Understanding Users Across Parler and Twitter

Primary Research Question:

What were the social-media behavior and content patterns of users across Parler and Twitter that engaged in conversations leading up to the January 6th insurrection?

Digital mis/disinformation extends to offline world

A stark example of this exists in the case of the Capitol Insurrection on January 6th, 2021.

Insurrection as cross-platform case study

The insurrection is an ideal case study because of the widespread and accessible nature of conversation around the event on low-moderation platforms like Parler.

Identified 44 users

Tracked users across Parler and Twitter. They were chosen based on activity leading up to Jan 6.

6 in-depth case studies

Used digital trace ethnographic methods and qualitatively coded posts during important time periods

Who was a part of conversations

10 veterans and/or family of military service members

11 presented as older adults

29 presented as white, **1** as Indian and **1** as Cuban, all others had no human pictures

18 presented as female, **13** as male

All 44 identified as conservative

Unexpected participants

International influencers and organic participants

Primarily conservative British and Indian (Indian Americans and Indian national), often unified in anti–Muslim sentiment

Inauthentic accounts

Users were accused/accused others of inauthenticity
Difficult to tell who was real and who was not

Platform engagement: case studies

2 removed from Twitter: **1** deleted, **1** suspended
  ○ Not active on Parler since it came back online
3 remained active on Twitter despite constantly disparaging Twitter and Jack Dorsey
  ○ All **3** resumed activity on Parler
1 had last Twitter post in October
  ○ Deleted Parler account after ~January 10th
Twitter behavior was **less explicit, but thematically similar** to Parler

Drivers of conversation

Surface level claims of election fraud **were preceded by an intense distrust of established systems.** People were already primed to challenge election results long before it took place.

Q influence: Qanon rhetoric and mainstream conservative rhetoric overlap. Even amongst those who claim Q is not to be believed, their views adopted QAnon rhetoric and in some cases they became Q supporters.