

George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management and Zignal Labs Launch Media Monitoring and Analysis Collaboration

Project measures public chatter in mainstream and social media about the 2016 presidential campaigns

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WASHINGTON – George Washington University's [Graduate School of Political Management](#) (GSPM) and [Zignal Labs](#) unveiled the Public Echoes Of Rhetoric In America (PEORIA) Project report Thursday. The first of its kind collaboration relies on textual data and analytics to assess the relative effectiveness of candidate messages and campaign communication strategies.

Using Zignal Labs's realtime, cross media story tracking platform, GSPM Associate Professors Lara Brown and Michael Cornfield have tracked, measured, and analyzed more than 10.3 million mentions of the presidential aspirants in news and social media. "We're quantifying the old vaudeville and marketing phrase about how well messages 'play in Peoria' and everywhere else," said Cornfield. "Whose brands are catching on—and whose are catching flak?"

"With Zignal's platform, we're able to see how the presidential campaigns are creating—or missing—their communication opportunities. This project is helping to make the 'invisible primary' more visible," stated Brown.

During the first time band under examination, March 15 to May 15, 2015, PEORIA monitored words from and about 15 presumed presidential aspirants, focusing on the eight who formally declared their candidacies in that period. Relying on a mix of seven indicators derived from Zignal data, Brown and Cornfield rated the campaign value of the Public Echo for each declared candidate on a scale of 1 (crickets) to 11 (historic). Their GSPM Echo Ratings, in chronological order of announcement:

Ted Cruz	7
Rand Paul	5
Hillary Clinton	8
Marco Rubio	5
Bernie Sanders	4
Ben Carson	1
Carly Fiorina	3
Mike Huckabee	3

Other key findings:

- Democratic front-runner former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton not only dominated share of voice but also campaign web site shares and message resonance. She racked up nearly double (4.8 million,

47 percent) the total mentions of the leading Republican, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, (2.5 million, 25 percent). Social media users shared the URL of her campaign web site 173,342 times (Cruz again was second, with 85,355 shares). And the words “champion,” “everyday,” and “Americans” dwarfed other non-identifier terms in phrases with her name, a sign of potent message resonance.

- Sen. Cruz’s strategy to announce his run first appears to have paid off in the short term, as he led share of voice on announcement day (89 percent) as well as in the three-day periods in the days before (60 percent) and after (81 percent).

- Sen. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, (-13.6 percent) and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee (R) (-14.8 percent) had the worst echoes for their announcements in terms of net sentiment, calculated as the percentage of mentions scored positive by the Zignal algorithms minus the percentage of negative mentions. Clinton (+26.6 percent) and Republican business executive Carly Fiorina (+14.8 percent) were the top net sentiment performers in their announcement echoes.

- Cruz had the largest gap in share of voice between social (27 percent) and mainstream (19 percent) media. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Florida, had the largest gap in the reverse direction, with 15 percent mainstream and 10 percent social.

- The words “thug,” “gangsta,” and “life” loom large on Huckabee’s word cloud. They echo comments he made December 13, 2014 in reaction to the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. In contrast, key words from his announcement day web site home page, with its slogan “From Hope to Higher Ground,” hardly register.

- The only announced candidate to improve on his/her net sentiment post-announcement was Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. His formal announcement received virtually no attention, and then he received boosts from appearances on network television talk programs on two successive Sundays –the inspiration behind the title of our report: “Media Weekends at Bernie’s (and other highlights of the first wave of presidential candidate announcements).”

For additional information, including analysis from Professors Brown and Cornfield, please visit our [PEORIA Project page](#).

About Graduate School of Political Management:

Founded in 1987 and located in the heart of Washington, DC, GW’s Graduate School of Political Management is the first and foremost school of applied politics and advocacy offering master’s degrees in the following disciplines: Advocacy in the Global Environment, Legislative Affairs, Political Management, Strategic Public Relations, and Comunicación Política y Gobernanza. We provide a hands-on education, not a theoretical exploration. Our students know what they want to do to change the world; we teach them how to use the strategies and tactics needed to do it. Our faculty are recognized industry leaders and bring the best practices of the field into the classroom.

About Zignal Labs:

Zignal Labs is a realtime, cross media story-tracking platform. We enable clients to quickly spot trends, see relevant stories unfold, and take action.

For interviews with Professors Brown and Cornfield please contact John Brandt (johnbrandt@gwu.edu; 202-994-3199).

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