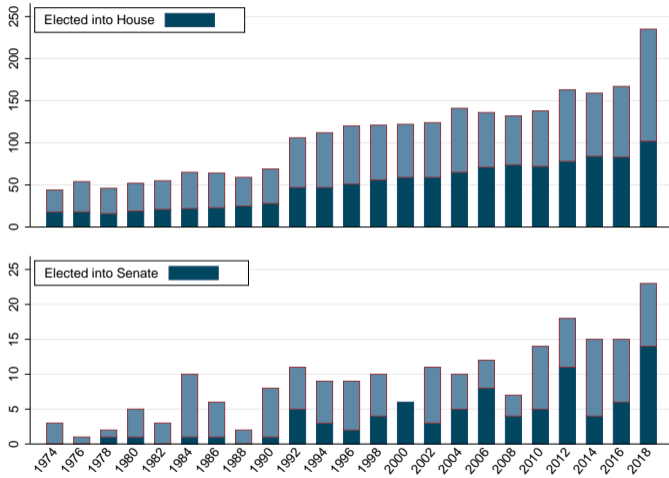


Deconstructing the MeToo Movement and the Blue Wave in the 2018 House Elections

Lucas Shen

October 2022

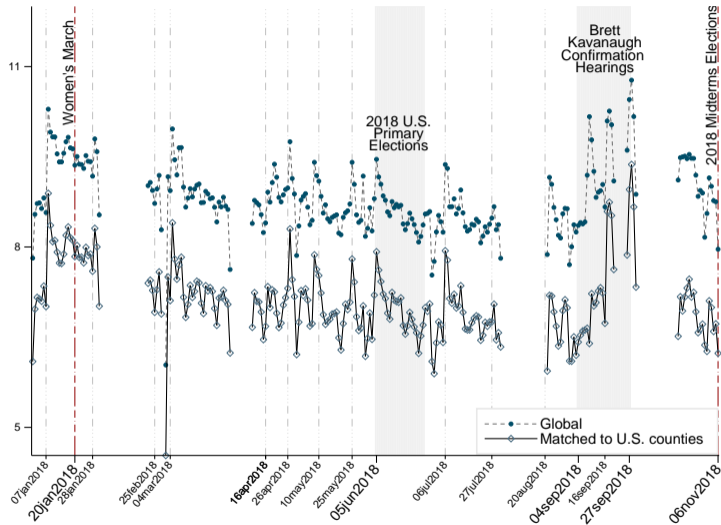
Historical women performance in 2018



- ▶ Dark blue = elected
- ▶ Spike in the 2018 midterm elections
- ▶ MeToo movement
- ▶ On Twitter

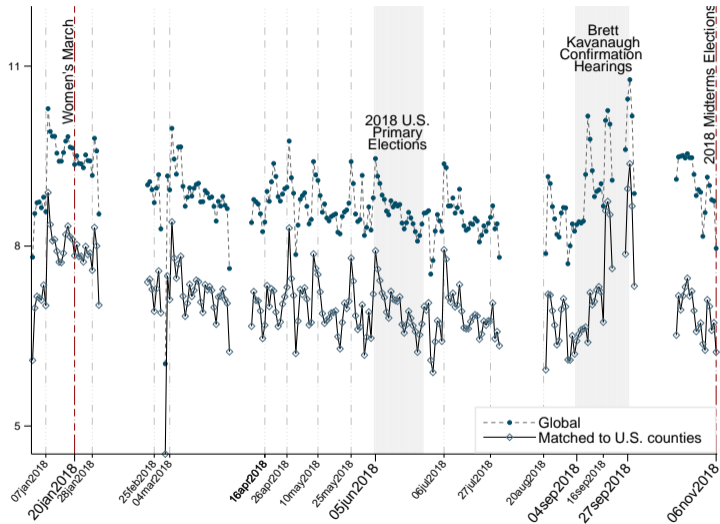
Numbers: *Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP)*

