

Harris, Buttigieg Spark Social Media, Immigration Top Issue Following First 2020 Democratic Presidential Debates

July 29, 2019

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Senator Kamala Harris of California and Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, left a significant impression on the national discourse surrounding the first Democratic debates of the 2020 presidential campaign, according to a social media study performed as part of the George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management's PEORIA Project. The study also found that immigration was the most discussed issue among Twitter users posting about the debate.

On the verge of the second Democratic debates, here are several highlights about the first debates as they were discussed on Twitter. The observations come from the PEORIA Project's ongoing study examining the 2020 presidential campaign conversation.¹

- **Kamala Harris attracted more Twitter mentions (880,020) than President Trump (792,550) in the week following her debate appearance.** Since then the frequency of her mentions has declined sharply although it remains slightly above the rate before the debate. [See Table One, Chart One, and Conversation Excerpt A.]
- **Pete Buttigieg narrowly bested Harris and Castro as the candidate gaining the most** in terms of before/after debate mentions, new followers, and engagements (retweets, likes, and direct addresses). [See Table Six.] This occurred despite Buttigieg himself posting the second fewest tweets of any of the top eight candidates. [See Conversation Excerpt C.]
- **The most discussed issue by far was immigration.** [See Table Five.] This is of course Trump's tentpole issue, which he has linked to national security, jobs, and, during the first debate, health care. [See Conversation Excerpt E.] The topic was also brought to the forefront of the conversation just before the debates by a widely-circulated photograph of a dead father and child attempting to cross into the U.S. The candidate who contested Trump's approach to immigration the most in his tweets, Beto O'Rourke, lost standing relative to the other top candidates in both the polls and on Twitter during this period. [See Table Six.]

¹ The data come via Crimson Hexagon's social media monitoring platform. They span the two weeks before and after the debates (June 20 - July 4, 2019), and include all English-language posts from U.S.-based Twitter accounts which included issue-related keywords or the names of any of the top eight Democratic candidates in the RealClearPolitics aggregate poll on July 4: Joe Biden, Cory Booker, Pete Buttigieg, Julián Castro, Kamala Harris, Beto O'Rourke, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren. (Due to posts with multiple mentions exact counts of posters and posts is not possible; the estimated total is in the low millions for candidate-related posts and mid-to-high millions for issue-related posts.)

- **The three candidates who spoke in Spanish in the Miami debates --Cory Booker, Julián Castro, and Beto O’Rourke-- were ridiculed in English-language tweets** for what some have labeled “Hispandering.” In Spanish language tweets about O’Rourke, however the reception was mixed. [See Conversation Excerpt D.]
- **While the words “socialism” and “socialist” have received much attention in the news media, they appeared rarely in tweets about the debates.** The two candidates most publicly affiliated with the terms, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, avoided using them in their combined 476 tweets all but twice, both by Bernie Sanders. Mentions of Sanders included “socialism” or “socialist” in 8% of the tweets, and 2% of tweets with Warren’s name. [See Tables Thirteen and Fourteen.] **Warren did better overall than Sanders, who fared worst in our measures.** [See Table Six.]
- **The associated words most prominent in tweets with Joe Biden were “Harris,” “Trump,” “Obama,” and “Busing/bussing,” all above 27,000 out of 685,000 total mentions. “Old” came in at “12,367” and “electability” at 2,183.** [See Table Seven.]

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- D. Booker, Castro, and O’Rourke speaking Spanish.
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Table 1 – Total Mentions of Candidates

CANDIDATE	6-20 to 6-26	6-27	6-28 to 7-4	Week-to-week Percentage Rise
Harris	64,784	132,187	880,020	1258%
Buttigieg	37,852	23,660	97,731	158%
Castro	64,243	72,598	135,619	111%
O'Rourke	39,983	35,041	78,799	97%
Biden	303,340	116,749	405,195	34%
Sanders	179,309	68,981	232,580	30%
Warren	203,917	118,010	236,936	16%
Booker	154,333	86,877	179,665	16%
Trump	715,240	133,618	792,550	11%

