scandinavian languages. Figure 2 shows each type of tweet portioned out by language.

c) Temporality: When did Scandinavians tweet about the election?

Scandinavians discussing the American election generally followed patterns predicted in literature about national elections (e.g. Larsson & Moe, 2014). Twitter activity peaked around each televised debate and the election itself. In addition, peaks throughout the collection periods were seen in reaction to unexpected events. Activity peaked a few days before the second debate in reaction to the Access Hollywood recording of Trump on Oct. 7 and 8. Another peak is seen on Oct. 16 in what appears to be a reaction to a combination of Wikileaks' release of Clinton’s speeches to Goldman Sachs and a series of tweets by Trump claiming that the election was rigged.

As Figure 3 shows, these followed the same patterns of the American users, with the exception of the final November collection period, when Scandinavian Twitter activity increased after the result of the election was known, while American Twitter activity declined. In addition to the visual comparison in the figure, I ran test to see how closely daily variation in Scandinavians’ tweets correlate to variation in tweets sent by American users. On an hourly basis, no correlation could be determined between Scandinavian and American tweets (Pearson’s r = -.034, n = 742, p = .360). This is likely a sign that the time difference between northern Europe and the United States prevailed in Scandinavians’ temporal patterns. However, the variation in tweeting volume from day to day showed a strong positive relationship (Pearson's r = .703, n = 35, p < 0.001), and even more so when looking at Scandinavians’ English-language tweets (Pearson's r = .815, n = 35, p < 0.001). However, this is not a matter of Scandinavian languages following a different rhythm from English-language tweets. Scandinavians’ English-language tweets were slightly more strongly correlated with other Scandinavians tweets (Pearson's r

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40FBI Director James Comey’s letter to Congress on Oct. 28 occurred outside the collection periods and therefore does not show up in the data.
Findings

The temporal fluctuations may be artificial – the result of Twitter’s data limits. It is hard to know how much this played a role. It is worth noting, however, that some of the temporal fluctuations may be artificial – the result of Twitter’s data limits. It is hard to know how much this played a role.

Although Scandinavians generally tweeted during their own waking hours, there were anomalies in this pattern. These anomalies occurred during the televised debates between Trump and Clinton. In Scandinavian countries, these occurred in the 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. hours (9 p.m. and 10 p.m. Eastern Time). Figure 4 shows that during the first and second debate, both the number of tweets and the number of unique users diverged from their normal patterns, as people stayed up to watch the live debate and used Twitter as a political “backchannel” (Kalsnes, et al., 2014). During the first hours of the first and second debates, the number users participating was higher than hourly average for any hour over the course of the collection periods. The third debate did not show the same pattern. However, again on

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Figure 3: Hourly tweeting, Scandinavians vs. Americans

Notes: Dates are according to the time of the events in the United States. The American portion of the timeline is based on the American random sample (n = 771,248), which represents 3.5% of the total volume of American tweets in the election keyword data collection. Due to similar restrictions, the baseline Scandinavian collection could not be used as a comparison of temporality. It is drawn from a constant 1 percent collection of the total Twitter stream, so fluctuations were partly influenced by how many available tweets there were at a given time.
Findings

During the hours in which the live election returns were in full swing, there was a disruption in the usual pattern in tweeting during the first hour of the first debate, original and broadcast tweets – as a portion of overall tweets – reached their peak in the data. The portion of these tweets were also high during the first hour of the second debate, and on election night. This is an indication of people commenting on a live event in real time (Highfield, et al., 2013). Even so, those commenting on the debates live were a minority of Scandinavian users (871 unique users, or 1.6 percent). Tweeting activity in each of the three debates spiked a few hours later, between 7 and 10 a.m. in Scandinavian countries. This is visible in Figure 3, where the American peaks align with the live debates, while the Scandinavian peaks lag behind.

d) Media: What media did Scandinavians link to?

Common media are seen as important drivers of “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983). Two-thirds of Scandinavians’ tweets included links, however much of this was due to retweets where the au-
The author of the original tweet had included a URL. While retweeting is an important form of media dissemination, it makes it difficult to know what media Scandinavians were actively choosing. To address this, I removed the retweets (“via” tweets were kept in). Although this reduces the absolute values, the sources that users actively chose are largely unchanged from the retweet data. The top 20 domains in non-retweets, representing a third of all URLs that were actively shared, can be seen in Table 10, sorted by the number of users who shared each site. Major American outlets like CNN, the New York Times, and the Washington Post dominate, along with major digital natives like the Huffington Post, Politico, and Vox.

A comparison between Scandinavian and American users showed that Scandinavians used similar media to Americans on Twitter. The top 20 domains in English-language tweets have an average overlap score of 0.77 with the top 20 in the American random sample (0.47 for tweets in Scandinavian languages). The discrepancy is largely due to Americans sharing more links to conservative news outlets. Fox News made the Scandinavians’ top 20, but it reached a higher rank (No. 7) among Americans. Breitbart and the Daily Caller, which did not make the Scandinavian top 20, are No. 9 and 10 among Americans. Meanwhile, British sources like the Guardian and other foreign sources were more popular among Scandinavians. No foreign sources appeared among the top 20 sites shared by Americans. Even the English-language Russian site Russia Today (rt.com) was relatively more actively shared among

Table 10: Top 20 sites Scandinavian users actively linked to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>% of English tweets w/ URL</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>% of Scand lang tweets w/ URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>youtube.com</td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>4,127</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>youtube.com</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nytimes.com</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>facebook.com</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facebook.com</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>2,169</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>aftenbladet.se</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huffingtonpost.com</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>dn.se</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>washinngtonpost.com</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>expressen.se</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theguardian.com</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>svt.se</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cnn.com &amp; cnn.it</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>aftenposten.no</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politico.com</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>nrk.no</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vox.com</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>sverigesradio.se</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC (various)</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>nytimes.com</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change.org</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>omni.se</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent.co.uk</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>svt.se</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newyorker.com</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>di.se</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foxnews.com</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>washingtonpost.com</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thehill.com</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>instagram.com</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usatoday.com</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>dr.dk</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reuters.com</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>dagbladet.no</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newsweek.com</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>vg.no</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instagm.com</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>fivethirtyeight.com</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rt.com</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>cnn.com &amp; cnn.it</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative portion</td>
<td>4,227</td>
<td>12,395</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>Cumulative portion</td>
<td>2,825</td>
<td>4,065</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Ranking is based on the number of users who actively tweeted links to the domain; URLs in retweets are not included. Domains in bold are also in the top 20 sites actively shared among American users in the American random sample.
Scandinavians (No. 20) than among the American users; for Americans it ranked No. 60 in sites users actively linked to (40 when including retweets).

To some degree, the use of English-language sites is not unusual for Scandinavians on Twitter. The *Guardian*, the BBC, Reuters, the *Independent*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times* also appear in the baseline data (in that order of frequency). However, in the baseline there are far more links to *Expressen*, SVT, *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, NRK, *Svenska Dagbladet*, and *Aftenposten*. During the election, American news outlets far outpaced these Scandinavian sources, including to some degree in the national language spheres. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN, and interestingly, the polling analysis website *FiveThirtyEight* were popular among users tweeting in Scandinavian languages (Table 10). At the same time, the top Scandinavian sites enjoy much larger shares in the national language tweets than most of the media in the English-language tweets.

In addition to traditional news outlets, links to other platforms and non-news websites were important sources. Other social media platforms, particularly YouTube and Facebook, were frequent, regardless of language. This appears to be due to the use of these sites for sharing clips from the live debates. Linking to these sites was highest immediately after each debate, while links to newspapers tended to be more constant over the course of the collection periods. Interestingly, Change.org, a petition website, was also among the most popular actively linked-to sites. Most of these links were in tweets on Nov. 10, two days after the election, that pointed to a petition asking the Electoral College to make Clinton president. Meanwhile, one website is conspicuously absent from Table 10: Wikileaks was a frequently shared site, but was more often linked to through retweets (92 percent of the Wikileaks.org URLs were embedded in retweets). Similarly, HillaryClinton.com, frequently shared in retweets of @HillaryClinton, was less actively linked to.

