

Torrential Twitter: Climate Change, Female Politicians, and Harassment - Codebook*

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1 Overview

This codebook is designed to inform the coding process for my Torrential Twitter trial study. Prior to coding Tweets, the raw data sets were initially cleaned and tested using the statistical programming software R (R Core Team 2023), utilizing functions from **Janitor** (Firke 2023) and **testthat** (Wickham 2023). Tweets will then be coded using a Google Form to determine the severity of harassment and type of account.

*Code and other information available at: https://github.com/InessaDeAngelis/Torrential_Twitter_Trial

Harassment or gendertrolling is defined as sexist or misogynistic remarks that target a person based on their gender or sexuality and have varying levels of severity (Wagner 2020). Severity of harassment includes:

- Positive
- Neutral
- Questioning Authority
- Name-calling/Gender insults
- Vicious language
- Credible threats
- Hate speech

Type of account is defined as the dynamics of relationships between followers, followings, and lists and will be determined by analyzing the accounts' bio, profile image, and other characteristics (Singh, Bansal, and Sofat 2018; Uddin, Imran, and Sajjad 2014) and includes:

- Personal
- Professional
- Bots
- Spammers
- Anonymous
- Suspended/Deleted

2 Coding Schedule

2.1 Severity of Harassment

The coding of sentiment in Tweets will be conducted to determine the severity of harassment, measuring Tweets on a seven-point scale ranging from positive to hate speech (Mantilla 2013; Nadim and Fladmoe 2021). The sentiment categories will be mutually exclusive, therefore only one of the seven types of harassment can be selected per reply (Krippendorff 2011). The seven-point scale contains the following categories, and they are:

1. Positive

- a. Tweets that employ positive wording and tone without expressing complaints (Zavattaro, French, and Mohanty 2015).

- b. Punctuation, such as exclamation marks, may be used to convey a positive message (Jansen et al. 2009). See Table 1 for an example and note the use of the exclamation mark.
- c. May include language complimenting the work ethic and policies of the female politicians or congratulating them on introducing specific policies or winning an election.

Table 1: Sample of a **positive** Tweet sent to MP Elizabeth May.

Tweet
@ ElizabethMay thank you May for keeping us on climate change!!! #weonlyhaveoneplanet

2. Neutral

- a. A neutral Tweet states a matter-of-fact without expressing an opinion or exuding judgement (Jansen et al. 2009).
- b. No specific punctuation is used and the overall tone of the Tweet is neither positive or harassing. Reference Table 2 for an example of a user stating something that occurred during proceedings in the House of Commons.
- c. May include Tweets that quote government policies, election platforms, and news media articles.
- d. Tweets authored by the female politicians where they mention themselves will likely fall in this category.

Table 2: Sample of a **neutral** Tweet sent to MP Laurel Collins.

Tweet
@ Laurel_BC The gov't declared a climate emergency.

3. Questioning Authority

- a. Tweets that question the qualifications and abilities of female politicians, including questioning their ability to understand science, be effective leaders and govern based on their gender, age, and party affiliation, and question their common sense and ability to act rationally (Harmer and Southern 2021).
- b. For an example, see Table 3, where a Twitter user questions MP May's understanding of climate science.

Table 3: Sample of a Tweet **Questioning authority** of MP Elizabeth May.

Tweet
@ ElizabethMay Really Elizabeth? Describe to us in detail the climate catastrophe that would take place. I am real curious what it would entail.

4. Name-calling/Gender insults

- a. The use of offensive language, often grounded in stereotypes to refer to female politicians, their policies, and assumed qualifications (Nadim and Fladmoe 2021; Theocharis et al. 2020).
- b. Derogatory comments and terms used against women, including “whore” and “slut” which are “... designed to insult and humiliate women, especially in regard to their weight and physical appearance” (Mantilla 2013, 564).
- c. Tweets that are likely to fall under this category may call MP McKenna a “climate barbie” and call MP May “Lizzie” and claim that she is an alcoholic and that it is impairing her ability to effectively govern. See Table 4 for an example where the user calls MP McKenna a “barbie” and comments on her physical appearance in a way male politicians would not be spoken about.

Table 4: Sample of a Tweet containing **Name-calling and gender-based insults** sent to former MP Catherine McKenna.

Tweet
@ cathmckenna Hey Blonde Bimbo Barbie why do you look like you always just scraped outta bed

5. Vicious language

- a. The use of offensive and derogatory language, often grounded in stereotypes regarding weight and physical appearance, used to refer to female politicians, their gender, policies, and assumed qualifications (Nadim and Fladmoe 2021; Tessier 2021). Table 5 provides an example.

Table 5: Sample of Tweet containing **Vicious Language** sent to former MP Catherine McKenna (language redacted for this document).

Tweet
@ cathmckenna @ carleton_ F\$ck you climate b*tch

6. Credible Threats

- a. Tangible threats of violent sexual behaviour, rape, doxxing, and stalking which the gendertrolls would like to subject the female user to (Mantilla 2013). This includes seeking out the female politician with the intent to cause harm (Vickery and Everbach 2018). Reference Table 6 for an example.

Table 6: Sample of Tweet containing **Credible Threats** sent to former MP Catherine McKenna.

Tweet
@ cathmckenna U DO KNOW THAT CANADIANS ARE TOTALLY WAKING UP TO YOUR LIES AND AFTER YOU LOSE THE ELECTION WE WILL MOST DEFINITELY HUNT YOU DOWN AND HAVE YOU ARRESTED AND TRIED FOR TREASON WITH YOUR DISGUSTING CARBON AND CLIMATE LIES U WILL BE DEALT WITH !!!!!