Table 2 – Candidate Followers

CANDIDATE	# on 6-20	Gain 6-20 to 6-27/Rate	Gain 6-27	Gain 6-28 to 7-4/Rate	# on 7/4
Castro	219,687	2,609 1%	64,361	35,659 12%	322,316
Buttigieg	1,144,877	10,495 1%	22,419	67,532 6%	1,245,323
Harris	2,712,196	13,394 0.4%	5,085	146,054 5%	2,876,729
Warren	2,648,984	30,999 1%	22,713	68,042 2.5%	2,770,738
Booker	4,257,671	3,677 0.1%	5,108	26,530 0.6%	4,292,986
Biden	3,601,600	3,301 0.1%	2,451	9,531 0.3%	3,616,883
O'Rourke	1,432,895	591 0.04%	2,417	2,922 0.2%	1,438,825
Sanders	9,321,024	15,899 0.2%	5,185	24,839 0.2%	9,366,897
Trump	61,149,754	230,955 0.4%	51,280	265,552 0.4%	61,697,541

Table 3 – Candidate Engagements

CANDIDATE	6-20 to 6-26	6-27	6-28 to 7-4	Percentage Rise (Fall)
Buttigieg	116K	122K	469K	304%
Harris	334K	242K	1M	199%
Castro	100K	113K	253K	153%
Booker	167K	44K	271K	62%
Biden	333K	130K	499K	50%
O'Rourke	186K	73K	226K	21%
Warren	648K	170K	684K	5%
Sanders	775K	163K	659K	(-15%)
Trump	7M	1M	9M	29%

Table 4 – Candidate Tweets

CANDIDATE	# TWEETS	TRAVELS & MEDIA RTs	CALLS TO ACTION	CELEBRITY RTs & EXCHANGES	SUPPORTER RTs & EXCHANGES	MESSAGES
Biden	143	9	25	0	0	109
Booker	156	15	23	3	34	81
Buttigieg	75	4	12	3	12	44
Castro	61	28	7	0	15	11
Harris	160	18	16	6	11	109
O'Rourke	262	130	15	0	11	106
Sanders	248	41	37	15	21	134
Warren	228	37	18	18	18	137

Table 5 – Issue Topics and Keyword Groupings for Each

TOPIC	6-20 to 6-26	6-27	6-28 to 7-4
Immigration	5,709,783	1,548,881	4,735,590
Race/Rights	3,548,274	1,271,379	4,038,977
Health Care	1,060,790	1,026,056	1,571,528
Education/Child Care	1,515,732	432,670	1,134,572
International	812,599	204,586	1,071,781
2020 Election	755,595	359,250	1,009,053
Climate Change	1,044,326	303,418	771,222
The Economy/Budget	854,343	341,542	752,824
Impeachment	946,351	183,814	528,204
Corruption	615,174	266,278	570,981
Abortion	1,039,591	316,482	510,007
Guns	335,023	141,320	262,636

ISSUE KEYWORD COMPILATIONS

1. **Abortion**, reproductive rights, Hyde Amendment, Planned Parenthood, Roe, Roe v. Wade, pro-life.
2. **Climate Change**, EPA, Global Warming, Carbon Pricing, Carbon Tax, Paris Agreement, Green New Deal.
3. **Corruption**, Filibuster, Gerrymander, Voting Rights, Citizens United, Court-Packing, The Swamp, Rigged System, Revolving Door, Giant Corporations.
4. **The Economy**, Public Debt, Tax Cut, Budget Deficit, Wealth Tax, Economic Inequality, UBI, Universal Basic Income, Middle Class, Working Class, Billionaires, Minimum Wage.

5. **Education and Children**, Free College, Tuition-Free College, Student Debt, Universal Pre-K, Child Care.
6. **Gun Control**, Gun Buyback, Mass Shootings, School Shootings, Parkland, Newtown, Assault Weapons, Second Amendment, NRA, Gun Rights.
7. **Health Care**, ACA, Medicare for All, Public Option, Private Insurance, Drug Prices, Obamacare, Opioids.
8. **Immigration**, Border Policy, Asylum, Deportation, Decriminalization, Children in Cages, DACA, Undocumented, Illegal Aliens, ICE, Census Question, Open Borders.
9. **Impeachment**, Russia Investigation, Collusion, Mueller, Election Interference, Impeachment Hearings.
10. **International Relations**, Military Spending, Trade Deals, Trade Policy, US Russia, US China, US Korea, US Iran, US Iraq, US Syria, US Middle East, US Afghanistan, Our Troops, Veterans, Nuclear Weapons, NATO, NAFTA.
11. **Race**, Racism, Segregationists, Busing, Bussing, Reparations, Criminal Justice, Civil Rights, LGBT, LGBTQ.
12. **2020 Election**, Electability, Radical Left, Far Left, Leftward, Moderate Democrats, Move to the Center, Socialism, Capitalism, Defeating Trump. Beating Trump, Democratic Senate.

