

Liam Essig

Department of Sociology & Criminology
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Research Interests

- Computational Social Science
- Political Sociology
- Social Network Analysis
- Organizational Sociology
- Natural Language Processing
- Cultural Sociology

Education

Pennsylvania State University <i>Ph.D., Sociology & Social Data Analytics</i>	Aug. 2019 – Present <i>University Park, PA.</i>
Brigham Young University <i>M.S., Marriage, Family, & Human Development</i>	Aug. 2016 – Apr. 2018 <i>Provo, UT.</i>
Brigham Young University <i>B.S., Human Development</i>	Aug. 2012 – Apr. 2016 <i>Provo, UT.</i>

Dissertation

Political elites, including those holding elected office, have considerable influence over voters, and the rise of social media has shifted the agenda-setting power away from media corporations to politicians themselves. For the first time in history, large-scale data on politicians' unique performative practices are available for analysis. In this dissertation, I explore organizational pressures political elites face, examine how elites respond to these, and the impact of their responses on their political careers and the political organizations themselves. I employ text and network analysis to document the evolution of US politicians' performative practices over time using the first comprehensive Twitter data set (5.5 million tweets), composed of every tweet produced by every account operated by a member of Congress. I investigate distinct components of elite political performance through three chapters. First, I consider the role of social reinforcement in shaping the evolution of elites' performative practices. Most notably, I find that Twitter users reward and reinforce congressmembers' political negativity, resulting in an increasingly negative political climate on the platform. Second, I examine how congressmembers' fellow partisans influence their performative practices and how these not only influence the evolution of elites' performative practices but also alter the structure of the political organizations themselves. Lastly, I examine how congressmembers navigate organizational pressures to "fit in" and "stand out" from fellow party elites with whom they compete for organizational resources in increasingly ideologically homogeneous parties.

Research Experience

- Graduate Research Assistant** Aug. 2019 – Present
Pennsylvania State University, Advisor(s): Daniel DellaPosta University Park, PA
- contributed as the primary methodologist on several papers
 - made significant theoretical, methodological, and writing contributions to several papers
 - collaborated with scholars across multiple departments at several institutions
- Graduate Research Assistant** Aug. 2018 – May 2019
Stony Brook University, Advisor(s): Jason Jones & Kathleen Fallon Stony Brook, NY
- carried out digital and archival data collection projects
 - assisted in framing and drafting a major grant application
 - offered one of only three paid RAs in the entire sociology program
- Graduate Research Assistant** Aug. 2016 – Apr. 2018
Brigham Young University, Advisor(s): Sarah Coyne & Kevin Shafer Provo, UT
- trained and oversaw 18 undergraduate researcher assistants on several projects
 - conducted SEM, OLS, and MLM statistics for several peer-reviewed publications
 - charged with managing funds from large research grants
- Undergraduate Research Assistant** Jan. 2013 – Apr. 2016
Brigham Young University, Advisor(s): Sarah Coyne Provo, UT
- participated in data collection of multi-year longitudinal study
 - collaborated in analysis and write-up of several peer-reviewed papers
 - conducted focus groups and lab experiments with over 300 participants

Other Experience

- Adjunct Instructor** Summer 2017, Summer 2018, Summer 2019
Brigham Young University Provo, UT
- Media & Human Development
 - Family Processes
 - Research Methods
- Graduate Teaching Assistant** August, 2018– April, 2019
Stony Brook University Stony Brook, NY
- Multiple Regression (Graduate Course)
 - Introduction to Sociology
- Graduate Teaching Assistant** May, 2016 – April, 2018
Brigham Young University Provo, UT
- Special Topics in Sociology
 - Media & Human Development
- Undergraduate Teaching Assistant** Dec, 2014 – April, 2016
Brigham Young University Provo, UT
- Research Methods
 - Introduction to Sociology
 - Media & Human Development

Publications

Essig, Liam and Daniel DellaPosta. *Forthcoming*. "Partisan Styles of Self-Presentation in Twitter Bios." *Scientific Reports*.

Reschke, Peter, Ashley Fraser, **Liam Essig**, et al. 2022 "Variability in infant helping and sharing behaviors across the second and third years of life: Differential roles of target and socialization." *Developmental Psychology*.

Stockdale, Laura, Christin Porter, Sarah Coyne, **Liam Essig**, McCall Booth, Savannah Kroff, and Emily Schvaneveldt. 2020. "Infants' response to a mobile phone modified still-face paradigm: Links to maternal behaviors and beliefs regarding technofence." *Infancy*.

Cserni, Robert, and **Liam Essig**. 2019. "Twenty Years of Men and Masculinities by the Numbers: An Analysis of Publications and Article Keywords." *Men and Masculinities*.

