

DIGITAL ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP AT HARVARD
DASH.HARVARD.EDU

HARVARD LIBRARY


The U.S. Capitol Riot: Examining the Rioters, Social Media, and Disinformation

Citation

WANG, JIAN. 2022. The U.S. Capitol Riot: Examining the Rioters, Social Media, and Disinformation. Master's thesis, Harvard University Division of Continuing Education.

Link

https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37371540

Terms of use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material (LAA), as set forth at

https://harvardwiki.atlassian.net/wiki/external/NGY5NDE4ZjgzNTc5NDQzMGIzZWZhMGFlOWI2M2EwYTg

Accessibility

https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/digital-accessibility-policy

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. Submit a story

The U.S. Capitol Riot: Examining the Rioters, Social Media, and Disinformation

JIAN WANG

A Thesis in the Field of Government
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University
May 2022

Copyright 2022 [JIAN WANG]

Abstract

The thesis focuses on participants involved in the January 6 insurrection. The major aims of this thesis are to find out who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021, and to learn what major factors influenced them to engage in the insurrection that broke the tradition of peaceful transition of power for the first time since Lincoln's Presidential election. It is also to study the current intertwined relationships between political elites, social media, technology, disinformation and mass audiences, and how they gathered together and organized the 'stop the steal' campaign, causing the violence on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. By studying this, we can learn how to prepare to face other looming and ongoing challenges that disinformation poses to democracy in the near future such as the mid-term election this November and the next Presidential Election in 2024, creating viable solutions.

The thesis selected 124 subjects out of 691 on the Capitol Breach Cases' list across all regions of the U.S. It organized their data, including their names, and primary demographics such as gender, race, the geography of residence, and age, and reviewed and examined their attitudes towards the insurrection on January 6, 2021 in response to a belief that the 2020 election was fraudulent. The findings show that majority of participants are white male. 91.13% or 630 (0.9113 x 691 = 630) of whom are employed and 30% of or 207 (0.3 x 691) participants who are university or college educated. A number of defendants had associations with QAnon conspiracy theory and some known

DVE (domestic violent extremist) groups such as Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, and Three Percenters.

The most striking finding is that veterans were highly over-represented in the mob (17% or 117), which exceeds the percentage of veterans in the U.S. population as a whole. The thesis suggests that four possible motivations for their participation: extremism in the military, nationalism and patriotism, a belief in Donald Trump's false claims, and social media.

It also reveals that there is a strong positive connection between disinformation on social media and participants as they (96% of or 663 participants) were nearly all active on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Parler and Instagram, sharing and receiving misinformation about the election. More specifically, social media platforms should bear responsibility because social media technology employs popularity-based algorithms that tailor content to maximize user engagement, increasing the level of polarization, partisan animosity and political sectarianism.

The thesis is significant because the study of the January 6 insurrection and its associations with social media and disinformation is also a study of American political culture and society. It provides insight into whether and when the political beliefs or psychology of individuals affect the nation's political health. The thesis offers several recommendations on combat extremism in the military ranks and disinformation on social media. Ultimately, it expresses serious concerns for the integrity and security of the mid-term election this November and the next Presidential Election in 2024, and the future of democracy.

Dedication

To those who protect the and stand for Democracy, especially those Capitol police officers who protected the Capitol, lawmakers, and the U.S. Constitution and Democracy on January 6, 2021.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my thesis director Professor Allan A. Ryan for his invaluable feedback and support, guiding me and accompanying me over the course of the project. Our conversations on Zoom and most recently in Cambridge have helped me become a better academic and a person. I am fortunate to have him as my thesis director. Thank you for your role in my formation as a scholar.

I am also very grateful to my research advisor Professor Michael David Miner for helping me narrow down my thesis topic, preparing my thesis proposal and reviewing my thesis format. His assistance was invaluable. Thank you for having guided me in the direction of my thesis topic.

To my friends outside academia who have helped me along the way, I thank all of you for your presence in my life. To my dear friend AnQi Chang, thank you for helping me stay grounded.

Finally, to my family who has always supported me unconditionally, I am grateful for your support over the years, particularly to my brother Hong Wang who has always believed in and supported me. My dear parents, I owe you a significant debt of gratitude. Thank you for giving my brother and me the opportunity to follow our dreams.

Table of Contents

Dedication v

Acknowledgments vi

List of Tables iIX

List of Figures x

Chapter I. Introduction 1

Research Questions and Hypotheses 3

Literature Review 6

The History of the Relationship between the Press, Technology, and Political Parties 6

Fake News, Misinformation and Disinformation are not new 7

The Emergence of Social Media 9

Producers of Disinformation on Social Media 12

Chapter II. Research Methods 16

Limitations 18

Chapter III. Findings 20

Chapter IV. Categorizing the Insurrection Participants 25

Organized Domestic Violent Extremist (DVE) Groups 25

Organized Groups with no Associations with DVE 31

Individuals Acting Alone 37

Conclusion 42

Chapter V. Veterans 44
Extremism in the Military Ranks 44
A Lack of Attention to the Problem of Extremism in the Military 46
Uneven Response to the Extremism in the Military Ranks 48
Patriotism and Nationalism 51
Donald Trump, His False Claims and Rectifying an Injustice 55
The Role of Social Media 59
Chapter VI. Results & Discussion 62
Discussion 65
Chapter VII. Recommendations 73
Combat to Extremism in the Military Ranks 74
Regulations on Social Media 76
Bottom-Up Changes: Teaching Individuals: Fact Checking 77
Top-Down Changes: Altering the Algorithms 77
Government Regulations 79
The President's Attitude 79
Chapter VIII. Conclusion 81
Appendix 1. Participants' data 86
References 103

List of Table

Table 1. Participants' demographics.....23

List of Figures

Figure 1. The Proud Boy adopted Trump's phrase 49

Figure 2. Trump spread misinformation on his Twitter 56-57

Figure 3. Trump spread misinformation on his Twitter 56-57

Figure 4. Trump spread misinformation on his Twitter 56-57

Figure 5. Trump's lawsuits 57

Figure 6. Trump's speech on January 6, 2021 58

Chapter I

Introduction

On January 6, 2021, when members of Congress and Vice President Michael Pence met to certify Joe Biden as a winner of the 2020 Presidential election at around 1:03 pm, President Donald Trump, a few minutes later, finished his speech to his supporters in Washington and called for his supporters to march on Congress.[1] Exhorted by Trump, thousands of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol, ransacked federal offices and violently attacked federal officers, resulting in at least five deaths and many injuries and damage to federal property.[2]

The January 6 insurrection was a defining event, representing a violent mob's attempt to overturn a fair and democratic election. The attack on the Capitol was in an attempt to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's election victory because those rioters believed 'the Election was stolen by Democrats' as claimed by Trump who had repeatedly promoted and disseminated this false information for months on various social media platforms before, during and after the election in 2020.[3]

After the insurrection, many scholars and political leaders condemned Trump for spreading misinformation about the election and accused him of inciting his supporters to

---

[1] Shelly Tan, Youjin Shin, and Danielle Rindler, “How One of America’s Ugliest Days Unraveled inside and Outside the Capitol,” Washington Post, accessed January 1, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2021/capitol-insurrection-visual-timeline/.
[2] Michael A Foster and Peter G Berris, “Federal Criminal Law: January 6, 2021, Unrest at the Capitol,” n.d., 7.
[3] Tan, Shin and Rindler, "How one of America's ugliest days unraveled inside and outside the Capitol."

attack the Capitol. For instance, a number of Republican lawmakers, including Senator Lindsey Graham and House Representative Liz Cheney, criticized him over the January 6 violence. "He is going to have a place in history of all of this (Capitol Riot)"[4] said Senator Lindsey Graham. Despite her support for Trump's re-election in 2020, long-term established House Republican Representative Liz Cheney voted for the second impeachment of Trump, and later joined the House Select Committee to investigate the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol.[5]

The January 6 insurrection also interrupted more than two centuries of peaceful transfers of power,[6] and challenged Constitutional values, undermining the willingness of the loser to accept defeat, an essential requirement of a democracy.[7] Before President Biden, solely one president experienced a large proportion of the country rejected the outcome of the election and stormed the Capitol after winning a Presidential Election, and that president was Abraham Lincoln.[8] There are, however, major differences between then and now. While Lincoln's victory in the 1860 election tore America apart on the divisive issue of slavery, no one called the election rigged or fraudulent.[9] On the other hand, the 2020 U.S. Presidential election result itself was claimed to be fraudulent by

[4] John Bowden, "Graham says Trump will have 'a place in history' for Capitol riot," The Hill, July 2, 2021, https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/537717-graham-says-trump-will-have-a-place-in-history-for-capitol-riots?rl=1.
[5] Cristina Marcos, "The fates of the 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump," The Hill, January 14, 2021, https://thehill.com/homenews/house/589826-the-fates-of-the-10-house-republicans-who-voted-to-impeach-trump.
[6] Stephen Collison, "January 6 may be only a preview of a deeper democratic rupture," CNN, accessed January 6, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/06/politics/january-6-insurrection-legacy/index.html.
[7] "Congressional Record, Volume 167 Issue 8 (Wednesday, January 13, 2021)," accessed March 1, 2022, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-2021-01-13/html/CREC-2021-01-13-pt1-PgH165.htm.
[8] Ted Widmer, "Opinion | The Capitol Takeover That Wasn't," *The New York Times*, January 8, 2021, sec. Opinion, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/opinion/capitol-protest-1861-lincoln.html.
[9] Matthew Rozsa, "How Abraham Lincoln Dealt with Traitors and Insurrectionists: A History Lesson," Salon, December 12, 2021, https://www.salon.com/2021/12/12/how-abraham-lincoln-dealt-with-traitors-and-insurrectionists-a-history-lesson/.

Trump, his political allies and supporters. Furthermore, what Lincoln faced after the election were violent rebels in the Southern States that caused the American civil war, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths. Even though there has been no actual civil war after the insurrection, what President Biden confronts is damage done by the insurrection that might compare to a civil war. The violent attack on the Capitol might also send a dangerous message to the American people that an American Presidential election may not be decided by solely the electoral success of one political party, nor should it be ultimately decided by the Constitution.

Moreover, we still do not have a full picture of those participants' real identities and their motivations behind it, as we do of the Southerners during Lincoln's time. For example, why would they so willingly believe Trump's words such as 'the election was stolen' while ignoring facts published by state and federal officials that the election was fair and free? Hence, it is vital to study those participants to learn their identities and motivations so that we may better prepare for similar potential violent activities in the near future such as the mid-term election this November and the next Presidential Election in 2024. Therefore, my major aims in this thesis are to find out who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021 to know who we are dealing with, and to learn what main factors influenced them to fail to recognize disinformation on social media, and engaged in the insurrection that broke the tradition of peaceful transition of power for the first time since Lincoln’s Presidential Election.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this case, the thesis will address the two main research questions. My first research question is: Who stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021? Clearly, those

participants involved in the insurrection are Trump's supporters. However, based on photos of those participants listed on the FBI website and numerous media reports, those participants' identities were mixed. Some of them were wearing the same uniforms, military goggles, well-armed and appeared to come from the same group, while the majority was wearing their non-tactical cloths without holding any weapons such as guns. Thus, my first hypothesis is,

H1: Those who participated in the insurrection came together with the same purpose, but they were from various groups.

The second question is: What main factors led Trump's supporters to believe Trump's false claims and engage in the insurrection on January 6, 2021? Other questions will also be discussed in this regard, including whether participants believe Trump's false claims and conspiracy theories because of their ignorance? What were their motives to attack their partisan opponents?

Disinformation, conspiracy theories and social media might be the main factors. A conspiracy theory is "an effort to explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who attempt to conceal their role."[10] Conspiracy theories include the government or political elites are taking over the country or the world for nefarious purposes.[11] In some circumstances, people holding such conspiratorial beliefs are more likely to feel threatened, hence they are less likely to reduce their capacity to distinguish between fake and true information. They may also be willing to

[10] Matthew Baum, James Druckman, Matthew D. Simonson, Jennifer Lin, and Roy H. Perlis. "What I Saw on the Road to Insurrection: Internal Political Efficacy, Conspiracy Beliefs and the Effect of Depression on Support for the January 6th Storming of the Capitol." *OSF Preprints*. July 26, 2021. doi:10.31219/osf.io/tnfj7.
[11] Baum et al., "What I Saw on the Road to Insurrection."

combat the issues by violent means [12] because some scholars believe violence is the "remedy for the grievance (s) that caused an individual's motivation imbalance."[13]

Also, readily accessible disinformation and conspiracy theories found on social media might play a significant role in influencing Trump's supporters' decision to participate in the insurrection. It might be very easy for Trump to spread misinformation and his conspiracy theory widely to the mass audience on social media. Given the empirical focus on the participants involved in the January 6 insurrection, disinformation, conspiratorial beliefs and social media are likely to be particularly relevant. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H2: There might be a strong direct correlation between disinformation on social media platforms and the January 6 insurrection.

H3: At the same time, I also hypothesize that factors such as age, race, education and employment might have little impact on those rioters' ability to recognize disinformation on social media, while other factors such as their readiness to accept the truth of conspiracy theories, stolen elections, and the dishonestly of the political opposition might affect their judgments and lead to the acceptance of disinformation.

In a nutshell, the January 6 insurrection provides an excellent opportunity to study the current intertwined relationships between political elites, social media, technology, disinformation and mass audiences, and how they gathered together and organized the 'Stop the Steal' campaign, causing the violence on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. By studying this, we can learn how to prepare to face other looming and ongoing challenges

[12] Baum et al., “What I Saw on the Road to Insurrection.”
[13] David Webber, Arie Kruglanski, Erica Molinario, and Katarzyna Jasko. 2020. "Ideologies that justify Political Violence." Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences 34. August 2020. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352154620300048

that disinformation poses to democracy, creating viable solutions for the future. Current research can tell little about it. Therefore, it is meaningful to conduct systematic and thorough research on the relationships between the January 6th insurrection, disinformation and social media platforms.

The remainder of this thesis proceeds as follows: First, it begins by reviewing the pertinent literature. Then, it describes research methods and data collection. Next, it presents the results from a series of randomly selected participants involved in the insurrection. Finally, it discusses findings, provides recommendations and draws conclusions.

Literature Review

The History of the Relationship between the Press, Technology, and Political Parties

Changes in media technology have repeatedly influenced American democracy.[14] Newspapers were the major American political communication prior to the broadcast era and internet age.[15] Before the mid-19th century, the relationship between political parties and the newspapers was intertwined. Most newspapers were identified as partisan boosterism that had close associations with politicians.[16] They received a political party's financial support and other benefits as a result of being partisan mouthpieces.[17] Nevertheless, with the introduction of new technology, the "Penny Paper" started to

[14] Hunt Allcott, and Matthew Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Eletction." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31. no. 2 (May 2017): 211-36. DOI: 10.1257/jep.31.2.211
[15] Allcott and Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election."
[16] Rieselbach, "Making Laws and Making News."
[17]Culver H Smith, *The Press, Politics, and Patronage: The American Government's Use of Newspapers, 1789-1875* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977).

change the information system in the middle 19th century.[18] "Penny Paper" brought cheap newsprint and a mass advertising revenue model that allowed many newspapers to profit and become independent from party control,[19] almost eliminating the older form of partisan paper in the late 19th century.[20] There were merely 13 percent of non-partisan papers in the top 50 markets in 1870, but it exploded to about 47 percent in 1900.[21] Additionally, the significantly increased circulation for all newspapers between 1870 and 1900 would seem to imply that many readers preferred objective partisanship over partisan news.[22] The decline in partisan papers during this period would seem to indicate that partisan media would be done after the 19th century. Nonetheless, far from disappearing, partisan news sources still exist today and maybe more influential than ever.

Fake News, Misinformation and Disinformation are not new

In recent years, we have been exposed to fake news, misinformation and disinformation. Those terms may be new to people after the 2016 US Presidential Election, but they are not new historically. Fake news is defined "as those news stories that are false: the story itself is fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes."[23] Sharing of fake news, however, can be categorized in two different types: misinformation

[18] Tim Groeling and Matthew Baum, "Partisan News Before Fox: Newspaper Partisanship and Partisan Polarization, 1881-1972. *HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP13-035*. September 2013. https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/partisan-news-fox-newspaper-partisanship-and-partisan-polarization-1881-1972#citation
[19] Samuel Popkin, "Changing Media and Changing Political Organization: Delegation, Representation and News." Cambridge University Press, March 14, 2007. doi:10.1017/S1468109907002484.
[20] James Hamilton. *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[21] Hamilton, *All the News*.
[22] Samuel L Popkin. Review of *Changing Media, Changing Politics*, by James Hamilton and Matthew Baum. *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 2 (2006): 327–41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3688271.
[23] Shevon Desai, "Research Guides: 'Fake News,' Lies and Propaganda: How to Sort Fact from Fiction: What Is 'Fake News'?," accessed Jan. 1, 2022, https://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=637508&p=4462356.

and disinformation. Misinformation is unintentionally mistaken, or spreading mistaken information on social media, whereas disinformation is deliberately false or misleading intentionally information to achieve certain purposes, such as financial or political.[24] More specifically, disinformation "includes all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit."[25] Karen and Ellen have even said, "disinformation campaigns thereby overwhelm the 'signal' of actual news with 'noise,' eroding the trust in news necessary for democracy to work."[26] It twists the truth while keeping key facts secret.[27] Thus, disinformation is the worse than misinformation. In political areas, disinformation contains rumors, deliberately incorrect information about politics. Countless actors, including governments, political parties, politicians, state actors and corporations, have used disinformation strategies for their political and financial interests, influencing elections in other countries or influencing their voters in their own country to justify their actions. For instance, during the Iraq War, the Bush and Cheney administration claimed that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (which they did not find), and spread false heroic stories about U.S. soldiers in the media, while significantly limiting the coverage of war crimes committed by the U.S. military.[28] In brief, fake news,

---

[24] Jacob Sweet, "Can Disinformation Be Stopped?," Harvard Magazine, June 9, 2021, https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2021/07/features-disinformation.
[25] Bertin Martens et al., "The Digital Transformation of News Media and the Rise of Disinformation and Fake News," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, April 20, 2018), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3164170.
[26] Karen Kornbluh and Ellen P Goodman, "Safeguarding Digital Democracy," no. 4 (2020): 41.
[27] Steven J. Barela and Jerome Duberry, "Understanding Disinformation Operations in the 21st Century," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, December 29, 2020), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3757022.
[28] Deepa Kumar, "Media, War, and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 48–69, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420500505650; Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, "The Revival of the Propaganda State: US Propaganda at Home and Abroad since 9/11," *International Communication Gazette* 68, no. 5–6 (October 1, 2006): 389–407, https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048506068718.

misinformation and disinformation---are not new; in particular, disinformation has been a critical political strategy used by political elites throughout history. But questions remain, such as why misinformation, fake news and disinformation have become the center of the current state of politics in recent years.

