

network found searching for Barack Obama. @barackobama was mentioned 19,984 times in 20,268 tweets, but there is not a single RT @barackobama in the network. They are both celebrities who are frequently mentioned on Twitter, but it is not what they have done on Twitter that produces the mentions. Their fame and fortune, political leadership, is based on what they have done outside of Twitter communication.

RVAwonk is a user of Twitter who is able to reach millions with her tweets. She was a graduate student when she started, and a year later she characterizes herself as a public scholar. She understands who she is as someone who is helping others think about who we are and who we want to become and how to get there. In this network her tweets were retweeted 2071 times. That was 39 tweets that had been retweeted 71,894 times up to the day the network was collected. Like Lexi4prez she is able to reach millions by virtue of what she has done on Twitter. That is what the infrastructure that is Twitter has made possible -- a new route to political leadership.

This section is about the infrastructure that has made it possible for individuals to reach out to very large numbers. Voice has become potentially global. It does not explain how Lexi4prez and RVAwonk have that reach. That requires looking at what they do on Twitter. Who do they become? How do they relate to the tens and hundreds of thousands.

Four persons whose voice reaches multitudes

Richard Fenno wrote *Homestyle* in the day of the Tuesday -- Thursday club. Members of Congress did their business of law making on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. They did their business of being in touch with their people Friday through Monday. It was what they did Friday through Monday that he wrote about in *Homestyle*. But in 2003 he found that the infrastructure of communication, Friday through Monday in their constituencies, was no longer adequate. That infrastructure could no longer serve their needs. It had been outgrown by the increase in the number of people in congressional districts. There were too many people with whom members of congress needed to be in touch for four days to be enough. TV became communication with constituents.

The results of the politics of reaching to the people through TV advertising is now apparent. A *Washington Post*-ABC poll gives an answer.

On the broader question of who is or is not in touch with the American people, the perception of the president and the GOP has changed little since the early days of Trump's presidency, with 63 percent saying each are out of touch. At the same time, 51 percent say the Democrats are out of touch with most people (*Washington Post*, 9/4/2018)

Well over half the population believe the politicians in Washington are out of touch with them. If not the politicians then how do individuals communicating on Twitter become in touch?

Lexi4prez Who is Lexi4prez? She is not a famous entertainer. She is not a famous politician. The academic year of 2018-19 she was a third year student at a Florida university who had been active on Twitter since high school. She has quite remarkable reach in the twittersphere. If she does not bring that stature with her from another domain how does it happen?

In *Home Style* Fenno describes the relationship between members of Congress and their constituents. In the electoral world constituents are specified by law; they are the people living within a geographic boundary. But there are no comparable boundaries defining constituents in Twitter. Individuals find their way into--using the language of Fenno--a constituency relationship. They read a message posted by Lexi4prez and find the message interesting and meaningful. If they expect a stream of messages that are interesting and meaningful they will follow her. When they find messages that are interesting and meaningful they are likely to pass those messages along to their followers by retweeting. If those followers find the retweeted messages interesting and meaningful they will follow the person who posted the message -- in this case Lexi4prez -- and the number of followers increases. It is a process of spreading communication, and the result is a community constituting itself around the person writing the interesting and meaningful tweets. In the summer of 2015 Lexi4prez had 40 thousand followers. By the fall of 2018 130 thousand Twitter users had found her and wanted to receive the messages she posted that they found interesting and meaningful. These are her inner circle, and the broader reach to millions is largely the result of the retweeting of her inner circle.

There is a person in the Twitter messages, and that is the place to turn next. Lexi4prez changes her profile page regularly, but there is one that is particularly revealing.