SLOGANS, ONE-LINERS, AND EPITHETS

Sleepy Joe
Crazy Bernie
Pocahontas

That little girl was me.
I did not get it done.
I have a plan for that.
Adios Donald Trump.

Mayor Pete
Speaking Truth
For the People
Revolution
MAGA
Keep America Great
America First

Table 6 – Debate Winners by Twitter Metrics

CANDIDATE	MENTION GROWTH RATE (wk to wk)	FOLLOWER GROWTH RATE (after & before wk)	ENGAGEMENT GROWTH RATE (wk to wk)	MENTIONS (after wk)	MENTION SHARE (Democrats only)	NEW FOLLOWERS (after wk)	ENGAGEMENTS (after wk)	ENGAGEMENT SHARE (Democrats Only)
BIDEN	-3.50%	0.3% up from 0.2%	8%	405,195	18.04%	9,531	499,000	12.29%
BOOKER	-26%	0.6% up from 0.2%	28%	179,665	8.00%	26,530	271,000	6.67%
BUTTGIEG	59%	6% up from 3%	97%	97,731	4.35%	67,532	469,000	11.55%
CASTRO	-0.90%	12% down from 30%	19%	135,619	6.04%	35,659	253,000	6.23%
HARRIS	347%	5% up from .6%	74%	880,020	39.17%	146,054	1,000,000	24.62%
O'ROURKE	5%	0.02% same	-13%	78,799	3.51%	2,922	226,000	5.57%
SANDERS	-6%	0.2% same	-22%	232,580	10.35%	24,839	659,000	16.23%
WARREN	-26%	2.5% up from 2%	-16%	236,936	10.55%	68,042	684,000	16.84%
TRUMP	-6.60%	0.4% down from 0.5%	12.50%	792,550		265,552	9,000,000+	

Table 7 – Terms Associated with Joe Biden

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
JOE BIDEN	TOTAL MENTIONS	685,711	293,952	111,768	279,991
JOE BIDEN	"Affordable Care Act"	409	88	279	42
JOE BIDEN	"Hyde Amendment"	1,663	279	313	1,071
JOE BIDEN	"Kamala Harris"	100,202	1,662	17,492	81,048
JOE BIDEN	"Sleepy Joe"	9,999	5,441	883	3,675
JOE BIDEN	Abortion	4,757	3,755	235	767
JOE BIDEN	ACA	66	12	34	20
JOE BIDEN	Busing/Bussing(sp)/Busse d	27,341	3,995	3,667	19,679
JOE BIDEN	<i>Busing</i>	24,600	3,930	3,074	17,596
JOE BIDEN	<i>Bussed</i>	509	0	179	330
JOE BIDEN	<i>Bussing</i>	2,232	65	414	1,753
JOE BIDEN	Electability	2,183	1,285	179	719
JOE BIDEN	Healthcare	2,682	589	1,554	539
JOE BIDEN	Immigration	2,362	813	715	834
JOE BIDEN	Obama	64,670	32,979	8,137	23,554
JOE BIDEN	Old	12,367	5,895	1,900	4,572
JOE BIDEN	Racism	3,878	2,605	212	1,061
JOE BIDEN	Segregation	13,530	2,316	1,006	10,208
JOE BIDEN	Trump	114,729	43,803	18,207	52,719
JOE BIDEN	Women	11,631	1,977	950	8,703