MeToo movement, Twitter, & legal implications



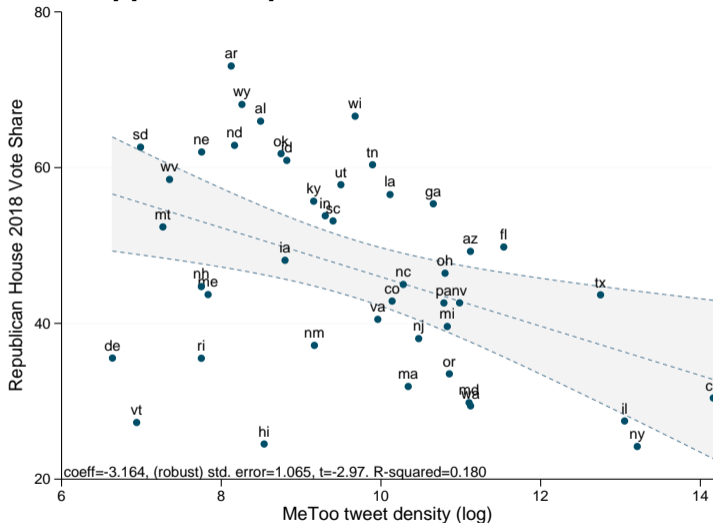
- ▶ Started in 2006 on *myspace*—Tarana Burke used it in her local community to encourage ethnic minority girls/women to report sexual misconducts
- ▶ Traction on Twitter, late 2017
- ▶ Legal implications (Tippett 2018; Singer 2019; North 2019)
- ▶ Bipartisan acts, NDAs, Judge recalls

MeToo movement, Twitter, & electoral implications(?)



- ▶ Electoral implications(?)
(Deckman 2018; Peaker 2018)
- ▶ MeToo—elections
- ▶ MeToo—politics
- ▶ MeToo—partisan dimension

MeToo support & Republican 2018 House returns



- ▶ Electoral implications(?)
(Deckman 2018; Peaker 2018)
- ▶ MeToo—elections
- ▶ MeToo—politics
- ▶ MeToo—partisan dimension
- ▶ Rep. vote share—MeToo tweets

Deconstructing the MeToo Movement and the Blue Wave

▶ Media affects electoral outcomes

(Adena et al. 2015; Enikolopov et al. 2011)

▶ **Question:** Did the MeToo movement had an impact on the 2018 US midterm elections?

(Peaker 2018)

▶ **Prior work:**

- Traditional media → elections/laws
- Print (Lim et al. 2015), radio (Adena et al. 2015; Boas and Hidalgo 2011; Ferraz and Finan 2008), broadcast (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007; Oberholzer-Gee and Waldfogel 2009)

▶ **This paper:**

- Social media → elections
- Twitter & MeToo movement → 2018 midterms
- Did political agents benefited from the movement?
- Democratic women candidates benefited, but through selection into certain districts and higher turnout

Findings

DiD results on candidate vote shares at the candidate-county level:

- ▶ No effect of MeToo support for Democratic candidates
- ▶ Some advantage for Democratic women candidates (+ disadvantage for Republican men), moderated by support for 2016 Republican Presidential candidate
- ▶ In counties with a s.d. increase in vote share, a s.d. increase in MeToo tweets is associated with a 0.96 p.p. higher vote share for Democratic women candidates
- ▶ But this relation can be traced back to the 2016 House elections, before MeToo movement went into full swing (in 2018)

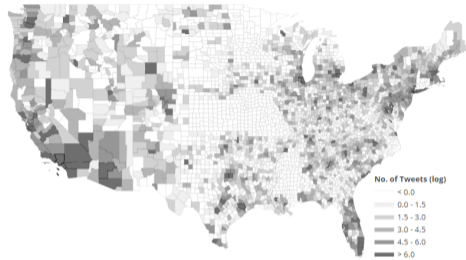
Turnout & strategic candidacy:

- ▶ Republican counties with higher MeToo support have higher turnout
- ▶ For a 10 p.p. increase in Rep. vote share, a s.d. in MeToo tweets is associated with a 1.17% increase in turnout ($p < 0.01$)
- ▶ Higher probability of Democratic non-incumbent women candidates in Republican districts with high MeToo support

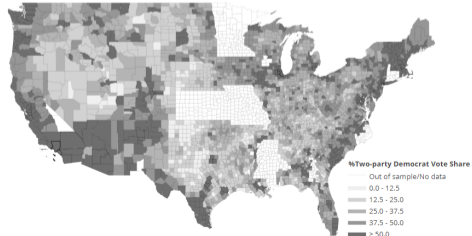
Data

- ▶ MeToo tweets Jan–Nov 2018:
GetOldTweets–Python
- ▶ U.S. counties list:
U.S. Cities Database—SimpleMaps
- ▶ Election returns:
SOS Elections Department; MIT Election Data and Science Lab 2018
- ▶ County level demographics:
ACS 5-year estimates 2012–16 & 2015–19
- ▶ Individual voter attitudes (7'491 individual-county observation):
Democracy Fund Voter Study Group (2018)
- ▶ House candidate ethnicity—Black, Hispanic, White, Others
NamePrism (Ye et al. 2017)
- ▶ 8'653 candidate-county observations: 44 states, 388 House congressional districts, 2'652 counties, 1'022 House candidates (767 main party)