**Political orientation**

There were also differences in the media shared by Trump-leaning and Clinton-leaning Scandinavians, whether through active linking or retweeting. In the random sample of Scandinavians I manually coded for political orientation (n = 440), Clinton-leaning users’ top sites were dominated by mainstream and left-leaning media: CNN, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *Buzzfeed*, the *Huffington Post*, and *Vox*. Trump-leaning users’ top sites were right-wing media: Fox News, *Breitbart*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Caller*, and Infowars, as well as Wikileaks. YouTube was at or near the top of both lists. Unfortunately, the random sample offered low statistical significance for most individual
sites, so I added the set of manually coded Top Scandinavian\textsuperscript{42} users – the users that Americans interacted with (to be discussed further under RQ2). Here, a relationship with political orientation could be established for many of the most popular sites (df = 1, \(p < 0.005\)). Sharing links to the \textit{New York Times}, the \textit{Washington Post}, CNN, the \textit{Huffington Post}, \textit{FiveThirtyEight}, and \textit{Newsweek} was associated with being Clinton-leaning. Sharing links to Fox News, \textit{Breitbart}, the \textit{Daily Caller}, the \textit{Daily Mail}, Infowars, \textit{Russia Today}, and Wikileaks was associated with being Trump-leaning. Rates of linking to Reuters, \textit{The Hill}, \textit{USA Today}, and \textit{Politico} were not statistically different.

\textit{Fake News}

In this study, I used the lists from Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Albright (2016) for sites that peddled “fake news,” the general term used to refer to conspiratorial and inflammatory political information. I found that 4.6 percent (5,304) of the links that Scandinavians shared pointed to these so-called fake news sites (see Table 11 for the top 10 sites). This includes links embedded in retweets, which was in fact the main form of fake news sharing among Scandinavians for all but the site \textit{occupydemocrats.com}, a far-left site that was shared more through active linking. The Scandinavians shared these sites at lower rates than Americans; in the American random sample, the rate was 6.8 percent. The lower rate may reflect the pro-Clinton political leanings of Scandinavians, whereas “fake” news tended to, though didn't exclusively, support Trump (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Indeed, when examining the political orientation of users, Trump-leaning Scandinavian users were more likely to share links from the fake news domains (df = 1, \(p < 0.005\)). However, it is also worth noting the rate among American users is low compared with those reported in the literature: Howard, et al. (2017), for example, put the portion of what they call “junk” news at 16 percent. This may have to do with definitions of what counts as fake or junk, or with computer methods. For example, I could not easily follow shortened links back to their original domain, or see the content users shared on YouTube or Facebook –

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Top 10 ‘fake’ news sites among Scandinavians}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Domain & Users & Original & Retweets & Total \\
& & tweets & & tweets \\
\hline
breitbart.com & 255 & 197 & 411 & 608 \\
infowars.com & 184 & 225 & 362 & 587 \\
thesiphon.com & 105 & 44 & 160 & 204 \\
lifezette.com & 101 & 40 & 122 & 162 \\
zerohedge.com & 99 & 69 & 113 & 182 \\
occupydemocrats.com & 73 & 65 & 32 & 97 \\
politicususa.com & 57 & 27 & 64 & 91 \\
dailymail.com & 47 & 9 & 72 & 81 \\
regated.com & 46 & 4 & 53 & 57 \\
drudge.com & 41 & 14 & 65 & 79 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Notes: Ranking is based on the number of users who tweeted links to the domain

\textsuperscript{42} It should be noted that the Top Scandinavians set is not a random sample. It is based on the Scandinavian users that Americans interacted with most.
platforms Albright (2016) and Howard et al. (2017) found were important vectors in the “fake” news ecosystem.

e) Conversational markers: What hashtags did Scandinavians use?

Hashtags are used to connect a tweet to a larger ongoing conversation, making the tweet searchable for other users even if they do not follow the user. However, as with URLs, hashtags are often embedded in retweets. Although hashtags shared in this way help magnify certain conversations, they do not indicate an active choice on the part of the user sharing the tweet. To find out what hashtags Scandinavians actively chose, I again removed retweets (as well as the vias). This left 11,427 English-language tweets (6 percent of the overall English-language corpus) and 7,293 tweets in Scandinavian languages (13 percent of all tweets in the national languages). The top 20 hashtags can be seen in Table 12. 43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English language</th>
<th>Scandinavian languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hashtag</td>
<td>Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trump*</td>
<td>1145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clinton*</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election2016</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hillary</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valsedeln</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electionday</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>debate</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>debatenight</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electionnight</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imwithher</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hillaryclinton</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uselections2016</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usa</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uselection2016</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donaldtrump</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uselection</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maga</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>svpol</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elections2016</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative portion</td>
<td>3,982</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Ranking is based on the number of users who actively selected the hashtag; hashtags in retweets are not included. Hashtags in bold are also in the top 20 hashtags actively used by American users in the American random sample. (*) The hashtags #trump and #clinton are artificially inflated because these would have been picked up by the keywords used to collect the data.

43 The hashtags #trump and #clinton are artificially high because they would have been picked up in the keyword search used to collect the election tweets.
Scandinavians’ top 20 hashtags in English-language tweets have an average overlap score with Americans’ of 0.63 (the Scandinavian language list scored 0.34). Scandinavians, like American users, largely used Twitter’s official hashtags for the election, including #debate, #debatenight, and #electionday, as well as hashtags promoted by the campaigns – #maga and #imwithher. The English-language hashtags that did not match those of the American users included hashtags that identified the country of the election, as in #usaelections2016. Among the top 20 hashtags in tweets in Scandinavian languages, many adapted the existing hashtag #svpol or #dkpol, used for national politics as well. They also used hashtags promoted by media outlets (#aftonbladet, the Swedish newspaper, and #valgamok, promoted by Denmark’s public broadcaster DR). Hashtags in Scandinavians languages specific to the
American election also appear – e.g. #usavalg (“usaelection”). Meanwhile, two Scandinavian hashtags appear prominently in the English-language data: the hashtag for Swedish politics, #svpol, and #valsedeln. The latter, meaning ballot in Swedish, was used by a Swedish betting site to promote a contest asking users to guess the final Electoral College vote. Participants generally tweeted only the candidates’ names followed by numbers, which Twitter coded as English.

As previous scholars have found, many of these hashtags appear to be event-driven (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012; Moulaison & Burns, 2012). (See Figure 5.) #Debatenight, #debate, #electionday, and even #election2016, which was mainly used on Election Day, came and went quickly. However, other hashtags, such as #svpol, #maga, and #imwithher, were used more continuously, with spikes around major news events. The variation seen in Figure 5 in the debate-related hashtags are notable. Among American users, a shift took place between the first and second debates. In the first, the hashtag #debate was most used. In the second, #debatenight became the dominant conversational marker. In the third debate, both were used. Figure 5 shows the same shift occurred among Scandinavians.

f) Addressivity: Who did Scandinavians attempt to interact with?

An important function of Twitter’s function as a facilitator of political participation is the ability to interact directly with other users through what Papacharissi (2015) calls “addressive” tweets – mentions, retweets, and replies. These interactions form the networks through which information moves and conversations take place on Twitter. For the Scandinavians discussing the U.S. election, these addressive tweets occurred in various languages, as was found in RQ1-b. Figure 6 presents a visual representation of these interactions through a network map created in Gephi. Each line represents a mention, reply, or retweet, with the color representing the language of the tweet. (The candidates’ names have been added as reference points.) The map shows that English dominated the interactions: 82 percent of the addressive tweets are in English. It also shows strong communities of Norwegian and Swedish speakers, while Danes, in addition to being a minority of users, were less active in the Danish language.

However, language alone does not show who Scandinavian users addressed. To assess this, I ran the list of users mentioned and retweeted against the Scandinavian set itself. This showed that 34,130
tweets, or 16.3 percent of all addressive tweets, engaged with another Scandinavian, either by mentioning or retweeting them.\textsuperscript{44} I then ran the list of users that Scandinavians mentioned and retweeted against the full American set (see “Finding the American users” in the Methods section). This returned 85,180 tweets, making up 40.7 percent of all addressive tweets. These results are shown in Table 13. I next turn to who the most mentioned and retweeted users were.