Table 8 – Terms Associated with Cory Booker

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
CORY BOOKER	TOTAL MENTIONS	175,430	83,252	44,755	47,423
CORY BOOKER	"Affordable Housing"	8	7	0	1
CORY BOOKER	"Baby Bonds"	102	74	13	15
CORY BOOKER	"Climate Change"	63	37	9	17
CORY BOOKER	"Kamala Harris"	11,704	1,570	255	9,879
CORY BOOKER	"Low Income/ Low Income Community"	244	226	13	5
<i>CORY BOOKER</i>	<i>"Low Income Community"</i>	63	59	4	0
<i>CORY BOOKER</i>	<i>"Low Income"</i>	181	167	9	5
CORY BOOKER	"Voting Rights"	74	24	0	50
CORY BOOKER	Economy	134	117	13	4
CORY BOOKER	Guns	601	450	81	70
CORY BOOKER	Hispandering	823	537	273	13
CORY BOOKER	ICE	1,189	875	210	104
CORY BOOKER	Neighborhood	4,314	1,709	2,462	143
CORY BOOKER	Spanish	27,077	9,633	13,726	3,718
CORY BOOKER	Urgency	71	46	0	25

Table 9 – Terms Associated with Pete Buttigieg

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
PETE BUTTIGIEG	TOTAL MENTIONS	135,583	37,852	23,600	74,071
PETE BUTTIGIEG	"African Americans"	499	101	5	393
PETE BUTTIGIEG	"I Couldn't Get It Done"	625	0	182	443
PETE BUTTIGIEG	"Mayor Pete"	25,960	12,415	4,209	9,336
PETE BUTTIGIEG	"New Generation "	43	12	2	29
PETE BUTTIGIEG	"Religious Left"	19	5	2	12
PETE BUTTIGIEG	"Student Loan Debt"	292	5	213	74
PETE BUTTIGIEG	"Town Hall"	6,510	5,885	296	329
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Biden	15,687	1,991	2,435	11,261
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Christian	2,670	139	1,069	1,462
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Gay	3,393	1,549	371	1,473
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Healthcare	145	82	38	25
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Immigration	1,001	253	71	677
PETE BUTTIGIEG	LGBT	763	26	2	735
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Military	1,221	302	95	824
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Millennial	85	12	28	45
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Pence	400	76	35	289
PETE BUTTIGIEG	<i>Racism</i>	2,214	696	180	1,338
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Trump	6,096	859	1,114	4,123
PETE BUTTIGIEG	Veteran	421	17	43	361

Table 10 – Terms Associated with Julián Castro

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
JULIAN CASTRO	TOTAL MENTIONS	105,666	35,189	38,336	32,141
JULIAN CASTRO	"Adios Trump"	181	29	146	6
JULIAN CASTRO	"Beto O'Rourke"	5,226	974	1,096	3,156
JULIAN CASTRO	"Border Security"	29	12	15	2
JULIAN CASTRO	"Detention Facilities"	181	109	0	72
JULIAN CASTRO	"Elizabeth Warren"	10,512	3,893	4,784	1,835
JULIAN CASTRO	"Executive Experience"	6	4	0	2
JULIAN CASTRO	"Piss Us All Off"	899	602	280	17
JULIAN CASTRO	"Section 1325"	2,038	374	943	721
JULIAN CASTRO	"Trans Community"	1,394	535	472	387
JULIAN CASTRO	"Vice President"/VP	890	359	342	189
JULIAN CASTRO	<i>"Vice President"</i>	61	33	8	20
JULIAN CASTRO	VP	829	326	334	169
JULIAN CASTRO	Decriminalization	259	192	42	25
JULIAN CASTRO	ICE	1,261	107	73	1,081
JULIAN CASTRO	Immigration	9,479	4,273	3,170	2,036
JULIAN CASTRO	Spanish	5,374	1,194	924	3,256
JULIAN CASTRO	Texas	3,227	1,335	1,196	696