Figure 4.
Lexi4prez Twitter Profile Page

Alexis Isabel
@lexi4prez
Creator of @FeministCulture & MTV contributor. @Adrianv_060. contact me, business only: lexi@feministculture.com
Miami, FL
Joined December 2011

TWEETS 28.7K FOLLOWING 538 FOLLOWERS 80.5K LIKES 138K

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

Alexis Isabel @lexi4prez · 3h
I'm an independent. I refuse to align with a major party after seeing how easily each are swayed by people like Trump or Hillary

Alexis Isabel Retweeted
Feminist Culture @feministculture · 4h
Same-sex couples can now adopt children in all 50 states. huff.to/1VYPBCc

Alexis Isabel @lexi4prez · 4h
A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE REVOLUTION

A woman's place is in the revolution and that is where she is. She is that young woman with her fist raised. The profile photograph is Lexi4prez speaking to a state sponsored meeting of young people. She is making the case for a law in Florida like the law in California that requires the schools to teach that only yes means yes in sexual relations. In a later version of the profile page she characterizes herself as "Chicana y proud." The revolution is intersectional feminism which is every combination of gender and race possible. This is a revolution of the young. She was as unhappy with the understanding of gender and racism of Clinton as that of Trump.

I'm an independent. I refuse to align with a major party after seeing how easily each are swayed by people like Trump and Hillary.

That is a message she posted to Twitter with her fist raised.

She joined Twitter in December of 2011, and she has been exceedingly active on Twitter. By the spring of 2016 she had posted 31.9K tweets. She was following 371 people and had 85.2K followers. And she had liked 160K tweets. And by 2018 the number of followers had grown to 130K users of Twitter.

She addresses an audience of teenagers who are struggling to find themselves. Who should I become? Who can I become? Lexi4prez lives that life in public. She takes the selfies. She discusses the entertainers they all know. She also talks about her pain and her commitment to -- you can be who you are. If you are homosexual love yourself. If you are transgender love yourself. If your 'shape' is not what is constantly presented to you love yourself. If you are Latina love yourself. If you are black love yourself. If you are white love yourself. At the top of her profile page she pinned a tweet -- "you will still be art even when he stops admiring you." Do not let others impose a you on you.

Notice how this public persona reflects the elements that Fenno suggests are most important in the presentation of self of the leader addressing those who would follow. Fenno found three strategies for gaining trust: identification ("I am one of you"), and empathy ("I understand you and think like you do"), and qualification. In public she leads the life they all lead and want to lead. She understands how you feel and how you are challenged because she lives the same challenges. And qualification -- qualification comes as she explores the culture in which they live that would make them someone other than who they are. And all three can be seen clearly in the tweets that are retweeted millions of times.

Fenno wrote trust "is hard to win; and it must be constantly renewed and rewon." It is, he wrote, why members "spend so much of their time working at home." And that is an important description of Lexi4prez. She is there every day. She reads and retweets more tweets written by others than she posts of her own. She reads and likes even more. For Lexi4prez Twitter is not broadcast. It is interaction. It is a community exploring who they may become.

RVAwonk #Feminist. Behavioral Scientist. Freelancer. Writer/Editor @Shareblue Media. Reviving the **public scholar & making our information space great again.** That is how RVAwonk, or Caroline O., introduces herself. This text is new, but the image with which she introduces herself on her profile page has been there from the beginning.

Figure 5. RVAwonk Twitter Profile Page



The account was set up January 28, 2014. When the account was set up she was a graduate student working on a Ph.D. She is now a public scholar. Scholarship is standing at the display space helping others understand. The image tells everyone just who she is.

Her 72K tweets is an average of 43 tweets per day. That is many fewer than Beverly, but her tweets have been much more productive in terms of followers. Between January of 2014 and June of 2017 164K twitter users had found her. Then came an explosion. By August of 2018 the number of followers had doubled; she now had 359K followers.

One person articulates what RVAwonk brings to the Twitter

"Hahaha! I don't know what the hell I'd do without [@RVAwonk](#)'s brilliance and wit these past two years. The wit bit saves me and the brilliance bit teaches me." (Eileen De Freest [@eileendefreest](#) April 1, 2018).

Her brilliance is in the breadth and depth of her search for information. These are ten examples from a single morning.