**Table 13: Where Scandinavians addressed their tweets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tweets that @mention a(n)</th>
<th>Tweets that retweet a(n)</th>
<th>TOTAL addressive tweets engaging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,717</td>
<td>13,069</td>
<td>24,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of all tweets @mention:</td>
<td>% of all retweets:</td>
<td>% of all addressive tweets:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: “Scandinavians” and “Americans” refer to users that could be determined to be in those locations. Remaining percentages may include additional tweets to users in those places, or users elsewhere in the world. The mentions figures include replies.

---

\textsuperscript{44} Here “mentions” include replies. I have not separated them out because it was not possible to identify who all the recipients of a reply were.
Mentions

Table 14 shows that regardless of language, the candidates themselves were top recipients – which may point to the use of mentions as a signal of participation, like a hashtag, rather than an actual attempt at conversation. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump after all would not understand what is being said to them in Swedish, even if they did read their mentions. Other top mentions in English tweets were American media, such as CNN, Fox News, and the New York Times. Scandinavians also addressed tweets to political figures, like Kellyanne Conway and Bernie Sanders. The betting site @Unibet also addressed tweets to political figures, like Kellyanne Conway and Bernie Sanders.

Table 14: Top 20 users Scandinavians mentioned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>English language</th>
<th>% of @mentions in English</th>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Scandinavian languages</th>
<th>% of @mentions in Scan langs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>realdonaldtrump</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>1.458</td>
<td>youtube</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hillaryclinton</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>realdonaldtrump</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youtube</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>svtnyheter</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unibet_sverige</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>hillaryclinton</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cnn</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>aftenbladet</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cnnpolitics</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>expressen</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wikileaks</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>svd</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nytimes</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>svt</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>washingtonpost</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>gotiskaklubben [blogger]</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prisonplanet</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>mariesimonsen [journalist]</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potus</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>richardherrey [musician]</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foxnews</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>dagensnyheter</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mitchellvii [Bill Mitchell, Trump supporter]</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>omni_red [media service]</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politico</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>jasnoen [journalist]</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keemstar [YouTube star]</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>johaninger [commentator]</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>berniesanders</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>anderslindeberg [journalist]</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kellyanepolls</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>aftenposten</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>jorandegaard [local politician/commentator]</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mmflipt [Michael Moore]</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>sr_ekot</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cnni [CNN international]</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>greiderdd [journalist and author]</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative portion</td>
<td>2,427</td>
<td>5,387</td>
<td>Cumulative portion</td>
<td>1,386</td>
<td>2,026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Ranking is based on the number of individual users actively mentioning each account; mentions embedded in retweets are not counted. The handles of the candidates, @realdonaldtrump and @hillaryclinton, would not have been picked up by the keyword search, and so are not artificially inflated. Accounts in bold are also in the top 20 accounts mentioned by American users in the American random sample.
Findings

bet_Sverige – which held a contest to predict the winning electoral college count – again makes an appearance here. The average overlap with American users was 0.70 for Scandinavian users tweeting in English (0.29 for Scandinavians using national languages). The differences came from Americans mentioning more television personalities (e.g. Megyn Kelly and Sean Hannity) and members of Trump’s campaign team (e.g. Mike Pence, Donald Trump Jr., and the official Republican Party account).

Tweets in Scandinavian languages trended heavily toward media accounts and political commentators. In English tweets, these were the main accounts of the media outlet, while in the national languages, users addressed both the main accounts and specific journalists.

Retweets

Retweets were an important form of communication during the election, both for Scandinavians and Americans. In this case, the language is not a choice – the retweet is by definition in the language of the original. Therefore, the average overlap in Scandinavian languages is 0. In English-language tweets, the overlap of accounts is 0.38 even though most of the accounts the Scandinavians retweeted are American (see Table 15). The discrepancies occur in two areas. First, American users retweeted far more content from Trump-leaning sources, including Fox News and Fox host Lou Dobbs, Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway, and Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Wikileaks and Donald Trump were also the first and second most retweeted, in terms of number of American users. Second, Scandinavian users were relatively heavier tweeters of celebrity accounts – Jerry Springer, Stephen King, and Seth Myers, as well as digital native celebrities like Tyler Oakley and the account @girlposts. The most popular tweets can be seen in Table 16.

As a rule, elites receive the most attention on Twitter, and this is the case here as well. The Americans that Scandinavians tweeted at most were not “average” Americans – 79 percent were elite based on the follower count and verified metric, and these users received 84 percent of all mentions to American users. Retweets were slightly more egalitarian. Lesser known users (e.g. @double_cupp_me) were able to garner attention through the virtue of a single tweet. When factoring retweets in, 57 percent of the users Scandinavians addressed were elite.
RT @jerryspringer: Hillary Clinton belongs in the White House. Donald Trump belongs on my show.

RT @StephenKing: My newest horror story: Once upon a time there was a man named Donald Trump, and he ran for president. Some people wanted him to win.

RT @EthanLDN: So the final numbers for #ElectionDay are: 231,556,622 eligible voters: 46.9% didn't vote 25.6% voted Clinton 25.5% voted Trump Wow.

RT @nowthisnews: Donald Trump just straight up lied about how President Obama responded to a pro-Trump protester https://t.co/nd1Dhk3bwE

RT @double_cupp_me: We gone sit here and act like Hillary Clinton ain't been representing Death Row Records at all

RT @ughHugs: HI debates? https://t.co/z6ZWzQJ6O6 (1)

RT @troyesivan: thehill 429 846 0.5% fotbollsdamp [commentator] 144 144 0.6% ughhugs 359 359 0.2% bdldbdfjl 142 142 0.6% natesilver538 352 543 0.3% svd 134 195 0.9%

Notes: Ranking is based on the number of individual users who retweeted each account. Accounts in bold are also in the top 20 accounts mentioned by American users in the American random sample.

Table 15: Top 20 users Scandinavians retweeted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>% of RTs in English</th>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>% of RTs in Scan langs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hillaryclinton</td>
<td>2,232</td>
<td>3,411</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>carinabergfeldt [journalist]</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jerryspringer</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>1,705</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>rolandulvselius [producer]</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stephenking</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>1,447</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>planckskonstant [historian]</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wikileaks</td>
<td>1,162</td>
<td>4,963</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>pwolodarski [journalist]</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>berniesanders</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>1,114</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>patrikbrinkbjerig [journalist]</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cnn</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>svetnyheter</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nytimes</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>agneswold [professor]</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nowthisnews</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>expressen</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realdonaldtrump</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>dagensnyheter</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prisonplanet</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>2,275</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>dremafrans [doctor]</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youtube</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>1,833</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>kjellhaglund [critic]</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethanlnd [British activist]</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>marcuspolack [editor]</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyleroakley [YouTube star]</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>williamspetz [comedian]</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>latenightseth [Seth Myers]</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>amandalbjorkman [journalist]</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girlposts [Twitter celebrity]</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>gotiskaklubben</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>double_cupp_me</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>niklassvensson [journalist/personality]</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>troyesivan</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>vildkvittran</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thehill</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>fotbollsdamp [commentator]</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ughhugs</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>bdldbdfjl</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natesilver538</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>svd</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cumulative portion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>% of RTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15,279</td>
<td>27,139</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cumulative portion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
<th>% of RTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,858</td>
<td>4,555</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Ranking is based on the number of individual users who shared the tweet. The tweets in italics are translated from Swedish. (1) This tweet by @double_cupp_me includes images favorably comparing Clinton's pantsuits to suits worn by '90s rappers. (2) This tweet by @LateNightSeth links to a video that presents Clinton as the obvious choice.

Table 16: Scandinavians’ top 10 most retweeted individual tweets (any language)

RT @jerryspringer: Hillary Clinton belongs in the White House. Donald Trump belongs on my show.

RT @StephenKing: My newest horror story: Once upon a time there was a man named Donald Trump, and he ran for president. Some people wanted him to win.

RT @EthanLDN: So the final numbers for #ElectionDay are: 231,556,622 eligible voters 46.9% didn't vote 25.6% voted Clinton 25.5% voted Trump Wow.