Table 11 – Terms Associated with Kamala Harris

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
KAMALA HARRIS	TOTAL MENTIONS	944,804	64,784	132,187	747,833
KAMALA HARRIS	"Criminal Justice"	8,233	151	106	7,976
KAMALA HARRIS	"Food Fight"	8,859	0	6,041	2,818
KAMALA HARRIS	"For The People"	1,344	271	159	914
KAMALA HARRIS	"Not American Black"	2,613	0	26	2,587
KAMALA HARRIS	"That Little Girl Was Me"	4,496	0	542	3,954
KAMALA HARRIS	Barr	436	45	172	219
KAMALA HARRIS	Biden	152,024	3,513	27,931	120,580
KAMALA HARRIS	Busing/Bussing(sp)/Busse d	32,966	2	3,212	29,752
KAMALA HARRIS	<i>Busing</i>	24,507	1	2,591	21,915
KAMALA HARRIS	<i>Bussed</i>	5,131	0	172	4,959
KAMALA HARRIS	<i>Bussing</i>	3,328	1	449	2,878
KAMALA HARRIS	Healthcare	13,224	55	753	12,416
KAMALA HARRIS	Immigration	2,600	355	939	1,306
KAMALA HARRIS	Kavanaugh	9,005	7,478	264	1,263
KAMALA HARRIS	Predator	11,032	51	13	10,968
KAMALA HARRIS	Prosecutor	15,819	860	2,128	12,831
KAMALA HARRIS	Segregation	12,470	75	1,269	11,126
KAMALA HARRIS	Trump	153,737	7,969	18,493	127,275

Table 12 – Terms Associated with Beto O’Rourke

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
BETO O’ROURKE	TOTAL MENTIONS	60,334	21,257	17,685	21,392
BETO O’ROURKE	"Border Security"	3	3	0	0
BETO O’ROURKE	"DACA Parents"/"Dreamer Parents"	0	0	0	0
BETO O’ROURKE	"Detention Facilities"	10	0	0	10
BETO O’ROURKE	"Foregin Policy"	436	301	5	130
BETO O’ROURKE	"Julian Castro"	5,372	1,026	1,141	3,205
BETO O’ROURKE	Corporations	9	9	0	0
BETO O’ROURKE	Democracy	444	130	276	38
BETO O’ROURKE	Dreamers (DACA)	5	1	2	2
BETO O’ROURKE	Hispandering	6	1	2	3
BETO O’ROURKE	ICE	200	190	4	6
BETO O’ROURKE	Immigration	1,174	428	416	330
BETO O’ROURKE	Spanish	19,470	7,253	10,397	1,820
BETO O’ROURKE	Texas	2,039	890	235	914

Table 13 – Terms Associated with Bernie Sanders

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
BERNIE SANDERS	TOTAL MENTIONS	394,058	172,842	64,355	156,861
BERNIE SANDERS	"Crazy Bernie"	1,112	794	84	234
BERNIE SANDERS	"Medicare for All"	9,306	3,329	1,744	4,233
BERNIE SANDERS	"The Guts"	706	47	142	517
BERNIE SANDERS	"Tuition Free College"	345	313	0	32
BERNIE SANDERS	Biden	39,408	12,033	5,702	21,673
BERNIE SANDERS	Billionaires	1,319	358	77	884
BERNIE SANDERS	College	14,600	12,317	830	1,453
BERNIE SANDERS	Healthcare	16,016	11,986	1,622	2,408
BERNIE SANDERS	Immigration	4,952	3,771	348	833
BERNIE SANDERS	Old	4,057	1,543	682	1,832
BERNIE SANDERS	Revolution	2,309	819	714	776
BERNIE SANDERS	Socialism	11,416	4,667	1,165	5,584
BERNIE SANDERS	Socialist	21,830	4,352	7,999	9,479
BERNIE SANDERS	Trump	26,712	12,966	2,851	10,895