The Emergence of Social Media

Mass media has always played an essential role in American politics because they serve as direct communication channels between citizens and political leaders,[29] thereby affecting public opinion and policymaking. However, in the early 2000s, with the emergence of novel advanced technology and the internet, social media has reconceptualized our information ecosystem and has created a significantly different structure from previous media technologies.[30] It has substantially affected our communications and challenged the current models of engagement with journalists and influencers by creating new and viral forms of influence that affect nearly all industries.[31] More specifically, social media platforms and the internet can provide an opportunity for every user to become a journalist because "it is inexpensive to create a social media account or a website that has the trappings of an established news organization,"[32] and also because they enable users to collect and disseminate information about current events, people, trends, and issues within seconds. For example, sites such as Facebook

[29] Matthew A. Baum and Philip B.K. Potter, "The Relationships Between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (2008): 39–65, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060406.214132.
[30] Allcott and Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election."
[31] Peter Auditore, "Everyone Is a Journalist," *Social Media Today*, August 31, 2010. https://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/everyone-journalist.
[32] David M.J. Lazer, etal, "The science of fake news," *Science*, no.6380 (March 2018), https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aao2998.

and Twitter allow people to readily and quickly access and publish new content, thus the diversity of information shared by the platforms has allowed more voices to be heard,[33] which is significantly consistent with American democratic values. Therefore, as technology has allowed information and popular culture to spread at speeds much faster than the traditional press, social media users can share information with and receive information from a wide audience readily.

At the same time, online social media can also easily undermine the quality of democracy as the growth of online news promotes new concerns. Social media platforms are a medium for sharing news and increasing dissemination.[34] Content without third-party filtering and fact-checking can be sent and relayed easily among social media users. In this case, as social media platforms intensify the speed of information dissemination, they also open the door for extremists and organized groups to produce, distribute and weaponize disinformation to a large audience readily and rapidly.[35] This allows both domestic and foreign actors to seek to manipulate the political agenda and elections[36] by "precisely reaching to citizens without being found,"[37] and ultimately presenting unprecedented threats to electoral integrity and thus to the American democratic society.[38] The Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA) interfered with the U.S. 2016

[33] Owen, "The New Media's Role in Politics."
[34] David M.J. Lazer, etal, "The science of fake news."
[35] Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, "The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money," *The Interpreter*, accessed April 21, 2021, https://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf.
[36] Joshua Tucker, Theocharis Yannis, Roberts Margaret and Barbera Pablo, "From liberation to turmoil: social media democracy," *Journal of Democracy 28*, no.4 (2017). https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/from-liberation-to-turmoil-social-media-and-democracy/.
[37] Jessica Baldwin-Philippi, "The Myths of Data-Driven Camoaigning," *Political Communication* 34, no.4 (2017), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10584609.2017.1372999
[38] Chris Tenove and Stephanie Maclellan, "*Confronting Disinformation: Journalists and the Conflict over Truth in #Elxn43*," In Cyber-Threats to Canadian Democracy, eds. Holly Garnett and Michael Pal (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021): 1.

Presidential election by producing and sharing misleading information with American voters on social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.[39] Among these platforms, Twitter was the major vehicle of Russia's disinformation operations during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election.[40] Russians used Twitter to create many fake accounts to produce and disseminate political and social disinformation to mislead voters in the United States.[41] Despite the 2016 election interference by Russia, the U.S., still pays little attention to the consequences of disinformation and has failed to combat misleading medical information on social media. For example, the success of disinformation campaigns in the realms of public health (Covid-19 misinformation) and politics in the U.S. is mainly due to social media platforms.[42] The disinformation on social media, therefore, has continued to contribute to both the spread of Covid-19[43] and anti-vaccination propaganda in the U.S.[44]

Putting these facts together, it is not surprising to see social media and disinformation and its relatives---fake news and misinformation--have been critical concerns in contemporary Western democracies, particularly in the U.S. Hence, in the absence of federal or state regulation in the United States, social media platforms may be more vulnerable to disinformation. In brief, an increasingly new and dynamic media

---

[39] Yavor Raychev, "Cyberwar in Russian and US Military-Political Thought: A Comparative View," *Information & Security* 43, no.3 (2019): 349-361. https://connections-qj.org/system/files/4326_cybrid_russia_us_views.pdf

[40] Dawn Carla Nunziato, "Misinformation Mayhem: Social Media Platforms' Efforts to Combat Medical and Political Misinformation," *19 First Amendment L. Rev.* (2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3672257

[41] Craig Timberg & Elizabeth Dwoskin, "Twitter is Sweeping Out Fake Accounts Like Never Before, Putting User Growth at Risk," *WASH. POST*, July 6, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2018/07/06/twitter-is-sweeping-out-fake-accounts-like-never-before-putting-user-growth-risk/?utm_source=reddit.com

[42] Barela and Duberry, "Understanding Disinformation Operations in the 21st Century."

[43] Nunziato, "Misinformation Mayhem: Social Media Platforms."

[44] Broniatowski, et al, "Weaponized Health Communication."

environment where people receive more information and faster than ever questions of whether citizens are better informed, and whether they are able to process the information and evaluate the accuracy of the information in this novel media environment should be asked.

Producers of Disinformation on Social Media

Besides foreign governments, numerous scholars argue that domestic conspiracy theorists, mass media, politicians, and partisan media outlets are also the main producers of disinformation on social media.[45] They all have played a role in creating, amplifying and disseminating disinformation in today's media ecosystem to fulfil their goals.

First, domestic conspiracy theorists are driven by a belief that elites are manipulating the public, and their claims range from the 9/11 attack to President Obama's birth certificate.[46] Mass media then amplifies their conspiracy theories for receiving more attention and viewers, thus exposing the public to these ideas. For instance, when Trump, in 2011, asserted that Obama was not born in the U.S., mainstream news covered his false claim extensively.[47] Still today, some right-wing extremists still question Obama's birth. This phenomenon is so widespread in America that half the American people believe at least one conspiracy theory.[48]

---

[45] Tucker, et al, " Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation."
[46] Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cues," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no.2 (2009): 202-227. https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/10880581
[47] Bradley Wiggins, "Navigating an Immersive Narratology: Factors to Explain the Reception of Fake News," *International Journal of E-Politics 8*, no.3 (2017): 16-29. https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/article/186961
[48] Eric Oliver and Wood Thomas, "Conspiracy the theories and paranoid style(s) of mass opinion," *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no.4 (2014): 952-966. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24363536

Additionally, partisan media is responsible for producing and disseminating disinformation on online social media platforms.[49] It has been demonstrated that partisan media news is more widely shared on social media sites such as Facebook,[50] and they were more partisan during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election.[51] Such sites are vulnerable to disinformation and false reporting because, as Robert Faris has written, "when objectivity and accuracy are at odds with partisanship, fealty to partisan messaging necessitates a loosening of standards regarding truth."[52]

Politicians are one of the primary incubators and disseminators of disinformation in various contexts. Lying in politics is not new.[53] To seek publicity and support, politicians often produce false claims through partisan media channels.[54] Moreover, they may not be the largest producers of disinformation, but they may be the most influential sharers of disinformation.[55] For example, political leaders with millions of followers on their Twitter accounts can dramatically increase the reach of information, and their posts are often reported and shared frequently by their followers and mainstream media. Today they produce more false claims than ever before in the U.S. For instance, Trump made

[49] Robert Faris et al, "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 US Presidential Election," *Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society Research Paper*, accessed April 19, 2021, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:33759251
[50] Faris et al, "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation"
[51] Faris et al, "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation."
[52] Faris et al, "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation."
[53] Martin Jay, *The Virtues of Mendacity: On Lying in Politics* (Virginia, University of Virginia Press, 2020).
[54] Adam Berinsky, "Rumors and Health Care Reform: Experiments in Political Misinformation," *British Journal of Political Science* 47, no.2 (2017): 241-262. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-political-science/article/rumors-and-health-care-reform-experiments-in-political-misinformation/8B88568CD057242D2D97649300215CF2/share/8bd983ffd812a52a61ff330ddffd8ed658878114
[55] Nicco Mele et al, "Combating Fake News: An Agenda for Research and Action," May, 2017, https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/combating-fake-news-agenda-research-and-action

false statements far outpacing unprecedented other political candidates during the 2016 election,[56] and he made more than 30,000 misleading claims during his administration.[57]

As today's online information ecosystem continues to be a major forum for discussing political matters, the intertwining role played by disinformation and social media in Western democracy has been a serious public area of concern,[58] mainly spurred and exemplified by the January 6 insurrection, challenging our current information ecosystem and the system of democracy. The long-term consequences of the January 6 insurrection, however, are still limited and not well understood.

Thus, studying the January 6 insurrection provides fertile ground for continued research and discussion not merely on social media and disinformation, but also on the current state of the U.S. politics. On the other hand, the role of receivers of disinformation on social media platforms has gained relatively less attention from scholars who study disinformation and online social media. Research on the psychological motivations behind the users who believe and spread fake political news on social media is also limited. Therefore, this study of the January 6 insurrection focuses on receivers of misinformation on social media (participants involved in the insurrection) to examine who participated in the insurrection and why? It is also more crucial than ever to learn whether the disinformation about the election disseminated by Trump on social media platforms has a direct connection with participants' decision to engage in the

[56] Carole McGranahan, "An Anthropology of Lying: Trump and the Political Sociality of Moral Outrage," *American Ethnologist* 44, no.2 (2017): 243-248. https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/amet.12475

[57] Glenn Kessler, Salvador Rizzo and Meg Kelly, "Trump's false or misleading claims total 30,573 over 4 years," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/24/trumps-false-or-misleading-claims-total-30573-over-four-years/

[58] Rachel Kuo and Alice Marwick, "Critical Disinformation Studies: History, Power, and Politics," *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, August 12, 2021, https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-76.

insurrection, and if so, to what extent? Did participants simply believe whatever Trump said? To what extent did disinformation about the election disseminated on social media influence them to engage in the insurrection? What other factors or motivations could influence their ability to recognize disinformation on social media? The present thesis attempts to answer those questions, seeks to fill the gap and creates viable solutions for the future by investigating whether and how disinformation on social media influenced participants' attitudes regarding political violence in the context of the January 6 insurrection. Ultimately, this thesis also provides insight into whether and when the political beliefs or psychology of individuals affects the nation's political health. In other words, the study of the January 6 insurrection and its associations with social media and disinformation is also a study of American political culture and society.

Chapter II

Research Methods

To answer my research questions and test the hypotheses, the first step in the research process was to identify those arrested for participation in the insurrection on January 6, 2021. Since the researcher is not part of the MAGA group, to anchor this body of research and to collect reliable and valid data, the thesis drew upon a series of media reports and administrative data sets from the FBI, Congressional Research Service (CRS), the U.S. Department of Justice and the House Select Committee regarding those arrested people who participated in the insurrection on January 6, 2021. This study also utilized the publicly available database---the *Capitol Breach Cases* list provided by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. The *Capitol Breach Cases*' list includes defendants' names, residences, and plea agreements, indictments, statements of facts, and complaints. Then, I supplemented public records with media stories, conducting searches for media stories and interviews about those defendants. Lastly, secondary evidence was also used in the research, including journal articles and books on disinformation, social media and Capitol rioters.

After identifying those participants on the FBI and *Capitol Breach Cases*' list, I found that there were, to date, 691 federal cases against people who stormed the Capitol.[59] To satisfy a statistically valid sample, I randomly selected 124 subjects out of 691 on the Capitol Breach Cases' list across all regions of the U.S. I organized their data,

[59] "Capitol Breach Cases," The United States Department of Justice, accessed December 12, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/capitol-breach-cases

including their names, and primary demographics such as gender, race, the geography of residence, age, etc., into a table (Appendix 1, page 86).

I particularly reviewed and examined participants' attitudes towards the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021 in response to a belief that the 2020 election was fraudulent. Conducting interviews and mail surveys of those arrested (most of whom have been released and returned home) was impractical at best because those arrested would likely have been advised by lawyers not to give interviews. Thus, I gathered information on their comments before, during and after the insurrection on their social media posts such as Facebook, Twitter, Parler and Instagram. As their information listed on the *Capitol Breach Cases* provided me with their names and emails, I was able to find their social media accounts which reliably reflect their opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior about the 2020 election outcomes as well as their political mobilization prior to, during and after the events of January 6, 2021. While many of their social media accounts have been suspended, their previous online posts relating to their attitudes about the 2020 Presidential Election and the January 6 insurrection can be found on their criminal complaints, statements of facts, and federal affidavits on the *Capitol Breach Cases*.[60] I also relied upon media stories of those defendants who were interviewed about their opinions on the insurrection by their local news organizations, found on the internet. In terms of learning their occupation and education level, the thesis heavily relies on some online websites such as *Conan Daily* and *LinkedIn*.

Finally, those public documents, media stories and online websites provided specific details of every arrested participant of the insurrection, including their social

[60] Capitol Breach Cases," The United States Department of Justice, accessed December 12, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/capitol-breach-cases

media usage, gender, race, the geography of residence, age, occupation, civic and political activities, education level, prior military experience and their affiliation in militias and organizations. Most importantly, I learned their interviews and social media accounts' activities regarding their motives to engage in the insurrection. These are all open-source and accessible on the internet. While it is vital to note that the charges brought against defendants remain to be proven beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law, personal information contained in court documents is likely to be accurate, and their posts on social media are their own words.

Limitations

There are several limitations that may affect my research. The first limitation concerns access to their social media posts. The thesis has to view participants' previous social media posts regarding their opinions on the election, Trump and the January 6 insurrection, but almost every participant's social media account has been suspended by social media companies after the insurrection. The researcher can only rely on their information on the *Capitol Breach Cases* and online media stories, viewing the screenshots of their previous posts on social media, which is very limited. Moreover, participants also used some exclusive social media platforms such as Parler that are limited to only supporters of Trump. The researcher is not part the group; hence I could not access their posts on those social media platforms.

The second limitation involves time constraints. The thesis attempts to show the full picture of what happened on January 6. As the thesis is highly relevant to the insurrection, the research is subject to the investigation of the January 6 insurrection. The

information about the players of the insurrection such as participants, conservative media outlets such as Fox News, Donald Trump, and other GOP politicians, and their private conservation on January 6 would be greatly useful for the thesis. But only January 6 panel have the authority to access their information and make it to the public. It took more than seven months for House Special Committee to finally disclose Fox News hosts' texts on January 6, and the investigation on the attack is still ongoing. The Committee received some Trump's White House documents in January 2022, which could be months for them to finish the review and disclose to the public. Given the time of writing the master's thesis, which is nine months, it is very unlikely to see those documents.

With those above limitations, this thesis may not have access to more participants' social media posts and may not have enough time to wait for the results of the investigation conducted by House Special Committee. However, the thesis still manages to find out who stormed the Capitol, their backgrounds, how and why would they do it. It successfully presents the current state of American politics.

Chapter III.

Findings

According to my data collection (see Table 1, page 23), based on a sample of 124 persons randomly selected from the 691 arrested (17.94%). The majority of defendants are male (84% or 584 (0.84 x 691=580), while only 16% of or 111 (0.16 x 691 = 111) defendants are female. The average age of those selected subjects is 41, and the majority race is white (98% or 677 = 0.98 x 691). In addition, 30% of or 207 (.3 x 691 =207) participants pleaded guilty for their involvement in the January 6 insurrection (see Table 1, page 23).

Moreover, a number of defendants had associations with some known DVE (domestic violent extremist) groups such as Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, and Three Percenters (see Table 1, page 23). 8.06% of or 56 (0.0806 x 691 =55.69) participants appeared to have links to the Proud Boys, 3.23% of or 22 (0.0323 x 691 = 22.32) participants appeared to have ties to the Oath Keepers and 2.42% of or 17 (0.0242 x 691 =16.722) participants seemed to have membership in the Three Percenters. I also identified that 6.45% of or 45 (0.0645 x 691 = 44.57) participants had an overt affiliation with QAnon conspiracy theory (see Table 1, page 23), which is a wide-ranging conspiracy theory sometimes promoted by Trump. It advocates a false belief that the world is run by a cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles and child traffickers.[61]

[61] "How Conspiracy Theorists Are Disrupting Efforts To Fight Human Trafficking," NRP, October 14, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/10/12/923019289/how-conspiracy-theorists-are-disrupting-efforts-to-fight-human-trafficking

One of the most interesting findings is that except those participants who are retired (4.84% of or 33 = 691 x 0.0484), only 4.03% of or 28 (0.0403 x 691 = 27.8) defendants are unemployed or unknown, while 91.13% or 630 (0.9113 x 691 = 630) of whom are employed and 30% of or 207 (0.3 x 691) participants who are university/college-educated (see Table 1, page 23). Many of them are college-educated, white-collars and blue-collars such as real estate and loan agents, nurses, school or university employees, engineers, a geophysicist, lawyers, doctors, former or current local, state, or federal government employees, military personnel and reservists, politicians, state delegates, and police officers (see appendix 1, page 86). Particularly, there are 19.35% of or 134 (0.1935 x 691 =133.7) participants are business owners (see table 1, page 23).

The overwhelming reason for their action, cited over and over in their court documents, was that they were following Trump's orders to save America from a "stolen election" by preventing Congress and then Vice-President Pence from certifying Joe Biden as the presidential-election winner, putting the nation in the hands of the Democrats controlled by "communism" and "globalism." A large segment fervently believes the election was stolen and violence is their only recourse. It is quite surprising to see that those having stable and well-paid jobs as well-respected and educated people believed the false claims about the 2020 Presidential Election promoted by then-President Trump and willingly attempted to disrupt the certification of the election.

Additionally, social media appeared to play a vital part in the insurrection. 96% of or 663 (0.96 x 691 =663.36) participants used social media (see Table 1, page 23). As stated in their court documents, almost every selected subject communicated and shared

information about Trump's false claims and January 6 events by using their social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Parler (see appendix 1, page 86). They were charged and identified in part using evidence from their personal social media accounts according to court documents.

Perhaps the most striking finding is that those with military experience were highly over-represented in the mob. 19% of or 131 (691 x 0.19 = 131.3) defendants have military experience or background and have been charged with federal crimes ranging from Obstruction of an Official Proceeding to Assaulting Capitol Police Officers. That includes 17% or 117 (.17 x 691 = 117) who are military veterans (see Table 1, page 23). These numbers clearly exceed the percentage of veterans in the U.S. population as a whole. To put that number perspective, there were roughly 19 million military veterans in the United States last year, representing only about 7% of the total U.S. adult population.[62]

[62] Katherine Schaeffer, "The Changing Face of America's Veteran Population," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed Nov 1, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/05/the-changing-face-of-americas-veteran-population/.

Table 1. Participants' Demographics.