RT @nowthisnews: Donald Trump just straight up lied about how President Obama responded to a pro-Trump protester https://t.co/nd1Dhk3bwE

RT @double_cupp_me: We gone sit here and act like Hillary Clinton ain't been representing Death Row Records at all 3 debates? https://t.co/z6ZWzQJ6O6 (1)

RT @ughHugs: HILLARY: i told you he’d fuck the chair TRUMP: *while fucking the chair* I never fucked the chair https://t.co/QACRSmry4SG

RT @LateNightSeth: From tonight’s #ACloserLook: How could anyone choose between Trump and Clinton? https://t.co/IUc6pVY3D5 (2)

RT @RolandUlvselius: How the hell can they put the Trump Clinton debate at three o'clock at night. It’s like they don’t give a crap about the Swedish voters!

RT @carinabergfeldt: Final numbers for the USA election 231,556,622 eligible voters: √46.9% didn't vote √25.6% for Clinton √25.5% for Trump https://t.co/ITEFeH6gl

RT @BernieSanders: If you sit this election out and Trump wins by a few votes, many people are going to be dealing with that reality for their entire lives.

Notes: Ranking based on number of individual users who shared the tweet. The tweets in italics are translated from Swedish. (1) This tweet by @double_cupp_me includes images favorably comparing Clinton's pantsuits to suits worn by '90s rappers. (2) This tweet by @LateNightSeth links to a video that presents Clinton as the obvious choice.
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: AMERICAN RECIPROCATION

The second research question addresses the extent to which American users interacted with Scandinavians and the characteristics of the Scandinavian users they interacted with. Data used here include both the keyword collection as well as the supplementary collection made based on common hashtags and mentions of the candidates. This means that tweets did not have to use the words "clinton" or "trump" to be included.

In total, 7,845 Americans in the data engaged with one of the Scandinavian users, representing 0.47 percent of American users. They addressed 10,865 mentions, replies, or retweets to Scandinavian users, representing 0.06 percent of all addressive tweets sent by Americans. By comparison, 10,658,234 (55.35 percent) of Americans’ tweets were addressed to a user determined to be American.

Characteristics of Top Scandinavians

Scandinavian users who were mentioned or retweeted 10 or more times were selected for this analysis; this set includes 143 users, who received a total of 7,898 tweets from American users, or 73 percent of all the American-to-Scandinavian tweets. The Scandinavian users who received 100 or more interactions from American users are presented in Table 17 with information from their public profiles at the time of the data collection.

ELITENESS AND COSMOPOLITANISM. Of the top 143 users, 61 users were elite, or 40 percent. Of these, 13 users were verified and 57 users had follower counts in the top 5 percent for Scandinavian users. However, these were not the same “elites” who received attention in the national Scandinavian spheres. Of the top 20 mentioned and retweeted users in the Scandinavian languages, only five appear among the Top Scandinavians that Americans engaged with. The most successful of these is Expressen, ranked No. 36 in the Top Scandinavians (46 tweets from American users). Two American correspondents for Swedish media (SVT and Svenska Dagbladet) do appear among the Top Scandinavians, but overall, journalist and media account for only 8 percent of the top users Americans engaged with. Instead, the Top Scandinavians are elite in other ways. Based on the biographical information the users provide, 10 users, or 7 percent, indicated they are Americans living in Scandinavian locations; 3 users (2 percent) say they are other foreigners living in Scandinavia; and 16 users (11 percent) are Scandinavians living abroad. The Top Scandinavians were also more likely to be Duo-Lang users: 40 percent of the Top Scandinavians compared with 14 percent among all Scandinavian users.
Table 17: Top Scandinavian users American users interacted with (100+ tweets from Americans)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Bio</th>
<th>mentions from US</th>
<th>RTs by US</th>
<th>Total from US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian4Trump</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>5,814</td>
<td>#WeThePeople #MakeAmericaGreatAgain #Trump2016 #MAGA #TrumpPence16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChrChristensen</td>
<td>Stockholm, Sweden</td>
<td>8,873</td>
<td>Prof. of Journalism at Stockholm University. American via UK, Turkey &amp; Sweden. Tweets my own opinion, not my employer's.</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PeterSweden7</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2,386</td>
<td>Single, Swedish photographer. Reporting on news from Sweden. Political commentator.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GissiSim</td>
<td>Oslo, Norway</td>
<td>21,261</td>
<td>Born; Iceland. Founder: @Conflicts. Creator: @Buy_Pens. SharePoint Solutions Architect: @Puzzlepart. Interests: UX/UI, Gaming, Geopolitics, Travel, Activism, ++</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VickyWillkan</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,002</td>
<td>Christian Conservative Dane who loves Denmark, the US, the Defence, values, responsibility and politics. I follow back. #Trumpsupporter #MakeAmericaGreatAgain</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reroll</td>
<td>Oslo, Norway</td>
<td>13,880</td>
<td>Well travelled political commentator. I support #Trump2016. Historian and Political Scientist. Honorary Professor.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JWeismonger</td>
<td>Norway DUAL US CITIZ</td>
<td>3,811</td>
<td>TRUMPS-NINJA</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATTIPoysti</td>
<td>Varsinais-Suomi, Suomi</td>
<td>2,573</td>
<td><a href="http://twitteraudit.com/c01n5b">http://twitteraudit.com/c01n5b</a> <a href="http://facebook.com/matti.a.poysti">http://facebook.com/matti.a.poysti</a> Romans 10:9 #Swexit #cufi #Russia #Sweden #ProLife</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carlbildt</td>
<td></td>
<td>532,067</td>
<td>Entrepreneur in future and peace. Before that most other things. På svenska på @cbildt.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon_Eu</td>
<td>Sailing The Internetz</td>
<td>10,716</td>
<td>#Anonymous #News #Humanity #StopTPP #nocensorship #privacy #freeanons #Snowden #solidarity #NOTISA #NOCETA #PardonSnowden #pressegruppen #StopTISA #STOPPTIP</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iyad_elbaghdadi</td>
<td>Oslo, Norway</td>
<td>89,547</td>
<td>Entrepreneur, author, and Arab Spring activist. Islamic libertarian. Made in the UAE, expelled from the UAE. Interview requests: <a href="mailto:iyad@el-baghdadi.com">iyad@el-baghdadi.com</a></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MarcusCarlsso19</td>
<td></td>
<td>389</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>andersoslund</td>
<td>Kyiv, Ukraine</td>
<td>24,635</td>
<td>Swede by birth, European by choice. Living in Ukraine since 2009. Founder of Fryday, an international network.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KristianeHebnes</td>
<td>norway</td>
<td>4,621</td>
<td>friends don't lie</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MatsLiland</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,305</td>
<td>Children's Rights Advocate. Philosopher. Bachelor psychology.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SwedenNilsson</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,135</td>
<td>#Trump for President - #TrumpPence16 - Interested in politics, Donald Trump.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jollarn</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,496</td>
<td>Second generation immigrant sitting poolside in Sweden observing his country performing harakiri on itself. Proudly blocked by @sallykohn &amp; @cher #MAGA</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Follower counts and user information is based on the latest available tweet collected in fall 2016. Mentions include replies.
POLITICAL ORIENTATION. Trump-leaners made up 38 percent (54 users) of the Top Scandinavian users Americans engaged with, while Clinton-leaners accounted for 37 percent (53 users). This was unexpected, given the political orientation of Scandinavians in the random sample. See Table 18 for a comparison.

Ideological affinity

To see if the transnational interactions were the result of ideological homophily, I retrieved all the tweets by the American “interlocutors” who mentioned or retweeted Scandinavians. Through a combination of manual coding a random sample and Gephi’s modularity classes (see “Determining political orientation” in the Methods chapter), I was able to determine the political orientation of these interlocutors. Figure 7 shows a network map of the activity of these users during the election, with selected Top

Table 18: Political orientation of Top Scandinavians that Americans interacted with vs. orientation of random sample of Scandinavian users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Scans Group</th>
<th>Clinton-leaning</th>
<th>Trump-leaning</th>
<th>Unknown/Neither</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top 143 users</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10+ tweets from U.S.)</td>
<td>53 users</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37% of total</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top 17 users</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(100+ tweets from U.S.)</td>
<td>8 users</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47% of total</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Random sample of Scandinavian users</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 441)</td>
<td>261 users</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59% of total</td>
<td>11% of total</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Differences between the Top Scans and the random sample are statistically significant (df = 1, p < 0.05) except where marked (*).