Tweets



Democratic vote share



Difference-in-differences (county and candidate)

$$\nu_{icd} = \beta^{RW} RW_{i\tau_C} + \beta^{DW} DW_{i\tau_C} + \beta^{RM} RM_{i\tau_C} + \beta^{DM} DM_{i\tau_C} + \text{Candidate}_i + \Delta_1 \nu_{c,2016}^{\text{Rep., House}} + \Delta_2 \nu_{c,2012-2016}^{\text{Rep., Pres.}} + \Gamma \mathbf{X}_{ic} + \varepsilon_{icd}$$

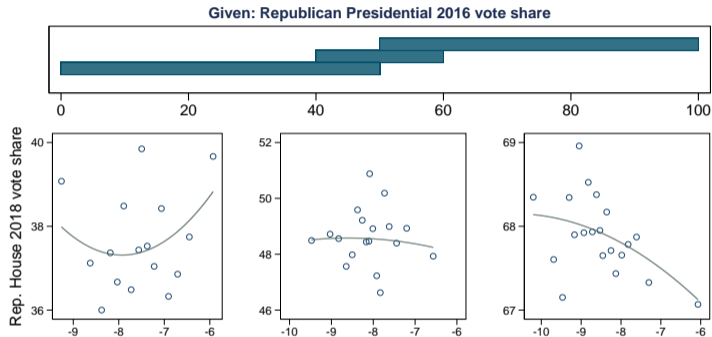
- ▶ i = candidate
- ▶ cd = county-district
- ▶ ν_{icd} vote share of 2018 House candidate i in county-district cd
- ▶ τ_C county-level MeToo log tweet density
- ▶ Party-gender dummies— $\{RW_i, DW_i, RM_i, DM_i\}$
- ▶ $\nu_{c,\cdot}^{\text{Rep.,}}$ full interaction of candidate party & 2012–16 Pres./House elections county-level returns
- ▶ \mathbf{X}_{ic} full interaction of candidate party & county demographics (ethnic, gender, age, education, and foreign-born composition, income and employment rate, and rural-urban composition)

	Heterogeneous effect, by presidential Republican vote share in 2016				
	All-party vote share		Two-party vote share		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Log tweet density × (Rep. woman)	-3.557*** (0.993)	-0.674 (0.574)	-0.707 (0.724)	-0.472 (0.713)	-0.193 (0.699)
Log tweet density × (Dem. woman)	2.073*** (0.492)	0.074 (0.188)	-0.655*** (0.253)	-0.930*** (0.287)	-0.636** (0.312)
Log tweet density × (Rep. man)	-2.218*** (0.410)	0.008 (0.157)	0.300 (0.235)	0.408 (0.255)	0.302 (0.272)
Log tweet density × (Dem. man)	2.316*** (0.515)	0.279 (0.232)	-0.029 (0.354)	-0.439 (0.431)	-0.592 (0.436)
Log tweet density × (Rep. woman) × (Pres. 2016 Rep. vote share)			-0.023 (0.030)	-0.027 (0.029)	-0.027 (0.028)
Log tweet density × (Dem. woman) × (Pres. 2016 Rep. vote share)			0.037*** (0.014)	0.047*** (0.013)	0.043*** (0.015)
Log tweet density × (Rep. man) × (Pres. 2016 Rep. vote share)			-0.021** (0.009)	-0.022** (0.009)	-0.024** (0.010)
Log tweet density × (Dem. man) × (Pres. 2016 Rep. vote share)			0.014 (0.014)	0.027* (0.015)	0.035** (0.015)
<i>Control variables</i>					
Candidate fixed effects	X	X	X	X	
District fixed effects					X
2016 House & 2012–16 Pres. election		X	X	X	X
County census demographics		X	X	X	X
Racial & gender voting		X	X	X	X
F-test: House & 2012–16 Pres. election = 0		F = 297.71***	F = 13.07***	F = 15.63***	F = 12.17***
F-test: Census controls = 0		F = 3.82***	F = 3.55***	F = 4.14***	F = 2.63***
F-test: Racial & gender voting = 0		F = 3.81***	F = 4.53***	F = 9.16***	F = 2.94***
Main-party candidates only				X	X
R ²	0.907	0.975	0.977	0.952	0.886
N	8634	8470	8470	6234	6234