Total Number of Selected Participants	124
Number of Male Participants	104 (84%)
Number of Female Participants	20 (16%)
Participants with Military Experience/Background	23 (19%)
Participants Who Are Veterans	21 (17%)
The Majority Race: White	121 (98%)
Participants with Social Media Accounts	119 (96%)
University/College Educated	33 (27%)
Participants Who Pleaded Guilty	37 (30%)
Employed	113 (91.13%)
Unemployed/unknown	5 (4.03%)
Retired	6 (4.84%)
Business Owners	24 (19.35%)
Proud Boys	10 (8.06%)
Oath Keepers	4 (3.23%)
Three Percenters	3 (2.42%)
QAnon Believers	8 (6.45%)

Source: created by Author.

Taken together, above demographic data show the heterogeneity of the insurrectionists and are useful in sizing the general threat, but they do not show the complete picture of who stormed the Capitol on January 6. Not only did these defendants come from a wide range of backgrounds, but their level of organization varies immensely.

While it is important to gain a better understanding of the different individuals who perpetrated the Capitol siege by moving beyond surface-level information for a deeper look into the fractured landscape of domestic extremism in the U.S., the presence of defendants with military backgrounds in the insurrection was by itself surprising news, attracting considerable coverage.[63] Of the most concerning facts was the disproportionately higher number of veterans involved in the insurrection, some veterans appeared to hold membership in DVE organizations, while others acted alone. All military veterans had once sworn an oath of office to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution, and the procedures for certifying the results of the U.S. Presidential Election obstructed by those military veterans on January 6 comes directly from the U.S. Constitution.[64] Their violent actions on January 6, 2021 clearly contravened that oath, raising a national security concern for the future of the U.S.

With that said, a better understanding and analysis of those charged veterans' motivations for participating in the insurrection is also needed to understand and discourage future involvement. Therefore, in the following part of the analysis, the first step is to categorize the insurrection participants based on their level of organization to learn better their characteristics and motivations; then the thesis specifically analyzes those veterans' motivations of why they would betray their oath on January 6, 2021.

---

[63] Daniel Milton and Andrew Mines, "This is War: Examining Military Experience Among the Capitol Hill Siege Participants," *Combating Terrorism Center*, April 12, 2021, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/This_is_War.pdf

[64] "U.S. Constitution - Twelfth Amendment | Resources | Constitution Annotated | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress," accessed March 2, 2022, https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-12/.

Chapter IV.

Categorizing the Insurrection Participants

Based on the collected data and preliminary information, the thesis categorized three major categories of participants who stormed the Capitol:

1. Domestic Violent Extremist (DVE) groups
2. Organized Groups with no Associations with DVE
3. Individuals Acting Alone

Organized Domestic Violent Extremist (DVE) Groups

The first category---organized DVE groups---represents those multiple organized individuals who had a strong affiliation with anti-government organizations such as the Three Percenters, the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys.

First, the Oath Keepers is a large right-wing, anti-government and extremist political organization founded on the belief that the federal government is coopted by a shadowy conspiracy attempting to strip American peoples' rights and freedoms.[65] They are highly engaged with the militia movement and conspiracy theory, and vowed to defend their understanding of the U.S. Constitution "against all enemies, both foreign and domestic."[66] Particularly, a NBC News report from February 2021 reveals that they see

[65] "Examining Extremism: The Oath Keepers," Center For Strategic & International Studies, June 17, 2021, https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-oath-keepers
[66] "Oath Keepers," Anti-Defamation League, accessed Dec 1, 2022, https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/oath-keepers.

"leftist group, the deep state and supposed foreign conspirators or global cabals" as the most dangerous threats.[67] Moreover, the founder and leader of the organization: Stewart Rhodes, who is a Yale Law School graduate, has been supporting Donald Trump since 2016 and advocating Trump's false claims about the election and QAnon theory.[68] He is also referred to as 'Person One' in court papers, showing that he was in direct communication via phone and text with some of members of the Oath Keepers for months prior to and on the January 6 events.[69] Most importantly, many members of the Oath Keepers who participated in the insurrection are veterans and trained in how to behave in a chaotic environment as the group mainly recruits members from military veterans, law enforcement, and first responders.[70]

Second, the "Three Percenters" is loosely allied with the Oath Keepers, which is another domestic extremist militia group, and an anti-government militia that advocates for gun ownership rights, and provides security services for various right-wing protests and movements.[71]

Finally, the Proud Boys, self-described "Western male chauvinists," is an extremist and nationalist organization in the U.S., supporting then-President Trump.[72] They are notorious for street violence as they routinely attend rallies, protests, and other

---

[67] Josh Lederman, "The founder of a far-right militia once warned of federal tyranny. Then came Trump." *NBCNEWS*, February 3, 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/founder-far-right-militia-once-warned-federal-tyranny-then-came-n1256546

[68] "Elmer Stewart Rhodes," SPLC: Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed November 12, 2021, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/elmer-stewart-rhodes-0

[69] Ryan Lucas, "Oath Keepers Founder is Under Scrutiny, Court Documents Show," *Capradio*, April 5, 2021, https://www.capradio.org/news/npr/story?storyid=984353179

[70] Matthew Kriner and Jon Lewis, "The Oath Keepers and Their Role in the January 6 Insurrection," *Combating Terrorism Center*, December 2021 https://ctc.usma.edu/the-oath-keepers-and-their-role-in-the-january-6-insurrection/

[71] "Three Percenters," ADL, accessed November 13, 2021, https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/three-percenters

[72] "Proud Boys," SPLC: Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed November 12, 2021, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/proud-boys

First Amendment protected events, engaging in acts of violence against individuals whom they perceive as threats to their values.[73]

In short, people who align with these groups generally believe they are protecting the public from government tyranny. Moreover, what distinguishes these groups from the other two categories are that they all collectively well-planned their travel to Washington, D.C., before January 6, 2021 with the specific intent of breaching the Capitol and engaging in violent activities. Specifically, they were well organized, made detailed plans for months and so committed to stop and hinder the certification of President Biden's victory in the 2020 Presidential Election by force if necessary. When individual members received the order from their leaders of the groups, they contacted other members to coordinate logistics, methods, and plans of action in the weeks before January 6th.[74]

A fifth superseding indictment charged members of the Oath Keepers who participated in the January 6 insurrection as co-conspirators engaged in violent entry and disorderly conduct, entering a restricted building, etc in their indictment in the federal court shows the details of their communication and plans. The indictment, including our randomly selected defendants: Joshua James (33, a veteran) and Jason Dolan **(**44, a Marine veteran**)**, along with other 15 other Oath Keepers, states that the Oath Keepers are led by PERSON ONE and they officially planned for the events of January 6th. At an online meeting held on November 9, 2020, Steward Rhodes (PERSON ONE) told members of the Oath Keepers:

---

[73] SPLC: Southern Poverty Law Center, "Proud Boys."

[74] "5th superseding indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, August 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1422696/download
"Case 1:21-cr-00175-TJK," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, October 3, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1415116/download

> "We're going to defend the president, the duly elected president, and we call on him to do what needs to be done to save our country. Because if you don't guys, you're going to be in a bloody, bloody civil war, and a bloody - you can call it an insurrection or you can call it a war or fight." PERSON ONE continued, "I do want some Oath Keepers to stay on the outside, and to stay fully armed and prepared to go in armed, it they have to .... So our posture's gonna be that we're posted outside of DC, um, awaiting the President's orders. We hope he will give us the orders. We want him to declare an insurrection."[75]

Furthermore, this fifth superseding indictment also states that before December 31, 2020, members of the Oath Keepers joined an invitation-only encrypted Signal group message titled "DCOP: Jan 6 21" (hereinafter the "Leadership Signal Chat") to discuss the plan on January 6. On January 4, 2021. They travelled from their states together to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, and booked a room at the Hilton Garden Inn in Washington, D.C. from January 5-7, 2021. On January 4, 2021, PERSON ONE posted an article to the Oath Keepers website, signed by its founder Stewart Rhodes titled "Call to Action: Oath Keepers Deploying to DC To Protect Events, Speakers and Attendees on Jan 5-6: Time to Stand!", encouraging Oath Keeper members to go to Washington, D.C., for the events of January 5-6, 2021, stating:

> "It is CRITICAL that all patriots who can be in DC get to DC to stand tall in support of President Trump's fight to defeat the enemies foreign and domestic who are attempting a coup, through the massive vote fraud and related attacks on our Republic. As we have done on all recent DC Ops, we will also have well-armed and equipped Quick Reaction Force' teams on standby, outside DC, in the event of a worst case scenario, where the President calls us up as part of the militia to assist him inside DC. We don't expect a need for him to call on us for that at this time, but we stand ready if he does (and we also stand ready to answer the call to serve as militia anytime in the future, and anywhere in our nation, if he does invoke the Insurrection Act)."[76]

[75] 5th superseding indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, August 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1422696/download
[76] 5th superseding indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, August 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1422696/download

Similarly, the Proud Boys had also planned the Capitol riot for months according to their indictment.[77] In my data collection, most of them are from the leadership of the organization such as presidents and organizers in various states. The leader of The Proud Boys---Ethan Nordean is also included. Other members have good jobs such as an executive director of a company, a business owner, a one-time GOP House candidate and roofing business owner, and veterans (see appendix 1, page 86). They made many public posts regarding the potential violence on January 6, 2021 and massively spread election misinformation on social media since November 2020. For instance, on November 5, 2020, Biggs posted on social media, "It's time for fucking War if they steal this shit."[78] Biggs, in response to the results of the presidential election, posted "No This is war."[79] On November 16, 2020, Nordean posted on social media:

> "what is more disturbing to me than the Dems trying to steal this election.....is how many people just accepted Biden won, despite the obvious corruption... Luke warm Patriots are dangerous."[80]

On November 27, 2020, Nordean made another post on social media,

> "We tried playing nice and by the rules, now you will deal with the monster you created. The spirit of 1776 has resurfaced like the and has created groups like the Proudboys and we will not be extinguished.... Good luck to

[77] "Case 1:21-cr-00175-TJK," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, October 3, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1415116/download
[78] "Nordean, Biggs, Rehl, Donohoe - Indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 10, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1377586/download
[79] "Nordean, Biggs, Rehl, Donohoe - Indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 10, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1377586/download
[80] "Nordean, Biggs, Rehl, Donohoe - Indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 10, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1377586/download

> all you traitors of this country we so deeply love ... you're going to need it."[81]

On December 19, 2020, the Proud Boys officially announced for the Steal protest event and started asking their members to go to Washington, D.C. on January 6, 2021 as Biggs wrote on Parler (which is a social media network popular with Trump supporters), "we will not be attending DC in colors. We will be blending in as one of you.....Jan 6th is gonna be epic."[82]

These online social media posts recorded their opinions, thoughts and conspiracy on the 2020 Presidential Election, leading them to make pre-operation plans for the January 6 events. In their indictment documents, FBI also listed their means and manner to carry out the conspiracy. Members of these groups attended trainings to teach and learn paramilitary combat tactics in advance of the January 6 operation, used social media to encourage people to travel to Washington, D.C., for the January 6 operation, brought paramilitary gear and supplies--including weapons, camouflaged combat uniforms, and radio equipment.[83] On January 6, they moved together in a military "stack" formation while using radio equipment to maintain communication and coordination, forcibly storming the Capitol.[84]

---

[81] "Nordean, Biggs, Rehl, Donohoe - Indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 10, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1377586/download

[82] "Nordean, Biggs, Rehl, Donohoe - Indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 10, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1377586/download

[83] "Nordean, Biggs, Rehl, Donohoe - Indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 10, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1377586/download

[84] "Third Superseding Indictment," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 31, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1382471/download

Consequently, this first category (Organized domestic violent extremist-DVE-groups) are disproportionately military veterans who appeared to have no financial difficulties or living problems, yet they were willing to commit federal crimes. Members of the groups often see themselves as patriots, repeating that word multiple times in their posts and conversation, while they deem Democrats and Capitol police officers as traitors. Because those in DVE groups believe the election and Trump's presidency were stolen by their Democrats, those who protect Democrats and President Biden are traitors in their eyes. For instance, in a Capitol siege video, Gabriel A. Garcia (a member of the Proud Boys) asked an officer, "How does it feel being a traitor to the country? How does it feel?"[85]

Organized Groups with no Associations with DVE

While extremist right-wing militia groups played a part in the Capitol riot, a large majority of those charged are not known to hold membership in those established DVE groups. I divide them into two categories: organized groups with no associations with DVE and individuals who act alone. Organized groups with no associations with DVE are generally small, close-knit groups of people who participated in the siege together. They were mostly driven by conspiracy or extremist theories, ideologies, and partisan fervor, values and opinions rather than following a direct call from a DVE leader.[86] They did not participate in the insurrection with the same level of advanced organization or conduct the same level of violence as those DVE groups. Instead, they made a plan for

[85] "GARCIA, Gabriel Augustin - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA February 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/garcia-gabriel-augustin.
[86] The George Washington University: Program on Extremism, "This is Our House!"

the January 6 events in conjunction with their close personal contacts, family members, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances.[87]

According to their court documents, some of them were in family groups such as parents and their children. For example, Lisa Eisenhart, 56, a Woodstock, Georgia registered nurse was charged along with her son Eric Munchel ,30, for breaching the Capitol on January 6th.[88] While inside the Capitol, the Georgia woman shouted "Treason, Traitors!" and "We want a fair election!"[89] *The Times* newspaper published an online article entitled: "*Trump's militias say they are armed and ready to defend their freedoms*,"[90] her quotes in the article refer to violent revolution:

> "We wanted to show that we're willing to rise up, band together and fight if necessary. Same as our forefathers, who established this country in 1776...This country was founded on revolution. I'd rather die a 57-year-old woman than live under oppression. I'd rather die and would rather fight."[91]

Moreover, organized groups of family members extend beyond parents and children. I also identified defendants---husband and wife Thomas Roy Vinson (54, a U.S. Air Force veteran) and Lori Ann Vinson (49, a nurse) from Union County, Kentucky,[92] and Jessica Bustle (36) and Joshua Kahle Bustle (35) from Virginia who later pleaded

[87] The George Washington University: Program on Extremism, "This is Our House!"
[88] "Case: 1:21-mj-00071," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, accessed November 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/opa/case-multi-defendant/file/1355811/download
[89] Brinley Hineman, "Lisa Eisenhart, mom of Capitol riot zip-tie suspect, to remain in custody, reversing earlier decision," January 25, 2021, https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2021/01/25/mom-zip-tie-guy-lisa-eisenhart-released-federal-custody-riot/4248209001/
[90] Hineman, "Lisa Eisenhart."
[91] Hineman, "Lisa Eisenhart."
[92] "Vinson, Lori Ann - Criminal Complaint," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, February 22, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1371551/download

guilty on May 17, 2021.[93] They were jointly charged with participating in the Capitol siege and knowingly entering or remaining in a restricted building or grounds, entering grounds with the intent to impede government business, demonstrating on Capitol grounds and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds. In Lori Vinson's interview with Fox17 news, she believed her actions were "justified" and that she would "do this all over again tomorrow." She stated:

> "I'm sorry that you don't see my worth.....I hope that is something I remember and say 'I'm glad I was a part of that' thirty years from now..... people have asked are you sorry that you done that, absolutely I am not, I am not sorry for that, I would do it again tomorrow." [94]

The Vinson couple pleaded guilty on July 27, 2021.[95]

Some cases involve siblings such as Sean Cordon (35, a manufacturing and design engineer) and Kevin Cordon (33, an alumnus of California State University, Los Angeles) from California who were both charged with breaching the Capitol.[96] According to their court documents and social media posts, they shared former President Trump's values such as anti-lockdown measures. In May 2020, Sean supported the campaign to end the lockdown amid the new coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic on his social media.[97] Sean's Twitter posts also express his admiration for Trump and his belief that the election

[93] "Bustle & Bustle - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1378481/download
[94] " Vinson, Lori Ann - Criminal Complaint," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, February 22, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1371551/download
[95] "Vinson, Lori Ann," The United States Department of Justice, July 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/vinson-lori-ann
[96] "Cordon & Cordon - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1383086/download
[97] Omar, "Sean Carlo Cordon biography."

was stolen by Democrats in 2020.[98] In December, he complained about vote recounts in Georgia on social media.[99] His brother Kevin shared his thoughts too. He accused the "establishment, the media, and the big tech of completely ignoring all of overwhelming evidence" that the Presidential Election was 'stolen' in 2020.[100] During the interview, Kevin said,

> "We're here to take back our democratic republic. It's clear that this election is stolen, there's just so much overwhelming evidence and the establishment, the media, big tech are just completely ignoring all of it. And we're here to show them we're not having it."[101]

In addition to family groups, other small organized groups included friends and colleagues. Their friendship or colleagueship date back years before the insurrection. One particularly illuminating example of this phenomenon is the group from Pennsylvania. Pauline Bauer (53) is an owner of Bob's Trading Post (restaurant) in Kane, Pennsylvania.[102] According to witness quoted in Pauline's court document, her customers had stopped going to her restaurant because they did not want to hear her political views.[103] For the Trump rally on January 6, she helped organize two busloads of people, including her husband and her best friend William Blauser (65, a Vietnam War veteran

[98] Finnegan, "FBI arrests two brothers."
[99] Omar, "Sean Carlo Cordon biography."
[100] Omar, "Kevin Cordon biography."
[101] "Cordon & Cordon - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1383086/download
[102] "Bauer - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. May 18, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1395396/download
[103] "Bauer - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. May 18, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1395396/download

and retired mail carrier), to travel to Washington D.C.[104] When asked if she was inside the Capitol lawfully on Facebook, she answered:

> "You can thank me after you start researching that these Democrats not only cheated and stole this election from the people but they have been trafficking children for years."[105]

She was also shouting for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others: "Bring them out now. They're criminals. They need to hang."[106] According to the FBI, Bauer also told the Capitol police officers:

> "Bring Nancy Pelosi out here now. We want to hang that f---ing bitch. Bring her out. We're coming in if you don't bring her out. What are you trying to do, protect a f---ing Nazi?"[107]

Richard Barnard (55) and Jeffery Witcher (58) are close friends and Marine Corps veterans. During the FBI interview, Witch stated they traveled to the Capitol on January 5, 2021 at their own expense, and they went together inside the Capitol on the next day.[108] Thomas Robertson (47) and Jacob Fracker (29) were two Virginia off-duty police officers who were co-charged with conduct related to the insurrection in their indictment.[109] Thomas is a retired Army reservist, while Fracker is an infantryman with

[104] "Bauer - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. May 18, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1395396/download
[105] "Bauer - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. May 18, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1395396/download
[106] "Bauer - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. May 18, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1395396/download
[107] "Bauer - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. May 18, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1395396/download
[108] "Barnard & Witcher - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, February 24, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1378401/download
[109] "Barnard - Witcher - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, January 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1353461/download

the Virginia National Guard and previously served as a Marine. Thomas later bragged on social media that he didn't do anything illegal by storming the U.S. Capitol,

> "CNN and the Left are just mad because we actually attacked the government who is the problem and not some random small business ... The right IN ONE DAY took the f***** U.S. Capitol. Keep poking us."

