

Affective Action and Delayed Dissent: Why Colombia's Referendum Opponents Tweeted Their
Outrage a Year After the Theft of Their Vote

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Abstract

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This interdisciplinary thesis explores the reasons behind a delayed response from Colombia's peace deal opponents following the government's overturning of their referendum victory. Existing literature failed to explain why a group of individuals would not immediately respond to a significant event, and why an eventual response would take place on Twitter, rather than in the form of a physical demonstration. This thesis develops an innovative methodology from the fields of communications and political and social psychology to draw nuanced significance from a population of tweets. This research finds that deeply rooted psychological predispositions explain both the timing of the peace deal opponents' response and the virtual form in which it took place. The research here advances the uses of Twitter data in the social sciences, particularly for the study of social movements and human behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Recent social and political events in Colombia are colored by a turbulent past. Since its independence from Spain in 1819, Colombia's government transitioned five times before it was established as the Republic of Colombia in 1886, upon the dissolution of previous federalist regimes.¹ The history of the republic is marked by conflict and political violence. The three-year Thousand Days' War of 1899 was catalyzed by radical political factions. Thirty years later it was followed by a period known as *La Violencia* (The Violence), a ten-year civil war generated by various factors. The causes included social divisions and conflict spurred by rapid industrial growth of the 1930s; the rise of a right-wing ruling party in 1946 that sparked divides between poor farmers;² and the 1948 assassination of popular Liberal Party presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, which provoked the mass *Bogotazo* riots that resulted in the death of approximately 5,000 people in under 12 hours. In the following ten-year civil war, 200,000 people died, the vast majority of them were civilians.³

The resolution to the civil war, namely the establishment of the National Front pact in 1958—a power-sharing agreement between the warring conservative and liberal factions, ultimately precipitated new violence. The parties agreed to rotate 4-year terms between each side's chosen representative, which marked Colombia's long-awaited transition to a formal democracy.⁴ In reality, however, paramilitary groups have perpetuated political violence, much of which has come in the form of land grabs characterized by assassinations, assaults, and disappearances, almost exclusively concentrated in rural areas.⁵

¹ Farnsworth-Alvear 2017; Posada Carbó 2006

² Bailey 1967 & Oquist 1980

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hartlyn 1988

⁵ Grandin & Joseph 2010

The government's inability to protect rural Colombians from these attacks led to the formation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC*), a guerrilla group whose acts were initially premised on a Marxist-Leninist ideology of anti-imperialism, but who ultimately became notorious for kidnappings, extortion, and drug production and trafficking.⁶ For this reason, many people impugn FARC for the violence of Colombia's most recent protracted armed conflict. The degree to which FARC violence impacted Colombian civilians is high;⁷ estimates suggest that, in the early 1990s, FARC insurgents were responsible for approximately 80 percent⁸ of deaths and displacement.⁹

This heavy civilian toll led to widespread demonstrations against the FARC in 2008, which are understood by some as the catalyst for the FARC's shift in military tactics in an effort to gain political recognition.¹⁰ At the same time, however, the FARC sustained control over civilians who were held hostage. Kidnappings of soldiers and civilians continued, even as their military power weakened compared to strengthening Colombian forces.¹¹ After many ceasefires, negotiations, and failed peace deals, the FARC again agreed to a ceasefire with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos—an indication of its readiness to end the war.¹² In August of 2016, President Santos declared that a peace deal had been proposed and that Colombians would ultimately decide whether or not the deal should pass, by way of a referendum on October 2,

⁶ Molano 2016

⁷ Independent organization reports (see NACLA) and declassified documents (See the National Security Archive: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB166/index.htm>) have pointed to the Colombian government's use of both insurgent and paramilitary forces to carry out its "dirty work"

⁸ A 2001 Human Rights Watch report points to the later attribution of this number to paramilitary groups as key evidence that the Colombian military has been 'outsourcing' its own violence to both insurgent and paramilitary groups in order to appear as though it has been making internal reforms

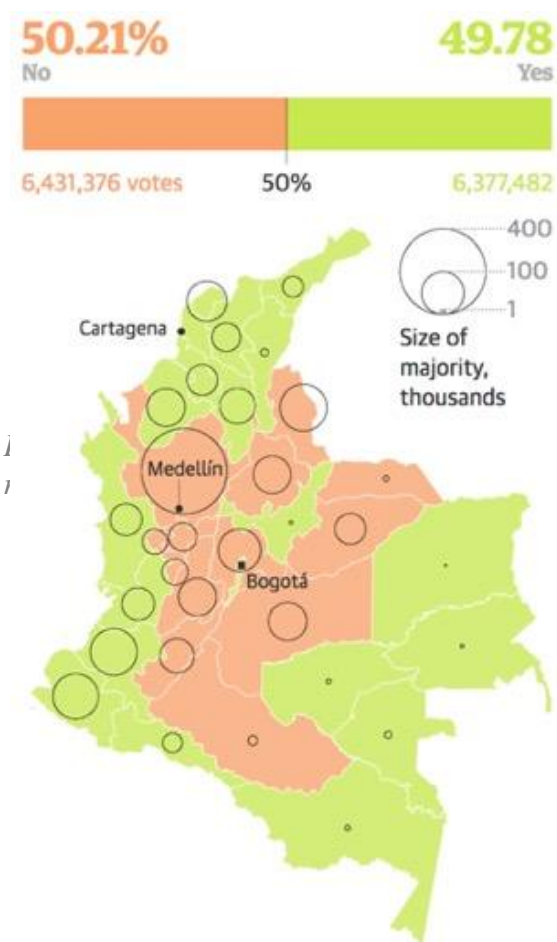
⁹ Andreas & Greenhill 2010

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/colombia-announces-peace-deal-to-end-52-year-conflict-with-farc/2016/06/23/3b85e53a-37ff-11e6-af02-1df55f0c77ff_story.html?utm_term=.a55d66671df5

2016.¹³ The referendum, which would approve the peace deal, failed by a slim margin of .43%, with 6,431,376 votes against the deal and 6,377,482 in favor of it (*see figure 1*)¹⁴.



Sources: Plebiscito.registraduria.gov.co, Colombia.com

Fed up with years of conflict, protests led by youth who supported the peace deal erupted across the country. They demanded president Santos negotiate and pass a new peace agreement.¹⁵ The president obliged and, within a couple of months, the FARC and the government reached a new deal that included less harsh punishment for FARC commanders and militants. The deal was approved by the Colombian Congress on November 30, 2016.¹⁶ By June 2017, the FARC had disarmed and, as authorized by the peace agreement, had established itself as a legal political party—the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force.¹⁷

Nearly one year following the plebiscite vote, President Santos announced the establishment of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), an extrajudicial court system that would try and prosecute offenders who committed war crimes against civilians.¹⁸ Citizens who had voted against the peace deal in the referendum took to

¹³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/colombia-government-and-farc-rebels-ready-to-announce-peace-deal/2016/08/24/32ac13b6-d796-4d70-b2f9-da75d9e43bbb_story.html?utm_term=.c942892dd6cb

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/02/colombia-referendum-rejects-peace-deal-with-farc>

¹⁵ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/thousands-of-colombians-protest-for-peace-after-unexpected_us_57fbb084e4b0b665ad818683

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/01/colombias-government-formally-ratifies-revised-farc-peace-deal>

¹⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/27/world/americas/colombia-farc-rebels-disarmament.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Colombia-Court-Approves-Peace-Jurisdiction-With-Changes-20171115-0006.html>

Twitter, voicing their outrage. Given the salience of public demonstrations by ‘YES’ voters against the ‘NO’ victory, we would expect ‘NO’ voters to respond in a similar manner following the reversal of the referendum result. Instead, it was not until a year later that we saw this collective response from ‘NO’ supporters, in which they vocalized their discontent with the peace plan. What accounts for this lag in the expression of resistance and why did it take place on Twitter?

This thesis argues that ‘NO’ supporters stifled their political dissent against the overturning of the referendum outcome and the new November peace deal. I claim that the suppressed response was a function of positive emotions evoked by democratic ideations manifested in the outpouring of YES supporters in the streets. Anger was suppressed, and anxiety took its place. When the Special Jurisdiction for Peace was announced, it was widely suspected as a ploy for the government to evade its responsibility to execute justice. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace so threatened ‘NO’ supporters’ ideals of democracy that it activated their expression of anger toward the government’s invalidation of the referendum result.

Furthermore, affect, emotions, and the specific relationships between each group of voters and the political institutions in place at the time influenced the space in which their responses took place. ‘YES’ voters primarily demonstrated in the streets and called for political institutions to represent their demands through the implementation of a peace deal. This reveals how ‘YES’ voters felt they had power and influence in their institutions, as well as the rights and protections to occupy physical space. ‘NO’ voters, on the other hand, showed mistrust of their political institutions and called for the referendum’s upset. This begins to explain the primarily virtual nature of their Twitter-based collective dissent, rather than the physical demonstrations we might expect to see.