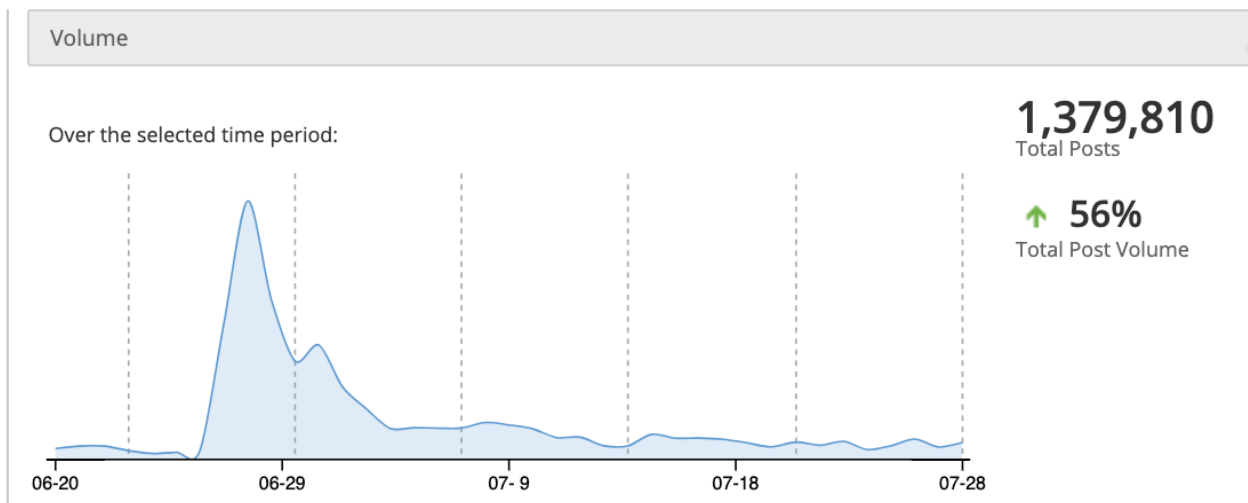
Table 14 – Terms Associated with Elizabeth Warren

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
ELIZABETH WARREN	TOTAL MENTIONS	440,853	203,917	118,010	118,936
ELIZABETH WARREN	"Child Care"	735	436	153	146
ELIZABETH WARREN	"Democratic Senate"	17	10	0	7
ELIZABETH WARREN	"Medicare for All"	3,471	1,818	1,027	626
ELIZABETH WARREN	"Wealth Tax"	840	433	177	230
ELIZABETH WARREN	Biden	24,979	5,837	2,573	16,569
ELIZABETH WARREN	Corruption	4,904	3,544	484	876
ELIZABETH WARREN	Healthcare	4,976	2,831	1,381	764
ELIZABETH WARREN	Immigration	4,656	4,002	507	147
ELIZABETH WARREN	Plan	42,293	24,450	9,252	8,591
ELIZABETH WARREN	Pocahontas	6,418	4,011	1,322	1,085
ELIZABETH WARREN	Policy	12,527	7,618	3,316	1,593
ELIZABETH WARREN	Socialism	729	591	83	55
ELIZABETH WARREN	Socialist	8,654	1,103	6,196	1,355
ELIZABETH WARREN	Trump	31,693	11,177	8,025	12,491

Table 15 – Terms Associated with Donald Trump

CANDIDATE	KEYWORDS	JUN 20-JUL 4	JUN 20-26	JUN 27	JUN 28-JUL 4
DONALD TRUMP	TOTAL MENTIONS	1,463,303	871,095	129,403	640,542
DONALD TRUMP	"Illegal Aliens"	1,065	466	168	298
DONALD TRUMP	"The Wall"	3,917	429	78	311
DONALD TRUMP	"Unlimited Health Care"	0	0	0	0
DONALD TRUMP	"Unlimited Healthcare"	0	0	0	0
DONALD TRUMP	China	8,638	6,532	375	5,368
DONALD TRUMP	Immigration	24,722	15,537	2,989	11,233
DONALD TRUMP	Impeach	6,720	4,146	116	3,383
DONALD TRUMP	Iran	48,763	8,771	1,423	4,900
DONALD TRUMP	MAGA	21,129	9,153	919	6,747
DONALD TRUMP	Russia	17,095	14,144	712	11,864