He was also proud of the photo of them in the Capitol in an Instagram Post because he was "willing to put skin in the game."[110]

Lastly, I identified The youngest pals in this category are Elliot Bishai and Elias Irizarry, both 19 from South Carolina.[111] Bishai and Irizarry spent time with each other in the Gastonia Civil Air Patrol, which is a volunteer leadership program for teenagers that can lead to military service in the Air Force.[112] Irizarry was a very active member of Republican party as he was an active member of the Republican Society at his school.[113] Notably, Trump was invited by the Republican Society's Patriot for dinner in 2016.[114] Additionally, Irizarry's Facebook profiles shows his liking for various conservative candidates and causes such as Donald Trump, Ivanka Trump, GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul and the New Jersey Young Republican Federation.[115] He was also a chairman of the Essex County Teenage Republicans during the school. In 2017, he spoke at a Township Council meeting against naming Montclair a sanctuary city, "We need to put

---

[110] "Barnard & Witcher - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, January 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1353461/download

[111] "Bishai & Irizarry - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 15, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1386286/download

[112] " Bishai & Irizarry - Statement of Facts," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, March 15, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1386286/download

[113] Omar, "Elias Irizarry biography."

[114] Tnovelly, "Citadel cadet charged in Capitol riot."

[115] Omar, "Elias Irizarry biography."

Montclair citizens first, not undocumented foreigners," he said.[116] Consequently, besides their participation, their age and background raise a significant concern about how disinformation and extremist ideologies have increasingly influenced students, particularly students who serve to the military and one day might have access to the top-secrets and national security.

Individuals Acting Alone

Finally, the third category of participants is classified as those who travelled to the Washington D.C. and stormed the Capitol but were neither affiliated with any known DVE groups nor involved in any organized groups. They arranged their own travel and other logistics alone to Washington D.C without a well-organized plan. Some were opportunists who took part in the demonstration based on personal motivations and objectives. According to their court documents, some of those charged were advocates of conspiracy theory and motivated and inspired primarily by a series of extremist narratives and conspiracy theories such as QAnon, and the misinformation of election fraud spread by Trump and conservative media outlets such as Fox News. They also constantly shared misinformation and false news about the 2020 Presidential Election on various social media platforms, publicly expressed their desire to gather at the Capitol and to fight to prevent the certification of the election in the days and weeks prior to January 6th.

Larry Rendall Brock, a 53-year-old retired Air Force lieutenant colonel and graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1989, was charged with knowingly entering or remaining in any restricted building or grounds without lawful authority and violent entry

[116] Omar, "Elias Irizarry biography."

and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds on January 6, 2021.[117] In recent years, two family members and a friend said that Brock's political stand had become more extreme. He had become a strong supporter of Trump, wearing his 'MAGA' hat frequently.[118] Bill Leake, a longtime friend and a former colleague of Brock in the Air Force, said that he had avoided Brock, "I don't contact him anymore 'cause he's gotten extreme...He went all in on the alternative-news-source world. He actually believes liberals and Democrats are a threat to the country."[119] Brock's family members also said, "he called himself a patriot, and that his expressions of that identity had become increasingly strident." In the days prior to the insurrection, Brock made several posts on Facebook, detailing his plans to take part in Trump's "Save America" rally on January 6 and preparing for a "Second Civil War",

> "The President asked for his supporters to be there to attend, and I felt like it was important, because of how much I love this country, to actually be there," he said. "We are now under occupation by a hostile governing force that may seem ludicrous to some, but I see no distinction between a group of Americans seizing power and governing with complete disregard to the Constitution and an invading force...Against all enemies foreign and domestic #OathKeeper #2A #111%."[120]

After the insurrection, in an interview, Brock denied that his involvement in the insurrection was to follow Trump's order, but he said that he learned his knowledge of the 'rigged' election primarily from social media.[121]

---

[117] "BROCK, Larry Rendall," UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, July 28, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/brock-larry-rendall
[118] Ronan Farrow, "An Air Force Combat Veteran Breached the Senate," *The New Yorker*, January 8, 2021, https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-air-force-combat-veteran-breached-the-senate.
[119] Farrow, "AN AIR FORCE COMBAT VETERAN BREACHED THE SENATE."
[120] "Larry Rendall Brock Government Detention Exhibits," The George Washington University: Program on Extremism, accessed November 11, 2021, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Larry%20Rendall%20Brock%20Government%20Detention%20Exhibits.pdf
[121] Farrow, "AN AIR FORCE COMBAT VETERAN BREACHED THE SENATE."

William Calhoun **(**a Georgia 57-year-old practicing attorney for 30 years) admitted his participation in the riot in an exclusive interview with the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC) in which he described the assault on Congress as done out of frustration over a 'stolen' election. He was charged with entering restricted building or grounds, violent entry or disorderly conduct and tampering with a witness, victim or an informant.[122] During the interview with *AJC,* He described the mob as patriotic and heroic:

> "The people who went in there, what they did was heroic. It was very patriotic.....I'm not saying it was the ideal thing to do. I am saying at that time and place those people felt like that was their only hope. They don't want to lose their democratic republic..... The Deep State cannot stop us, they learned that today when we stormed the Capitol and took it. The word is we're all coming back armed for war."[123]

After the riot, he expressed his feelings on Facebook,

> "Today the American people proved that we have the power.....We occupied the Capitol and shut down the Government - we shut down their stolen election shenanigans."
> "The crowd was of one mind. Everybody there had the same attitude. They felt they had been robbed of a fair election and the Congress wasn't listening to them. It probably wasn't the best idea, but it was what this group of people did; they did it for the love of America."[124]

Prior to January 6, 2021, he often took to social media to express his ire at Democrats and ANTIFA and to warn of a second Civil War. His posts on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Parler were brought to the attention of the FBI National

---

[122] "CALHOUN JR., William Mccall," The United States Department of Justice, August 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/calhoun-jr-william-mccall
[123] Chris Joyner, "Georgia attorney among those who broke into U.S. Capitol," January 9, 2021, https://www.ajc.com/news/georgia-attorney-among-those-who-broke-into-the-us-capitol/MF3IWF57WRGHBO2G2GTSZII374/
[124] "Affidavit in support of criminal complaint and Arrest Warrant," IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, January 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/opa/page/file/1356036/download

Threat Operation Center, encouraging people to carry their firearms and go to Washington, D.C.:

> "We are going to kill every last communist who stands in Trump's way.....As part of the anti-communist counter revolution we've got to get serious about stopping them by force of arms."[125]

Michael Stepakoff, a father of four children and 55-year-old Messianic rabbi and ex-lawyer, was arrested and pleaded guilty for his participation in the insurrection on 24 September, 2021.[126] He, graduated from Florida State University, is also a published author and a member of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America executive committee. Notably, he sees himself as a pro-Bible, pro-America, pro-Israel, staunch Republican and conservative Jewish American patriot.[127] In the days leading up to the siege, there were many tweets and retweets on his twitter account relating to the plans to overturn the result of the Presidential election. For instance, on January 5, 2021, he wrote:

> "I am proud to be an American, I made the trip up from Florida to support the effort to save America. D.C., swarming with MAGA people. We're not gonna take it! Thank you President Trump!" [128]

On January 6, 2021, after leaving the Capitol, he described his actions on January 6 as necessary and self-defence on his Facebook, stating,

> "I am against violence, except in cases of self-defence.....despite the fake news images being shown, it was almost completely a peaceful demonstration within the context of the first Amendment.....But, sadly, I think violence or even the breaking apart of the Republic might become

[125] "Affidavit in support of criminal complaint and Arrest Warrant," IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, January 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/opa/page/file/1356036/download
[126] "STEPAKOFF, Michael," The United States Department of Justice, February 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/stepakoff-michael
[127] Omar, "Michael Stepakoff biography."
[128] Sullivan, "Palm Harbor Messianic rabbi.

> inevitable if something isn't done immediately in order to ensure the integrity of the 2020 election."[129]

One of the most visible of those charged in relation to the events of January 6 is Jenny Cudd, 36, an owner of flower store and a former candidate for mayor in Midland, Texas, wearing a Trump flag as a cape as she entered the Capitol.[130] She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Texas and earned her associate degree in drug and alcohol abuse counselling from Midland College in Midland. In 2020, she participated in protests in Midland and Odessa, Texas against business closures and mask mandates related to the Covid-19 pandemic.[131] Before the riot, according to her social media posts, Cudd appeared to be ready for a revolution at the Capitol. On January 5, 2021, Cudd stated on social media:

> "a lot of . . . the speakers this evening were calling for a revolution. Now I don't know what y'all think about a revolution, but I'm all for it. . . . Nobody actually wants war, nobody wants bloodshed, but the government works for us and unfortunately it appears that they have forgotten that, quite a lot. So, if a revolution is what it takes then so be it. Um, I don't know if that is going to kick off tomorrow or not...we shall see what it is that happens in Congress tomorrow at our United States Capitol. So, um either way I think that either our side or the other side is going to start a revolution."[132]

Additionally, she livestreamed on Facebook while in the Capito:

> "When (Vice President) Pence betrayed us is when we decided to storm the Capitol. We did break down the Nancy Pelosi's office door... Fuck yes, I

[129] "Stepakoff - Statement of Offense," IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, September 24, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1436786/download
[130] Omar, "Jenny Cudd biography."
[131] Omar, "Jenny Cudd biography."
[132] "Cudd - Statement of Offences," IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, October 13, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1442576/download

> am proud of my actions, I fucking charged the Capitol today with patriots today. Hell yes I am proud of my actions."[133]

On January 8, according to The Midland Reporter Telegram, Cudd said:

> "We the patriots did storm the U.S. Capitol...I would do it again in a heartbeat because I did not break any laws. I went inside the Capitol completely legally and I did not do anything to hurt anybody or to destroy any property. So yes, I would absolutely do it again."[134]

On October 13, 2021, she pleaded guilty to entering a restricted building.[135]

Conclusion

Analysis of these three categories leads to a better understanding of "who" stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021, giving some insight into their motivations to engage in the insurrection. It also expands our insight into how and why people take up certain beliefs and act on them. Even though they are from different groups, they shared many similarities. For instance, many of them hold and promote the false beliefs or conspiracy theory that the 2020 Presidential Election was stolen by Democrats. The main purpose for them to be present at the Capitol was to follow Trump's orders---'Stop the Steal' and prevent the certification of electoral votes for the 2020 Presidential election to save the country from 'traitors'--the leftist (Democrats) who 'rigged' the election. It

[133] "Cudd - Statement of Offences," IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, October 13, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1442576/download
[134] "Cudd - Statement of Offences," IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, October 13, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1442576/download
[135] "CUDD, Jenny Louise," The United States Department of Justice, October 19, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/cudd-jenny-louise

appears to confirm the role of conspiracy theories such as QAnon has become increasingly influential in right-wing extremism and violence in the U.S.

Additionally, while the issue of DVE groups has already posed significant challenges for a long time in the U.S.,[136] the involvement of those without DVE links made up a significant proportion of the overall participants in the insurrection, posing a new potential challenge in the U.S. The second category shows friendship, colleagueship and kinship networks can be the major factors in encouraging extremism and violent activities; the hodgepodge of participants in the third category demonstrates there is a possibility for increased lone-actors to participate in violent political activities in the future.[137] Therefore, besides DVE groups, participants in these two categories represent the novel types of domestic violent extremist in today's American society.

[136] Milton and Mines, "This is War."
[137] The George Washington University: Program on Extremism, "This is Our House!"

Chapter V.

Veterans

Alongside the political violence, equally concerning is the over-representation of military veterans in the siege. While military veterans were not the majority in the insurrection, it is less likely that the insurrection would have succeeded without their involvement. The experience of serving in the military likely made them better organized, better able to communicate with each other, and better equipped to do violence on January 6. Although, all military veterans had once sworn an oath of office to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution, their actions to violently stop Congress to from certifying the results of the Presidential Election was clearly contrary to their oath. Some of these veterans even hold membership in DVE organizations (see appendix 1, page 86). Perhaps even more puzzling is that many of them, along with other participants who are non-military veterans, are self-described 'patriots' who believed they were acting the best interests of the nation, saving their nation from communism and the 'rigged' Presidential Election.

The following analysis of those veterans involved in the events of January 6 suggests four possible motivations for their participation: extremism in the military ranks, nationalism and patriotism, a belief in Donald Trump's false claims, and social media.

Extremism in the Military Ranks

The issue of the extremism in the military is not new. The Executive Order 9981 signed by President Harry Truman in 1984 officially abolished segregation in the armed

forces, but many units in the military did not follow the Executive Order until later 1954.[138] In the 1970s, extremism in the military was thrust into the national coverage when the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was found to be operating publicly at a U.S. Marine Corps base.[139] In 1980s, the Southern Poverty Law Center's Klanwatch Project issued the first of many warnings to the Department of Defense about white supremacists in the military ranks and asked then-Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to prohibit active-duty service members from the KKK:

> "It is simply intolerable that members of the U.S. armed forces, sworn to uphold and defend the Constitution of the U.S., be allowed to hold memberships in an organization which seeks to overthrow the federal government through violent means."[140]

In 1995, extremism in the military received national attention again when three white Army paratroopers at Fort Bragg in North Carolina were arrested for killing a Black Couple in Fayetteville; in the same year, Army veteran Timothy McVeigh, an anti-government extremist, killed 168 people, including 19 children with a homemade bomb before a federal building in Oklahoma.[141] According to *New America*, 21 military veterans were identified as right-wing extremists between 2001 and 2013.[142] Among them, some already became extremism before or during their military service, and others joined the movement after leaving the military. Furthermore, there have been many

---

[138] Kat Stafford and James Laporta, "Decades of DOD efforts fail to stamp out bias, extremism," *AP NEWS*, December 30, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/business-donald-trump-lloyd-austin-veterans-arrests-aa564fe473dd4c347189bb39ad8a9201?utm_source=dailybrief&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DailyBrief2021Dec30&utm_term=DailyNewsBrief
[139] Stafford and Laporta, "Decades of DOD efforts fail to stamp out bias, extremism."
[140] Stafford and Laporta, "Decades of DOD efforts fail to stamp out bias, extremism."
[141] Stafford and Laporta, "Decades of DOD efforts fail to stamp out bias, extremism."
[142] Christopher Jones, “Does the American Military Have a Problem With Far-Right Extremism?,” Pacific Standard, accessed March 1, 2022, https://psmag.com/social-justice/does-the-american-military-have-a-problem-with-far-right-extremism.

similar cases in recent years. In 2018, Marine Lance Corporal Basillios G. Pistolis was expelled from the Marine Corps for his association with the neo-Nazi group--Atomwaffen Division (AWD)--after engaging in violent assaults in the Charlottesville riots in 2017.[143] In 2019, the *Huffington Post* exposed several members of the U.S. military as part of the white nationalist organization Identity Evropa, including Marines, and Army ROTC cadets.[144] In 2019, two men, one of them on active duty in Afghanistan, were expelled from the Georgia National Guard after they were identified as members of the racist pagan group---Ravensblood Kindred.[145]

A Lack of Attention to the Problem of Extremism in the Military

Extremism and domestic terrorism often receive inadequate attention. The 9/11 attacks happened partly because there was a lack of interagency cooperation, a refusal to share information among the Federal departments.[146] The January 6 insurrection happened partly due to the fact that the federal authorities did not pay much attention to the problem of domestic extremism and terrorism. For example, after the January 6 riot, a senior Department of Defense official told *NPR* that the DoD received more than 60

[143] A. C. Thompson Hanrahan Ali Winston,Jake, "Ranks of Notorious Hate Group Include Active-Duty Military," ProPublica, accessed March 1, 2022, https://www.propublica.org/article/atomwaffen-division-hate-group-active-duty-military?token=QWMHNu1frTkwNtZ9tn8Uvt0O9Qq1EbGO.
[144] Christopher Mathias, "Exclusive: 7U.S. Military Members Identified As Part of White Nationalist Group," *HUFFPOST*, March 18, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/white-nationalists-military-identity-evropa_n_5c8ab70ae4b0d7f6b0f1094b
[145] The Associated Press, "2 men kicked out of National Guard Over alleged white supremacist ties," *NBCNEWS*, December 27, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/2-men-kicked-out-national-guard-over-alleged-white-supremacist-n1107591
[146] "THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT," 9-11 Commission, accessed January 10, 2022, https://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf

notifications from the FBI last year regarding former and current military members' involvement in domestic extremism.[147]

Moreover, military personnel whose are aware of the problem of extremism have not paid enough attention to it.[148] In 2005, the Pentagon established numerous policies combating participation in extremist organizations, but "effectively, the military has a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy pertaining to extremism."[149] According to polls by the *Military Times* in 2017, almost 25 percent of active serving military personnel have encountered white nationalism and racism in the military.[150] There were around 1.3 million active-duty troops at that time, which means that about 325,000 soldiers experienced white nationalism in 2017. Surveys in 2018 and 2019 found that there were 22 percent in 2018 and 33 percent in 2019. In 2018, when then-U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison wrote a letter to then-Defense Secretary James Mattis showing his concern about the extremism in the military and requesting details on the Pentagon's efforts to combat the white supremacists, the DoD responded that it had received "27 reports of extremist activity (domestic) by Service members over the past five years."[151] Such low number reported to Ellison compared to the polls from *Military Times* about white supremacy in the military, indicates that the nature and cases of the extremism of the troops, therefore, have not been well documented by the DoD. Thus, it is hard to know the true extent of

---

[147] Tom Dresibach and Meg Anderson, "Nearly 1 in 5 Defendants in Capitol Riot Cases Served In the Military," *NPR*, January 21, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/01/21/958915267/nearly-one-in-five-defendants-in-capitol-riot-cases-served-in-the-military

[148] Stafford and Laporta, "Decades of DOD efforts fail to stamp out bias, extremism."

[149] Stafford and Laporta, "Decades of DOD efforts fail to stamp out bias, extremism."

[150] Heidi L. Beirich, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy in the military - How to Stop It?" *Congress.GOV*, February 11, 2020, https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110495/witnesses/HHRG-116-AS02-Wstate-BeirichH-20200211.pdf

[151] Beirich, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy."

the problem of white supremacists in the military due to the lack of transparency. The low numbers might also reflect an attitude in the DoD that extremism is not a great concern or efforts to rid the extremism in the ranks have not been enough. Carter F. Smith a former Army criminal investigator, said:

> "They (the military) always say the numbers are small, and because of that, it is not priority.....Well, the numbers might be small, but they are like a drop of cyanide in your drink. They can do a lot of damage."[152]

Uneven Response to the Extremism in the Military Ranks

Only as more extremism cases have come to light in recent years has the federal government started to admit the seriousness of the problem. In 2019, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) added white supremacist violence to its list of priority threats, which was the first time since the 9/11 attacks.[153] Moreover, while there have been rounds of reforms over recent decades, including bipartisan support to fight this problem.[154] The January 6th insurrection, makes clear that the Armed Forces and Federal Departments still fall far short in rooting out extremists. The current policies, resources and investigative priorities are still not enough to root out this increasing problem that is contributing to domestic terrorism. If they fail to do so, these extremists in the military can effectively perpetuate violence when they re-enter civil society.