Other scholarship including rational choice theory and social psychology also identifies emotions as a catalyzing factor for political expression. Scholars of rational choice theory (RCT) have attempted to offer an explanation for human behavior, particularly in social and political contexts. The foundational tenet of RCT is that humans are rational beings who, for the most part, make logical, calculated decisions about how to act, based on factors such as efficacy—the perceived likelihood of reaching the intended outcome—and cost. When costs (particularly collective costs) of not acting are high, any chance of failure to achieve the intended result becomes a less significant inhibitor of action.¹⁹ Deviation from rational behavior which follows this calculus is explained by the interference of emotions which override rational decision-making.

According to rational choice theory, ‘NO’ voters’ delayed response was irrational, because the high costs associated with not acting (the implementation of an unjust peace deal) should have motivated ‘NO’ voters to respond in protest. While rational choice theory points to emotions as the cause of this phenomenon, it does not go any further to explain the mechanisms that produced these emotions or the potential reasons for the timing and mode of the eventual response.

Social psychology has made a more compelling, yet still insufficient, case for the explanation of this behavior. Social psychologists have recognized two factors, in addition to efficacy, that motivate collective action: anger toward perceived injustice and social identification.²⁰ This theory explains that individuals are more likely to participate in collective action when they “have shared interests, feel relatively deprived, are angry, believe they can

¹⁹ Blume & Easley 2008; Lohmann 2008; Opp 1989

²⁰ Drury & Reicher 2009; Jost et al. 2017; Kawakami & Dion 1995; Becker et al. 2011; van Zomeren et al. 2012

make a difference, and strongly identify with relevant social groups.”²¹ The strength of this approach is that it identifies the specific and therefore measurable emotion associated with producing action. According to this rationale, ‘NO’ voters did not respond immediately to the overturning of the referendum vote because one or more of the necessary components was missing. Because this group had just participated in the collective act of voting in the referendum, we can deduce that all of these conditions were true at that time. Immediately following the rejection of the referendum outcome, the emotional component changed. As with rational choice theory, where this area of literature falls short is in its inability to explain the mechanisms that motivated this change in emotion, which is fundamental to understanding the mode and timing of the ultimate response.

This thesis applies an historical-structural perspective that situates actors within a translocal context informed by experiences with political institutions, memories of violence, and expectations of democracy as perpetuated by global trends. Actors are complex rational and emotional beings that interact with their surroundings from informed global and historical standpoints. They form connections through embodied and disembodied spaces in which, guided by rationality and emotion, they challenge the structures that threaten their realities. It is through this lens that I endeavor to explain why opponents of the October 2016 referendum did not respond, until a year later, to the new peace deal, which they retrospectively recognized as a violation of democracy.

This thesis offers a contribution to political psychology literature, which thus far has addressed the differences between the galvanizing effect of anger and enthusiasm and the stifling effect of fear or anxiety.²² While anger and enthusiasm both propel collective action, the

²¹ Thomas et al. 2014, p. 726

²² Erisen 2018

respective responses will often take different forms. Because collective action is dependent on networked relationships and emotions are central to fostering those connections, the type of emotion that dominates discourse, paired with the context in which it takes place, will influence how individuals relate to each other and how they assert their collective voice.

This thesis holistically applies sentiment analysis tools to texts and images found among the tweets that constituted ‘NO’ voters’ ultimate response to the overturning of the referendum outcome. By unearthing these sentiments and their relationships to the political symbols and imagery to which they are attached, it sets out to uncover the reason for the initial delay and explain why the ultimate response took place on Twitter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to its rapid rise in popularity in recent years, Twitter has captivated the attention of scholars for its potential as a data source. Every user action on the platform leaves behind traces of data.²³ With hundreds of millions of tweets posted every day, the sheer volume of content has peaked the curiosity of social science researchers who are interested in web-mediated human behaviors.²⁴ This growing body of work is contributing to the process of integrating Twitter data into mainstream social science research.²⁵

Many scholars have defined Twitter as a microblog.²⁶ Twitter better aligns with the definition of a blog than it does with that of a social media site, because the content of interest on Twitter is not the user's profile, but the information shared in tweets.²⁷ Twitter is less about connecting with friends and more about forming a network of information based on common interests.²⁸ The result is a self-curated news stream that provides personally relevant material in 140 characters or less for each user, as well as the opportunity for users to share content with a receptive audience.²⁹

Since the use of big data has become increasingly popular, it is important to distinguish it from Twitter data. Big data refers to the massive quantities of information left behind from interactions with web-connected technology, such as internet browsers and cloud-based applications.³⁰ Big data is most often used to identify consumer behavior and create targeted

²³ Jungherr 2015

²⁴ Ibid., p. 12

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Kwak et al 2010; Larsson & Moe 2012; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira 2012; Pond & Lewis 2017; Tumasjan et al. 2010

²⁷ Richards et al. 2014, p. 203

²⁸ Yu 2016, p. 415; Kwak et al. 2010; Wu et al. 2011

²⁹ Kim & Chen 2015, p. 323; 327

³⁰ Jungherr 2015, p. 32-33

marketing. It is the reason why, after browsing for flights to a particular destination, someone might start receiving advertisements for activities in that area. Big data is also used to determine probability and make predictions about human behavior. Predictive policing has become an increasingly common example where big data is used to determine the most likely location of the next crime.³¹ While it typically cannot explain causation, big data can identify new phenomena that would otherwise go unnoticed.

Unlike big data, Twitter data is not reliable in making inferences about the general public, such as opinions or voting choices, because its users are not representative of the general population.³² However, similar to the computational social sciences, Twitter effectively supplies the aggregate data necessary to recognize the mechanisms beneath certain social and behavioral phenomena.³³ Hashtags, conversational markers that are used to attach tweets to specific conversation topics, facilitate smaller, more observable segments of the population on Twitter.

A hashtag is a formal marker of belonging to a group or subject within which many perspectives exist. It is not a direct proxy for opinion, but rather a refraction of opinion. The symbolic marker of the hashtag contributes to the formation of “hashtag publics” through which users congregate and express their opinions around specific conversation topics.³⁴ This level of aggregated Twitter data can provide insights into the mechanisms of social and psychological phenomena.³⁵ Twitter data opens up possibilities for two types of social science inquiries: first, as a portal into the world of human behavior and social processes and second, as an opportunity to grasp the way in which Twitter as a platform shapes communication practices.

³¹ Aghababaei 2018

³² Jungerr 2015, p. 25

³³ Jungherr 2015, p. 33

³⁴ Schmidt 2014, p. 6

³⁵ Hedstrom & Ylikoski 2010; Jungherr 2015 p. 69; 33-4; 37

Twitter data has thus far been used to evaluate political expression in a few distinct ways. In some circumstances, examining expressions of political opinion has explained how people are using Twitter to generate interest in and grow social movements. In a study of the student-led Rhodes Must Fall campaign in South Africa, Tanja Bosch 2016 gathered and analyzed tweets that used the #RMF hashtag, among others that related to the event. By studying the way different clusters of messages interacted with each other and qualitatively evaluating the content of a sample of tweets, Bosch found that Twitter created a space for youth to express their political opinions and resist normative memory production that did not exist in the physical world.³⁶

Twitter data has also been used to understand reactions to changes in government policy. In a paper on the public perception of reform to the propane gas subsidy in El Salvador, Seabold et al. 2015 used sentiment analysis of select Tweets over the course of three years to gauge reception of the policy change.³⁷ They found that Tweets reflected similar results in the categories measured by household survey data: ‘lack of information,’ ‘partisanship,’ ‘distrust of institutions,’ ‘personal economic impact,’ ‘other,’ and ‘irrelevant.’ In fact, the results aligned so well that the authors support the potential use of Twitter analysis where household data is unavailable.³⁸

Despite this proposition, because the population of users on Twitter are not representative of entire publics, their views are not suitable for making generalizable insights.³⁹ We can, however, identify tendencies for certain subsets of individuals. Additionally, Twitter data can provide clarity on opinions and sentiments surrounding certain issues, particularly dissident

³⁶ Bosch 2016

³⁷ Seabold et al. 2015

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Jungerr 2015, p. 1-5

opinions that run counter to those represented in mainstream media.

The Boom and Bust of Events on Twitter

Unique to Twitter is the speed at which users respond to certain events. A couple of primary theories explain why some events receive large volumes of attention and others fall flat. Some researchers have demonstrated that the interconnectivity of web-based systems and the mediated nature of digital news explains this phenomenon. In a study of Germany's political communication space leading up to its 2009 federal election, Jungherr and Jürgens found that, due to a high portion of URLs included in tweets, users were reacting not directly to an event, but to mediated content on the web.⁴⁰ Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliviera 2012 came to a similar conclusion, after a discovery in their study that peaks of tweets were strongly correlated with web-based news events. The volume of tweets dropped during televised coverage of an event, such as a politician's speech.⁴¹ This sudden decline demonstrates not just a shifting of attention, but also a cognitive pause necessary to analyze, interpret, and frame new information.

Research has shown the impressive speed with which people on Twitter respond en masse to breaking news, like natural disasters or political unrest.⁴² For Maireder and Ausserhofer, how people receive events depends on the conversations within their networks.⁴³ Because Tweets often already include interpretation of an event, the process through which people react to news on Twitter is accelerated. Tweets and topics that quickly gain attention are those that are able to reach large audiences, either directly, within a user's network of followers, or indirectly, through

⁴⁰ Jungherr 2015, p. 77

⁴¹ Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliviera 2012

⁴² Bruns & Moe 2014; Jungherr 2015, p. 14-18

⁴³ Maireder & Ausserhofer 2014, p. 310

re-tweets. This logic, however, does not explain what compels large amounts of people to make the jump from consuming information to sharing it.