Chart 1 – Twitter Posts Mentioning Kamala Harris



Conversation Excerpts

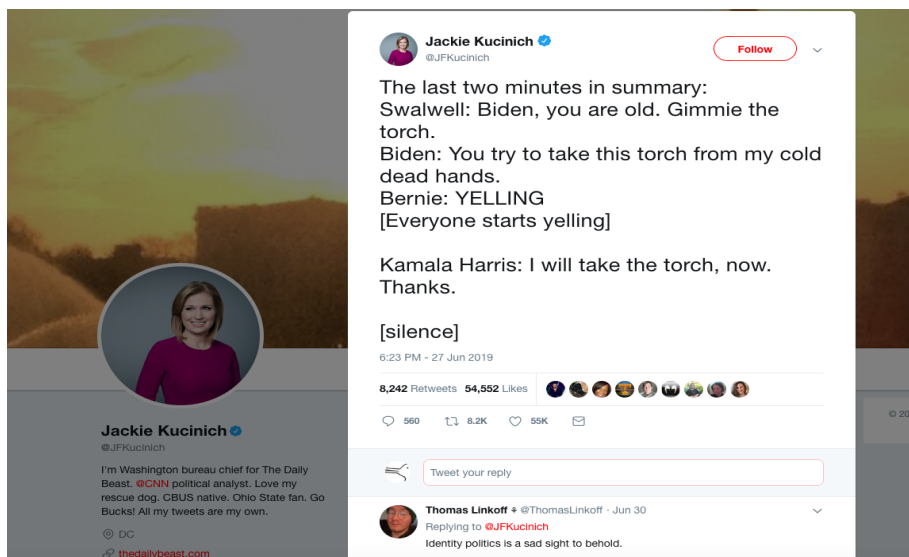
A. Harris Attacks Biden

The Biden-Harris confrontation generated an explosion of tweets, including 35,488 with both names in the same post. Here are a few that attracted thousands of re-tweets and likes.

This wisecrack gave rise to a thread dialogue expressing a variety of views. One accused Harris of playing the race card, “which African-American politicians are permitted to do.” Another wrote: “I don’t understand how she helps to calm things down,” a larger point than the immediate context in which the Senator had riled things up, in as much as it (apparently) voices a desire for a more civil public space post-Trump.



A journalist for the *Daily Beast* posted a real-time comical recap anticipating the impacts on several candidates' fortunes of the exchange preceding and including the Harris-Biden confrontation:



While a black commentator addressed white liberals:



A screenshot of a tweet from the user @Unknwnstuntman. The tweet text reads: "Dear white liberals: Kamala Harris wasn't mean to Joe Biden. She wasn't aggressive with Joe Biden. She wasn't hostile to Joe Biden. You're just unfamiliar with black people calling you on your bullshit particularly in matters of race. Get used to it. Signed A Black Man". The tweet is dated 3:01 AM - 28 Jun 2019 and has 9,113 retweets and 57,767 likes. A reply from user Cheryl (@chuerta1) is visible below, stating: "No worries, this white liberal knows and might have treated Joe the same way. These damned 'myths' about people has got to stop. A black person strongly expressing their views isn't aggressive. A woman strongly expressing her views". The user's bio includes: "Former Professional Bodyguard. Retired Security consultant with expertise in cyber security, threat assessment & digital (counter)surveillance. Full time nerd."

For her part, Harris not only posted a photograph documenting her “That little girl was me” mic-drop line, but added a journalist’s assessment that captioned the moment exactly how she wanted it:



A screenshot of a tweet from Kamala Harris (@KamalaHarris). The tweet text reads: "We need a nominee who has the ability to prosecute the case against four more years of Trump. I will do that." Below the text is a photograph of Kamala Harris. The photo is captioned: "Kamala Harris was the Democrat you could imagine taking on Trump How Harris shut down Joe Biden and transformed her candidacy, plus four other takeaways. vox.com". The tweet is dated 3:18 PM - 28 Jun 2019 and has 4,326 retweets and 26,355 likes. The user's bio includes: "U.S. Senator and candidate for president. Wife, Momma, Auntie. Fighting for the people. No corporate PACs. Just people like you. Text JOIN to 70785 to join us."

B. Sanders, Warren, and “socialism.”

The “s” word cropped up, especially from detractors, in 8,349 tweets with Warren’s name and 21,380 with Sanders’s during the two-week period enveloping the debates. Here “socialism” is thematized by a prominent online conservative voice as part of a broadside against several Democrats who were, borrowing a favorite word of the president, fakers:



One Warren supporter pushed back on the inappropriateness of the label:



While a black Trump supporter with a sizable following sought to equate socialism with big government:



C. Exploring Buttigieg's Popularity as a Twitter Subject.

Buttigieg over-performed on Twitter relative to his poll standing but not his fundraising. Reading excerpts from posts with his name in them during the two-week period under review yields nothing that explains the dynamics behind these three data points (Twitter popularity, poll standing, and fundraising).

