

Twitter and the Professionalization of Women in Congress

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Abstract

Many quantitative studies detail the electoral challenges that face women, yet little attention is paid to how these challenges continue on Capitol Hill and what women can do to build influence in Congress. Congresswomen use Twitter — a low-cost, public-facing platform — to bypass barriers to social and professional ties with influential members of the Congressional network. Using network analysis, we show that Congresswomen are more likely to engage directly with other female legislators and with Congressional leadership compared to male legislators. Our findings support the theory that Twitter offers women a way to strategically build and signal professional ties.

Keywords: Congress, gender, Twitter, social media, networks