In examining the temporal and linguistic patterns, as well as the hashtags used in Tweets during the 2011 Egyptian uprising, Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira made a few significant findings about the culmination and endurance of Twitter responses in a time of political crisis. In concurrence with other research, they confirmed that the spike in activity on Twitter was attributable to repressed expression through traditional channels.⁴⁴ Additionally, they found that the massive response transpired and was sustained due to two primary factors. First, the use of hashtags capacitated substantial identification with and contribution to a shared topic. Second, the widespread infusion of affect throughout initial tweets provoked others to join in and share those sentiments.⁴⁵

Voices That Occupy Twitter

Even though it has been identified as a space in which dissenters participate, some scholars have disputed whether Twitter actually enables the participation and recognition of new political actors or whether individuals with a large following outside of Twitter dominate these conversational spaces.⁴⁶ The quantity of interactions (such as likes and re-tweets) popular actors receive, compared to lesser known individuals, has varied depending on context. Even in situations where popular users gain a high volume of interactions, lesser known actors can gain recognition by effectively employing the platform's tools.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliviera 2012, p. 266

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Chaffee & Metzger 2001; Margolis & Resnick 2000; Schweitzer 2011

⁴⁷ Jungherr 2015

While Twitter is limited by its rules and architecture, users leverage some of its key features, specifically hashtags, to freely express themselves and their political opinions.⁴⁸ Hashtags act as symbolic markers that users often include in tweets to align with broader theme to which others can relate. Because hashtags are not moderated or controlled, Twitter users have the freedom to either apply popular ones in new ways or to invent their own. This flexibility “makes room for suggestion, imitation, learning, and trending.”⁴⁹

Twitter affords users a level of freedom of expression that would otherwise be inaccessible. Consequently, the information shared on Twitter often reflects views not found in mainstream media.⁵⁰ Individuals who feel excluded or unheard will often turn to Twitter as an outlet “to bypass traditional gatekeepers and contribute directly to the news process” when mainstream communications are restricted or not trusted, particularly during times of political instability.⁵¹

Contrary to what others have said about the leaderless nature of Twitter expressions, Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira found that organic crowdsourced opinion leaders emerged, due to the number of times their posts were retweeted.⁵² This phenomenon supports the conceptualization of Twitter as a democratic space where networked publics “elect” individuals to represent their thoughts and opinions. Given the minimal research on reasons people turn to Twitter in the first place, the limitations to freedom of expression people face outside of Twitter ought to be considered as a factor that drives their use of the online platform.

Another influential factor that drives the expression of political opinions on Twitter is the

⁴⁸ Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira 2012, p. 268-9; Schmidt 2014, p. 8

⁴⁹ Schmidt 2014, p. 6

⁵⁰ Bruns & Burgess 2011; Kim & Chen 2015, p. 321;

⁵¹ Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira 2012, p. 268-9; Schmidt 2014, p. 8

⁵² Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira 2012, p. 274

exposure to likeminded perspectives. Many researchers have studied the impacts of exposure to likeminded versus cross-cutting perspectives on political expression.⁵³ Common perspectives have overall been found to increase participation.⁵⁴ Because Twitter facilitates congregation around shared understandings, users are more likely to be vocal in these networks to which they belong. Further, because of this feature, peoples' use of Twitter can be attributed to times of political instability or polarization.

While the body of work on the relationship between Twitter and political expression is growing, research aimed at determining the mechanisms that provoke users to interact with the web-based platform is lacking. The data that each individual user leaves behind online is essentially meaningless on its own, but when many users respond online to an event that affects them collectively, patterns emerge that “can be used to identify the social phenomena or events that lead users to use digital services in reaction to them.”⁵⁵ Moreover, by employing sentiment and content analysis tools, the specific values and experiences attached to political expressions becomes discernable, which in turn can help explain why the response took the shape it did.

Negativity Bias

Because psychology is able to explain the mechanisms behind human behavior, its inclusion in analyses of sentiment or expression of opinion is imperative. One of the remarkable strengths of psychology is its ability to establish some fundamental truths about human behavior. One of these truths, the negativity bias, has been used to explain how people respond to

⁵³ Kim & Chen 2015; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2012

⁵⁴ Kim & Chen 2015

⁵⁵ Jungherr 2015, p. 5

situations and stimuli throughout their daily lives, but is of particular relevance to behavior in times of political conflict.

The disproportionate weight of negative information on human behavior and decision making has garnered great attention from psychologists for decades.⁵⁶ Many researchers have found that, even when doing so runs counter to one's best interest, people regularly make decisions based on avoiding negative outcomes. Further, the psychological impact of negative events can leave lasting marks for a lifetime. No equivalent exists for positive events. These concepts have been drawn into other areas of literature, such as international politics. This phenomenon is called the 'negativity bias' or 'negativity effect.'

In a recent article, Johnson and Tierney identified a few tendencies that occur during times of political conflict as a result of a bias toward negative stimuli, including: threat sensitivity, loss aversion, and failure salience. Threat sensitivity explains how individuals are sensitive to threats because they "seek out negative information, downplay positive information, and overweight bad information about other actors."⁵⁷ Loss aversion means people are generally risk averse and avoid behaving in ways they believe will result in losses or negative outcomes. Failure salience explains how unexpected failures are more influential on learning and action than is success.⁵⁸ Following a failure, actors are much more likely to seek explanations for why something went wrong and create plans for how to avoid it than they are to evaluate why something went right.

These tenets of the negativity bias provide strong grounding in the psychological basis of 'NO' voters' initial delay and eventual response to the overturning of the referendum. The

⁵⁶ Kanouse & Hanson 1972

⁵⁷ Johnson & Tierney 2018, p. 42

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50

overturning of the referendum outcome, rather than the initial victory, defined how ‘NO’ voters responded, because negative experiences are much more impressive than positive ones. Because the referendum was overturned after following the procedural democratic practice of voting, ‘NO’ voters later experienced this rejection as a failure of the democratic system.

Threat sensitivity explains how this negative experience of rejection and failure primed ‘NO’ voters to be on high alert for similar government actions. Further, failure salience and loss aversion explain how the failure of democratic procedures influenced this faction’s eventual response in the free-flowing, non-procedural space of Twitter. ‘NO’ voters learned from this experience that continuing to follow procedure would not ultimately lead to their desired outcomes. Lastly, due to loss aversion, they had to avoid at all costs the devastating loss of rejection that followed what seemed to be the accomplishment of a long sought-after goal—delivering justice to the people they found responsible for the violence of the war. By turning to Twitter, ‘NO’ voters put little at risk.

The disproportionate salience of negative stimuli that ‘NO’ voters experienced stems from the fight or flight survival mechanism inherent to the human brain. The brain is constantly processing information, with an orientation toward detecting possible threats. Signals from the senses are sent to the thalamus, which is responsible for routing information in the appropriate direction depending on potential threat.⁵⁹ If a possible threat is detected, these signals are then sent to the amygdala, which gauges emotional quality. If a threat is detected, the amygdala triggers the release of adrenaline and noradrenaline which enable the body’s “fight or flight” capabilities and provokes the emotion of fear.⁶⁰ This response also engages the hippocampus—

⁵⁹ Vince 2005

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the brain's memory center—where events that are attached to fear (or other negative emotions like sadness or despair) are imprinted more strongly than mundane or positive inputs.⁶¹

Memory serves as a powerful tool for learning. The next time the brain detects cues similar to the original threat, it fast-tracks the processing of signals for a quicker response. This threat-based learning exists as a mechanism for survival. As the context of human existence changes, so does the way in which this mechanism operates.

At the beginning of human existence, the brain processed signals from the natural environment to determine threats such as a rustling in the bushes, or the sudden sound of tumbling rocks or rushing water. Since then, with technological advancements and population growth, the number of stimuli has dramatically increased. Now, the human brain must at times simultaneously process signals like those above, and those like the whirring and dinging of machines, the honking of cars, and the chatter of other people, among other things.⁶²

In order to account for the vast increase in signal processing, the brain has had to become more efficient in how it recognizes and routes information.⁶³ For this reason, the unconscious has taken on more of this role by determining what information it must elevate to other areas of the brain for further analysis, sometimes reaching the level of consciousness. Due to the role of memory in unconscious processing, new or unexpected stimuli would be most likely to engage a conscious assessment.⁶⁴

This differentiation between unconscious and conscious analysis has also been thought of as affective versus informational processing.⁶⁵ Consequently, the negativity effect occurs on both

⁶¹ Bower & Sivers 1998; Vince 2005

⁶² Wilson 2002

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Peeters & Czapinski 1990

the affective and informational levels. Each is associated with a distinct coping mechanism. Affective coping takes the form of defense, such as a “fight or flight” response.⁶⁶ Cognitive coping involves gathering more information (either consciously or unconsciously) and making a decision about how to respond.⁶⁷ While cognition and emotion may seem discordant, they often have a high level of interaction. In the information gathering process, for instance, memories are often explored as a source of intel and emotions that are attached to memories can influence the cognitive calculus.