This post notes that Buttigieg makes no apologies or contrary stands regarding wealth donors:



And this post underscores Buttigieg's difficulties with African-Americans:



Keith Boykin ✓
@keithboykin

Mayor Pete Buttigieg: "I do not have evidence that there has been discipline for racist behavior..."

Protester: "You running for president and you expect black people to vote for you?"

Buttigieg: "I'm not asking for your vote."

Protester: "You ain't gonna get it either."




8:51 PM · Jun 21, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

7.5K Retweets 21.2K Likes

D. Booker, Castro, and O'Rourke Speak in Spanish.

O'Rourke's first response at the top of the first debate was in Spanish, eliciting a meme-worthy side-eye from Booker and these well-circulated barbs:

 **Caleb Hull** ✓
@CalebJHull

Cory Booker's face while Beto O'Rourke speaks in Spanish
LMAO



0:05 | 2.5M views

9:13 PM · Jun 26, 2019 · [Twitter Web Client](#)

19.7K Retweets 112.9K Likes



mad-liberals
@mad_liberals

All tweets are original artwork. But feel free to share anything you wish. All done for the love of our wonderful President!
© Florida, USA

mad-liberals
@mad_liberals

Follow

Highlights from the First Democratic Debate!
Starring Corey Booker, Julian Castro, and Beto O'Rourke



0:38 | 105K views

8:10 PM - 27 Jun 2019

4,257 Retweets 9,047 Likes

463 4.3K 9.0K

Tweet your reply

Later, Booker himself spoke Spanish, to the same result:

 **Terrence K. Williams** ✓
@w_terrence

Cory Booker tried to speak in Spanish last night but it ended speaking something else.

Can someone translate this for me ? What was he speaking and saying ?

Who's laughing with me ??



4:21 PM · Jun 27, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

8.8K Retweets 29.3K Likes

E. Trump Intervenes at an Intersection of the Immigration and Health Care Issues.

Finally, here is a microcosm of the first Democratic debates and the state of presidential candidate debates. During the June 27 session moderator Savannah Guthrie asked for a show of hands from the second group of ten contestants “if your government plan would provide coverage for undocumented immigrants.” All ten raised a hand.

Raised hands provide even less information than tweets. Guthrie called on Pete Buttigieg to explain his position:

BUTTIGIEG: Because our country is healthier when everybody is healthier. And remember, we're talking about something people are getting a—given a chance to buy into. In the same way that there are undocumented immigrants in my community who pay, they pay sales taxes, they pay property taxes directly or indirectly. This is not about a handout. This is an insurance program. And we do ourselves no favor by having 11 million undocumented people in our country be unable to access healthcare.

Buttigieg went on to say that the American people largely agree on immigration policy and that:

If leadership consists of—of forming a consensus around a divisive issue, this White House has divided us around a consensus issue.... Washington can't deliver on something the American people want. What does that tell you about the system we're living in? It tells you it needs profound—

GUTHRIE:

—Mayor, thank you—

BUTTIGIEG:

—Structural reform.

Guthrie turned next to Joe Biden. He agreed with Buttigieg that:

BIDEN: you cannot let people who are sick, no matter where they come from, no matter what their status, go uncovered....

Biden pointed out that they had increased the lifespan of Social Security by paying into the system, and insuring them would reduce health care costs by substituting preventive for emergency care. He assailed the pharmaceutical industry for misleading ads on opioids and excessively high prices in general.

Then the moderator cut to a commercial break after which a new topic was broached. But minutes later @realdonaldtrump chimed in:



In his tweet the president swapped out “undocumented immigrants” for “illegal aliens,” a terminological switch that encapsulates the controversy. Trump also mischaracterized the question and answers by terming the option to purchase health care insurance as “unlimited healthcare.” Trump knew this was a hot-button ready to be pushed. Perhaps he remembered that Congressman Joe Wilson of South Carolina back in 2009 had yelled “You Lie!” at President Obama during the State of the Union Address when Obama assured people that his health care plan did not provide coverage to undocumented workers. Obama was correct for his version.

Sometimes, full appreciation of the politics of presidential candidate debates requires a double inflation of context, once for the time-compressed exchanges on stage and a second for the comments on those exchanges in social media such as Twitter.