No effect of MeToo on candidate vote share

- ▶ Col (1): Dem. advantage w/ candidate FE
- ▶ Col (2): Effect disappears w/ additional controls

Heterogeneous Effect, by Rep. Vote Share



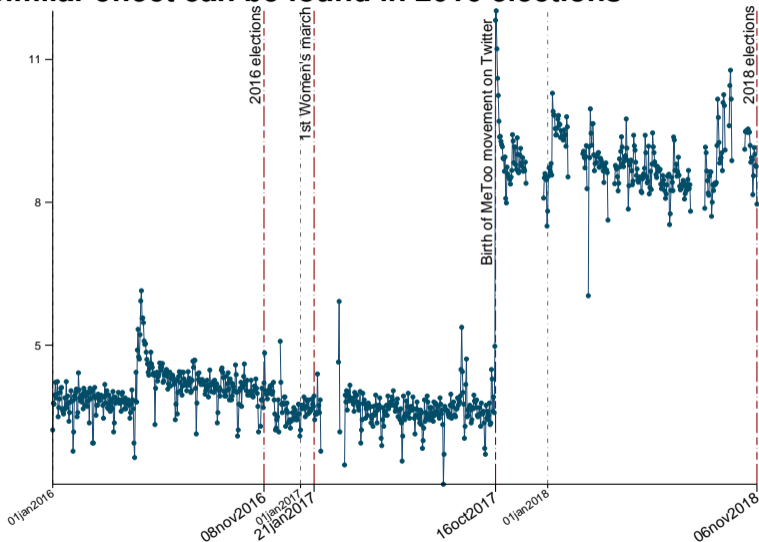
$$\begin{aligned}
 \nu_{icd} = & \alpha + \beta^{RW}(RW_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} + \gamma^{RW}(RW_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} \nu_{c, 2016}^{\text{Rep., Pres.}} + \beta^{DW}(DW_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} + \gamma^{DW}(DW_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} \nu_{c, 2016}^{\text{Rep., Pres.}} \\
 & + \beta^{RM}(RM_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} + \gamma^{RM}(RM_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} \nu_{c, 2016}^{\text{Rep., Pres.}} + \beta^{DM}(DM_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} + \gamma^{DM}(DM_i)_{\mathcal{T}_c} \nu_{c, 2016}^{\text{Rep., Pres.}} \\
 & + \text{Candidate}_i + \Delta_1 \nu_{c, 2016}^{\text{Rep., House}} + \Delta_2 \nu_{c, 2016}^{\text{Rep., Pres.}} + \Gamma \mathbf{X}_{ic} + \varepsilon_{icd}
 \end{aligned}$$

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Main-party candidates only				X	X
R ²	0.907	0.975	0.977	0.952	0.886
N	8634	8470	8470	6234	6234

Effect moderated by 2016 Pres. Republican vote share

- ▶ Expected advantage for Dem. women
- ▶ Expected disadvantage for Rep. men
- ▶ But only in Republican counties

Similar effect can be found in 2016 elections



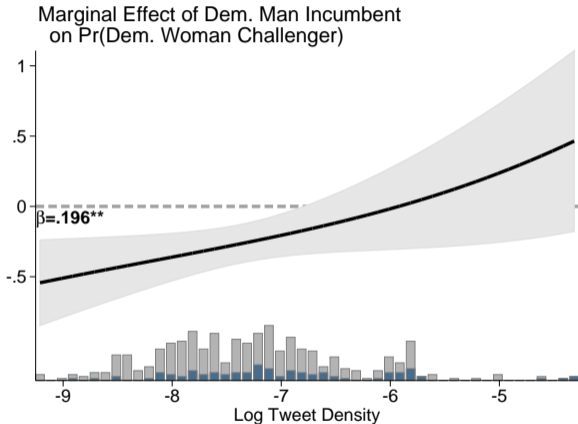
- ▶ **Back to 2016 House elections**
- ▶ MeToo movement peaked on Twitter only in 2018
- ▶ 2016 House returns as placebo
- ▶ Similar (qualitative) results
- ▶ MeToo movement \nexists demographic trends