One of the main problems is a lack of political will, particularly from the Commander-in-Chief. In the United States, all chains of command lead eventually to the President, who under the Constitution is Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces. Thus,

---

[152] Beirich, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy."
[153] Beirich, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy."
[154] Glenn Thrush, "Congress Passes Measure Challenging Trump to Denounce Hate Groups," *The New York Times*, September 13, 2017, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/us/congress-trump-hate-groups-charlottesville.html.

having the Commander-in-Chief join with military commanders and condemn extremism and white supremacists in the military is vital, reiterating importance of keeping extremists out of the military.[155] Concerns about the danger of white nationalism, however, were downplayed by President Trump. Not only did he fail to act during his administration, but he showed evident sympathy with those extremist militia groups. For example, he was asked in the September 29, 2020 Presidential debate whether he would "condemn while supremacists and militia groups and say that they need to stand down."[156] The Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. refused to condemn the Proud Boys---a militant nativist group---on national television. Instead, he said that the Proud Boys should "stand back and stand by". The Proud Boys adopted that phrase as their official slogan and created merchandise with the slogan (see figure 1, page 49).



Figure 1: The Proud Boy adopted Trump's phrase

[155] Beirich, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy."
[156] Sarah McCammon, “From Debate Stage, Trump Declines To Denounce White Supremacy,” *NPR*, September 30, 2020, sec. Elections, https://www.npr.org/2020/09/30/918483794/from-debate-stage-trump-declines-to-denounce-white-supremacy.

Source: Twitter

In addition, President Trump and his Republican Party also failed to take strong actions against extremism and racism in the military ranks. In 2017, Congress passed the bipartisan resolution after the deadly Charlottesville racist riots, condemning "White nationalism, White Supremacy, and neo-Nazism as hateful expressions of intolerance that are contradictory to the values that define the people of the United States."[157] The resolution requires the President and his administration "use all resources available to the President and the President's cabinet to address the growing prevalence of those hate groups in the U.S." Unfortunately, the Senate cut out a reference to "white nationalism" from a measure in that year's National Defense Authorization Act, hence the final version of the bill, passed by the Senate and sent to President Donald Trump, only required the DoD to monitor "Extremist and gang-related activity," rather than specifically referencing white nationalism.[158] Trump did not make any efforts to persuade the Senate to not to exclude "white nationalism" from the bill..

Consequently, when the President and Commander-in-Chief of the United States demonstrates sympathy with extremist militia groups while refusing to publicly condemn extremism in the military ranks or to undertake actions extremist militia groups, he sends a clearly message to the public that extremist in the military, though labelled as a threat to the public by FBI and DHS, is not a great concern. It is not surprising, therefore, to

---

[157] Beirich, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy."
[158] Heidi L. Beirich, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy in the military - How to Stop It?" *Congress.GOV*, February 11, 2020, https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110495/witnesses/HHRG-116-AS02-Wstate-BeirichH-20200211.pdf

hypothesize that the extremism in the military ranks exacerbates domestic terrorism and contributes to an over-representation of veteran in the mob on January 6.

Patriotism and Nationalism

"Patriotism is love of country which includes some mix of culture, values, the regime, the land, the national history and myths, the government and its policies."[159] Patriotism is one of the main motivations cited by veterans who participated in the insurrection. Many veterans claimed to be patriots and deemed their violent actions as patriotic moves in their court documents. Nevertheless, the following analysis shows that their actions and words are more consistent with nationalism than patriotism.

Four significant types of patriotism that are often discussed within the patriotism literature.[160] First, it is called "exclusionary patriotism," a high degree of patriotism associated with aggressive attitudes toward other countries,[161] emphasizing on maintaining homogeneity within groups and differentiation between groups.[162] The second is named "goal-based patriotism," by which "a group may become a coherent entity by virtue of facing a common problem, having a common purpose, and acting in a coordinated way to achieve shared goals."[163] The third is known as "blind patriotism",

[159] Elizabeth Thesiss-Morse, *Who Counts as an American*? (London: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 23.
[160] Hodges, "Storming the Castle."
[161] Sidanius, J., & Petrocik, J. R. *Communal and national identity in a multiethnic state: A comparison of three perspectives*. In R. Ashmore, L. Jussim, & D. Wilder (Eds.), Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction (London: Oxford University Press, 2001): 101–129.
[162] Masaki Yuki, "Intergroup Comparison versus Intragroup Relationships: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Social Identity Theory in North American and East Asian Cultural Contexts." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2003): 166–83. https://doi.org/10.2307/1519846.
[163] Brewer, M. B., Hong, Y.-Y., & Li, Q. *Dynamic entitativity: Perceiving groups as actors*. In V. Yzerbyt, C. M. Judd, & O. Corneille (Eds.), The psychology of group perception: Perceived variability, entitativity, and essentialism (Psychology Press, 2004): 25–38.

which does not permits criticism and is required an absolute loyalty ("love it or leave it") to the nation.[164] Finally, the last one is referred to "constructive patriotism" that allows room for criticism to improve the nation.[165] Citizens trying to help improve the country by protesting can be classified as constructive patriotism. In this case, constructive patriotism refers to the non-competitive love of and commitment to one's country.[166]

Nationalism, on the other hand, although akin to patriotism, is "related to an ideology of superiority of the ingroup over outgroups, implying the exclusion or even domination of others."[167] It, thus, refers to "higher levels of chauvinism, prejudice, militarism, hawkish attitudes, and social dominance orientation, and lower levels of internationalism."[168]

Although nationalism and patriotism both share some similarities such as national pride, they share different concepts of intergroup attitudes. Nationalism takes a stronger militaristic attitude towards other groups in competitive intergroup situations,[169] while patriotism is less militaristic and hostility towards other groups but more cooperative.[170]

---

[164] Robert T. Schatz, Ervin Staub, and Howard Lavine, "On the Varieties of National Attachment: Blind Versus Constructive Patriotism," *Political Psychology* 20, no. 1 (1999): 151–74, https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00140.
[165] Schatz, Staub and Lavine, "On the varieties of national attachment."
[166] Hodges, "Storming the Castle."
[167] Thomas Blank and Peter Schmidt. "National Identity in a United Germany: Nationalism or Patriotism? An Empirical Test with Representative Data." *Political Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2003): 289–312. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792352.
[168] Rui J. P. De Figueiredo Jr. and Zachary Elkins, "Are Patriots Bigots? An Inquiry into the Vices of In-Group Pride," *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 1 (2003): 171–88, https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5907.00012.
[169] Seymour Feshbach, "Nationalism, Patriotism, and Aggression," in *Aggressive Behavior: Current Perspectives*, ed. L. Rowell Huesmann, The Plenum Series in Social/Clinical Psychology (Boston, MA: Springer US, 1994), 275–91, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-9116-7_12.
[170] Hodges, "Storming the Castle."

Additionally, nationalism makes people highly engaged in politics, whereas several types of patriotism, including goal-based, blind and constructive patriotism, do not.[171]

On the other hand, some factors can impact the level of nationalism and patriotism. First, both the level of patriotism and nationalism tend to increase in response to foreign crises immediately. For instance, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. showed a strong expression of, patriotic fervor, unity and national identification.[172] Secondly, national leaders, their words and actions, can also affect whether patriotism becomes nationalism.[173]

Military veterans encompass a high sense of loyalty to the nation as they all swear to defend the U.S. Constitution, thus acting in the best interest of the country during the military service. The level of patriotism and loyalty of veterans, therefore, are likely higher than those with non-military background, suggesting that they might be more likely to take action when they feel the nation is under threat or in danger. There seems to be some support for this hypothesis in the attitudes of some veterans on January 6:

> "The President asked for his supporters to be there to attend, and I felt like it was important, because of how much I love this country, to actually be there...We are now under occupation by a hostile governing force that may seem ludicrous to some, but I see no distinction between a group of Americans seizing power and governing with complete disregard to the Constitution and an invading force...Against all enemies foreign and domestic #OathKeeper #2A #111%."
>
> ----Larry Rendall Brock (Air Force veteran)

[171] Leonie Huddy, and Nadia Khatib. "American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement." *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 63–77. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122906.
[172] Qiong Li, and Marilynn B. Brewer. "What Does It Mean to Be an American? Patriotism, Nationalism, and American Identity after 9/11." *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004): 727–39. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792341.
[173] Hodges, "Storming the Castle."

> "Mike Pence is a fucking traitor....to allow us to send a message to all the tyrants, the communists, and the globalists, that this is our nation, not theirs, that we will not allow America, the American way of the United States of America to go down...It]hank you for allowing the United States of America to be reborn. Thank you for allowing us to get rid of the communists, the globalists, and the traitors within our government."
>
> ----Jacob Chansley (Navy veteran)

> "This is our call to action, friends! See you on the 6th in Washington, D.C. Along with 2 million other like-minded patriots...I accept that assignment! I swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic. I did the former, I have done the latter peacefully but they (Dems) have morphed into pure evil even blatantly rigging an election and paying off the political caste. We must smite them (Dems) now and drive them down."[174]
>
> ----Thomas Cladwell (Navy Veteran)

The veterans' use of the words 'patriot' and 'traitor' can be relevant to their motivation. In their comments, although they thought of themselves as patriots and believed they were acting patriotically, their comments seem more consistent with the definition of nationalism as explained above. Their comments and violent actions typify the characteristics of nationalism more than patriotism inasmuch as they indicate a preference for military violence, military force, a willingness to fight, and vilification of the opposition. One possible explanation for why they referred to themselves patriots but behaved nationalistically is that patriotism and nationalism occur on a spectrum and that the behavior of national leaders can activate the nationalistic impulse.[175] It was then-President Donald Trump who activated both their patriotism and nationalistic impulse. For example, veterans believed the false claims promoted by Donald Trump that the

[174] "Caldwell, et al - Indictment," IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, January 27, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1361086/download
[175] Hodges, "Storming the Castle."

election was 'stolen,' the nation was 'under threat,' and *'you will lose your nation unless you do something about it*.'[176] It might explain why they called themselves patriots when they unlawfully and unconstitutionally stormed the Capitol to stop the certification of what they believed was the "fraud" election claimed by President Trump. They thought they were protecting the nation from fraud and corruption consitent with their oath.

If we consider veterans who participated as exclusionary patriots and focus on intergroup competition and see the President from a competing party as a threat to their party, the idea of fraud begins to make sense. Therefore, given the consideration of patriotism and nationalism existing on a scope, it is possible that the competitive environment of the 2020 U.S Presidential election and Donald Trump could have activated both the veterans' nationalism.[177]

Donald Trump, His False Claims and Rectifying an Injustice

President Trump played a role in stoking the nationalistic tendencies of these veterans. As explained in the foregoing paragraphs, the level of patriotism and nationalism can be primed or evoked by national leaders. President Trump and his allies were able to activate his supporters' patriotism and nationalism by constantly spreading false claims about the fraudulent election and describing Democrats as traitors and a foreign threat before, during and after the election (see figure 2, 3, 4, page 56-57) on social media, thereby pushing his supporters, including those veterans, toward patriotism and nationalism. To increase the credibility of his false claims, Trump and his allies filed

[176] Brian Naylor, "Read Trump's Jan. 6 Speech, A Key Part Of Impeachment Trial," *NPR*, February 10, 2021, sec. Politics, https://www.npr.org/2021/02/10/966396848/read-trumps-jan-6-speech-a-key-part-of-impeachment-trial.
[177] Hodges, "Storming the Castle."

dozens of lawsuits aimed at overturning the election at the state and federal levels, including the U.S. Supreme Court (see figure 5, page 57). On January 6, 2021, Trump even encouraged his followers to fight like hell, and 'if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore...you have to show strength (see figure 6, page 58)," leading them to believe violence was justified and was the only recourse to save the United States from corruption and The most common comment from veterans' indictment is that the President wants them to be here and fight against a fraudulent election, otherwise the opposition controlled by communists will take over the country. In a video clip, one of those protesters standing outside the Capitol and yelled "We were invited by the President of the U.S."[178] Thus, they did not see that they were breaking laws, instead, they believed they were simply following the order of the President.



[178] NBC News, *DeGette Makes Case That Rioters Were Invited To Capitol By Trump | NBC News NOW*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TXfH7yxhyU.

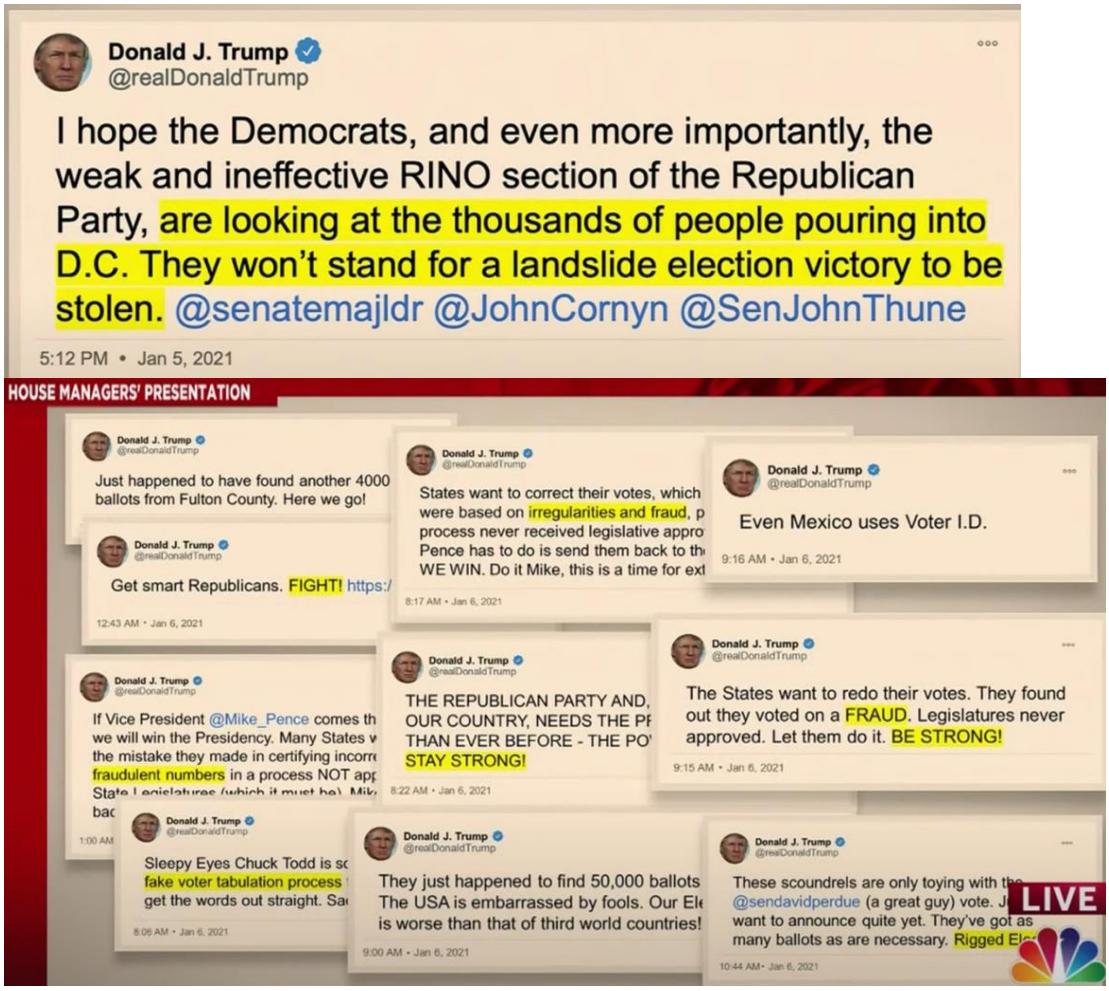


Figure 2, 3, and 4: Trump spread misinformation on his Twitter
Source: MSNBC and Trump's twitter



Figure 5: Trump's lawsuits
Source: MSNBC

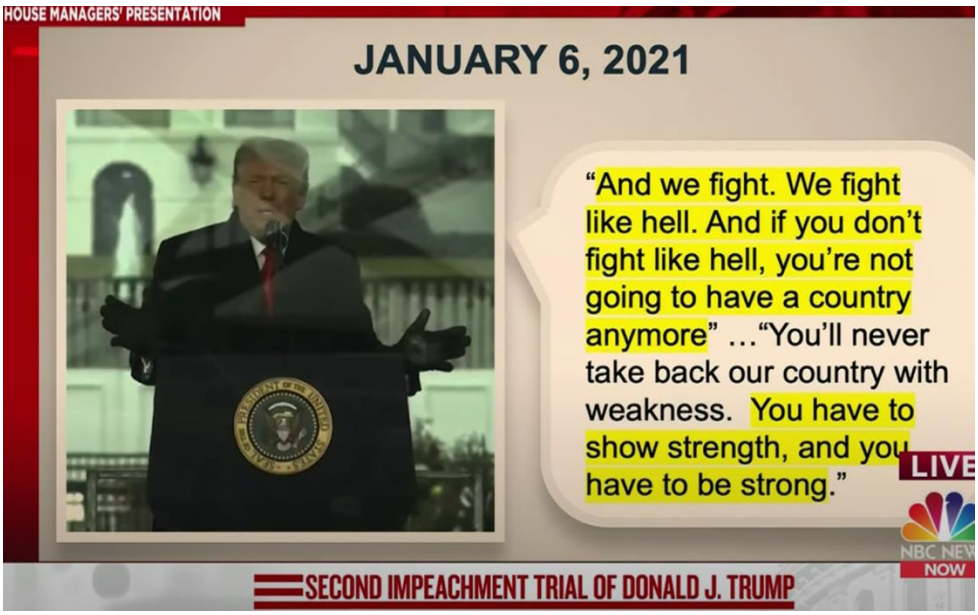


Figure 6: Trump's speech on January 6, 2021
Source: MSNBC

On the other hand, many veterans are members of extremist militia groups. As discussed previously, much evidence shows that then-Commander-in-Chief appeared to approve of DVE groups such as Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers and was often reluctant to condemn them. In return, these groups willingly followed Trump's orders and embraced his conspiracy theories, seeing him as an ally in the White House who shared their values.[179] In other words, these groups were not following the Republican party, they were following then-President Trump. For example, the Oath Keepers criticized both Democratic and Republican politicians, but in the 2016 presidential election, the group started to support Trump.[180] After the 2020 election, Oath Keepers founder Stewart

[179] Ryan Lucas, "Who are the Oath Keepers? Militia Group, Founder Scrutinized in Capitol Riot Probe," *NPR*, April 10, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/04/10/985428402/who-are-the-oath-keepers-militia-group-founder-scrutinized-in-capitol-riot-probe
[180] Lucas, "Who are the Oath Keepers?