Some notable patterns right now on [@SecureDemocracy's](#) Hamilton 68 dashboard, which tracks accounts linked to Russian influence operations. Syria is still dominating, but the death of pro-Russia separatist leader Alexander Zacharchenko is very quickly taking over the charts. 1/ <https://t.co/OOFcXvv4F0>

This is [@nikkihaley](#) authorising Assad, Iran and Russia's assault on Idlib. Does anyone still doubt that this American regime works for Putin? <https://t.co/nTyKNVtUEf>

[@realDonaldTrump](#) Remember when you said this? We do! #RespectWomen #ExpectUs <https://t.co/AaOvPEmnPL>

This is a fantastic article, basically taking the premise of our project & giving the entire audience of the NYTimes an opportunity to try to distinguish between known Russian propaganda content & other content. Bravo [@sheeraf](#) & [@collinskeith](#)! <https://t.co/RPBz2VlwRH>

"It's dirty little secret was that there was no one American involved in it, that it was a de facto foreign agent, working on an American election," former Cambridge Analytica research director-turned-whistleblower Christopher Wylie said. <https://t.co/uQbAJ1hOcD>

omfg. The House of Representatives has introduced a bill called the "Unmasking Antifa Act of 2018," which carries a potential 15-year prison sentence for anyone caught engaging in behaviors typically associated with anti-fascist activists. <https://t.co/IQLRzfopZD>

I miss having a real president. Especially this one right here. This one — President Obama, my president — will always be the best. <https://t.co/78ZEbjfWd8>

NEW: Special counsel Mueller reportedly told the White House he will accept written answers from Trump on questions about whether his campaign conspired with Russia - but *not* questions about obstruction. <https://t.co/Mgp9IUjOVj>

Cool. Who funds The Federalist? <https://t.co/BJqdGcEHlc>

This is big --> British PM Theresa May just named two Russian military intelligence (GRU) officers as the prime suspects in the nerve gas poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter on UK soil. <https://t.co/LNPdTUGKTm>

From the Hamilton 68 dashboard to the British prime minister -- and it goes on for the day and day by day. Richad Fenno would call that qualification. And so did 56,636 other persons when they retweeted the messages of that day.

But there is also a person in her tweets. This is one example of her and the reactions to her.

I honestly don't know what I did to deserve things this beautiful.
<https://t.co/GuJBnkzPG1>

Figure 6.
From RVAwonk Twitter Post



And these are a few of the responses to her perplexity.

1. Plenty. Sleeping Giants
2. Well, one thing, you appreciate the beauty. Beauty will find her fans. Bottle'air
3. There are upwards of 360K of us that know. Kevin Patrick
4. None of us deserves it. The word is "grace." William Bennett
5. I can think of a few hundred thousand people who would tell you. James V. Lambers
6. Every time you notice them, you deserve them, Caroline! Caris Severn
7. You deserve it because you are!! Dave Javoo
8. Lots of data analysis and perspective sharing. Stephen Black
9. You are saving democracy. Kathy
10. It may be your reward for being a fierce proponent of the truth. NESP Hound

And that goes on too; more than a hundred answers. She is a person who cares and a person about whom others care. Richard Fenno would know that as I am one with you.

She is trusted. She is in touch. And the number of people she is able to reach with her brilliance and wit continues to grow. That brilliance and wit is her political leadership.

Locating the new political leaders

At any earlier time in history the likelihood that Lexi4rez or RVAwonk could reach out to hundreds of thousands or millions would have been zero. As different as their focus they are helping large numbers of people think through what they want and how that may come about. Are there others? If so, how would one find them?

The two necessary conditions are: 1) an individual who is repeatedly the beginning of a geometric explosion of communication and 2) a person whose ability to be the person in this geometric flow of communication comes about by actions on Twitter and not by prominence outside of Twitter. This is political influence in the new flow of communication.

People who meet these two criteria are not particularly hard to find. Without much difficulty one can find people who are widely retweeted, which is the way an individual becomes the beginning of the geometric explosion. On September 4, 2018 the streaming API of Twitter responded to a request for tweets mentioning Trump with 709K tweets. One of the persons was retweeted just over 3K times by 2619 Twitter users. The followers of the 2.6K retweeters numbered 5,225,011. A NodeXL search for DearAuntCrabby found a network of 3749 vertices, 1839 in (mentions of her), and 13 out. If you do a search for DearAuntCrabby there is quite a lot of information available, but it is all about her role on Twitter and Facebook. This is a social media leader.

Conclusion

When the infrastructure of communication changes so too does the politics. 'In touch' which had gone away from our politics is returning. Few elected officials have wanted to take advantage of the potential reach of the new social media. They have wanted instead to convert it into advertising. That will change as these politicians are replaced.

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