Turnout higher in Republican counties with high MeToo tweets

	Measure of county-level MeToo movement (τ) is			
	ln(No. of tweets divided by population)		ln(No. of tweets)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
τ	0.0221 (0.0144)	-0.0162 (0.0347)	0.0145 (0.0121)	-0.0221 (0.0180)
Pres. 2016 Rep. vote share	-0.0128*** (0.0025)	-0.0081* (0.0046)	-0.0127*** (0.0025)	-0.0136*** (0.0025)
$\tau \times$ (Pres. 2016 Rep. vote share)		0.0006 (0.0004)		0.0006*** (0.0002)
District fixed effects	X	X	X	X
Census Control	X	X	X	X
F-test: Electoral controls = 0	$F = 19.19^{***}$	$F = 4.32^{***}$	$F = 19.26^{***}$	$F = 18.1^{***}$
F-test: County census = 0	$F = 2.72^{***}$	$F = 2.74^{***}$	$F = 2.47^{***}$	$F = 2.53^{***}$
R^2	0.6551	0.6557	0.6543	0.6556
N	3102	3102	3102	3102

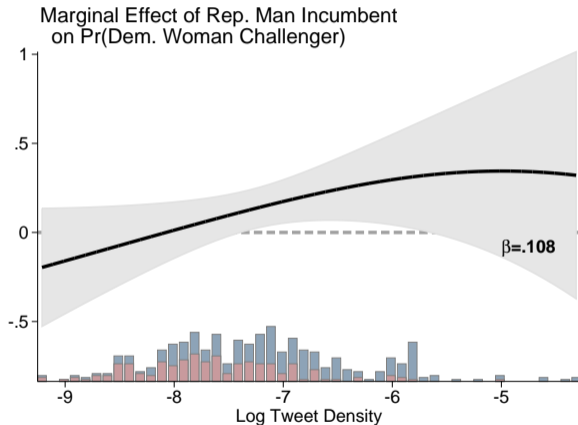
- ▶ No detected effect using tweets per county population
- ▶ Positive effect using tweets
- ▶ For a 10 p.p. increase in Rep. vote share, a s.d. in MeToo tweets is associated with a 1.17% increase in turnout ($p < 0.01$)

Democratic women challengers & Democratic men incumbents



- ▶ Dep. var. is $\mathbf{1}_{\{\text{Dem. woman challenger}\}}$
- ▶ MeToo tweet measure $\times \mathbf{1}_{\{\text{Dem. man incumbent}\}}$
- ▶ Prob. of a Dem. woman challenger to a Dem. man incumbent \uparrow as MeToo movement \uparrow
- ▶ One s.d. \uparrow MeToo tweet measure \uparrow prob. by 16 pp
- ▶ "The Squad"—AOC, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, Cori Bush

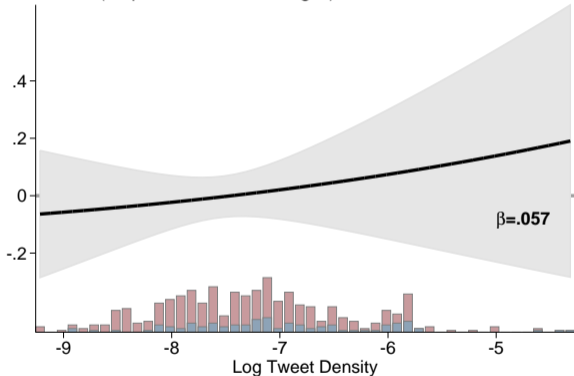
Democratic women challengers & Republican Man incumbents



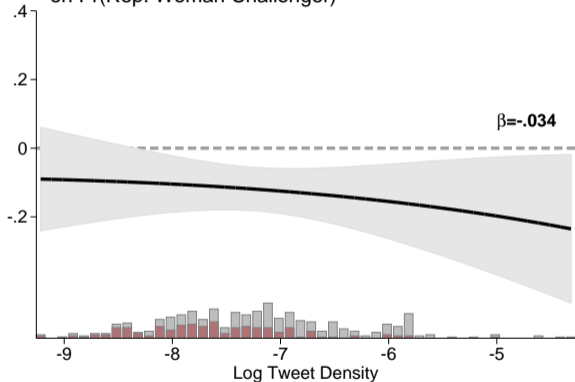
- ▶ Dep. var. is $\mathbf{1}_{\{\text{Dem. woman challenger}\}}$
- ▶ MeToo tweet measure $\times \mathbf{1}_{\{\text{Rep. man incumbent}\}}$
- ▶ From handchecking, ~ 17 districts where Democratic non-incumbent women candidates successfully unseated Republican men incumbents
- ▶ *E.g., Oklahoma 5: Kendra Horn unseated Steve Russell*
- ▶ *E.g., Texas 7: Lizzie Fletcher unseated John Culberson*