The evident impact of emotion on memory making and subsequent reactions is found in many studies of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to various findings, following a traumatic experience, an event that slightly resembles the original trauma can create a stress response in the amygdala.⁶⁸ When a traumatic event is imprinted in the hippocampus, the brain uses the negative emotions to associate specific “perceptual categories, images, themes, ideas, and beliefs” with negative affect.⁶⁹

While emotions are consciously experienced, affect works as the unconscious gauge that sorts stimuli into two categories for quick processing: positive and negative. As a result, a stimulus that bears resemblance to one of the above areas can be fast-tracked to trigger an immediate stress response because it carries a negative affective charge.⁷⁰ For instance, following a serious car accident, a survivor might experience a severe reaction or aversion to the smell of smoke from a toaster, a particular song on the radio, or a certain day of the week without being consciously aware of the trigger. Even though these stimuli occur outside the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Vince 2005; Baumeister et al. 2001; Bower & Sivers 1998

⁶⁹ Bower 1983; Bower & Sivers 1998

⁷⁰ Marcus et al. 2000

context of the crash, they may trigger a stress response unbeknownst to the survivor because of the way in which meaning is unconsciously formed and associated with the threat. Similarly, activation of fear has been found to revive unpleasant memories of traumatic events.⁷¹ The processing of information from previous experiences unconsciously informs an emotional response.

Affective Intelligence Theory

Because political expression is driven by emotion,⁷² a theory that builds on emotions and the forces that drive them is necessary to understand the underlying mechanisms. Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT) serves as a pragmatic tool that, with a few contextual modifications, can be used to investigate underlying causes of the Twitter response and its timing. While at times it has been considered the antithesis of reason, the role of emotions has boomed as an explanation for phenomena across many bodies of literature.⁷³ Affective Intelligence Theory has brought another layer of sophistication to the use of emotions in political science. It dispels the myth of irrationality by linking together emotions and cognition. Further, it explains how, on an unconscious level, affect shapes emotions and drives behavior.

For the sake of establishing working definitions of the terminology, in this area of literature emotions are used to describe both the experience of feelings and outwardly visible expressions of those feelings. In both senses of the term, emotions are understood as a result of cognition that involve some level of neurological processing.⁷⁴ Affect is a preconscious,

⁷¹ Bower 1983; Bower & Sivers 1998

⁷² Marcus et al. 2000; Clarke et al. 2006; Redlawsk et al. 2006

⁷³ Marcus et al. 2000; Clarke et al. 2006; Redlawsk et al. 2006

⁷⁴ Shiota & Kalat 2017

instinctual positive or negative charge that informs the cognitive process.⁷⁵ It is, “both a characteristic associated with individual objects in memory and an organizational rule used to categorize objects in the mind”⁷⁶ that “organizes and drives how we make sense of new information.”⁷⁷

The utility of Affective Intelligence Theory stems from its process-tracing capability that explains how specific emotions and behaviors follow a certain type of affective charge.⁷⁸ Two primary geographies determine the events that follow an affective charge: the geography of familiar situations and the geography of uncertainty.⁷⁹ Familiar situations engage the dispositional system, which can be compared to a resting state. In this state, responses are habitual and preconscious. Familiarity produces enthusiasm and stimulates interest.⁸⁰

Voting behavior and political party alignment provide a poignant example. Political ideology often becomes incorporated as an element of identity.⁸¹ Because identity is preconscious, voting behavior that is informed by party alignment is typically habituated and operates within the dispositional system.⁸² The surveillance system, on the other hand, is activated when an individual encounters unusual or uncertain information⁸³ or threats to core desires like “liberty, democracy, and happiness.”⁸⁴ The surveillance system often produces anxiety which encourages “deep, effortful processing.”⁸⁵

⁷⁵ Marcus et al. 2000

⁷⁶ Cassino & Lodge 2007, p. 102

⁷⁷ Redlawsk et al. 2006, p. 153

⁷⁸ Cacioppo & Gardner 1999

⁷⁹ MacKuen et al. 2007

⁸⁰ Damasio 1994

⁸¹ Cohen 2003; Goren 2005; Greenwald et al. 1995

⁸² Redlawsk et al. 2006

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Nardulli & Kuklinski 2007, p. 316-317

⁸⁵ Marcus & Mackuen 1993

If the dispositional system produces enthusiasm and the surveillance system sparks anxiety, what produces anger? MacKuen et al. note that anger is a product of a familiar but punishing situation, therefore engaging the dispositional system.⁸⁶ Huddy, Feldman, and Weber⁸⁷ mapped the structure of Americans' negative emotions related to the war in Iraq, focusing specifically on "the war, terrorists, Saddam, and anti-war protesters."⁸⁸ They found that anger and anxiety played significant but distinct roles, both stemming from negative affect. This study found that contrary to anxiety which encourages information gathering and processing, anger produced "less thoughtful information processing" and the dismissal of possible risks.⁸⁹ This study shows how negative affect produces the two distinct emotions of anxiety and anger that lead to separate behavioral outcomes—one provokes action, and the other encourages hesitation.

This sequence where affect leads to emotions that then produce behavioral outcomes enables the causes of an event (such as a delay in collective action) to be evaluated. In the surveillance system it takes "longer to process information that is incongruent with habitual predispositions."⁹⁰ Within Affective Intelligence Theory alone, a delay would be explained by an anxious response that triggered the process of information gathering. The eventual occurrence of the response would then be due to a new event that engaged the dispositional system. Given that conventional democratic procedures led to the outcome of Colombia's referendum, the president's decision to overturn it came as a surprise to supporters. Therefore, at first glance it seems that the delayed response on Twitter could be easily explained by the activation of anxiety

⁸⁶ MacKuen et al. 2007, p. 124-151

⁸⁷ Huddy, Feldman, & Weber 2007

⁸⁸ Huddy, Feldman, & Weber 2007, p. 215

⁸⁹ Huddy, Feldman, & Weber 2007, p. 228

⁹⁰ Lau & Redlawsk 2006, p. 154

and the surveillance system. However, closer consideration of the social and historical context within which these responses took place introduces a different emotional response.

METHODS

Ethical Implications of Twitter Data

Research methods that use data from human subjects must typically pass rigorous IRB processes. While Twitter contains content similar to what might be encountered through interviews, it does not bear the same ethical requirements because anything posted online is accessible to the public and the information is anonymous in the sense that it does not result from direct interaction with a researcher.⁹¹ To adhere with Twitter's terms of use and user privacy, the Tweets included in this study only reveal the account names associated with Tweets by well-known public figures. All other identities have been redacted.

How Data Were Gathered

The data collection and analysis methods described here were based on others that have been successfully used in collecting event-specific Twitter data⁹² and analyzing the sentiment of web communications.⁹³

The 'NO' voters' Twitter response first became apparent on Trendsmap, an online tool that can be used to identify and visualize hashtags and topics that are trending on Twitter. Trendsmap also has country and city specific Twitter pages dedicated to tweeting the most popular hashtags and topics by the hour. The page @TrendsCO features tweets from Colombia.

⁹¹ Thelwall et al. 2014 p. 85

⁹² Bosch 2016

⁹³ Bosch 2016; Erisen 2018; Tumasjan et al. 2010

After browsing through weeks of previous tweets, #SantosRobóElPlebiscito appeared as one of the top trending hashtags on October 2 and October 3, 2017.

Since tweets cannot be exported directly from Twitter itself, third party software is necessary for collection and analysis. Accessing and exporting historical Twitter data through many commonly used open source tools is limited to how far back in time data can be collected. DiscoverText was used to collect the data for this study due to its ability to gather tweets that dated back further than a year. This software also features several built-in tools to sort, filter, cluster, code, and analyze batches of data.

Similar to the methods used by Bosch 2016, in order to capture a more comprehensive scope of this event beyond a single hashtag, I developed a library of terms and hashtags to collect more related tweets⁹⁴ which emerged from within that first batch. After pulling a dataset from all of the tweets that used #SantosRoboElPlebiscito, I ran an analysis of the most frequently used terms and top hashtags that I then re-incorporated into a new data set. I continued this process until no new relevant information was found. I then generated a graph of tweet frequency for the top hashtags to determine the timeframe of data to analyze. While the initial data collection spanned two weeks prior and two weeks following October 2, 2017, the ultimate batch was trimmed down to October 1 through October 4 and included 42,409 tweets in total. The peak of activity clearly occurred on October 2 and 3 with no significant trends outside of those dates.

How Data Were Analyzed

Sentiment analysis is used to determine attitudes, opinions, and emotions.⁹⁵ Methods to classify and distinguish sentiments vary by school of thought. Affective primacy and political

⁹⁴ Bosch 2016, p. 6

⁹⁵ Soroka et al. 2015, p. 112

science has tended to evaluate negative and positive affect alone.⁹⁶ Affective intelligence has also largely implemented a binary approach of enthusiasm as an action-oriented sentiment and anxiety as a hesitation-oriented sentiment.⁹⁷ More recently this has expanded to include anger which, similar to enthusiasm, is also considered to be action-oriented.⁹⁸

I pulled a simple random sample of 3,448 tweets that I coded into four primary sentiment categories to align with this recent development: ‘Enthusiastic/galvanizing,’ ‘anxious/fearful,’ ‘angry,’ and ‘other’ if it did not clearly fit in to any of the defined classifications. The final category ‘spam/irrelevant’ was used to categorize data from accounts that had been deleted, tweets that had been removed, tweets from politicians or other public figures that only served the purpose of self-promotion, as well as tweets from the ‘YES’ camp that promoted their perspective of the conversation through use of the same hashtags.