Figure 7: Selected Top Scandinavians in context of their U.S. interlocutors

Notes: This network map shows all interactions by the American interlocutors (the American users who interacted with Scandinavians during the election). Red represents the community of Trump-leaning interlocutors. Blue represents the community of Clinton-leaning interlocutors. | Created using Force Atlas 2. Filtered by Weighted In-Degree > 75.
Scandinavians labeled. As the visualization suggests, Trump-leaning users were more common among Scandinavians’ interlocutors – 50.6 percent (3,972 users) compared with 44.1 percent Clinton-leaners (3,457 users). Furthermore, a chi-square test found a significant association between the candidate orientation of the U.S. interlocutors and a similar orientation of Scandinavians they interacted with (df = 4, p < 0.05). As previous research suggests (Conover et al., 2012) retweets came almost exclusively from likeminded users, while mentions had a greater mix. Even so, political orientation aligned in mentions (df = 1, p < 0.05) as well as in retweets. The results show that the political orientation of the American interlocutors tended to match that of the Scandinavians – in other words, like attracted like even across national boundaries. Furthermore, it is disproportionately Trump supporters who reached out across these borders.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings in this chapter can be summarized as the following. Scandinavians tweeting about the U.S. mostly tweeted in English, and at higher rates than usual. The Scandinavians language spheres were more interactive as a whole. Even so, in terms of volume, Scandinavians directed most of their addressive tweets across borders. When tweeting in English, Scandinavians mimicked patterns in the American sphere, and used similar media and hashtags. Their daily temporal patterns were somewhat similar to American during the periods around the first two debates, including a minority of users who participated in “backchanneling” during the live events themselves. Scandinavians were more oriented toward retweeting celebrities and comedians, relied more on left-wing media, and mentioned left-wing figures more, compared with American users. However, Clinton-leaning and Trump-leaning Scandinavians followed similar ideological patterns to Americans in their use of media. Like Americans, they shared so-called “fake” news, but at lower rates. Overall, to the degree that Scandinavians did engage with the election, that engagement was largely oriented toward transnational participation.

As to Americans’ reciprocation, this communication was sparse. However, to the degree that it did occur, the communication was disproportionately directed at the minority of Trump-leaners in Scandinavia. Furthermore, this attention was not combative, but came from likeminded American. Other notable characteristics of the Scandinavians who Americans engaged with were that they were not the traditional elites in the Scandinavian spheres. National media and politicians largely did not cross over to the transnational level.
Discussion

In this chapter I contextualize the findings and their implications for transnational political participation. I will examine how the answers to my research questions align with previous studies and interpret them against theories on political participation, the public sphere, and transnational communication. Rather than assess individual results, this section will attempt to tie the data points together into overarching themes. I will argue that Scandinavians’ participation in the 2016 American election is an example of transnational participation and an expansion of the imagined community beyond the nation-state. I do not find evidence of what might be considered a true global or transnational public sphere, due to the lack of reciprocal exchanges with Americans. Nevertheless, I argue that the interactions that I did find point to an expansion of the American public sphere, and the formation of transnational affinities – particularly on the right. Finally, at the end of this chapter, I will consider the limitations of this study and offer suggestions for future research.

AMERICAN ELECTION AS TRANSNATIONAL EVENT (RQ1)

The first question posed in this thesis is: *How did Scandinavians engage with the U.S. presidential election via Twitter, and to what degree did they participate on a transnational level?* Despite the affordances of digital media, research has generally suggested that transnational communication is unusual. The nation-state continues to be the primary “zone of solidarity” (Calhoun, 2007, p. 149), with information and communication largely flowing within the same national borders, or at least the same linguistic region (Ghemawat, 2016; Takhteyev, et al., 2012; Ugander, et al., 2011). If Scandinavians followed this pattern, and engaged with information about the election on purely a domestic level, we would expect them to: a) use Scandinavian languages; b) follow communication patterns of the Scandinavians spheres; c) tweet during waking hours in Scandinavia; d) link to Scandinavian media; e) use Scandinavian hashtags; f) interact with other Scandinavians. Yet this was not the case. The majority of Scandinavian tweets were in the language of participation in the American sphere, English. More than a third of Scandinavians’ tweets could be documented as being either directed at American users or were retweets of American users – higher than the portion of tweets mentioning or retweeting another Scandinavian. They also linked to American media and used American hashtags, including those in use for debate nights, a classic “media event” (Dayan & Katz, 1992) during which Scandinavian participation spiked as well. The findings suggest that at least among the small minorities of Scandinavians who tweeted about the election, they sought to participate outside their national spheres. This has implications for how we think about democratic participation, imagined communities, and citizenship.
The nation-state as site of authority

One of the problems with the idea of the global or transnational public sphere is how public opinion is functionally translated into change. Fraser (2007) argued that theories of the global public sphere do not sufficiently solve the “addressee” problem:

If the modern territorial state no longer possesses the administrative ability to steer 'its' economy, ensure the integrity of 'its' national environment, and provide for the security and well-being of its citizens, then how should we understand the capacity component of efficacy today? … If not to the sovereign territorial state, to what or whom should public opinion on transnational problems be addressed? (p. 23).

Fraser argued that the “amorphous mix” of supranational and international organizations and multinational corporations do not constitute a single identifiable authority (p. 19).

In this case Scandinavian Twitter users did largely address the territorial state – just not their own. They used the transnational affordances of the internet to direct communication at American politicians, parties, media institutions, and people. They shared tweets by the leading candidates and jumped on #maga and #imwithher hashtags, signaling involvement “in communities of shared value” (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 804). When American chatter came to a crescendo, so did Scandinavians’, as if in “simultaneous activity” (Anderson, 1983, p. 26). Unlike Anderson’s anonymous morning newspaper readers, however, this was not the solitaire activity of following the news cycle. Instead, Scandinavians chose the language that would allow them to “assemble to form a public body” with American users (Habermas, et al., 1974, p. 49) – and potentially influence. “I can't vote in the US, and I'm usually not interested in politics very much, but I really need you Americans to stop Trump. Please” tweeted one user the morning of the third debate.

The use of Twitter for this purpose continues to present the nation-state as the “primary arenas for democratic political participation” (Calhoun, 2007, p. 148). Yet that authority is accessed transnationally. None of the top mentioned users were Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish politicians, even in tweets in Scandinavian languages. Altogether, only 34 tweets were directed at the prime ministers of the three countries (and no retweets). Thus, it is also true that Scandinavians’ practices of citizenships were “no longer bounded by … the formal relationship that an individual has to his or her own territorial society” (Falk, 1994, p. 138). They form a seemingly cosmopolitan relationship with another territorial society, at least temporarily, to address their opinion to the place where public opinion might actually be acted upon.
Transnational practices of citizenship

Language has been a persistent problem of transnational communication (Hafez, 2007; Jorba & Bimber, 2012). Therefore, it was important for participation that Scandinavians tweeted in English, and they largely did. Beyond that, however, the findings show that even the same users usually tweet in English at lower rates than they did to discuss the election. Additionally, language appeared to serve more than an instrumental purpose. The findings suggest that in switching language, Scandinavians also adjusted their use of media, hashtags, and their interlocutors (Taylor, 1989), blending into to “mediatized collectivities” (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 172) in the American sphere.

Here the Duo-Lang users are revealing. They show it was not just that a matter of Scandinavians with different practices tweeting in different languages. Instead, users moved fluidly between the American and Scandinavian contexts, tweeting on the #usavalg hashtag in Swedish, and then swapping it out for #election2016 in English, in a show of “pluralistic and reflexive performances of citizenship” (Coleman & Blumler, 2009, p. 6). Notably, Scandinavians also changed their communicative patterns between languages. The rates of retweeting, replies, URL sharing, and original tweets, even for the same users, more closely resembled American users’ in English and other Scandinavians’ in the national languages. These shifts suggest that tweeting behaviors may not intrinsic cultural differences, as Hong, et al. (2011) suggested, but rather, context-specific. It also indicates that as Scandinavians switched language, they revealed more than language fluency – they also exhibited fluency in the “contextual conventions” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 36) of different spheres.