7. Hate speech

- a. Hateful comments which oppose freedom of speech, violate human rights, and may even be unlawful (Nadim and Fladmoe 2021; Chetty and Alathur 2018)
- b. Online or offline vilification of an individual communicated in a specific context based on "... their immutable characteristics, such as their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or disability" (Carlson 2021, 4).
- c. Any form of expression that "... seeks to promote, or has the capacity to increase hatred against a person or group of people because of a characteristic they share, or a group to which they belong" (Saleem et al. 2017, 1)
- d. See Table 7 for an example of the most hateful speech found in this sample and the [Other Guidelines](#) section for notes on the frequency of hate speech found in this trial.

Table 7: Sample of Tweet containing **Hate Speech** sent to former MP Catherine McKenna (language redacted for this document).

Tweet
@ cathmckenna Better polish up that resume, climate mckenn*zi.

2.2 Type of Account

Only one type of account can be selected and will also be coded mutually exclusively. If one user replies to a single Tweet by a female politician using multiple separate Tweets, then each Tweet will be coded separately. There will be no limit on the coding of the number of replies sent by an individual account.

Types of accounts include and are defined as:

1. **Personal**

- a. People who represent their own views and interests and use their account for fun, to read the news, and socially interact (Uddin, Imran, and Sajjad 2014, 2)

2. **Professional**

- a. Share information about their area of expertise and may include businesses who use the platform to market their products and reach new audiences (Uddin, Imran, and Sajjad 2014, 2)
- b. This category includes politicians, political parties, and organizations and can be distinguished by looking at logos, branding, and URLs linked to the profile.

3. **Bots**

- a. Automated “... online agents that are used to intervene in political discourse online” and are intentionally created to circulate disinformation, malicious content, and flood the notifications of users (Dubois and McKelvey 2019, 28; Marlow, Miller, and Roberts 2021).
- b. However, not all bots are bad. There are some automated agents which circulate helpful information and will be labeled as “automated” by Twitter.

4. **Spammers**

- a. Intentionally “spread malicious content” (Singh, Bansal, and Sofat 2018, 2).
- b. May show up as one individual who has created multiple accounts to bolster their ability to send harassing content (Mantilla 2015).
- c. Can be determined by looking at the frequency of replies, randomness of the profile picture and bio (or lack of both/either), and may have a default, Twitter generated username (such as @ Bob047328416).

5. **Anonymous**

- a. An individually intentionally hiding information about their identity and location for the purposes of using the platform maliciously. May include not adding a profile picture or using an obscured, random picture and not revealing their actual name, age, gender, and other identifying characteristics (Trifiro et al. 2021).
- b. Hide behind fake usernames and “... express sexist, racist, or homophobic views with little fear of being held accountable for their comments” (Wagner 2020, 8).
- c. Can be determined by looking at a user’s bio which will either be blank (listed as NA in the data set) or say something very random and unidentifiable such as “love the outdoors”. The user’s profile picture will either be Twitter’s default, a picture of a random animal, or a political meme (such as Prime Minister Trudeau wearing a silly hat).

6. **Suspended/Deleted**

- a. Accounts found to be in violation of Twitter’s Terms of Services and temporarily or permanently removed from the platform.
- b. May include people who chose to terminate their account, especially following Elon Musk’s takeover of the platform.

3 Other Guidelines

3.1 Retweets

Retweets are not to be coded, only responses to Tweets that are initiated from the accounts of one of the three female politicians. A simple retweet or quote Tweet (retweet with comment) would not count, as the Tweet being shared was not originally authored by one of female politicians.

3.2 Threaded Responses

Threaded responses occur when one user posts a connected series of Tweets which contribute towards building the same message or narrative. They may be numbered as 1, 2, 3, ... out of the total number of responses.

For the purposes of this study, each Tweet in a threaded response will be analyzed and coded as a separate Tweet.

3.3 Media

Twitter defines any gifs, memes, images, and videos as media (Developer 2023). Media embedded in Tweets should be considered as part of the written text of the Tweet and coded accordingly, given that hateful speech can also be expressed through images and symbols (Carlson 2021). With increasing doctoring and creation of media for the purpose of deception and political gain, any media embedded in Tweets should be analyzed for manipulation and machine-learning generated deepfakes, which are compelling fake pictures and videos (Farid 2019; Appel and Prietzel 2022).

For Tweets that contain a picture without additional text, the nature, context, and suggestiveness of the picture should be analysed to determine the severity of harassment (Quan-Haase and Sloan 2017). Emojis, if included in a Tweet, should be interpreted as both a picture and text, analysing the rest of the Tweet for context (Swartz and Crooks 2020). Moreover, hash-tags will be coded in the same manner as regular text in Tweets (Quan-Haase and Sloan 2017). Any URLs in Tweets should be opened and examine to assist in determining the severity of harassment.

3.4 Hate Speech

It is anticipated that the quantity of hate speech detected in this sample of Tweets will be quite low, given that these Tweets are from 2019 when Canadian politics was slightly less polarized on Twitter and Twitter employed their content moderation rules more frequently. The few Tweets identified as hate speech in this trial study may not be deemed hate speech in the context of the full scale version of the study. However, given changes to Canadian politics and the affordances of Twitter, the number of Tweets containing hate speech is likely to change in the full-scale version of this study.

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