The use of sentiment lexicons such as ANEW (Affective Norms for English Language Words)⁹⁹ or modifications of ANEW in other languages such as Spanish¹⁰⁰ have been popular for the purpose of single-word analysis.¹⁰¹ But analysis of words alone can be misleading. Stand-alone words that may generally communicate a negative attitude about a particular target or that reflect a certain level of stimulation might not apply to the entire sentence or message.¹⁰² Opinions and feelings can also be embedded in language that does not use sentiment words.

Further, linguistic meanings are unfixated and in a constant state of flux. Many terms take on new significance depending on location, the historical sociopolitical setting in which they are used, and the values and beliefs of the individual that uses them. Even with quality control tests,

⁹⁶ Cassino and Lodge 2007; Erisen 2018; Zajonc 1980

⁹⁷ Erisen 2018; Huddy et. al 2005; MacKuen et al. 2007; Valentino et al. 2008

⁹⁸ Brader and Marcus 2013, p. 169; Erisen 2018 p. 57; MacKuen et al. 2010

⁹⁹ Dodds & Danforth 2009

¹⁰⁰ Stadthagen-Gonzalez et al. 2016

¹⁰¹ Bradley & Lang 1999; Dodds & Danforth 2009; Redondo et al. 2007; Thelwall et al. 2014

¹⁰² Liu 2012 p. 4

when working with large batches of data, meaning can be easily skewed without taking into consideration the complete context and other content such as images, emojis, and punctuation. Consequently, automated coding poses challenges to validity.

In the same way that the relationship between a sentiment word and a target can be supportive or oppositional, so too can be the relationship between the text of a tweet and the accompanying image or media. The methods used here are informed by the ANEW lexicon adapted for Spanish with 14,301 Spanish words evaluated by level of arousal¹⁰³ but each tweet as a whole is evaluated holistically. I manually coded each tweet in my sample while considering the way in which sentiment words or phrases were used, how those words related to their targets, the context of the tweet as established by the hashtag, the usage of punctuation and the expressions communicated through emojis, as well as the inclusion of images or other media and how they related to the message of the text.

In the world of a tweet, context can be understood as the social, political, and historical climate in which the tweet takes place as well as the user-prescribed hashtag which connects the tweet to a specific issue or phenomenon that is nonetheless shaped by these factors. For the purposes of this study, both are highly relevant and were given full consideration in the coding process. Because users congregate and express their opinions around specific conversation topics through hashtags,¹⁰⁴ in the coding process, hashtags were used to pinpoint the specific conversation the tweet contributed to which set the stage for understanding the overall meaning of the tweet. With each new hashtag that appeared in the coding process, I reviewed many tweets that used the same hashtag in order to gain an understanding of the tone and common themes before proceeding to classify it as a specific emotion.

¹⁰³ Stadthagen-Gonzalez et al. 2016

¹⁰⁴ Schmidt 2014, p. 6

Because the approach to coding was more holistic, no prescribed script was applied to every tweet. However, a few key indicators were used to detect the sentiment classification that each tweet fell into.

Anger: According to MacKuen et al. 2007, anger is often a reaction to a perceived violation of values or beliefs.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, tweets were identified as angry if they had an accusatory tone and additionally if they used exclamation points, the angry face emoji, or if the language was paired with other symbols that produced an overall meaning of disapproval (such as a large red ‘x’ over a politician’s face).

Fear/anxiety: According to Huddy et al. 2005, uncertainty is a suitable measure of fear or anxiety.¹⁰⁶ Uncertainty can be portrayed through a question or statement that seeks to gather more information about a situation. Not every question indicates fear or anxiety, however. Those that express disgust or bewilderment were typically classified as angry.

Enthusiasm/galvanizing: An enthusiastic message or tweet is typically understood to have an entirely positive tone.¹⁰⁷ Since “enthusiasm generates hypotheses about when people become involved in politics,”¹⁰⁸ for the purpose of this study, a tweet was coded as enthusiastic if it was mostly positive in tone and included a message of perseverance or a call to action such as “take to the streets.” A handful of tweets that met these criteria included images from previous protests, thus strengthening the message of taking political action.

In the data we would expect to see that one of the above emotions clearly dominates the sample, thus enabling an explanation for the cause of the response. We are most likely to encounter a response characterized by anger given the context of the situation. If enthusiasm

¹⁰⁵ MacKuen et al. 2007

¹⁰⁶ Huddy et al. 2005

¹⁰⁷ Erisen 2018

¹⁰⁸ Brader & Marcus 2013, p. 169

were to appear, it would seem likely that the data represents a different population than the one targeted, or that the negativity bias literature which informs learning from past negative experiences with authoritarianism and violence does not sufficiently address the situation here.

DATA ANALYSIS

Scholars of political psychology widely acknowledge the role of anger and enthusiasm as emotions that provoke action.¹⁰⁹ My findings show anger to be the predominant emotion among ‘NO’ supporters, who collectively expressed objections to the peace deal on Twitter one year after it was expected. Meanwhile, enthusiasm surfaced as the predominant emotion in the messaging of ‘YES’ supporters, who immediately demonstrated in the streets as a reaction to the referendum results. But emotion in this case goes beyond simply having a generative effect. Rather, it helps shape the mode through which the responses of each group take place. Enthusiasm encouraged ‘YES’ voters to occupy physical public spaces. Anger prompted the ‘NO’ crowd to converge in the virtual public space of Twitter. Emotions alone, however, do not fully account for the difference in forms of expression. Further, they cannot explain the timing of the ‘NO’ response.

An in-depth analysis of ‘NO’ tweets juxtaposed against imagery from ‘YES’ demonstrations reveals differences in the ways each group connected to ideals of democracy which informed the nature of their responses. Each group largely followed partisan lines: ‘YES’ voters sided with the liberal Social Party of National Unity and ‘NO’ voters primarily aligned with the more conservative Democratic Center.¹¹⁰ With the Social Party of National Unity controlling the government, ‘YES’ voters were more represented by—and included in—their national government. This positive connection to democracy encouraged the enthusiasm behind the ‘YES’ demonstrations.

¹⁰⁹ Demertzēs 2013; Livingstone et al 2011; Neuman et al. 2007

¹¹⁰ Kalyvas 2003

The eventual ‘NO’ response occurred while the Social Party of National Unity remained in power, putting ‘NO’ voters in an oppositional relationship to their government.¹¹¹ The ‘NO’ response was largely dominated by sentiments of anger, within which several significant trends emerged. These included: anger over the evasion of democracy, anger over a failure to deliver justice, and anger over the government’s granting of political power to the FARC. The government’s rejection of the referendum, from which anger stemmed, diminished the righteous significance of procedural democracy in Colombian society at large. The government’s position was experienced as a traumatic betrayal and was thereby charged with affective associations shaped by a history of dictatorship, repression, and deeply ingrained violence—evidence of this surfaces in the tweets’ contents.¹¹²

The shared memory of these events explains why the ‘NO’ camp repressed its anger: Democracy holds the paramount assurance of a long-sought peaceful society.¹¹³ The ‘NO’ camp’s claim to democracy was overshadowed by that of ‘YES’ proponents, through the democratic imagery of their public demonstrations. But the institutionalization of the JEP as an extension of the ostensibly democratic process that transpired in the wake of the referendum evoked the memory of traumatization by a government that had failed to protect the public from FARC violence and thus triggered the expression of repressed anger.¹¹⁴ The ‘NO’ supporters expressed their anger via tropes of deceit, which impugned the false pretenses of the government and disrobed it of the garb of democratic idealism with which it disguised itself. The ‘NO’ camp’s eventual Twitter storm reveals an attempt to transcend ‘YES’ claims to democracy.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Dalton, Russell J. 2002

¹¹² Neuman et al. 2007

¹¹³ Fierlbeck 2008

¹¹⁴ Koonings & Kuijt 1999

¹¹⁵ Brants 2017

Anger over the evasion of democracy was expressed in two distinct ways. First, large numbers of users claimed they had been robbed of their referendum votes. Second, many called out the illegitimacy of the newly forged peace agreement due to its passage and implementation without formal approval by the people.¹¹⁶ Allusions to robbery and illegitimacy both stemmed from anger, but they expressed distinct reasons behind why the evasion of democracy was experienced as traumatic.

