

@askgeorge Thank you for voting against the ratification of #SOPA and #PIPA !! @Darrellissa Excellent work on stopping #SOPA and #PIPA. I hope things go as you want with the #OPEN act. @Darrellissa @senwest THANK YOU BOTH for standing against #SOPA. On this conservative and @AllenWest @SenBillNelson @marcorubio Stop #SOPA and #PIPA #iftheyshutdowntwitter "@BillOwensNY Please stop #sopa don't let the bill pass get informed about it, please look into the bill it effects us all!!" @SteveAustria Mr. Austria, please tell me you plan on raising your voice against SOPA and PIPA. #SOPA #PIPA @RepRobertHurt @GOPLeader @MarkWarner Please oppose #SOPA and #PIPA These bills are akin to using a hand grenade to kill a mouse. #interwebs @RepHowardBerman please reconsider your support of SOPA. Do not destroy the internet. #SOPA. @BradSherman

I'd have to vote against you

Issue Campaigning via Twitter

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For more work from CaSM members and collaborators on the Public Official and Social Media Project visit <http://www.casmlab.org/projects/publicofficials/>

Twitter and Congress

Social media use by members of Congress (MOCs) is on the rise, but little is known about the nature of the interactions that take place.

Research suggests that those interactions are largely one-sided, that officials use social media as a broadcast platform rather than an interactive tool. But what about constituents who want to lobby for an issue?

Some studies suggest that the public at-large is increasingly engaging in political discourse online and they do actually interact with others when discussing political issues. Engaging with politicians makes users feel that they are "heard" even if they don't receive responses.

Mission: identify how constituents talk to MOCs on Twitter

We contribute to the literature on political communication in social media by identifying strategies constituents use to lobby their officials on a specific legislative issue. We also demonstrate the utility of existing machine learning tools for classifying tweets.

Methods

1. Collect

- Twitter Database Server / Twitter Streaming API
- Filtered for tweets containing #SOPA or #PIPA
- Between 10/22/11 and 9/29/2012, N=12,589 tweets posted by 15,379 users.

2. Code

- Inductive coding strategy to develop a set of codes
- We reached very high agreement between two coders on our training set ($\kappa > 0.8$), n=390 tweets

3. Classify

- We used these tweets to train a naïve Bayes (NB) classifier to automatically code the remaining tweets (N = 12,589)
- To train and evaluate our classifier, we used WEKA 3-6-8
- The table to the right shows the mean accuracy measures for our classifier (*precision, recall, and F-measure are weighted mean).

	Mean value*
Accuracy	0.86
Std. Dev.	0.23
Precision	0.86
Recall	0.85
F-Measure	0.85

Lobbying Strategies

We used two rounds of inductive coding on a sample of 390 tweets to develop a coding scheme for "lobbying strategies".

Tweets coded in this sample were used to train our classifier prior to coding the entire sample. Iterative coding and disambiguation resulted in the seven categories seen here.

(2) Please oppose

@BradSherman Please do not support #SOPA and #PIPA they are very bad bills.

User politely urges MOC to oppose SOPA and/or PIPA

(4) Because you're not opposing

@RepGoodlatte Remove the stain of #SOPA from your record, Congressman, or we will remove you from Congress. Love, the Internet.

User mentions consequences (e.g., losing support, being voted out of office) if an MOC does not oppose SOPA and/or PIPA

(6) Directly oppose

@RepGoodlatte Stop #SOPA

User expresses his/her opinion on SOPA and/or PIPA without requesting action from MOC

(1) Thank you for opposing

@petestark Thank you for opposing #SOPA and #PIPA.

User explicitly thanks MOC for opposing SOPA and/or PIPA

(3) I'm your constituent, and I oppose

@RepMikeRoss I am your constituent, and I oppose #SOPA and #PIPA. End Piracy not liberty!

User points out that s/he is a constituent of the MOC mentioned and urges MOC to oppose SOPA and/or PIPA

(5) Asking position

@repjerrylewis What is your stand on #SOPA and similar legislation?