Rhodes, an Army veteran, promoted Trump's false claims that the election was rigged, urged people refuse to accept the results and called Biden "a puppet of the Chinese communist party."[181] Therefore, the fact that there are many veterans in DVE groups who feel a special relationship with Trump might explain why veterans were over-represented in the insurrection. In a nutshell, the President's voice matters, and the Commander-in-Chief's words matter to the public, especially to the military.

The Role of Social Media

Social media served as an indispensable vehicle for Trump to spread false information, hence ultimately affecting participants' decision to engage in the insurrection. Conspiracy theories such as QAnon, which partly motivated the violence, are also widely accessible and disseminated on social media platforms. According to my data collection, almost every participant, including veterans, used social media. Mainstream social media organizations appeared to have been the platforms for participants to use before, during and after the insurrection for their purposes, including receiving Trump's false claims and conspiracy theories, posting misinformation updates, mobilizing people, coordinating violent activity. In such case, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter helped Trump's false claims and conspiracy theories transform from a conversation among a few people on a limited platform to mass online platforms within a few minutes.[182]

To support and bolster Trump's false claims and his conspiracy theories such as QAnon theories, Trump's political elites such as GOP politicians joined social media

[181] Lucas, "Who are the Oath Keepers?"
[182] Sweet. "Can Disinformation Be Stopped?"

platforms, throwing gasoline on top of the fire. There is significant evidence that GOP lawmakers actively and intentionally spread and disseminated his false claims about the election on social media. For instance, representative Zoe Lofgren, Democrat of California, compiled an almost 2,000-page document containing public social media posts from 102 Congressional Republicans between November 3rd, 2020 and January 31st, 2021.[183] Her report shows false voter fraud claims, conspiracy theories, and evidence of several Representatives who had associations with groups such as the Proud Boys and Stop the Steal organizers.[184] Most of those claims can be directly traced to former President Trump.

Moreover, numerous right-wing and conservative social media users and media outlets such as Fox News and Newsmax also propagated the notion of a fraudulent election significantly on multiple social media platforms. When Trump and his lawyers, Rudy Giuliani and Sidney Powell, filed more than 60 lawsuits in an attempt to overturn electoral votes, right-wing and conservative media outlets regularly reported their claims of election cheating on social media platforms.[185] In Arizona, social media users claimed voters were forced to use Sharpies so the machines would not recognize their ballots, even though Sharpies could be recognized.[186] In Michigan, a video on social media showed officials "stuffing ballots," but the video was made from Russia.[187] All of these

[183] Lauren Fox, "Democratic Rep. Zoe Lofgren quietly releases massive social media report on GOP colleagues who voted to overturn the election," *CNN*, March 8, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/05/politics/lofgren-social-media-report-gop-lawmakers/index.html
[184] Lauren Fox, "Democratic Rep. Zoe Lofgren."
[185] Sweet. "Can Disinformation Be Stopped?"
[186] Tom Kertscher, "Sharpiegate, vote fraud claim in Arizona is Flase," *PolitiFact*, November 4, 2021 https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/nov/04/facebook-posts/voting-machines-dont-read-ballots-filled-sharpies-/
[187] Louis Jacobson, "Video of 'ballot stuffing' is not from a Flint, Mich., polling place. It's from Russia," *PolitiFact*, November 5, 2021, https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/nov/05/facebook-posts/video-ballot-stuffing-filmed-russia-not-flint-mich/

false claims came together to build a false narrative that the election was stolen by Democrats. Even though those videos and footages were later verified as fake or misleading sources, and his campaign claims were dismissed by state and federal courts,[188] the damage was already done. That repetition, correlated with the online responsiveness people, could accelerate the dissemination of disinformation and get people into these rabbit holes.

Consequently, as social media has reshaped the media environment, Trump and his allies effectively used these platforms to seed, display and disseminate his misinformation about the election for months leading to the events that unfolded on January 6, 2021. Participants, including veterans, used social media to quickly share and receive misinformation and disinformation. They became outright exposed to fake news and responded to it with radical political activities, thereby exacerbating the conflicts. It is safe to say that veterans and many other defendants who participated in the riots were influenced in their strong sense of injustice by the repeated false claims of a stolen election on social media.

[188] "Face Check: Courts have dismissed multiple lawsuits of alleged electoral fraud presented by Trump campaign," *Reuters*, February 16, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-courts-election/fact-check-courts-have-dismissed-multiple-lawsuits-of-alleged-electoral-fraud-presented-by-trump-campaign-idUSKBN2AF1G1

Chapter VI

Results & Discussion

This study has used a unique combination of existing and original data to examine the complex relationship between social media, disinformation, political elites, and the crowd (particularly military veterans) involved in the insurrection, and how they came together to propagate Trump's false information about the election and engage in the violent attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. To answer my research questions and test my hypotheses, the thesis reviewed court filings and other information such as media stories for hundreds of defendants related to the January 6 insurrection to document what roles disinformation and social media played in the insurrection, who participated in the insurrection, and what factors that led them to engage in the insurrection.

1st research question: Who stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021?

H1: Those who participated in the insurrection came together with the same purpose, but they were from various groups.

White males at middle-age are the majority in the insurrection. 91.38% of or 631 participants are employed and many are white and blue and white collars, and have a strong political representation (Donald Trump), while only 3.4% or 24 (0.034 x 691 = 23.5) defendants are unemployed. Some are business owners (17.24% or 119) and former and current government employees (12.93% or 89).

Additionally, based on court documents and numerous media stories, the thesis successfully identifies three main categories of participants who stormed the Capitol: organized DVE groups (11.2%), organized groups with no associations with DVE, and

lone actors without the involvement of any groups. Defining those participants by their level of organization and networked connections can help explain the complex domestic extremist landscape in the U.S. before and after the events of January 6. It also indicates that the problem of extremism is not limited to the military but also appears in the civilian society, including government branches and non-government workplaces.

While DVE groups such as the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers played a particularly salient role in strategizing ahead of time and coalescing other rally-goers around their efforts to storm the Capitol, the vast majority--86.29% of participants were unaffiliated with DVE organizations, indicating that the mass movement was more than organizational. In this case, the January 6 insurrection was pro-Trump supporters joined with the DVE groups to create a novel kind of violent mob movement. The insurrection itself was an act of political violence rather than merely vandalism or trespassing for other purposes, demonstrating that a leader with demonstrated support for extra-legal activity can damage the nation deeply. Therefore, what we are dealing is not solely a mix of right-wing DVE groups, but a more general mass movement with violence at its core.

Moreover, participants with military backgrounds or service were over-represented in the violent mob, and there is a troubling overlap between current and former military service personnel and DVE membership. Not only did they join the DVE groups and march on the Capitol, they also led efforts to interfere with the democratic process, raising a national security concern for the future of the U.S. The extremism in the military, the notion of patriotism and nationalism and a belief in Donald Trump's false claims widely spread on social media appeared to be major motivations for engaging in the insurrection, based on court documents, interviews and social media.

The second research question is: What main factors could lead Trump's supporters to believe Trump's false claims and engage in the insurrection on January 6, 2021?

H2: There might be a strong correlation between disinformation on social media platforms and the January 6 insurrection.

The findings provide robust support for Hypothesis 2. There is a strong positive connection between disinformation on social media and participants as they were nearly all active on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Parler and Instagram, sharing and receiving misinformation about the election. Almost all of them were charged in part based on evidence from their personal social media accounts. Countless of Trump's false claims about the 2020 election being stolen by Democrats for Joe Biden was one of the key drivers behind the January 6 insurrection. Such disinformation narratives about the 'fraudulent' Presidential Election on social media were frequently used by Trump and his political allies to promote public acceptance of a 'stolen election'. The court documents also elucidate how misinformed beliefs influenced the participants' lives before the insurrection. After repeatedly being told by then-President Trump on social media that the election was stolen, defendants involved in the insurrection started to post and share their views on their social media accounts, ultimately participating in the insurrection.

H3: Factors such as age, race, education and employment might have little impact on those rioters' ability to recognize disinformation on social media, while other factors such as their readiness to accept the truth of conspiracy theories, stolen elections, and the dishonestly of the political opposition might significantly affect their judgments and lead to the acceptance of disinformation.

The thesis found that their age, race, and employment have little impact on the rioters' ability to recognize disinformation on social media, but their readiness to accept Trump's conspiracy theories and false claims about the election does. When state and federal officials affirmed it was a free and fair election, and judges, including judges appointed by Trump, across the federal and state courts rejected Trump's lawsuits that seek to overturn the election after they found no merit to the claims (see figure 5, page 57), those arrested still did not believe it. They did not simply hold these misguided beliefs, rather, they acted on them. It appears that these defendants did not think they were spreading misinformation, but sincerely believed Trump's false claims and other conspiracy theories consistent with Trump's statements while ignoring the reliable and objective evidence that shows the election was conducted fairly.

Discussion

Apart from the above hypotheses, social media and disinformation certainly played a role in contributing to the events of the insurrection. With the features of social media, people now can increasingly provide, receive and share information, making it easier than ever for nefarious groups to launch disinformation campaigns.[189] Without social media, the spread of misinformation about the 2020 election leading up to the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol would have been less likely to happen. Thus, social media organizations should bear significant responsibility for exacerbating the spread of false information. The House Select Committee to investigate the January 6th attack has already issued subpoenas to social media organizations as part of its investigation into the

[189] David M.J. Lazer, etal, "The science of fake news."

January 6th attack, demanding records from companies such as Twitter and Reddit relating to the spread of misinformation in the efforts to overturn the 2020 election.[190] Nevertheless, the role of social media and disinformation should not be overdramatized in the January 6 insurrection. To prevent such political violence in the future, the focus solely on the responsibility of social media companies may distract us from other causes that also led to political violence at the Capitol.

Although false claims about election sharing were fueled by ignorance, it is unlikely that teaching social media users how to identify false information and reminding them of the importance of sharing news articles from credible fact-checking sources would be successful. Those participants chose the influencer, messenger and information consistent with their opinions, ignoring facts and information that challenges their sense of politics and belief, those recommendations would be very less effective. For example, they completely ignored or refused to believe the facts that federal and state courts dismissed Trump's claims about election fraud. Thus, if we are to understand what causes millions of people to believe that Democrats stole the election, leading hundreds of participants to storm the Capitol on January 6, 2021, both social media and Trump share responsibility. Trump is clearly the leader of this mass movement; the insurrection would be unlikely to happen without him. Moreover, research shows that false narratives are based on and echoed by pre-existing ideologies.[191] In other words, Trump's rhetoric, both on social media and on January 6, persuaded his supporters because his words and ideas

[190] "Select Committee Subpoenas Social Media Companies for Records Related to January 6th Attack," Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, January 13, 2022, https://january6th.house.gov/news/press-releases/select-committee-subpoenas-social-media-companies-records-related-january-6th.
[191] Kuo and Marwick, "Critical disinformation studies."

were highly consistent with participants' long-term pre-existing ideologies. Therefore, misinformation about the election on social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook, believed and shared by participants, was more likely to be fueled by Trump, by partisan animosity and by pre-existing ideologies and not only their ignorance of the facts.

In this regard, social media is only one of the keys for the success of Trump's disinformation campaign that exacerbated partisan animosity and pre-existing ideologies. A polarized American society and party animosity are also the problems. These problems had gradually worsened for decades before the emergence of social media platforms and are the critical reasons driving misinformation sharing and producing, as well as Trump's presidential victory in 2016.

In addition, what happened on January 6 may insinuate that two political parties (Democrat and Republican) in the United States may not only clash over policy and politics, but they view each other as the enemy. According to their comments in the court documents, those participants demonize Democrats as immoral and alien, and a threat to the nation, brewing the antagonism that allowed participants to see themselves as patriots. Unfortunately, demonization is not a hallmark of a healthy democracy.[192]

This demonization is called political sectarianism, which is not a familiar term in the study of American politics.[193] It is normally used in the discussion about religious sectarianism, such as the hostility between Sunnis and Shia in Iraq.[194] Put in a short way, "it is the tendency to adopt a moralized identification with one political group and against

[192] Eli J. Finkel, et al, "Polityical sectarianism in America."
[193] Nate Cohn, “Why Political Sectarianism Is a Growing Threat to American Democracy,” *The New York Times*, April 19, 2021, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/us/democracy-gop-democrats-sectarianism.html.
[194] Cohn, "Why Political Sectarianism."

another."[195] As Eric states, political sectarianism has three foundational aspects: "othering----the tendency to view those with opposing political views as essentially different to oneself; aversion----disliking and distrusting those with opposing political views; and moralization----viewing the opposing as evil."[196] When these three elements brought together, a political loss by one's party would be seen as existential threats.[197] All these elements were clearly present in the comments made by participants in this study. "The Left has morphed into pure evil even blatantly rigging an election and paying off the political caste (Thomas Cladwell, Navy Veteran)."[198] Therefore, defeat is part of the presidential election in democracy, but it may be harder for the loser to accept the defeat in a political sectarian society. As we witnessed the January 6 insurrection, those participants, GOP lawmakers and conservative media outlets were all unwilling to be the loser, refusing the defeat and refusing to be ruled by their rival (Democrats) who is a disliked and evil rival in their eyes.

Moreover, in an extreme circumstance, "ruled by a hostile, alien group might not feel much different than being subjugated by another nation."[199] It might start to make sense to see participants having nationalistic tendencies and militaristic stands towards their opposition.

Perhaps most troubling of all, the political sectarianism may also incentivize political actors such as lawmakers and partisan media to choose the party over the Constitution. During Trump's second impeachment, 197 Republican House

---

[195] Thomas Edsaal, "America, we have a problem," *The New York Times*, Dec 16, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/16/opinion/trump-political-sectarianism.html
[196] Hodges, "'Storming the Castle.'
[197] Hodges, "'Storming the Castle.'
[198] "Caldwell, et al - Indictment."
[199] Cohn, "Why Political Sectarianism."

Representatives and 43 Republican Senators voted not to convict on Trump's incitement for incitement of insurrection,[200] and 35 Republican House Representatives voted against creating the January 6 Committee that is a Special House Committee to investigate the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol.[201] In January 2022, after Republican Senator Ted Cruz referred to the January 6 insurrection as a "violent terrorist attack on the Capitol," he walked back his use of the word "terrorist" and brushed off his previous statements as "sloppy" and "frankly dumb" during an intense back and forth interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson whose show is known to spread misinformation about the January 6 insurrection.[202] The interview with Tucker Carlson and attack on Ted Cruz can be seen as the Republicans' chief ideologists (Tucker Carlson) calling Cruz to the floor to explain himself and to engage in serious self-criticism to bring himself back toward the general line of the Party. After the interview, to prove his loyalty to the Party, Ted Cruz questioned the FBI about whether federal agents incited the riot, which is an incomprehensible and scary conspiracy theory that Tucker Carlson mentioned last summer.[203] Furthermore, after the January 6 insurrection, Rep. Liz Cheney, one of the two House GOP and vice-chair of the Special House Committee investigating the January 6 insurrection, has become less popular in the entire Republican party than renowned pro-

[200] "Impeachment of Donald Trump, 2021," BALLOTPEDIA, accessed Dec 12, 2021, https://ballotpedia.org/Impeachment_of_Donald_Trump,_2021
[201] Paul LeBlanc, "Here are the 35 House Republicans who voted for the January 6 commission," *CNN*, May 19, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/19/politics/house-republicans-january-6-commission/index.html
[202] CNN, *Keilar Calls out Tucker Carlson and Ted Cruz's Live TV Spar*, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wUx0K2AxkM.
[203] Peter Wade, "Tucker Carlson Minion Ted Cruz pushes Tucker Carlson's favorite Jan.6 Conspiracy Theory in Senate Hearing," *Rolling Stone*, January 11, 2022, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/ted-cruz-tucker-carlson-ray-epps-conspiracy-theory-1282885/

Trump and conspiracy theorist House Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene.[204] Cheney has been censured and removed from Republican leadership circle for working with the January 6 panel in spite of her consistently conservative voting record and her support for Donald Trump's re-election in 2020.[205] Thus, in a political sectarianism society, a political coalition is united far more by party animosity than policy, and even a long-term conservative House Representative can be shunned by the GOP leadership for promoting loyalty to the Constitution over to the party.

Fox News is a conservative media outlet whose hosts spent months pushing Trump's misinformation and conspiracy theory about the "rigged" election leading up to the January 6th insurrection, deflecting blame from Trump and placing it onto left-wing activists without any evidence that they provoked the insurrection.[206] But Rep. Cheney read texts that two Fox News hosts (Laura Ingraham, and Sean Hannity who are supporters of Trump) sent to Mark Meadows (the former White House chief of staff) to beg him to ask the President to make a national address asking his supporters to leave the Capitol and go home.[207] Here is a brief rundown of the texts they sent Mark Meadows on January 6 compared to what they told their audience the same day:

Laura Ingraham

Text to Meadows: "Mark, the president needs to tell people in the Capitol to go home. This is hurting all of us. He is destroying his legacy."[208]

---

[204] Margaret Talev, "Poll: Republicans Favor Greene over Cheney," Axios, February 4, 2021, https://www.axios.com/marjorie-taylor-greene-liz-cheney-a8f966eb-2a4b-452c-a1f4-61922bd07980.html.
[205] Melanie Zanona and Olivia Beavers, "Cheney booted from Republican leadership spot," *Politico*, May 12, 2021, https://www.politico.com/news/2021/05/12/liz-cheney-removed-leadership-position-487522
[206] Peter Wade, "Compare and Contrast: Fox News Anchors' Frantic Jan 6. Texts to Mark Meadows vs. what they told viewers," *Rolling Stone*, Dec 14, 2021, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/hannity-ingraham-kilmeade-fox-news-texts-on-air-1271349/
[207] Wade, "Compare and Contrast."
[208] Metzger and Lahut, "Fox News host Laura Ingraham."

Message to viewers: “Now, they were likely not all Trump supporters, and there are some reports that antifa sympathizers may have been sprinkled throughout the crowd...I have never seen Trump rally attendees wearing helmets, black helmets, brown helmets, black backpacks — the uniforms you saw in some of these crowd shots.*”*[209]

Sean Hannity

Text to Meadows: “Can he (Trump) make a statement? … Ask people to leave the Capitol.”

Message to viewers: “I’d like to know who the agitators were,” Hannity said on Jan. 6, holding that “those who truly support President Trump … do not support those that commit acts of violence.”[210]

The January 6 House Committee also revealed that Sean Hannity texted to then-White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany: "no more crazy people, no more election stolen talk," it was "key" to keep the then-President Trump away from certain people." "Yes, 100%,*"* McEnany responded.[211] Many times, we have to examine what politicians and political elites did in private, and compare with what they said or did in public. Those messages clearly show their surprise when their obedient viewers stormed

[209] Wade, "Compare and Contrast."
[210] Wade, "Compare and Contrast."
[211] Beitsch, "Hannity after Jan. 6 texted McEnany."

the Capitol. They also believed that Trump took some responsibility for the insurrection, and that attacking the Capitol was wrong that would destroy the Republican Party's legacy and Trump's legacy. Clearly, there is a discrepancy between what they were saying in private and what they were telling millions of Americans on TV on January 6.