Colombia's history of violence heavily influenced expectations of—and relationships with democracy. While the referendum was technically non-binding and did not obligate the government to deliver on the results, 'NO' voters expected the government to comply with their wishes. The referendum carried the same significance as an election or any other democratic procedure in which the will of the majority determines the outcome.¹¹⁷ Due to a history of political repression and the legacy of the FARC, 'NO' voters experienced the government's decision to override their will as robbery. While other actors have contributed to Colombia's instability and hardship, 'NO' constituents denounce the FARC as the primary source of violence over the past several decades.¹¹⁸ Not long after its initial formation, the rebel group turned to different forms of robbery for which it became notorious: theft, extortion, and kidnapping, all of which left lasting marks on the public psyche.¹¹⁹

A recognition of illegitimacy, which surfaced in tweets that expressed anger over the evasion of democracy, stemmed from the government's failure to follow democratic procedure. This dependence on democratic procedure is linked to a history of dictatorship and restricted political power. Formal proceedings provide a safeguard against undemocratic overreaches of

¹¹⁶ Halpin 2010

¹¹⁷ Halpin 2010

¹¹⁸ Molano 2000

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

authority.¹²⁰ Therefore, in calling out illegitimacy following the advancement of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, ‘NO’ voters oppugned an assault on democratic values accredited to a revival of authoritarian tendencies.

Tweets that expressed anger over a failure to deliver justice renounced a spurious peace that resulted from a violation of victims’ rights.¹²¹ Concern that the peace deal did not include sufficiently harsh punishments for FARC members and commanders motivated Colombians to vote ‘NO’ in the referendum. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which institutionalized FARC impunity, proved the validity of their original anxiety about FARC perpetrators evading their rightful punishments.¹²²

The third main categorization of tweets expressed anger over granting political power to the FARC. This goes beyond evading the will of the people and beyond failing to dispense well-deserved justice. Awarding the FARC political power, as revealed in a key tweet featured here was perceived as an initiation of alignment between the rebel group and the government—an ultimate betrayal of the people who felt they endured unbearable suffering at the hands of the guerilla group.¹²³ ‘NO’ voters read this move as an utter disregard of their pleas for justice and of their rightful position in a democratic government.¹²⁴ The government failed to avenge the worthy, but rewarded members of the FARC who ought to be punished, with legitimate political influence that ‘NO voters themselves were denied in the referendum.

Emotions are central to explaining whether individuals take political action.¹²⁵ Scholars in the political psychology field believe that because anger and enthusiasm are highly charged

¹²⁰ Jebb 2006

¹²¹ Portilla 2015

¹²² Idler 2018

¹²³ Dalton 2002

¹²⁴ Beramendi 2008

¹²⁵ Erisen 2018

emotions, they possess the capability to provoke action.¹²⁶ At the other end of the spectrum, fear and anxiety encourage thought, reflection, investigation, and hesitation.¹²⁷

An analysis of 3,448 tweets shows that anger was by far the predominant category. For 6% percent of the sample, enthusiasm played a central role, while fear or anxiety was recognized in only 2%. The “other” category represents content that did not fit neatly into any of the prior three categories—this applied to 1% of tweets. An additional 1% belongs in the irrelevant/spam category, which included self-promotion by political candidates, tweets from accounts that had been terminated, as well as tweets from the ‘YES’ crowd that engaged with the opposite perspective of the conversation through use of the same hashtags. The largest grouping of tweets, 90%, contained content that clearly illustrated feelings of anger. One user claimed, “the pact with the FARC is illegitimate, is spurious. It does not obligate anyone. Not even Santos. The NO triumphed.” The sentiments shared here regarding the Santos administration, the government, the FARC, and the violation of the referendum outcome were reflected among the majority of other tweets in the sample.

The analysis presented here demonstrates that, consistent with Cengiz Erisen’s application of political psychology, anger was central to the opinions behind these tweets, which helps explain the timing and mode of the ‘NO’ response.¹²⁸ The negligible presence of fear and anxiety in the 3,448 tweets further validates the influential role of anger. A sentiment and content analysis of ‘NO’ supporters’ tweets during the first week of their response to the peace deal helps reveal why it occurred one year later.

¹²⁶ Huddy et al. 2003

¹²⁷ Neuman et al. 2007

¹²⁸ Erisen 2018

	Term	Count		Term	Count
1	<i>Santosrobóelplebiscito/ Santos stole the plebiscite</i>	1066	11	<i>Ganó/ won</i>	172
2	<i>Robó/ robbed OR theft</i>	341	12	<i>Aniversariorobodelplebiscito/ Anniversary the plebiscite was stolen</i>	167
3	<i>Farc</i>	325	13	<i>Victoria/ victory</i>	166
4	<i>Plebiscito/ plebiscite</i>	321	14	<i>Octubre/ October</i>	155
5	<i>Democracia/ democracy</i>	303	15	<i>Acuerdo/ agreement OR accord</i>	149
6	<i>Santos</i>	299	16	<i>Justicia/ justice</i>	146
7	<i>Pazsinconejo/ peace without rabbit</i>	287	17	<i>Volundad/ (popular) will</i>	122
8	<i>Paz/ peace</i>	239	18	<i>Gobierno/ government</i>	117
9	<i>Impunidad/ impunity</i>	192	19	<i>Pueblo/ people</i>	117
10	<i>Colombianoserinde/ Colombia will not give up</i>	187	20	<i>Terrorismo/ terrorism</i>	117

Within the tweets that expressed anger, some common linguistic themes emerged. These themes help explain the source of anger and the timing of the response.¹²⁹ Democracy emerged as the most significant theme either through direct use or indirect references to the term, such as “plebiscito” (plebiscite) and “acuerdo” (agreement). These terms allude to democracy because they both represent important political processes that are part of Colombia’s democracy, and because of the context in which they are used. Within the 3,448-tweet sample, 72% directly used the term “plebiscite” and an additional 19% indirectly alluded to the event with statements like “We said NO” and “the NO won.” These tweets overwhelmingly convey outrage at the overturning of this outcome. This consensus among tweets points to the overturning of the

¹²⁹ Clough 2007

referendum outcome as the original source of trauma that drove the ‘NO’ camp’s collective response.

Many scholars who study Twitter discourse attribute the level of engagement with tweets to the extent of an actor’s network.¹³⁰ Tweets from a well-known politician with a large base of followers, for example, is likely to get more interactions than those of your more average Twitter user.¹³¹ As a result, the voice and opinions of individuals with a larger following become amplified, while those of most average twitter users remain little seen. It is important, however, to recognize that for the most part, Twitter users are not engaging with material simply because a well-known person posted it. They may be exposed to it due to the networks they belong to but engaging with content involves agency and decision making.

Users engage with material because they identify with it on a personal level, which they happen to see because they build networks for themselves that reflect their values and beliefs.¹³² Therefore, for the purposes of this data analysis, the number of retweets a post generates reflects individuals’ identification with and support of the tweet’s message. Tweets with high levels of user engagement represent the attitudes and opinions of the majority. Each like and retweet registers as a “vote” and the tweets with the most votes have been “elected” by the population.¹³³ All of the tweets analyzed here were among the top ranked in the sample for level of user engagement.

In addition to trends that emerged within the text and images of tweets, patterns involving the actors of the posts surfaced as well. Of the account holders who posted the 10 most popular tweets in the sample, all 10 were either lawyers, politicians, or activists. It is true that the tweets

¹³⁰ Gerbaudo 2012

¹³¹ Hill et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2013; Pond & Lewis 2017

¹³² Jeffares 2014

¹³³ Lutz et al. 2014

from these individuals gained attention, likes, and retweets due to their general level of public visibility and renown.¹³⁴ However, were notoriety the sole driver of engagement, other actors outside of the political sphere would likely enter the higher ranks as well. Therefore, the commonalities these actors share demonstrate further significance behind the timing and motivation of the response.

Lawyers, politicians, and activists are all generally regarded as having the experience, authority, and legitimacy to speak validly about political issues.¹³⁵ Their election via ‘NO’ supporters’ engagement speaks volumes to the importance of legitimacy for the Twitter storm. As discussed in the context of several tweets, illegitimacy is linked to the traumatic repression of political rights, specifically the government’s refusal to implement the outcome of the referendum. Therefore, the surfacing of legitimacy through the status and occupations of top actors in the collective response reaffirms the traumatic nature of the government’s actions as the original trauma which was triggered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Consider this tweet posted by Rafael Nieto Loaiza, a Colombian jurist



¹³⁴ Baron & Gomez 2016

¹³⁵ Patton 2015

and political analyst, which affectively represents the opinions of thousands of users who participated in the twitter storm with the most popularly used hashtag #SantosRobóEIPlébiscito (Santos stole the plebiscite). In the place of an image, this user posted a block of text of what appears to be a first-hand statement. It translates to the following:

There can be no doubt that, as of August 2018, with the legitimacy that given us by the triumph of the NO and the citizen mandate in the polls in the upcoming elections and a the majority in the Congress, we will preserve a base offering guarantees that the guerilla will not return to the countryside, but we will also remove the pact with the FARC from the Constitution, eliminate the guerrilla co-government, put an end to the creation of the JEP, and eliminate the benefits and privileges given to the criminals and which we who have never committed crimes don't have.

