Political Scripts in Twitter Conversations about the COVID-19 Pandemic

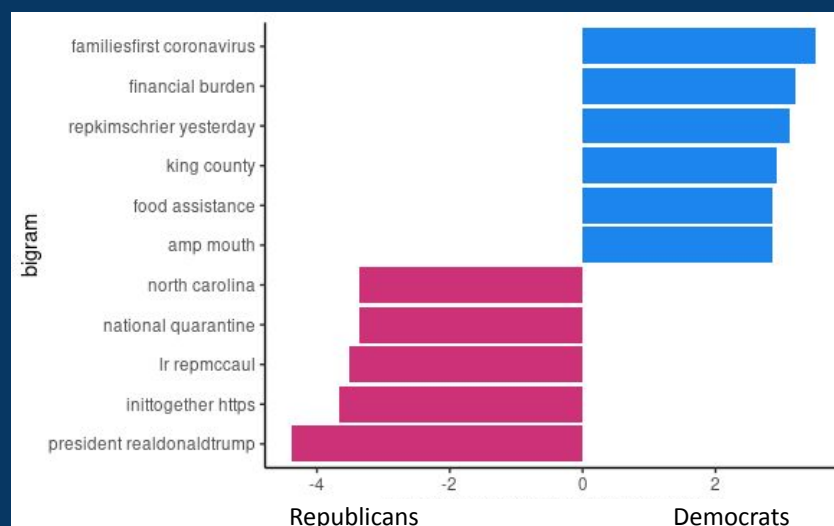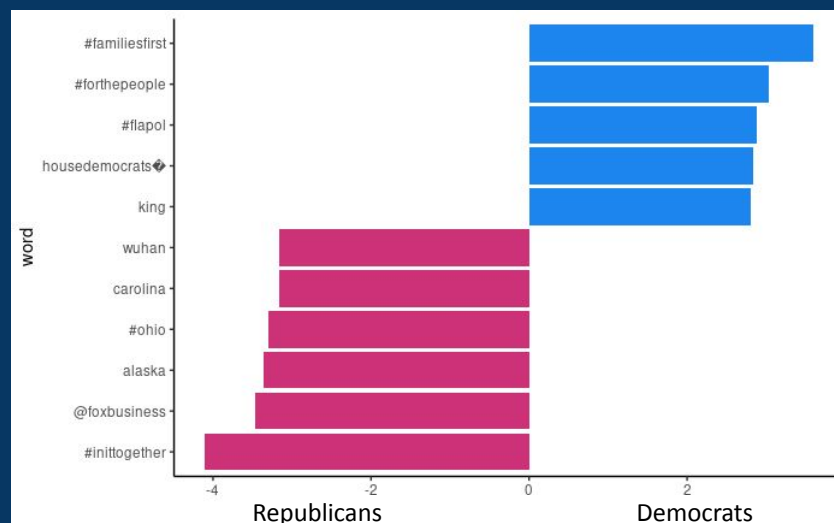**Abigail J. Rieck** & Julia M. Smith

INTRO

We compare the content and sentiment of tweets made by politicians and laypeople in Twitter conversations about the coronavirus pandemic in March, 2020. Within the tweets made by politicians, we also examine differences between Republicans and Democrats.
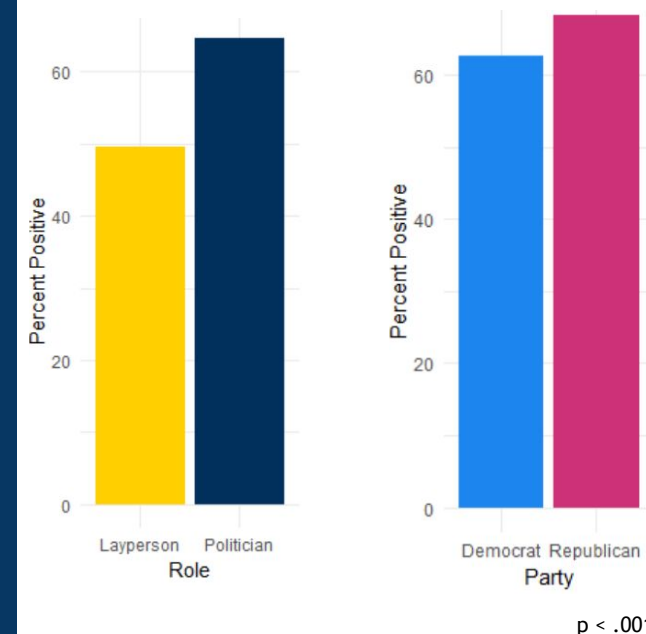
METHODS

1. Dataset of just under 240 million tweets related to the pandemic
2. Log odds ratios to identify polarizing words/phrases (log odds ratio (Democrat/Republican)
3. Compared sentiment scores using 2-proportion Z-test

CONTENT RESULTS

- Democrats were more likely to use the phrases "#familiesfirst", "financial burden", and "food assistance".
- Republicans were more likely to use the phrases "wuhan", "#inittogether", and "national quarantine".
- Generally, laypeople were more likely than politicians to use informal language, including profanity.

SENTIMENT RESULTS

p < .001

DISCUSSION

In this exploratory analysis, we find that Democrats and Republicans used different language to discuss the pandemic throughout March of 2020. We find that Republican politicians were, on average, more positive than Democrat politicians, and that politicians were more positive than laypeople in the tweets they made about the pandemic. The party difference may be due to Republicans controlling the presidency and majority of Congress at that time.