Coyne, Sarah, Monique Ward, Savannah Kroff, **Liam Essig**. 2019. "Contributions of mainstream sexual media exposure to sexual attitudes, perceived peer norms, and sexual behavior: A meta-analysis." *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Petts, Richard, Kevin Shafer, and **Liam Essig**. 2018. "Does adherence to masculine norms shape fathering?" *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

Coyne, Sarah, Wayne Warburton, **Liam Essig**, and Laura Stockdale. 2018. "Violent video games, externalizing behavior, and prosocial behavior: A five-year longitudinal study during adolescence." *Developmental Psychology*.

Essig, Liam. 2018. "Mr. and Mrs. representation: A content-analytic meta-analysis of gender stereotyping in screen media." *Scholar's Archive*.

Essig, Liam, Melanie Lott, Mona Abo-Zena, Zahra Alghal, Loren Marks, and David Dollahite. 2018. "Answering to Allah: Relational unity among American Muslim families." *Marriage and Family Review*.

Coyne, Sarah, Laura Stockdale, Jennifer Linder, David Nelson, Kevin Collier, and **Liam Essig**. 2017. "Pow! Boom! Kablam! Effects of viewing superhero programs on aggressive, prosocial, and defending behaviors in preschool children." *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*.

Manuscripts in Progress

Kim, Minjae, Daniel DellaPosta, and **Liam Essig**. *Under Review*. "How uncertainty may drive moderate voters to choose extreme candidates." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Essig, Liam. *Under Review*. "Politicians are Increasingly Pessimistic and People 'Like' it." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Fraser, Ashley, Joey Sheppard, **Liam Essig**, Megan Gale, Corrine Archibald-Sato, and Sarah Coyne. *Under Review*. "Caring Karens: Effects of political ideology and social media use on perceptions of racial inequality among mothers." *Political Psychology*.

Ongoing Projects

DellaPosta, Daniel and **Liam Essig**. "Asymmetric Ideologies: The Partisan Structure of Mass Beliefs, 1972-2016".

Adler, Gary, and **Liam Essig**. "What Ended the Separation of Church and State? Schema Replacement, Political Realignment, and Discursive Change".

Research Presentations

“Politicians are Increasingly Negative on Social Media and It’s A Winning Strategy.” *American Sociological Association*. Philadelphia, PA. August 2023.

“How Uncertainty May Drive Moderate Voters to Choose Extreme Candidates.” *Polarization Research Lab’s Annual Meeting*. Stanford, CA. March 2023.

“Why voters choose unrepresentative candidates: Looking for partisan alignment under conditions of uncertainty.” *American Sociological Association*. August 2021.

“Latte Liberals and Christian Conservatives: Evidence of Cultural and Political Polarization on Twitter.” *American Sociological Association*. San Francisco, CA. August 2020.

“Identifying Cultural Polarization in Political Networks on Twitter” *International Network for Social Network Analysis*. Paris, France. June 2020.

“How Can I Convey My Gender?’ The Use of Gender Identifiers in Twitter Bios.” *American Sociological Association*. New York City, NY. August 2019.

“Superman Vs. Average Joe. An Analysis of Superhero Media Consumption and Gendered Outcomes in Young Men.” *Society for Research on Child Development*. March 2019.

“Do You Even Parent, Bro?’ Masculine identity, External Barriers, and Parenting Stress.” *National Council on Family Relations*. Baltimore, MD. October 2017.

“Does Adherence to Masculine Norms Shape Fathers’ Attitudes and Behaviors?” *National Council on Family Relations*. Baltimore, MD. October 2017.

Scholarships, Grants, & Fellowships

Research & Travel Grants

PSU, SBU, & BYU 2013 - 2023

Liberal Arts Teaching and Research Scholarship

Pennsylvania State University 2020

Huber-Form Scholarship

Pennsylvania State University 2019

Garner Research Fellowship

Brigham Young University 2018

ORCA Research Grant

Brigham Young University 2016

Merlin and Edna Sant Scholarship

Brigham Young University 2015 - 2016

Wheatley Student Scholarship

Brigham Young University 2015 - 2018

Full-Tuition Academic Scholarship

Brigham Young University 2013 - 2015

Specialized Skills

Programming Languages: R, Python

Statistical Software: Stata, SPSS, MPlus

Analytic Methods: Social Network Analysis, Text Analysis, Agent-Based Modeling, Structural Equation Modeling, Multi-Level Modeling, Generalized Linear Models

References & Dissertation Committee Members

Dr. Daniel DellaPosta

*Associate Professor, Department of
Sociology & Criminology
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Dr. Gary Adler

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Dr. Diane Felmlee

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Dr. Kevin Munger

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