Imagined communities and fake news

A shared media environment is critical to democratic participation. As Hafez (2007) writes, “It is not the global availability of websites but actual cross-border use, that is, the number of users rather than technological reach, which generates globality” (p. 110, emphasis added). Like previous research, the findings here show that Twitter content does not exist in isolation. An important function of the platform is information sharing, curation, and reacting to the agendas set by traditional media (Chadwick, et al., 2016; Papacharissi, 2015). Importantly, however, the findings show that Scandinavian users integrated with both their own domestic media systems, as well as global media, and especially, American media.
The news outlets Scandinavians linked to in English-language tweets were heavily American. The most commonly shared American sources were the *New York Times*, the *Huffington Post*, CNN, and the *Washington Post*, but also included more insider and Beltway sources such as *The Hill*, *FiveThirtyEight*, and *Politico* – satisfying Hafez’s critique that true transnational media consumption would do more than “peer through the keyhole” at foreign countries by including the domestic media of the country (p. 20). As Alexa Robertson (2010) found, even international events covered by the world’s media are portrayed through a national point of view. The findings in this thesis indicate that users were sharing many of the same sources of knowledge as the Americans, not just relying on Scandinavian sources – indicating that they might not only share the same information but the same “symbolic resources” (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 175) and form the same “popular memories” (Calhoun, 2007, p. 64). In addition, Scandinavians participated in disseminating information, establishing the frames of debate, and highlighting particular stories over others – practices of “networked gatekeeping” that Papacharissi (2015) argues feed back into the “ambient streams” where the public sphere manifests on Twitter (p. 133).

Scandinavians incorporated other news sources though. In English-language tweets, they also linked frequently to British outlets, in particular the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, and the BBC. This suggests a global media ecosystem in which not only American but English-language media become the arbiters of transnational discussion. This may be why the *Hindustan Times*, an English-language paper in India, was also shared by some users. Meanwhile, link sharing to Scandinavian sources was almost exclusively reserved for tweets in Scandinavian languages. It did not appear that many users attempted to translate their national media products to a global stage: Fewer than 1 percent of the URLs shared in English-language tweets were to Scandinavian news sources. Although major American outlets were also in use in the domestic language spheres, it was largely Scandinavian media brands that made the strongest showing – particularly the largest national newspapers and the national public service broadcasters. This is consistent with the literature on the Scandinavian public sphere, which finds domestic news brands continue to have strong positions in Scandinavian countries, despite the threat of foreign media products (Ohlsson, 2015; Syvertsen, et al., 2014). Rather than fragmentation, a better descriptor may be segmentation – between the national and the transnational community.

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This is true even after excluding URLs embedded in retweets so as to include only the URLs that users actively chose to link to.
Transnational polarization

In other respects, the Scandinavian users diverged from the more cohesive aspects of their native public spheres. In contrast to Scandinavian spheres, research has found sharp partisan divisions among Americans’ media preferences (Mitchell, et al., 2014; Newman, et al., 2017) – divisions mirrored in the findings of this paper. Figure 8 shows network maps of the American random sample alongside the Scandinavians, with major media outlets labeled. Though less extreme, the Scandinavians displayed the same partisan divisions present in the American sphere. Scandinavian users who interacted with the New York Times, CNN, and the Washington Post are separate from those who engaged with Fox News, Breitbart, the Daily Caller, and Wikileaks. This separation was confirmed by the analysis of the random sample of Scandinavians, which pointed to what Flaxman et al. (2016) call ideological segregation in the media choices of Scandinavians, at least in English-language media.46

Scholars have argued that shared media can be a source of transnational identity formation along new lines (Bennett, 2012; Faulks, 2000, Langman, 2005; Livingstone, 2009). The findings here suggest that Scandinavians may to some degree identify with American ideological divides and parties, which

46 A similar assessment of media polarization in the Scandinavian spheres could not be made because there were too few tweets that contained URLs in Scandinavian languages by users in the random sample.
play a critical role in American elections (Achen & Bartels, 2016). This might be a sign of transnational affinities but also may be a warning sign of transnational echo chambers or filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2007) or even the Americanization of political identities. As other research has found (e.g. Boxell, et al., 2017; Flaxman, et al., 2016) these data do not suggest complete balkanization – either among Americans or Scandinavians – but they do show that the particular American divide in media habits is mirrored in the media habits of foreigner news consumers.

**Fake news**

Since the 2016 election, it has become clear that misinformation and so-called fake news were woven into deliberative practices of Twitter users during the 2016 election. While automated bots and Russian operatives may have accelerated the spread of misinformation, Albright (2016) and others have found that this spread was largely propelled “organically” by individual Twitter users. The data collected here found that Scandinavians were among those who helped disseminate the information. About 6 percent of the links shared by Scandinavian users were to “fake news” domains, as defined by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Albright. The relatively low rate – compared to rates among American users and the rates reported in the literature – may be a sign of Scandinavians’ higher levels of trust in traditional institutions (ESS Round 7, 2014; Hooghe & Dejaeghere, 2007), or their pro-Clinton political leanings. The “fake” news articles tended to, though didn't exclusively, support Trump (Guess, et al., 2018; Howard, et al., 2017). Even so, the findings here reinforce the idea that these hoaxes and junk news were shared through users’ “networked gatekeeping” practices (Marez & Papacharissi, 2013) – only it was not merely an interplay between Russians and Americans, as the situation has been characterized in the press.47 Fake news was a multinational phenomenon that spread transnationally. Aside from the transnational dimension, this finding also raises the question of how use of “fake” news online might impact participation and levels of trust in national politics in Scandinavian countries.

**Citizens and spectators**

While the findings indicate a high degree of overall activity in the American sphere, they also point to elements of spectatorship in line with critiques by Kellner (2003), Putnam (2001), and Hind-

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man (2009). To some degree this is perhaps not surprising since Scandinavians, as mainly non-American citizens, are inherently in an observation role. However, Kellner argues that spectatorship – characterized by attention to personalities and win/loss outcomes – goes further by fostering cynicism and creating distance rather than integration among citizens. Although it is impossible to know the true feelings of the Scandinavian users, some of the findings do point to elements of celebrity, sports-like spectatorship, passivity, and cynicism.

First, some of the most popular content among Scandinavians was from celebrities and comedians and contained satirical content. Comments about the election by horror novelist Stephen King, TV personality Jerry Springer, and late-night talk show host Seth Meyers were among the most retweeted on Twitter. Second, in the sample of users manually coded for political orientation, more Scandinavians fell into the Unknown/Neither category because their tweets were apolitical or dismissive of the election as a whole. Third, one of the most-mentioned users was @unibet_sverige, a Swedish betting site that usually administers wagers on sports. On the day of the election it held a contest in which people were asked to tweet their guess for the final electoral college vote tally – surely an example of the “presentation of politics as a game” if there ever was one (Blumler & Gurevich, 1995, p. 214). Finally, and perhaps most suggestive of spectatorship, is that three-quarters of the English-language output by Scandinavians were retweets. If we interpret retweets to be a more passive form of activity, this suggests that Scandinavians were proportionally more interactive in their national languages, while their English-language activity – the activity in which they could have transnational interactions – was proportionally more geared toward recirculating existing content.

All this suggests the election may have been for some users another American cultural export, in which celebrity candidates battle it out and #imwithher is the equivalent of voting for your favorite performer. What appears to be political participation might be another form of “audiencing” – a collective performance of fandom (Highfield, et al., 2013, p. 336). American elections share many of the genre conventions of entertainment programs, but this was arguably heightened in the 2016 race (Kellner, 2016; Patterson, 2016). For unenfranchised foreign observers watching from a greater geographic and cultural distance, it would not be surprising for the stakes of the election to be secondary to the entertainment value, particularly as musicians, actors, and personalities from other well-known American cultural exports became part of the mix. Rather than transnational participation, perhaps Scandinavians were playing along with the game.