The anger expressed in this post is tied to both the illegitimate institutionalization of the FARC and the robbing of the plebiscite, as are the vast majority of tweets that use the hashtag #SantosStolethePlebiscite. This post identifies the plebiscite as the original source of anger, which validates the repression of anger as an explanation for 'NO' voters' delayed response.¹³⁶ The tweet describes a profound sense of inequality between the Colombian people who have done nothing wrong and are being punished by the FARC's rise to political power and the FARC who have committed grave crimes and are being rewarded with seats at the political table.¹³⁷ By identifying a "co-government," the tweet shapes the FARC's rise to political power as a corrupt transformation of the current governing party into one that has defiled the democratic nature of Colombia's political system.¹³⁸

The notion of theft is heavily weighted with historical significance particularly among those who blame the FARC for the violence of the conflict.¹³⁹ Shortly following its formation,

¹³⁶ Flam 2004

¹³⁷ Dechesne 2012

¹³⁸ Warren 2001

¹³⁹ Leech 2011

the FARC rebel group resorted to kidnapping, extortion, and theft to fund its activities.¹⁴⁰ This left lasting effects on both direct and indirect victims.¹⁴¹ The use of language in and history behind this tweet demonstrates how the violation of ‘NO’ supporters’ popular will evoked the traumatic collective memory of the government’s failure at protecting the public from FARC violence which triggered this expression of anger.¹⁴²

The tweet closes with “the NO triumphed,” which directly refers to the referendum outcome one year prior. This comment, paired with the emphasis on the legitimacy of the outcome reached by popular decision, draws attention to the expectation of a democracy to honor the people’s ultimate decision-making power.¹⁴³ Therefore, this tweet communicates the institutionalization of the JEP as an illegitimate transgression of democratic values.

¹⁴⁰ Molano 2000

¹⁴¹ Leech 2011

¹⁴² Riaño Alcalá 2017

¹⁴³ Doyle 2011

Other evidence of anger over the evasion of democratic procedures is found in a tweet by lawyer and public right specialist Daniel Sanin of a photo that captures together three central actors involved with the implementation of the negotiated peace agreement, President Juan Manuel Santos (center), chief negotiator of the peace agreement Humberto de la Calle (left), and High Commissioner of the peace agreement Sergio Jaramillo Caro (right).



The text implicitly links the evasion of democracy to the institutionalization of terrorism. The tweet's author impugns the peace deal as a political mechanism of terror, thereby institutionalizing terrorism within Colombia's political system.¹⁴⁴ Evasion of democracy most immediately refers to the enactment of the peace deal without approval by the people.¹⁴⁵ It also cites the government's refusal to accept the outcome of the referendum which enabled both the passage of the subsequent deal and political power of the FARC.

This tweet expresses a similar yet distinct claim regarding anger over the evasion of democracy. Rather than relying on the concept of robbery, through different imagery and symbolism, this tweet identifies a slightly different source of collectively remembered trauma

¹⁴⁴ Alexander 1998

¹⁴⁵ Gerry 2006

that informs connections to democracy. All three of the individuals pictured here have been involved in forming and carrying out the stages of the newly negotiated peace agreement with the FARC that was ratified November 24, 2016, this time without approval from the population, less than two months following the referendum.

The text claims that these actors were responsible for an evasion of democracy and an institutionalization of terrorism. The tweet's author expresses that the new peace deal contains mechanisms that make terrorism part of Colombia's political system, which refers to the FARC's institutionalization as a political party with formal influence.¹⁴⁶ Evasion of democracy most immediately refers to the government's refusal to uphold the referendum outcome without procedural approval by the people. It also refers to the government's rejection of the referendum outcome which enabled both the passage of the subsequent deal and the formal establishment of the FARC as a political party.

The imagery of the rabbit appears in a large number of tweets. With 357 retweets, 158 likes, and dozens of comments, a proportionately high number of users engaged with this tweet compared to others that expressed similar meanings which makes this particular tweet exemplary for analysis. The metaphor of rabbit takes on several significant meanings that, in combination with the main text of the tweet, further portrays a sentiment of anger. "Paz sin conejo" translates to peace without rabbit in English. In Colombia, to "act like a rabbit" means to swindle, to cheat, to leave without paying, or to steal. Thus, the expression can be translated as "peace without swindling."

The symbolism of rabbit derives from a play on words, wherein the image of the animal, connotes both the word "rabbit," *conejo*, and the act of cheating, swindling, or stealing, "To act

¹⁴⁶ Dechesne 2012

like a rabbit,” *hacer conejo*. The locution “*paz sin conejo*,” “peace without rabbits,” which frequently is paired with rabbit imagery in tweets, implicates the government’s legitimacy produced by the act of swindling the public.

There is an international dimension to the symbol’s emotional charge, which brings to the fore a more specific, albeit tacit, intention of the rabbit imagery, namely to express outrage over the hypocrisy of a government that asks its citizens to feed on the scraps left after having been swindled. In Venezuela, Colombia’s neighbor, the image of the rabbit was used to castigate President Nicolás Maduro for failing to redress food shortages resulting from deep economic crisis, all the while ensuring he and his cronies were economically protected.¹⁴⁷

Two weeks before the ‘NO’ Twitter storm, Maduro proposed a policy, “Plan Rabbit,” which involved delivering rabbits to rural communities to be bred for food. Because rabbits are widely recognized as household pets in Venezuela and Colombia, the population was outraged at being asked to commit such a brutal act as raising rabbits to eat, while their president was unwilling to sacrifice his wealth.¹⁴⁸ The profound hypocrisy of Maduro’s acts, especially his feigned concern for the livelihood of starving Venezuelans, is viscerally captured by the image of a rabbit, which represents the victimization of Venezuelan citizens, casualties of Maduro’s heist. The symbol of the rabbit represents public frustration over the failure of a leader of a democratic system to represent the population.

The metaphor of the rabbit then conveys a representation of untruthfulness, corruption, and self-motivated politics. All of these descriptors embody the antithesis of democracy, which, given the long period of dictatorship, repression, and violence, carries paramount importance in

¹⁴⁷ Mccarthy, Michael 2017

¹⁴⁸ Hite et al. 2004

Colombia.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the tweet's author and the hundreds of users who engaged with it demonstrated anger over a betrayal of democracy. This betrayal is the refusal to honor the longing for justice against the FARC that the population made clear in the referendum by granting FARC leaders political power).¹⁵⁰ This tweet communicates that 'NO' supporters are not against peace as a whole (as some of their critics have claimed in responses). They are against a peace that is not reached through honest, representative, democratic means.



The tweet shown here by former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez generated 1,298 retweets, 1,357 likes, and over 250 comments, putting it at the most highly engaged with tweet in the sample. In it, Uribe highlights a video at a press conference (that accumulated nearly 33,000 views) in which he expresses disdain for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In the text of the tweet, Uribe quotes a comment he made in the video: “A year after the

victory of the No and the robbery of the plebiscite: ‘There is no worse corruption than that which does not know democracy’ #ColombiaWillNotGiveUp.

Inherent in the comment regarding corruption lies the claim that corruption and democracy are not entirely disparate. They can coexist within a democratic government, but even

¹⁴⁹ Lewin 1991

¹⁵⁰ Dechesne 2012

then, there is a level and type of corruption that becomes unacceptable—one that undermines the democratic social contract between people and government where the needs and desires of the population dictate political outcomes.¹⁵¹ The anger expressed in this tweet is a response to the crossing of this line, which first occurred with the government's refusal to honor the outcome of the referendum, as Uribe draws attention to at the opening of his tweet. This initial anger was triggered once more, as Uribe makes clear, by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace which, by granting political power to the FARC and relaxing jail sentences, debased the wishes of 'NO' voters to punish those who committed crimes and harmed the population.¹⁵² By situating democracy as the final line that is never to be crossed, regardless of circumstances, Uribe positions it as being of utmost importance and having the highest value in Colombian society. The number of users who engaged in this tweet show that they support his opinions and ideas shared here.

Uribe's use of the hashtag *#ColombiaWillNotGiveUp* colors the angry message of this tweet with optimism for the promise of change through the June 2018 presidential elections. Throughout the video, Uribe explains the assault on democracy as a result of the current government, then endorses frontrunner candidate Iván Duque. By doing so, he links Duque to the restoration of democracy and the rightful place of the people as the deciding voice in political life.¹⁵³

In addition to amplifying the collective sentiment of anger, Uribe capitalizes on the collective backlash to pursue his political motive. In a context where President Santos has been denounced for corruption and an interest in his own political gain, it may seem diametrical for

¹⁵¹ Weale 2013

¹⁵² Kelly 2017

¹⁵³ McCluskey et al. 2004

Uribe to gain mass support by the same crowd that launched these criticisms despite similar actions.¹⁵⁴ This apparent contradiction draws attention to the influence of party loyalty;¹⁵⁵ it has the power to obscure defects. His alignment with the Democratic Center party, which ‘NO’ voters almost exclusively support, means that due to shared party alignment, individuals participating in the Twitter storm more easily overlook the same flaws shared by leaders of the opposing party.¹⁵⁶ Self-interest and corruption in opposition to democracy persist as prominent themes throughout the sample.



While nearly all of the tweets that ranked highest for user engagement were posted by career experts like lawyers and politicians, one popular tweet comes from a student, political analyst, and activist at Javeriana University in Bogotá. His tweet generated 1,097 likes, 1,279 retweets, and 112 comments, for a total of 2,448 interactions—a very high amount compared to most other tweets, coming in second only to former president Uribe.