Furthermore, the texts raise a serious concern about the ethics of journalists and media. Jeff Cohen, author of "Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media," said "Journalists and media are supposed to be public checks on power, not private advisers to power...A commentator is still a journalist, and even if the commentator doesn't consider him or herself to be a journalist, they still have to tell the public when they played a role in something they're commenting on."[212]

In a nutshell, political sectarianism, especially one party's animosity towards the opposing party, strongly encouraged fake news sharing. Social media helped increase the level of political sectarianism and the spread of false news sharing. Most of all, within a political sectarianism environment, Republican political elites often knowingly chose for the sake of the party not to condemn the wrongdoing publicly but to encourage it by spreading misinformation favorable to their party. Ultimately, they chose the party over the Constitution, and the result has been lethal and expensive for Americans across the political spectrum. All of these suggest that the U.S. has not come together to defend its democracy, but has only split further apart, posing a threat to American democracy. Therefore, it is necessary to take serious measures against disinformation on social media to combat extremism and political sectarianism.

[212] Ashley Parker and Josh Dawsey, "Trump's cable cabinet: New texts reveal the influence of Fox hosts on previous White House," *The Washington Post*, Jan 9, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-cable-cabinet/2022/01/09/96fac488-6fe6-11ec-b9fc-b394d592a7a6_story.html

Chapter VII

Recommendations

The roles of those with military experience, DVE affiliations, and disinformation on social media platforms played a vital part at the Capitol Hill siege. There are preliminary measures that can be taken lest the horrors of January 6 happen again.

The cardinal step is to tell the truth to the general public because there are still many Republican lawmakers and conservative media outlets such as Fox News that have refused to condemn the January 6th violence or even admit it was a violent terrorist attack.[213] For example, GOP Reps. Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene, who held a press conference on the anniversary of the January 6th attack, continued to promote that the federal government's and left-wing activists were involved in the insurrection, to spin conspiracy theories and rewrite history, to defend insurrectionists as "patriotic Americans" and to falsely claim they had "no intent of breaking the law or doing violence."[214] There is no evidence to support their claims. Thus, within such a toxic political environment, the first necessary step is to investigate and tell the truth to the public with thorough intelligence and immense political will. The bi-partisan House January 6th Committee is a good step, although it takes time for the Committee to find the whole picture. Additionally, if Democrats were to lose the mid-term election this

---

[213] Katelyn Polantz, "Republicans have downplayed the US Capitol riot violence. The evidence paints a different picture," *CNN*, May 20, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/20/politics/us-capitol-riot-evidence/index.html

[214] "Representatives Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene on January 6 Anniversary | C-SPAN.Org," accessed Feb 1, 2022, https://www.c-span.org/video/?517073-1/representatives-gaetz-taylor-greene-suggest-fbi-january-6-attack#.

November, the Republican majority in the House would likely dismantle the Committee. Yet it is still unclear whether the committee's efforts will truly be an information-gathering endeavor. Hopefully, the DOJ might take action based on the information provided by the Committee. But perhaps it will take years for the information or truth to be complete.

Combat to Extremism in the Military Ranks

The over-representation of military veterans in the insurrection shows that extremism in the military is an ongoing issue that demands more attention than ever. Before being confirmed, Secretary of Defense retired General Lloyd Austin told Congress that he would work to combat extremism in the military,[215] "The Defense Department's job is to keep America safe from our enemies," he testified, "but we can't do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks."[216] On February 19, 2021, Austin sent a video message to all employees of the DoD, stressing that the problem of extremism is "not new to our country, and sadly, not new to our military."[217] Amidst growing extremism in the military ranks and to protect former and current military personnel from DVEs, the first necessary step is to investigate their connection with DVE groups. The House of Representatives should establish a bipartisan January 6 Veterans and Armed Forces Committee to work with the military investigative agencies, the DoD, scholars and experts on hate and extremism to specifically examine the link between

[215] Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, "Biden's defense secretary pick pledges to 'rid our ranks of racists and extremists," *Reuters*, January 20, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-pentagon/bidens-defense-secretary-pick-pledges-to-rid-our-ranks-of-racists-and-extremists-idUSKBN29O2II
[216] Dresibach and Anderson, "Nearly 1 in 5 Defendants."
[217] "A Message From the Secretary of Defense on Extremism," DVIDS, accessed Jan 1, 2022, https://www.dvidshub.net/video/784150/message-secretary-defense-extremism.

veterans, active military personnel and DVE groups. Particularly, the Committee should have the authority to issue subpoenas to those involved in the insurrection to testify before the Committee, including the leadership of those DVEs. The main purpose of the Committee is to investigate factors related to the bonding between current and former military service members and DVEs because it is imperative to know how the organizations recruited current and former military service members and why current and former military members joined them.

Secondly, Defense Secretary Austin also ordered a 60-day "extremism stand-down" in March to purge the extremism and white supremacists in the military.[218] The order requires employees of the DoD to learn and understand the threat and be trained and educated to appropriately respond to the extremism.[219]

Thirdly, vetting a recruit's social media posts before they join the various services could be one of the major areas to address racism and white supremacy. Reposting and liking extremist content or similar activities could be viewed as advocating the content, which could face disciplinary action. The DoD, however, has no ability to monitor the personal social media accounts of every member of the armed forces[220] as "there is no methodology in there," said John Kirby, the Pentagon chief's spokesman.[221] The FBI has the ability to screen social media for extremism and criminal activity rather than DoD.[222]

---

[218] Jason Slotkin, "Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin Signs Military 'Stand Down' Memo To Address Extremism," *NPR*, February 6, 2021, sec. National Security, https://www.npr.org/2021/02/06/964828770/defense-secretary-lloyd-austin-signs-military-stand-down-memo-to-address-extremi.
[219] "Office of the Secretary of Defense Leadership Stand-Down to address Extremism in the Force," Defense.gov, accessed Dec 12, 2021, https://media.defense.gov/2021/Feb/26/2002589872/-1/-1/1/LEADERSHIP-STAND-DOWN-FRAMEWORK.PDF
[220] Defense.gov, "Office of the Secretary of Defense Leadership Stand-Down."
[221] Helene Cooper, "Pentagon updates its rules on extremism," *The New York Times*, Dec 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/20/us/politics/pentagon-military-extremism-rules.html
[222] Defense.gov, "Office of the Secretary of Defense Leadership Stand-Down."

Thus, the DoD could work closely with the FBI in this matter. This initiative, however, could raise significant concerns of infringement on a recruit's rights to privacy and free speech.

On the top of that, the order does not outright ban service members from being members of extremist organizations such as the Oath Keepers.[223] The regulations only prohibit "active participation," which is defined as "publicly demonstrating or rallying, fundraising, recruiting and training members," as well as organizing or leading an organization.[224] In other words, members of DVE groups may remain in the military long as they do not become "active participation."

Finally, the DoD and the U.S. veterans' associations should work together to protect troops and veterans from being targeted by extremist organizations after leaving the military as DVE groups primarily recruit veterans. Thus, besides training for military investigators on how to spot extremist beliefs, tightened vetting of individuals and better social media monitoring, DoD and veterans associations should create an anti-extremist culture, and create anti-racist courses and training against white supremacy and extremism and evaluation of any affiliations or expressions of extremism, racism and discrimination. Based on the results of that review, the VA and DoD could develop and implement a media campaign designed to de-escalate DVE involvements.

Regulations on Social Media

Addressing disinformation sharing widely on social media platforms requires a multidisciplinary effort. There are two ways to curb the disinformation on social media

[223] Nation, "Military still grappling."
[224] Defense.gov, "Office of the Secretary of Defense Leadership Stand-Down."

platforms: Bottom-Up Changes: empowering individuals to evaluate the fake news they encounter,[225] and Top-Down Changes: structural changes aimed at preventing exposure of individuals to fake news in the first instance.

Bottom-Up Changes: Teaching Individuals: Fact Checking

The bottom-up method is mainly to encourage individuals to check the credibility of the news they received before they believe or share it. There are many websites and organizations that have the ability to fact check the credibility of the sources, ranging from websites such as PolitiFact and the *Washington Post*. Despite the prevalence of fact checking, the science supporting its efficacy is mixed. This is partly because some people, including those participants involved in the insurrection do not question the credibility of news unless it challenges their preconceptions.[226] In other words, they are more likely to accept familiar information as true. As the evidence on the effectiveness of claim repetition in fact checking is mixed, further research is needed to determine which fact-checking methodologies are most effective.

Top-Down Changes: Altering the Algorithms

As social media companies become more important, an understanding of how they operate may offer viable recommendations. The business model of Google, Facebook and Twitter relies on monetizing attention through advertising, using "complex statistical models to calculate and predict and maximize engagement with content."[227]

[225] David M.J. Lazer, etal, "The science of fake news."
[226] David M.J. Lazer, etal, "The science of fake news."
[227] David M.J. Lazer, etal, "The science of fake news."

Platforms tend to show users content that consists with their existing beliefs in order to maximize engagement,.[228] They can do this because their "algorithms designed to keep people engaged on social media".[229] An internal report from Facebook in 2016 displayed more than 60 percent of users joined an extremist group on Facebook via the company's algorithms.[230] In 2018, a report from Facebook showed that Facebook acknowledged that its recommendation engine worsened divisiveness and polarization, but they decided to ignore the findings because changes to the algorithms might disproportionately affect engagement.[231] In brief, their business models encourage the sharing of misleading or inaccurate news.

As their algorithms become more influential, social media platforms should modify those models and algorithms to emphasize on quality information. For instance, they could shift their algorithm to account for "quality" in its content curation process and provide consumers with signals of source quality that could be incorporated into the algorithmic rankings of content.[232]

More generally, social media platforms could combat misinformation by taking down the bots and other fake accounts that share misinformation. Twitter suspended 70 million such accounts in 2018.[233] Moreover, social media companies could block or ban certain accounts linked to misinformation and inform users exposed to those accounts that they spread false information. For example, Twitter, Facebook and other big social media companies permanently suspended Donald Trump after the January 6 insurrection;

---

[228] Daskalopoulos et al, "Thinking Outside the Bubble."
[229] Daskalopoulos et al, "Thinking Outside the Bubble."
[230] Daskalopoulos et al, "Thinking Outside the Bubble."
[231] Daskalopoulos et al, "Thinking Outside the Bubble."
[232] David M.J. Lazer, etal, "The science of fake news,"
[233] Timberg and Elizabeth Dwoskin, "Twitter is sweeping out fake accounts."

Twitter also permanently closed Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene's personal account after "repeated violations" of the Covid-19 misinformation policy on January 3rd, 2022.[234] Platforms could also work with independent scholars and experts on social media and disinformation to design effective interventions.

Government Regulations

Direct government interventions generally will raise legitimate concerns about respecting the First Amendment clauses of free speech and free press because those social media platforms are already shaping human experience on a global scale. The challenges before us are how those immense powers are being exercised and how these big social media companies can be held account without disrespecting fundamental human rights such as the First Amendment.

Congress could enforce social media companies to take responsibilities to address online hateful, racist and extremist content by introducing a bill that hold them accountable. For instance, Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Kathy Castor (D-Fla.) have introduced a bill---Online Consumer Protection Act---that generally points in this direction.[235]

The President's Attitude

[234] Donie O'Sullivan and Daniel Dale, "One of Marjorie Taylor Greene's verified Twitter accounts permanently suspended from Twitter, *CNN*, Jan 2, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/02/politics/marjorie-taylor-greene-twitter-suspension/index.html

[235] "Schakowsky, Castor Introduce Online Consumer Protection Act," Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, May 10, 2021, https://schakowsky.house.gov/media/press-releases/schakowsky-castor-introduce-online-consumer-protection-act.

The above plans and efforts will require strong political will, especially the political will from the President of the United States. Then-President Trump's refusal to condemn white supremacists, racists, extremists, and violent groups, and his reluctance to take measures against extremism in the military ranks exacerbated the problem of extremism in the nation. President Biden should lead a national dialogue on the challenges of rooting out white supremacy and combating misinformation. He also should publicly condemn extremism in the military, fake news, and far-right extremist violent groups and work with Congress to address the problem of extremism in the military, sending a message to the public that the United States has zero-tolerance for extremism in the ranks and the civilian society. Leadership from the President, Commander-in-Chief of the United States, is stronger than anyone or any office in the U.S.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

The insurrection began with Trump whose scorn for the Constitution made it impossible for him to admit his loss, falsely claiming his victory in the 2020 election and inciting the violence on Capitol on January 6, 2021. People in the U.S. must recognize that an assault on an electoral institution such as Congress significantly can vandalize the Constitution and disrespect the rule of law, ultimately undermining the democratic system.

This thesis has initially sought to show the relationship between social media, disinformation and the January 6 insurrection. It attempted to answer several questions: Who stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021? What primary factors led Trump's supporters to engage in the insurrection on January 6, 2021? Did participants believe and share Trump's fake news because of their ignorance? What were their motives to attack their partisan opponents? It has addressed these questions by reviewing and examining participants' court documents, social media posts and their related media stories.

According to the findings, disinformation that Trump and his false claims spread on social media platforms, the problem of extremism, and individuals' nationalism and patriotism are the major factors that led them to storm the Capitol. To answer the question of who stormed the Capitol, this thesis identified three types of groups: Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE) organizations, organized groups that have no associations with DVE, and lone actors. Among them, individuals in the DVE groups made up a minority of the overall participants in the siege, while those non-DVE actors

were the majority. It is, however, unlikely that they could storm the Capitol without the involvement of DVE groups partly because many DVE members are military veterans skilled in organization and training.

The most striking finding is that those with military backgrounds were highly over-represented in the mob. The lack of attention to the extremism, an uneven military and political response to extremism, the notion of nationalism and patriotism, the ex-President's relationship to DVE groups and his rhetoric pushing veterans toward nationalism all have contributed to the over-represented military personnel in the mob. It is urgent for the DoD to combat the long-term problem of extremism as its priority, otherwise, we may risk seeing more former and current military personnel engaged in domestic terrorism in the near future.

Moreover, social media has a direct connection to the January 6 insurrection. In the United States---its emergence, evolution, and impact---have increasingly attracted attention in recent years. While political sectarianism, partisan animosity and polarization began growing in the U.S. decades before Facebook and Twitter appeared and they increased during Trump's presidency, that does not exonerate the tech platforms. Social media platforms do not escape responsibility because social media technology employs popularity-based algorithms that tailor content to maximize user engagement, leading to increased polarization. Widespread social media use and countless misinformation on those platforms have exacerbated polarization and undermined the trust in democracy such as elections. There is ample evidence that so much misinformation and propaganda on numerous social media platforms from Trump, his Republican henchmen and conservative media outlets affected those participants' lives, and contributed to the

increased partisan animosity that led to insurrection. Therefore, social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter should bear responsibility for allowing extremism to spread on their platforms and not curbing the spread of misinformation about the 2020 Presidential Election, intensifying political sectarianism and conflicts. If we fail or refuse to acknowledge and counter these developments, we may risk experiencing a repetition of what happened on January 6 or worse.

The insurrection would have been impossible without Trump. His refusal to condemn white supremacists, racists, extremist violent groups, and extremism in the ranks and his constant promotion of fake news on social media are the leading causes of January 6. Trump's presidency, disinformation and social media both aggravated social polarization.

But the problems of disinformation and extremism were not wrought by Trump alone, nor by social media. I found that those participants believed and shared Trump's fake news was not due to their ignorance but their long-term pre-existing views on Democrats, their partisan animosity and their strong belief in Trump. Thus, the January 6 insurrection was more than a result of the disinformation about election fraud spread widely on social media leading to the insurrection. In fact, the insurrection mirrors the current state of American politics: a polarized American society and party animosity.

Some argued that the ex-President could no longer do any damage after the January 6 insurrection.[236] The reality is that Trump may be an even more powerful figure in the GOP now. Even having his social media accounts suspended, his power is still

[236] Jill Colvin and The Associated Press, "A year after the Capitol insurrection, Donald Trump remains the de facto leader of the GOP," *Fortune*, Jan 7, 2022, https://fortune.com/2022/01/06/donald-trump-gop-leader-capitol-insurrection/

sustained by a group of untruthful GOP lawmakers and conservative media outlets who have rewritten the history of January 6 for its audiences. The GOP party has largely swallowed Trump's election lies, with 71% of Republicans telling pollsters that "Trump was the rightful winner of the 2020 election," and 52% of Republicans said the Capitol rioters were actually "protecting democracy"[237] in the Ipsos/ABC News poll. [238] Merely 27% of Republicans in a recent Washington Post/University of Maryland poll believed Trump bears responsibility for January 6.[239]

In this case, far from destroying the Trumpism, the GOP leaders have stood by their most problematic and pro-Trump members while exiling Trump critics such as Liz Cheney. The Republican Party in the Congress now may be the home to some Pro-Trump caucus such as Marjorie Taylor Greene and Matt Gaetz who have tried to overturn the election, rewriting the history of the January 6 insurrection by using their social media platforms to spread conspiracy theories, eroding faith in the democratic process, and intimidating political opponents. As Trump is still influential in the Republican voters, supporting Trump's lies may be the price for 2022 GOP candidates who want Trump's endorsement and his voters. It can, however, undermine democratic values and increase a Trump 2024 presidential bid. It may be fair to say that the former party of Lincoln has, unfortunately, become the party of Trump, from passing the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery to inciting a Capitol insurrection and embracing Trump's lies demolishing the Constitution and democracy.

---

[237] Brittany Shepherd, "Majority of Americans think Jan. 6 attack threatened democracy: POLL," ABC News, Jan 3, 2022, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/majority-americans-jan-attack-threatened-democracy-poll/story?id=81990555

[238] Brittany Shepherd, "Majority of Americans think Jan. 6 attack threatened democracy: POLL."

[239] Dan Balz, Scott Clement and Emily Guskin, "Republicans and Democrats divided over Jan. 6 insurrection and Trump's culpability, Post-UMD poll finds," *The Washington Post*, Jan 1, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/01/01/post-poll-january-6/

Consequently, the January 6 insurrection brought an epiphany that the American democracy or politics is now between those who uphold the Constitution and those who put their party's interests above the Constitution. I don't think that a rerun of the American Civil War is likely, but what I do worry about and believe to be is a different kind of civil war or a party war. In terms of combating foreign threats, we had a "War on terrorism", and a "War on Drugs." Perhaps, but in terms of civil war, there might be a "War on Party." The mid-term Congressional Election this November and the 2024 Presidential Election may be more decentralized, fought by groups and individuals using disinformation campaigns to cause more political violence among partisans. Thus, the integrity and security of the mid-term election this November and the next Presidential Election in 2024 in a deeply fractured nation are seriously in danger.

Fortunately, Former Vice President Pence did the right thing by following the 12th Amendment. He set a good example of the role of a constitutional Vice President to his successors. But what if we had a Vice President who refused to be bound by his constitutional duty? What if we have a Vice President who will not be bound by his constitutional duty in the future? Therefore, the next research question in American politics now is: Where does the deeply fractured democratic country go from here?