User asks MOC to clarify his/her position on SOPA and/or PIPA

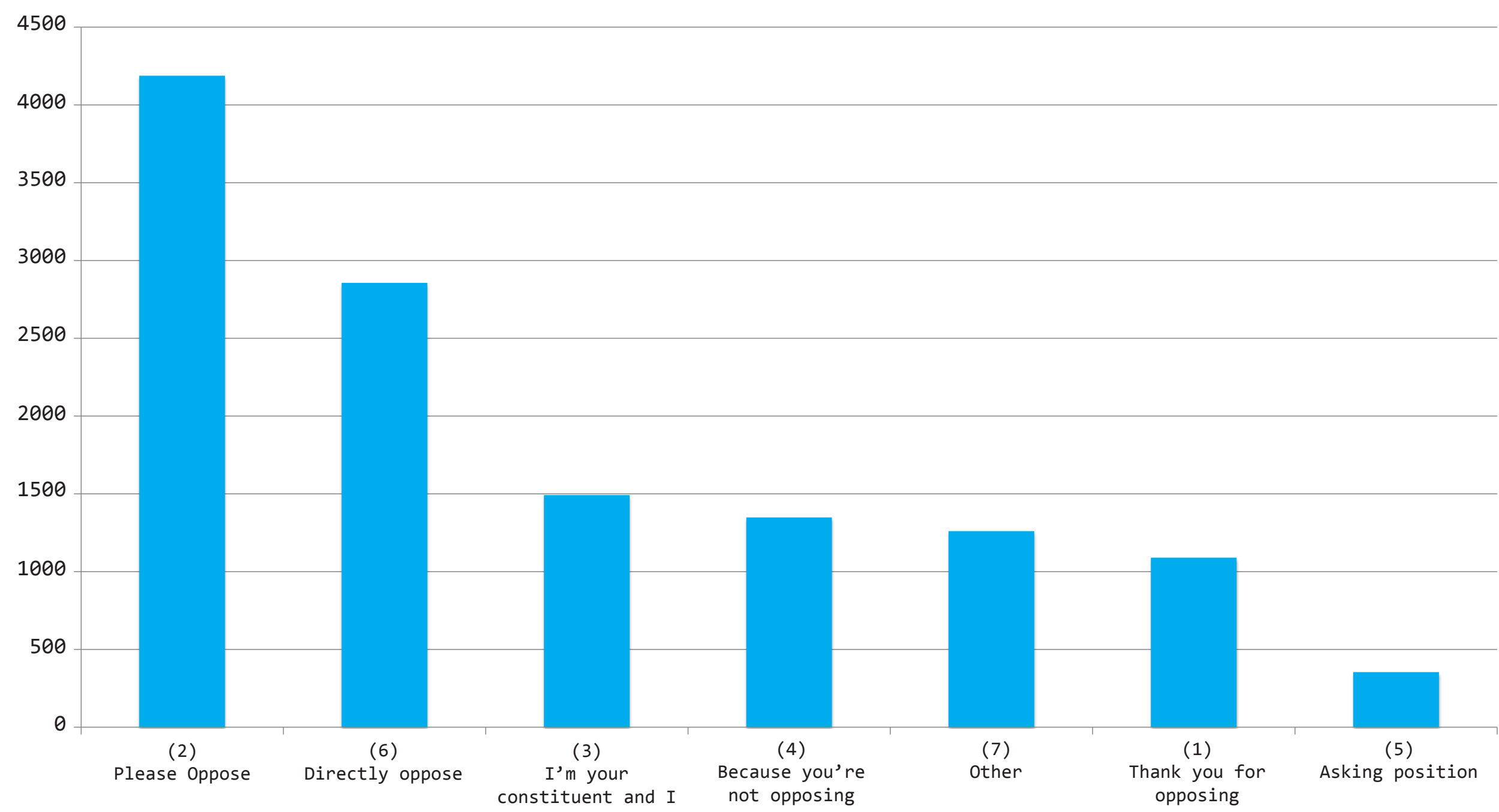
(7) Other

@darrellissa Hi Darrell, are you available for a Skype interview with Australian TV News on #SOPA? Please get in touch if so

Tweets that don't fit in other categories, including those supporting SOPA and/or PIPA

Users make requests more often than they stand on their soapboxes

Earlier research on constituent use of social media for political communication suggested users thought of Twitter as a "soapbox" where they could express an opinion but not really a place to interact with their officials. Our results show that's not the case.



23% of tweets (those in the "Directly oppose" category) were "soapbox" tweets where a user expressed an opinion without asking for an MOC to act, but "please oppose" tweets were more common (33%).

	Manual		Automatic	
	N	%	N	%
1	43	11%	1090	9%
2	106	27%	4188	33%
3	40	10%	1492	12%
4	36	9%	1349	11%
5	23	6%	354	3%
6	108	28%	2856	23%
7	34	9%	1260	10%

Other categories such as "thank you for opposing," "because you're not opposing," and "asking position" were also interactive. Constituents, at least around the issues of SOPA and PIPA, were attempting to engage their elected officials on Twitter, not just to express their opinions.

Limitations and future work

- All tweets in the training set were against SOPA/PIPA, which was surprising; therefore, we only identified opposition lobbying strategies. Further investigation should examine what strategies constituents use to urge their MOC to support legislation.
- Our classifier's mean accuracy is high, but so is its standard deviation, which is likely explained by the use of multiple strategies within one tweet. This tweet uses the adverb "please" to express politeness, much like tweets in the "please oppose" category. The user also mentions a consequence when s/he says "I'd have to vote against you".

@RepFrankGuinta Please stop all incarnations of #SOPA and PIPA. Many of my friends would be out of work and I'd have to vote against you.