Fiesco contributes as a columnist to various media outlets. His public visibility has helped him build a following of likeminded supporters. Fiesco’s experience with politics affords him the legitimacy to garner support for his opinions in support of the ‘NO’ response.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ André et al. 2015

¹⁵⁵ Cohen 2003

¹⁵⁶ Parmelee 2012

¹⁵⁷ Doyle 2011

Because he is a student and has not yet made a career out of politics or law, Fiesco is absolved of any suspicions of self-interest, unlike other top contributors whose careers and reputations depend on public support. This is particularly significant in a context where broken trust, corruption, and self-interest emerge as salient themes behind the anger of the NO response and are positioned in opposition to democracy. Fiesco serves as a closer, more direct representation of the people's voice than some political representatives who present this risk.¹⁵⁸

Fiesco's statement supports the same claims others have made regarding the illegitimacy of the peace deal. The tweet reads: "They can buy a Congress but not a country. Colombia said NO. We will change the course of Colombia with each Colombian signature! #1yearoftheplebiscite." This tweet suggests the FARC paid Congress to influence some part of the peace deal—specifically for the right to form a political party. The second half of Fiesco's tweet solidifies the Colombian people—voters—as the rightful proprietors of decision making for the country. In this way, Fiesco also alludes to the imagery of robbing shared among the other top tweets.

In the video which drew 26,500 views, Fiesco comments on the right for the Colombian people to have political power and how "it was clear that public opinion is not public opinion... a year later many Colombians knew they were lied to." Through these comments and the main content of the tweet, Fiesco expressed anger and bewilderment over the theft of the people's right to political decision making.

He engages with the sentiment of anger, but expresses optimism that, through collective action, the government can be held accountable to carry out the wishes of the majority. While it is possible that Fiesco's enthusiasm made his tweet resonate with more 'NO' supporters, due to

¹⁵⁸ Wisse et al 2012

the minimal role these positive emotions played in the Twitter storm as a whole, and the minimal attention the few tweets in the ‘enthusiasm’ category received, the popularity of this tweet more likely relates to what Fiesco as a person represents and his shared anger over the rejection of the referendum result.

These last two tweets together help explain how the value of democracy interacts with corruption and party loyalty. High levels of user engagement with Santos’ tweet result from his considerable popularity and partisan standing that cloak his self-interest. That of Fiesco stems his alignment with the Democratic Center and ‘NO’ campaign, in addition to his symbolic representation of the public interest.¹⁵⁹ Through an analysis of these two tweets in particular, we can understand how democracy persists as the central theme behind as an explanation for the delayed ‘NO’ response.

While enthusiasm played an insignificant role among ‘NO’ proponents’ *virtual* Twitter storm, it constituted the primary sentiment of the ‘YES’ crowd’s *physical* demonstrations that immediately succeeded their loss in the referendum. The field of political psychology has not yet addressed how emotions influence modes of expression. The findings of this analysis suggest that anger may function as a more effective unifier in virtual space, while enthusiasm may be more capable of uniting demonstrators in physical space.

Of most significance to this analysis, however, is the role of democratic association, which persisted as a salient theme throughout the ‘NO’ response. Its central role in the Twitter storm explains how democracy accounted for the delay. The overwhelming expression of and claims to democracy made by the ‘YES’ demonstrations across the country left lingering reverberations that silenced the grievances of ‘NO’ voters that arose only days later. ‘NO’

¹⁵⁹ Blake 2009

supporters repressed their own response because of the influence of positive emotions evoked by ‘YES’ demonstrators’ substantial claims to democracy. This silence endured until the announcement of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace that triggered the trauma of the government’s refusal to abide by the referendum results.

The response took place online, rather than in physical public space, for a couple reasons. First, it is possible that anger and enthusiasm encourage different forms of collective assemblages. Anger is often considered an isolating emotion, while enthusiasm is thought to be a more effective social unifier.¹⁶⁰ Second, the ‘NO’ camp experienced political repression and exclusion at the hands of the political party in power. Because voting through formalized procedure did not produce the desired outcome, they were likely aware that rallying in the streets would have fallen on deaf ears. Thirdly, due to this political exclusion, the web provided a space in which users could network with each other and engage in their own form of democracy. Through liking and retweeting, participants in the Twitter storm effectively “voted for” and “elected” the representatives of their collective action.¹⁶¹

Scholars of social movements are beginning to treat social media as an incubator in which large-scale movements grow.¹⁶² By building consensus through dialogue, grievances generate energy that eventually become physical public demonstrations.¹⁶³ But in this case, due to the exclusionary political climate and the government’s disregard of the ‘NO’ voters’ wishes, it is not likely that ‘NO’ voters took to Twitter only because their movement was not yet developed enough to take form in the streets. The data here show that these responses were heavily influenced by the negative experiences of the past. Out of the various forms of social

¹⁶⁰ Flam & King 2005

¹⁶¹ Parmelee 2012

¹⁶² Gerbaudo 2012

¹⁶³ Ibid.

media, the collective response took place on Twitter because it is quick, easy, accessible, and facilitates the type of Western democratic interaction of voting and direct representation described above that 'NO' voters so closely identified with.

The findings here explain how collective memory, trauma, and collective action intersect with public discourse, how contested claims over shared values shape collective action, and how emotions influence expression. This analysis and the materials presented here encourage other researchers to consider incorporating social media analyses into future research projects. This thesis raises a question in need of further consideration within political psychology and social movement scholarship: how can emotions be exercised for the benefit of building powerful social movements and producing meaningful change?

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated why citizens who voted against the Colombian government's proposed peace deal with the FARC reacted to the overturning of the referendum a year after it occurred. By applying sentiment analysis to a collection of tweets, this study discovered that anger was by far the dominant emotion, confirming the consensus within research in political psychology showing that anger is an emotion that provokes action. Anger alone, however, was not sufficient to explain the timing of the response or why these angry citizens took to Twitter instead of to the streets.

Answers to both of these questions were found among the symbols within the tweets to which anger was linked. The three categorizations of anger included: anger over the evasion of democracy, anger over a failure to deliver justice, and anger over the government's granting of political power to the FARC. The tweets within each of these categories linked directly or indirectly to tweeters' experiences of trauma and the paramount significance they attributed to procedural democracy, which explains both the initial reason for the delay and the reason the response took place on Twitter.

Proponents of the peace deal took to the streets before the referendum was overturned. Opponents of the peace deal, on the other hand, recognized this enthusiastic claim to democracy and stifled their own response. One year later, the institutionalization of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace evoked the memory of traumatization by a government that had failed to protect the public from FARC violence and thus triggered the expression of repressed anger. Opponents of the peace agreement aimed to transcend their rivals' claims to democracy by voicing their outrage on Twitter. The online microblog enabled users to employ language, symbols, and the platform's tools to fully shape and control their narratives.

This thesis helps to promote Twitter as a legitimate and underused source of data for social science, particularly social and political psychology, as well as social movement research. Current social movement literature treats social media as an incubator for physical demonstrations.¹⁶⁴ As a result, this body of work has focused on how organizers can effectively use communication tools to create successful protests and larger movements. In the process, however, they have failed to investigate the conversations taking place within online responses. The application of sentiment analysis and special attention to the source of those sentiments could prove a very useful apparatus to inform the way in which social movement leaders can shape narratives that result in physical demonstrations.

Furthermore, while researchers of social and political psychology lean heavily on the role of emotions, they often overlook the underlying affective mechanisms that drive those emotions and add a layer of depth. Of recent interest to many scholars has been the question of whether sentiment analysis can successfully make predictions about elections or voting patterns through analysis of social media posts.¹⁶⁵ Aside from the fact that social media does not represent entire publics and therefore is not a proxy for public opinion, the way in which these studies approach sentiment analysis does little to accomplish this for specific groups of voters.

Thus far, such studies have largely focused on how online users feel about hot-button issues or specific political candidates. One of the reasons these studies have been unsuccessful is because they have not endeavored to answer the “why.” If researchers can identify the drivers of those sentiments, they will be better able to group users accordingly and make predictions informed by those mechanisms. This thesis provides a model that can be adapted for this purpose.

¹⁶⁴ Bennet & Segerberg 2012; Castells 2015

¹⁶⁵ O'Connor et al. 2010; Tumasjan et al. 2010

What this thesis does not answer is whether specific emotions might be linked to physical, as opposed to virtual, responses. Even though enthusiasm and anger are both understood as action-provoking emotions, it is possible that, in an atmosphere where actors feel their opinions are dominant or align with those of political leaders, enthusiasm may tend to facilitate street demonstrations. Conversely, in contexts where individuals perceive themselves to be the minority opinion or where their views might not align with those of political leaders, anger may play a role in virtual outcry. It is highly unlikely that, if true, this dynamic would be the sole driver of the space in which individuals congregate. Nonetheless, neither this thesis nor the political psychology literature to date have been able to address this possibility.

A compelling comparative study would offer an opportunity to further develop the work begun here. First, the researcher would need to identify several instances of both physical demonstrations and virtual dissent. Next, the researcher would need to apply sentiment analysis to determine the primary emotion that characterized each response, as well as the relationships between these populations and their mainstream political outlet. Finally, the researcher would need to determine whether this correlation appeared to hold true, or if not, what explained these variations.

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