Of course, American users exhibited many of the same tendencies, including the retweet rate and, though to a lesser degree, the attention to celebrities. It is also useful to consider Bruns and Stieglitz’s
work on types of tweeting in different kind of events on Twitter. They found that original tweeting tended to be high during televised events like Eurovision, the Oscars, and the British royal wedding, while retweeting and media links dominated during unfolding disasters and political action, like the 2011 tsunami in Japan, and Occupy Wall Street. Under this typology, Scandinavian language retweeting/URL sharing were closer to the televised events, while English-language patterns were in line with crises events. The authors attribute retweeting not to passivity but to information sharing during a crisis or news event (p. 177). In raw numbers, Scandinavians also generated more original tweets in English. It is not clear whether the entertainment value of the election promoted cynicism and alienation (Habermas, 1991 [1962]; Hindman, 2009) or a sense of ownership of an election Scandinavians were not formal participants in (Hartley (2010); Schudson (1998); Van Zoonen, 2004). It is worth noting, however, that the most popular tweet, by Jerry Springer, what itself kind of meta-commentary on what Sunstein (2017) described as Trump’s unleashing of political taboos: “Hillary Clinton belongs in the White House. Donald Trump belongs on my show.”

EXPANSION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE (RQ2)

The second question posed in this thesis is: To what degree did American Twitter users interact with Scandinavian users in discussing the U.S. presidential election, and what characteristics are prevalent among the Scandinavians who were successful in their attempts to engage in transnational exchange? This question moves from the issue of participatory activities to the question of interaction. Overall, the findings of this study show that while the Scandinavians aimed a significant portion of their communication at American users, American users seldom reciprocated. This is largely in line with previous conservative estimates of transnational communication (Ghemawatt, 2016; Takhteyev, et al., 2012) as well as research that suggests Americans are unreceptive to foreign opinion (Entman, 2004). Nevertheless, a minority of Scandinavian users did have their tweets about the American election retweeted or were otherwise interacted with by U.S. users. Here I will examine the prevalent characteristics among these Scandinavians.

Classic cosmopolitans and cosmopolitan nationalists

First, a significant portion of the Top Scandinavians that Americans interacted with were what might be described as classic cosmopolitans: people with international connections. A fifth were Americans or other foreigners living in Scandinavia or Scandinavians living abroad – a disproportionate number compared with the overall population of Scandinavians abroad and foreigners in Scandinavia.
This may be a reflection of the international networks these users have, or the global outlook they express. For example, the user @andersostlund is the founder of an expat professional networking site, lists his location as Kyiv, Ukraine and describes himself as “Swede by birth, European by choice.” The second topmost-ranking Scandinavian that American users engaged with was @ChrChristensen, an American journalism professor and researcher in Stockholm and previously lived in Turkey and the U.K.\textsuperscript{48} Even though almost all interactions between American and Scandinavian users were in English, the Top Scandinavians were also more likely to use multiple languages to tweet about the election. Additionally, 40 percent of the Top Scandinavians also had follower counts in the 95\textsuperscript{th} percentile. Yet these were not the elite figures who dominated the Scandinavian language spheres – the Top Scandinavians were for the most part not major media accounts, politicians, and reporters. These elites did not translate transnationally. Even Sweden’s former prime minister Carl Bildt, who \textit{was} one of the Top Scandinavians in the American sphere (see Table 17), did not feature prominently among Swedes, through either his English-language or Swedish-language account. This suggests that the “well-traveled polyglot” (Appiah, 2007, p. xviii) played an important role in the transnational public sphere that they may not play in the national sphere, which aligns with other findings about bilinguals on social media (Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013; Hale, 2014).

I would like to turn now to the most striking feature of the Top Scandinavians: they were evenly split between Trump-leaners and Clinton-leaners (38-37 percent).\textsuperscript{49} This is extremely disproportionate based on overall breakdown of Scandinavians’ political orientation. In the sample coded for political orientation, only 10.5 percent of Scandinavians were Trump-leaning, roughly equivalent to Scandinavian opinion found in a global survey about the U.S. election (YouGov, 2016). This means that Trump-leaners received an unusual degree of attention from American users, relative to their overall representation. Additionally, further analysis showed that the interactions were largely coming from Trump-leaning American users. In other words, the interaction was not the result of Clinton-leaners challenging opposing viewpoints online, but rather Trump-leaners finding shared ideological affinity.

This is surprising for three reasons. First, previous research on Americans’ receptiveness to foreign opinions has shown that it is people on the left who have generally been more receptive, while conservative Americans are more likely to dismiss opinions expressed by foreign leaders (Hayes &

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\textsuperscript{48} Christensen’s academic work on Twitter has also been cited in this paper. 
\textsuperscript{49} The portion of Unknown and Neither users was lower than in the general Scandinavian user population: a combined 28 percent in the random sample compared with 17 percent among top users. This may be the result of a combination of more available tweets (reducing the number of Unknowns) and the tendency for strong opinion and sentiment to be rewarded on Twitter.
\end{flushright}
Guardino, 2011), or even take the opposite opinion (Dragojlovic, 2015). Given this, one might expect Clinton-leaners to engage more in exchanges with Scandinavians, perhaps out of interest in the Nordic Model. Instead, Trump-leaning Americans appeared to find and amplify the small minority of Scandi-navian Trump-leaners. Second, the documented cases of online transnational movements have more often formed around left-leaning causes, such as human rights, labor rights, the environment, and gender issues (Bennett, 2012), not right-wing causes. Finally, third reason the exchanges are surprising is Donald Trump’s particular brand of conservatism. He ran under an America First slogan, opposed free-trade, promised to rein in foreign aid, critiqued cooperative treaties, and took a strong anti-immigration stance. In other words, Trump represented an anti-transnational point of view.

So why would American Trump-leaners engage in interactions with Scandinavians? One possibility may lie not in their political orientation per se, but in what Hayes and Guardino (2011) call an “oppositional vacuum” in the domestic public sphere (p. 844). In the case of the Iraq War, the authors argue foreign opinion was influential to the left because so few Democratic elites were expressing opposition to the war. Although the political ideologies are reversed here, Trump and his views faced a kind of approval vacuum. Republican elites were tepid in their support and editorials overwhelmingly supported Clinton. Part of the appeal of Trump as a candidate was that he was not “politically correct” – he represented a shift in the norms, bringing formerly inappropriate ideas among what he claimed to be a “silent majority” into the mainstream (Enli, 2017; Sunstein, 2017). This may have opened up transna- tional connections between Trump-leaning Americans and Scandinavians – Scandinavians who may have likewise felt their views were ignored by their countries’ political elites.

Yet the nationalist ideology of many Trump supporters (Inglehart & Norris, 2017) would seem to work against these cosmopolitan connections. Trump’s supporters explicitly condemned “globalists” and “cosmopolitans.” Dragojlovic (2015) found that Republicans in general tend to have higher nationalist and ethnocentric tendencies, which he theorized made them less open to foreign input (p. 75). However, Anderson (1983) has argued the nature of nationalism itself makes such sentiments, paradoxically, interchangeable. Although individual nationality is sui generis – Norwegian identity is unique from other identities for example – having a nationality is universal. What Langman (2005) has argued of other transnational movements can apply to nationalism as well: people are recruited “by virtue of their political sentiments and/or connections to like-minded folks” (p. 71). One of the Top Scandinavians, @PeterSweden, tweeted a link to the Wikileaks transcript of Hillary Clinton’s Goldman Sachs speeches, saying “This is ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT right here. Hillary Clinton is a globalist neo-
conservative. #PodestaEmails.” Like the supporters of the Zapatistas who saw the Mexican revolutionaries as representative of a larger movement, the American election for right-wing Scandinavians represented a larger threat from “globalists.” Similarly, among American Trump-supporters, Scandinavia may code differently than it does for the American left. Rather than representing Bernie Sanders’s democratic socialist platform, it may be a heuristic (Peffley & Hurrwitz, 1992) for what has been dubbed the cultural threat of immigration (Brubaker, 2017; Gullestad, 2002) – a concept that Trump himself called up after the election when he referred to a supposed extremist attack “last night in Sweden.”

Indeed, this use of transnational technology for anti-cosmopolitan appears to be in line with what Beck (2006) described as the “cosmopolitanization of reality.” Even as people seek defensive “essentialist” positions to deal with the increasing sense of boundarylessness (p. 3), he argued they will use the transnational capabilities at their disposal. The findings point to the possibility that transnational capabilities are being used for a form of cosmopolitan nationalism. Thus, Bennett’s (2012) argument that social movements in the digital age are less oriented around traditional identities may hold: in a borderless media environment, shared nationality may be less important in nationalist movements as well.

DOES IT MATTER?

