**Research**

I research how digital environments and platforms impact political processes and behavior—my current research focuses on elite roles and the ways in which political communications and opinions are shared—and develop and apply quantitative methods to support this agenda.

Interest Actors

My core agenda investigates interest actors, who they are, and how they impact the political process. In my dissertation, I introduce the theoretical concept of interest actors as individuals, who are recognized by an audience and assume a valued role in politics, particularly in online social media spaces. I provide operational traction to interest actors by evidencing them on Twitter with machine learning and investigate how these interest actors can impact the content that Members of Congress share online, how they connect with interest groups and shape the digital public sphere.

This provides a new theory for conceptualizing elites online. Interest actors are valuable---indeed--- critical, for comprehensively analyzing and understanding politics in a digital context. Their presence and behaviors online have implications for political activity, the digital public sphere, and participatory democracy.

I draw on machine learning, text methods, and networks to evidence interest actors and demonstrate their impacts in social and communications networks.

Related work extends our understanding of interest actors with constructed political, social identities to develop a theory for the different types of interest actors and how they derive value from their audiences.

Measuring Influence and Impact in Communications

My methodological agenda develops and applies quantitative methods in pursuit of the above research, focusing on how we can incorporate the content and context of individual communications to advance our understanding of political influence. Drawing on information theory and computer science, I introduce measures that capture the time-sensitive influence actors can have on one another through speeches, audio, image, and text-based communications to create network representations of communications. This provides insights into who and how Members of Congress and interest actors are influenced. I have also applied these methods to state actors to evaluate states' influence in discussions of the United Nations Security Council

Rhetoric and Narratives in Democratic Institutions

I also research the links between political rhetoric and democratic civic practice using computational methods. I work with Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Dino Christenson, and Sahar Abi-Hassan and an interdisciplinary team of undergraduate research assistants to evaluate how rhetoric and narratives factor into elite decision-making, public opinion, and political outcomes. Projects span Congress, the executive branch, and courts, and draw data from the congressional record, news coverage of events, and amicus briefs.