No similar findings for Republican women candidates

Marginal Effect of Dem. Man Incumbent on Pr(Rep. Woman Challenger)



Marginal Effect of Rep. Man Incumbent on Pr(Rep. Woman Challenger)



Geocoded MeToo tweets correlates to voter attitudes

	Sexism 2016 (Range 1 to 24)	Sexism 2018 (Range 1 to 24)	Change in sexism (Range -23 to 23)	1 (Allegations indicative of wider problems)	Approval of Rep. party in handling harassment (Range 1 to 4)	Approval of Dem. party in handling harassment (Range 1 to 4)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Log of tweet density	-0.096*** (0.036)	-0.134*** (0.050)	0.009 (0.034)	0.011* (0.006)	-0.035*** (0.012)	0.013 (0.013)
1(Always vote for Democrats)	-0.289*** (0.112)	-0.204 (0.138)	0.016 (0.113)	0.035* (0.018)	-0.103*** (0.036)	0.116*** (0.035)
1(Always vote for Republicans)	0.823*** (0.117)	1.032*** (0.171)	0.057 (0.128)	-0.015 (0.025)	0.242*** (0.040)	-0.107*** (0.040)
<i>Control variables</i>						
Individual characteristics	X	X	X	X	X	X
Voting history & tendency	X	X	X	X	X	X
Political interest & knowledge	X	X	X	X	X	X
F-test: Individual characteristics = 0	F = 12.78***	F = 9.34***	F = 1.27	F = 3.84***	F = 1.33*	F = 3.02***
F-test: Voting tendency = 0	F = 546.05***	F = 242.62***	F = .66	F = 101.44***	F = 315.92***	F = 216.49***
F-test: Political interest & knowledge = 0	F = 4.45***	F = .63	F = 1.06	F = .11	F = 3.03**	F = 1.32
R ²	0.393	0.393	0.015	0.187	0.351	0.307
N	6625	3908	3816	3972	3931	3934

- ▶ Merge MeToo tweets to Democracy Fund Voter Study Group (2018) individual voter attitudes at county level
- ▶ Counties with more MeToo tweets are more opposed to sexism
- ▶ Counties with more MeToo tweets have higher disapproval of the Republican party in handling issues of sexual harassment

Limitations

- ▶ Changing demographics—much of the correlation exists before 2018
- ▶ Exploiting county-level variation
 - Districts coterminous with county do not contribute to identification
 - Suburban and rural districts are geographically larger and have more counties than urban districts

Contribution & literature

▶ Media & turnout

(Campante et al. 2017; DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007; Enikolopov et al. 2011; Gentzkow 2006; Oberholzer-Gee and Waldfogel 2009)

▶ Effects of independent media on establishment

(Enikolopov et al. 2011; Miner 2015)

▶ Effects of protest movements

(Campante et al. 2017; Acemoglu et al. 2018)

▶ Ethnic & gender-based voting

(Abrajano and Alvarez 2005; Flanagan 2018; Holli and Wass 2010; Matsubayashi and Ueda 2011)

▶ Expressive voting?

(Fischer 1996; Tyrann 2004; Hillman 2010)

▶ **Twitter & US Elections**

(Fujiwara et al. 2020)

▶ **Women's march & 2018 elections**

(Larreboure and Gonzalez 2021)

Concluding remarks

- ▶ Twitter helped catalyse privately experienced harrowing episodes into the public sphere
- ▶ Grassroots MeToo movement
- ▶ Using a difference-in-differences setup: No credible evidence that Democratic women candidates benefited in counties with high MeToo support
- ▶ The historical success of women candidates in 2018 more likely through selection and active weaponizing of the movement
- ▶ A small subset of Democratic women candidates (“The Squad”) were outliers and their success unlikely to generalize to other grassroots movement context

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