The purpose of the democratic public sphere is “informal opinion-formation” which is transformed during elections into institutional power with legislative outcomes (Habermas, 1998, p. 249). Did the Scandinavians’ tweets influence the outcome of the election? Not likely. The participation by Scandinavians presented here represented only a fraction of the overall activity on Twitter, which itself includes only a fraction of American voters. The documented interactions between Scandinavians and Americans are even scarcer. Research on Russian involvement in the election – which was apparently a large-scale, coordinated effort – has not found evidence that the Russian activities actually changed the outcome of the election (Guess, et al., 2018). If the effects of an apparently highly organized intelligence operation are weak, effects by a dispersed group of individuals must be nearly non-existent.

Yet the findings show that Scandinavian users did contribute to what Papacharissi (2015) describes as the collective storytelling environment on Twitter. They shared links, they retweeted, they joined in on hashtags. In the algorithmic structure of Twitter, they were part of the crowd that prioritizes some content over others, some users over others, and collectively drives the conversation. They took part in forming whatever “communicatively generated power” (Habermas, 1998, p. 249) Twitter possesses. If the transnational exchanges between Trump-leaners encompassed more than Scandinavia, they may have also been part of a larger peer-to-peer mechanism that helped spread populist and nationalist causes in 2016.
Additionally, by participating in the public sphere, they may have influenced themselves. Participation is not just an instrumental exercise. As Coleman (2013) writes, there is value in “feeling counted” – having a voice if not having a vote (p. 8). Scholars of transnational movements point out that participation often shapes how the participants see themselves in the world and their understanding of citizenship (Kabeer, 2005, p. 3). Taking part is a way of negotiating their “situation in the political and cultural landscape” (A. Robertson, 2010, p. 2). These landscapes may be in their own national spheres, as in the user who tweeted in Norwegian during the first debate, “Hillary Clinton in this debate is so extremely relatable for every woman that has ever been at an afterparty with a drunk man with opinions”⁵⁰ – tying the American election to issues of gender in Norwegian society. Having taken part in the American election may forge new cross-border networks, perhaps create new avenues into American politics going forward, and as Sassen (2002) argues, “strengthen alternative notions of community and membership” (p. 277). While Scandinavians’ participation may not have had much influence over the opinions formed in the public sphere, they helped further move the bounds of the public sphere from its geographic moorings.

Limitations and generalizability

Case studies are useful ways of approaching complex social phenomena in a real-world setting (Yin, 2014, p. 4). But they also present only a narrow slice. On the one hand, the findings presented in this paper are almost certainly underestimates of Scandinavian participation. I used a fairly exclusionary method of determining Scandinavian users, and the windows of data collection were limited to four weeks. Significant rate limiting on Twitter also meant that many tweets that might have been otherwise collected were not. In addition, the data collection was made largely by keyword. That leaves out Scandinavian users who commented on the election without identifying the last names of the two main candidates. It also means that if an American user responded to a Scandinavian without using the name of the candidate, the candidate’s handle, or a commonly used hashtag, that tweet was also not collected, meaning there may be more interactions that were not picked up in the data. Therefore, the activity documented here should be seen as a slice of more voluminous activity online.

⁵⁰ Original: “Hillary Clinton i denne debatten er helt ekstremt relatable for enhver kvinne som noensinne har vært på nach med en full mann med meninger.”
At the same time, it may be difficult to generalize these numbers much beyond the Scandinavian countries, or even to the general Scandinavian population. These users represent a self-selecting minority of Scandinavians – not only those who use Twitter, but those who tweeted about the American election on Twitter. Scandinavians in general are what Hafez (2007) would describe as “info-elites.” They have high levels of education and English proficiency, high internet penetration rates, and a great sense of political efficacy. Their history with the United States may also contribute to their cultural proficiency in American politics – knowing enough about the Electoral College, for example, to place bets on it. One could imagine that people in other northern European countries took part in similar ways, but the exact nature may be different, particularly for countries with unique historical relationships to the U.S. like the United Kingdom. Furthermore, this election was unusually flashy and personality-focused even by American standards, meaning that future elections may not hold the same fascination. Thus, overall, I propose that the results are best used for what Yin describes as *analytical* generalization – they are not *statistically* generalizable to a larger population, but do help advance theoretical concepts that apply outside this immediate sample (p. 40).

**Future research**

This project tracked the patterns of communication, but largely did not examine the content of that communication. What issues were important in exchanges, the tenor and civility of the tweets, and how foreign users interpreted American politics are not addressed here. It is also evident the “hybrid” media system (Chadwick, et al., 2016) not blends traditional and social media, but social media platforms with each other – seen in the many links to Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Whether these URLs pointed to the same content, giving viral videos and memes a role in transnational imaged communities, could unfortunately not be assessed here. Finally, this research points to several trends but does not offer definitive answers. The transference of American political identities to foreign citizens, polarization in transnational media usage, the cross-border spread of conspiracy theories and “fake news” through English-language networks, and the formation of right-wing transnational connections are all areas this project has found evidence for, but not with the depth that would be needed to truly understand how these flows play out.
Conclusion

On March 20, 2017, the U.S. House Intelligence Committee held the first public hearing on revelations that Russia interfered in the American presidential race of 2016. Donald Trump had taken office two months earlier and disputed the U.S. intelligence community’s findings on Russia’s attempts to influence – much less successful influence of – the outcome. At the hearing, Congressman Jim Himes, a Democrat from Connecticut, incredulously questioned then-FBI director James Comey about a tweet Trump had just sent.

Rep. Jim Himes: So, thanks to the modern technology that's in front of me right here I’ve got a tweet from the president an hour ago saying 'the NSA and FBI tell Congress that Russia did not influence the electoral process.' So that's not quite accurate that tweet?

FBI Director James Comey: I'm sorry, I haven't been following anyone on Twitter while I've been sitting here.

Rep. Himes: I can read it to you. It says, 'the NSA and FBI tell Congress that Russia did not influence the electoral process.' This has gone out to millions of Americans – 16.1 million to be exact. Is the tweet as I read it to you ... is that accurate? (C-SPAN, 2017)

To begin with, this exchange captured a remarkable example of the role social media now plays in politics, with the president himself using his powerful account to blur the lines between audience and participant through “audiencing” the hearing (Highfield, et al., 2013). But the exchange also illustrates the liminal space the national public sphere occupies online. On the one hand, the very premise of the hearing is the systematic use of online communication by a foreign government to undertake, as the New York Times later put it, “what amounted to unprecedented foreign invasion of American democracy.”51 But then at another turn, Rep. Himes resurrects the notion of a nationally bounded sphere. He cites a figure – 16.1 million Americans – referring to the number of followers on the president’s Twitter account. This is clearly wrong. Those 16.1 million people are worldwide.

As this paper has shown, some fraction of those followers are Scandinavians – people who used that very platform to retweet the future president during his election bid, to tweet opposition, to comment, to share information, to talk to Americans, and in a few cases, to have Americans talk back. This paper, through a quantitative examination of Twitter activity in the run-up to the election, has shown that social media are being used to create fundamentally different opportunities for transnational political participation. Countries have always tried to influence each other (Nye, 2004). What these findings demonstrate is citizen-to-citizen contact – what Edward R. Murrow called “the last three feet.” Citizens of one country are using digital media to discuss the politics of another country with that country’s citizens, and in a manner very similar to those citizens. Citizens may not always, or in fact may rarely, achieve the kind of reach that could be described as “mass.” Many tweets probably won’t even have the audience that an Amerikabrev once had in a 19th century Norwegian village. True exchanges may be limited. And those that do exist may not be along the cosmopolitan lines that liberal democratic thinkers would like. But the findings suggest that at least on occasion, these media are being used to “gather together in a manner of speech and action” to paraphrase Arendt, in a way that expands the public realm beyond traditional borders.
Appendix

Approval letter from Norwegian Centre for Research Data

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Vår ref: 49495 / H 3

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 17.08.2016. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 27.09.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

49495 All Politics is Global: Transnational political engagement in the 2016 U.S. election on Twitter
Behandlingsansvarlig Universiteten i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig Gunn Enli
Student Jessica Robinson

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilråer at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilrådinger forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.


Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 18.11.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Kjersti Haugstedt

Hildur Thorarensen

Kontaktperson: Hildur Thorarensen tlf: 55 58 26 54

Documentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.
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