Appendix 1.

Participants' data

The data is collated through participants' court documents listed on Capitol Breach List on Justice Department website and other online websites such as LinkedIn, Conan Daily, and participants' social media posts.

Name	Gender	Race	Geography of residence	Social media	Age	Occupation	Pleaded guilty	University/ college
Joshua James	male	white	Alabama	Twitter, parler, Facebook	33	Veteran Cleaning Company Owner Oath Keepers	N	N
Jason Dolan	male	white	Florida	Twitter, parler, Facebook	45	A marine veteran Oath Keepers	Y	N
Zachary Rehl	male	white	Pennsylvania	Twitter, parler, Facebook	35	leader of the Philadelphia Proud Boys	N	Y
Joseph Biggs	male	white	Florida	Twitter, parler, Facebook	37	Organizer of Proud Boys event based in Florida	N	N
Charles Donohoe	male	white	North Carolina	Twitter, parler, Facebook	33	President of a Proud Boys chapter in Kernersville	N	N
Ethan Nordean	male	white	Washington	Twitter, parler, Facebook	31	right-wing political activist The Leader of the Proud Boys	N	N
Daniel Goodwyn	male	white	Texas	Twitter, parler, Facebook	33	Web developer The Proud Boys	N	N
Marc Anthony	male	white	Washington	Twitter, parler, Facebook	41	Executive director of RiseUpWa	N	N

						The Proud Boys		
Gabriel A. Garcia	male	White	Florida	Twitter, parler, Facebook	40	The Proud Boys veteran Onetime GOP House Candidate Former US AEMY Captain/military Business owner (roofying business)	N	Y
Nichcolas Ochs	male	white	Hawaii	Twitter, parler, Facebook	34	Veteran Founder of Hawaii chapter of proud boy Politician: Onetime Republican Nomination of US House of Representative.	N	N
Matthew Greene	male	white	New York	Twitter, parler, Facebook	33	First-degree of the Proud Boys artist veteran, former national guard	Y	Y
Rasha Abu-Ragheb	male	White	New Jersey	Twitter, Facebook	40	A member of New Jersey chapter of American Patriot Group---Three Percenters	Y	N

Robert Gieswein	male	white	Colorado	Facebook/Instagram/Twitter	24	appears to be affiliated with the radical militia group known as the Three Percenters A member of Three Percenters had a nursing aide certification	N	N
Lisa Eisenhart	female	white	Georgia	Facebook/Twitter	56	registered nurse	N	N
Eric Munchel	male	White	Georgia	Facebook/Twitter	30	Jobless, used to work at a restaurant. unemployed	N	N
Thomas Roy Vinson	male	White	Kentucky	Facebook	54	Air Force Veteran Maintenance Technician	Y	N
Lori Vinson	female	White	Kentucky	Facebook	49	Nurse She was fired after the riot	Y	N
Sean Carlo Cordon	male	Hispanic American	California	Facebook/Twitter	35	Manufacturing and design engineer	Y	Y
Kevin Francisco Cordon	male	Hispanic American	California	Facebook/Twitter	33	Alumnus of California State University employee of Lazyass	Y	Y
Pauline Bauer	female	white	Pennsylvania	Facebook	53	Restaurant Owner QAnon theory believer	N	N

William Blauser	male	white	Pennsylvania	unknown	65	Vietnam war veteran Retired mail carrier	Y	N
Richard Franklin Barnard	male	white	Texas	Facebook	55	Marine corps Veteran	Y	N
Jeffery Witcher	male	white	Texas	Facebook	58	Marine corps Veteran	Y	N
Thomas Robertson	male	white	Virginia	Facebook	47	Police officer veteran: A retired army reservist	N	N
Jacob Fracker	male	white	Virginia	Facebook	29	Police officer Veteran an infantryman with the Virginia National Guard who previously served as a Marine	N	N
Dawn Bancroft	female	White	Pennsylvania	Facebook/IG/ Twitter	58	Gym Owner	Y	N
Diana Santo-Smith	female	white	Pennsylvania	Facebook/IG/ Twitter	31	unknown, a friend of Dawn Bancroft	Y	N
Dr.Simone Gold	female	white	California	Facebook/IG/ Twitter		Physician, Attorney, Author A founder of America's Frontline Doctors Right-wing activist	N	Y
John Herbert Strand	male	white	California	Facebook/IG/ Twitter	37	A communication director for America's Frontline Doctors	N	N

Larry rendoll Brock	male	white	Texas	Facebook	53	A retired Air Force Lieutenant oath keepers believer of QAnon theory	N	N
Jacob Chansley	male	white	Arizona	Facebook/IG/ Twitter	33	A former supply clerk in the U.S. Navy veteran Singer/voice cover Right-wing activist/conspiracy theorist QAnon	Y	N
Douglas Jensen	male	white	Iowa	Facebook/Twitter	41	QAon believer A Laborer of a company; fired after the riot	N	N
Kenneth Grayson	male	white	Pennsylvania	Facebook/Instagram/Twitter	51	QAnon believer worked in the oil and gas industry as a contractor	N	N
Kari Kelley	female	white	Alabama	FacebookTwitter/Instagram	40	insurance adjustor	N	Y
William Calhoun	male	white	Georgia	Facebook, parler, Twitter	57	Lawyer	N	Y
Derrick Evans	male	white	west Virginia	Facebook	34	West Virginia House of delegate elected(R) Business owner	N	Y
Federico Klein	male	white	Virginia	Facebook/Twitter	42	a state dept aide Former Marine Corps	N	Y

						Reserves, Veteran		
Klete Keller	male	white	Colorado	Facebook/Twitter	39	Olympic swimming gold winner Real Estate Agent	Y	Y

Mark Ibrahim	male	white	California	Facebook/Twitter	33	D.E.A Agent	N	Y
Michael Stepakoff	male	white	Florida	Facebook/Twitter	55	A Messianic rabbi and ex-lawyer	N	N
Thomas Gallagher	male	white	New Hampshire	Facebook	62	A retired Defense Departme nt Analyst	Y	N
Jenny Cudd	female	white	Texas	Facebook/Twitter	36	An owner of flower store in Midland A former candidate for mayor in Midland	Y	Y
Elliot Bishai	male	white	South Carolina	Facebook,Twitter, Instagram	19	A member of Civil Air Patrol; A citadel cadet; Army recruit; A member of JROTC; Planned to join ROTC program, becoming an Air Force pilot;	N	Y
Elias Irizarry	male	white	South Carolina	Facebook,Twitter, Instagram	19	A graduate at Nation Ford and a freshman at the Citadel a	N	Y

						military college An active member of the school's Republica n Society		
Taylor J. Johnatakis	male	white	Washington	Facebook	37	Constructi on worker	N	N
Matthew Council	male	white	Florida	Facebook	49	a self-employed marketing and sales communic ations consultant	N	Y
Yvone st. cyr	female	white	Idaho	Facebook Instagram Twitter	53	Accountan t manager, Military backgroun d (media chief at the US Marine Corpse), veteran QAnon	N	Y
Garret Miller	male	white	Texas	Twitter Facebook,	34	Jobless; He has followed T since he lost his job employed	N	Y
Shane Jenkins	male	white	Texas	onknown	43	He has a lengthy of criminal history and jail time wearing 1776 shirt unemploy ed	N	N

Blake Reed	male	white	Tennessee	Facebook Twitter	28	Business Owner	Y	Y
Matthew J.Bledsoe	male	White	Tennessee	Facebook Twitter Instagram	36	Business Owner (primetime movers) Arrested for domestic violence in 2020	N	N
Jeramiah Ray Caplinger	male	White	Michigan	Facebook	25	Maintenance Technician	Y	N
Jacob Hiles	male	white	Virginia	Facebook	42	Business Owner	Y	N
Christine Marie Priola	female	white	Ohio	Facebook	50	Occupational therapist at school	N	Y
Henry Phillip Muntzer	male	white	Montana	Facebook	52	Business owner (an appliance shop) QAnon conspiracy theory believer	N	N
Christopher Grider	male	white	Texas	Facebook	39	Vineyard Owner	N	N
Couy GRIFFIN	male	white	New Mexico	Facebook/Twitter	47	County commissioner founder of Cowboys for Trump QAnon	N	N
Anthony A. Griffith, Sr.	male	white	Oklahoma	Facebook/Twitter	56	Electric business owner	N	N

Andrew W. Griswold	male	white	Florida	Facebook/Twitter	28	Business owner	N	N
Jeremy Groseclose	male	white	Virginia	Facebook/Twitter	38	Farm owner	N	N
Brain Gundersen	male	white	Pennsylvania	Facebook/Twitter/ Instagram	26	Law enforcement	N	Y
Matthew Mazzocco	male	white	Texas	Facebook	37	A mortgage loan officer	Y	N
Jessica Watkins	female	white	Ohio	Parler Facebook	39	member of the Oath Keepers commanding officer within the Ohio State Regular Militia	N	N
Mark Simon	male	white	California	Facebook	49	Far-right activist A lengthy criminal history	Y	N
Steve Maldonado	male	White	Florida	Facebook	40	Licensed real estate sales associate	N	N
Scott Fairlamb	male	white	New Jersey	Facebook/Twitter	43	Gym owner	Y	N
Cindy Fitchett	female	white	Virginia	Facebook/Twitter	59	was a member of Trump Women Landslide 2020 Facebook Group	Y	N

						Far-right activist		
Rachel Marie Powell	female	white	Pennsylvania	Facebook	40	A group fitness instructor business co-owner anti-mask wearing	N	N
Gary Edwards	male	white	Pennsylvania	onknown	68	Retired	Y	N
Joseph cable Barnes	male	white	Texas	Facebook/Twitter	35	Vice President of Real estate company painter artist, business owner	N	N
Gracyn Courtwright	female	white	West Virginia	Facebook/Twitter	24	University of Kentucky Student	Y	N
Dalton Crase	male	white	Kentucky	Facebook/Twitter	21	NKY Grad Student	N	N
Bruno Cua	male	white	Georgia	Facebook/Twitter/ Instagram	18	Pro-Second Amendment part-time jobs: yard work, repairs, and clean-up	N	N
Michael Curzio	male	white	Florida	onknown	35	Convicted felon	Y	N
Josiah Colt	male	White	Idaho	Facebook	34	Photographer CEO	N	N

Robert Sanford jr.	male	white	Pennsylvania	Facebook	55	Retired firefighter	N	N
Leo Brent Bozell IV	male	white	Pennsylvania	Facebook	41	Basketball coach	N	N
Jessica Bustle	female	white	Virginia	Facebook	36	Anti-vaxx activist, unemployed	Y	N
Danielle ray Caldwell	male	white	Texas	Facebook	49	Engineering technician **Ex-Marine Corps Recruiting** avionics technician, veteran graduated from U.S. Navy.marine corp school	N	Y
Jonathan Daniel Carlton	male	white	Florida	Facebook	45	A state corrections officer	N	N
Luke Coffee	male	white	Texas	Facebook	41	Actor director and movie producer	N	N
Lonnie Leroy Coffman	male	white	Alabama	onknown	71	Retired veteran vietnam	Y	N
Damon Beckley	male	white	Kentucky	Twitter	52	Construction management	N	N
Gina Bisignano	female	white	California	Facebook/Twitter	52	Salon owner	Y	Y
Joshua Black	male	white	Alabama	Facebook	44	owner of lawn service	N	N

Thomas Baranyi	male	white	new jersey	Facebook	29	former Peace Corps volunteer 2020 Enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps after leaving the Peace Corps	Y	Y
Robert Packer	male	white	Virginia	Facebook	57	Welder and pipe-fitter	Y	N
Jesus Rivera	male	white Facebook	Florida	Facebook	38	**U.S. Marine Corps** Veteran business owner	N	N
Jeffrey Sabol	male	white	Colorado	Facebook/Twitter	51	Geophysicist	N	Y
Deborah Sandoval	female	white	Iowa	Facebook	54	Leasing agent	N	Y
Thomas Webster	male	white	New York	Facebook	54	Retired NYPD police and marine veteran	N	Y
Ryan Zink	male	white	Texas	Facebook/Twitter	32	Musician and business owner	N	Y
Alexander Sheppard	male	white	Ohio	Facebook/Twitter	21	marketing specialist	N	Y
Audrey ann Southard	male	white	Florida	Facebook/Twitter	52	A business owner, Vocal coach and piano singer	N	Y
Michael Foy	Male	White	Michigan	Facebook	45	A marine veteran	N	Y

Nicholas Decarlo	male	white	Texas	Facebook/Twitter	30	employee of a media company a friend with the leader of the Proud Boys in Hawii	N	N
Danielle Doyle	female	white	Oklahoma	Facebook	37	Former senior ticket account manager	Y	N
Karl Dresch	male	white	Michigan	Facebook/Twitter	40	Son of former state representative, unemployed/unknown	Y	N
Daniel Egtvedt	male	white	Maryland	Facebook/Twitter	57	Medical Sales)linkedin) qanon conspiracy theory conspirist	N	Y
Kyle Fitzsimons	male	white	Maine	Facebook	37	a freelance butcher	N	N
Grady Owens	male	white	Florida	Facebook	21	Engineer, producer, instrumentalist	N	Y
Anthony Puma	male	white	Michigan	Facebook	47	Far-right activist	N	N
Jorge Riley	male	not specified self-described	California	Facebook/Twitter	42	Delegate of the California Republican Assembly	N	Y

		native ameri can				Disabled veteran A correspon ding secretary of the CRA		
Nicholas Rodean	male	white	Maryland	Facebook	26	Employee of painting company voice actor	N	Y
Joshua Kahle Bustle	male	white	Virginia	Facebook	35	Real estate agent/anti-vaxxer	Y	N
Nolan Cooke	male	white	Texas	Facebook	22	Former employee at Walmart;	N	N
Jeffery Mckellop	male	white	Virginia	Twitter	55	A CIA contractor Veteran	N	N
Stacie ann hargis-getsinger	female	white	South Carolina	Facebook	43	selling cats business: breeds and sells exotic cats	N	N
Annie Howell	female	white	Pennsylvani a	Facebook	30	far-right activist	Y	N
STEPHE N MICHAE L AYRES	male	white	Ohio	Facebook/Twitter	38	Far-right activist	N	N
Cody Connell	male	white	Louisiana	Facebook/Twitter	27	worker baywater driling	N	N
Paul Scott Westover	male	white	Missouri	Facebook Twitter	52	Technicia n recruiter	Y	N
Michael Daughtry	male	white	Georgia	Facebook/Twitter	58	Ex-Cop/ Gun business owner	N	N

Kevin creek	male	white	Georgia	Facebook	35	Tree-trimming service in Jefferson county	Y	N
Troy Faulkner	male	white	Ohio	Facebook	39	Painting business owner	N	N
Noah Bacon	Male	White	Massachusetts	Facebook/Instagram	28	Yoga Teacher high-school	N	N

References

Tan, Shelly, Youjin Shin, and Danielle Rindler. “How One of America’s Ugliest Days Unraveled inside and Outside the Capitol.” Washington Post. Accessed March 1, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2021/capitol-insurrection-visual-timeline/.

Foster, Michael A, and Peter G Berris. “Federal Criminal Law: January 6, 2021, Unrest at the Capitol,” n.d., 7. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/LSB/LSB10564

Bowden, John. "Graham says Trump will have 'a place in history' for Capitol riot." The Hill, July 2, 2021, https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/537717-graham-says-trump-will-have-a-place-in-history-for-capitol-riots?rl=1.

Marcos, Cristina. "The fates of the 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump." The Hill, January 14, 2021, https://thehill.com/homenews/house/589826-the-fates-of-the-10-house-republicans-who-voted-to-impeach-trump.

Collison, Stephen. "January 6 may be only a preview of a deeper democratic rupture." CNN, accessed January 6, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/06/politics/january-6-insurrection-legacy/index.html.

“Congressional Record, Volume 167 Issue 8 (Wednesday, January 13, 2021).” Accessed January 2, 2022. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-2021-01-13/html/CREC-2021-01-13-pt1-PgH165.htm.

Widmer, Ted. “Opinion | The Capitol Takeover That Wasn’t.” *The New York Times*, January 8, 2021, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/opinion/capitol-protest-1861-lincoln.html.

Rozsa, Matthew. “How Abraham Lincoln Dealt with Traitors and Insurrectionists: A History Lesson.” Salon, December 12, 2021. https://www.salon.com/2021/12/12/how-abraham-lincoln-dealt-with-traitors-and-insurrectionists-a-history-lesson/.

Baum, Matthew, James Druckman, Matthew D. Simonson, Jennifer Lin, and Roy H. Perlis. “What I Saw on the Road to Insurrection: Internal Political Efficacy, Conspiracy Beliefs

and the Effect of Depression on Support for the January 6th Storming of the Capitol." OSF Preprints, July 26, 2021. https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/tnfj7.

Webber, David, Arie Kruglanski, Erica Molinario, and Katarzyna Jasko. "Ideologies That Justify Political Violence." *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, Political Ideologies, 34 (August 1, 2020): 107–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.01.004.

Allcott, Hunt, and Matthew Gentzkow. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 2 (May 2017): 211–36. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.2.211.

Rieselbach, Leroy N. "Making Laws and Making News: Media Strategies in the U.S. House of Representatives. By Timothy E. Cook. Washington: Brookings Institution, 1989. 210p. $26.95." *American Political Science Review* 84, no. 4 (December 1990): 1376–77. https://doi.org/10.2307/1963296.

Smith, Culver H. *The Press, Politics, and Patronage: The American Government's Use of Newspapers, 1789-1875*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977.

Groeling, Tim and Matthew Baum. "Partisan News Before Fox: Newspaper Partisanship and Partisan Polarization, 1881-1972. *HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP13-035*. September 2013. https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/partisan- news-fox-newspaper-partisanship-and-partisan-polarization-1881-1972#citation.

Popkin, Samuel L. "Changing Media and Changing Political Organization: Delegation, Representation and News." *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 8, no. 1 (April 2007): 71–93. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109907002484.

Hamilton, James. *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information Into News*. Princeton University Press, 2006.

Popkin, Samuel L. "Changing Media, Changing Politics." Edited by James Hamilton and Matthew Baum. *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 2 (2006): 327–41.

Desai, Shevon. "Research Guides: 'Fake News,' Lies and Propaganda: How to Sort Fact from Fiction: What Is 'Fake News'?" Accessed March 1, 2022. https://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=637508&p=4462356.

Sweet, Jacob. “Can Disinformation Be Stopped?” Harvard Magazine, June 9, 2021. https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2021/07/features-disinformation.

Martens, Bertin, Luis Aguiar, Estrella Gomez-Herrera, and Frank Mueller-Langer. “The Digital Transformation of News Media and the Rise of Disinformation and Fake News.” SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, April 20, 2018. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3164170.

Kornbluh, Karen, and Ellen P Goodman. “Safeguarding Digital Democracy,” no. 4 (2020): 41.

Barela, Steven J., and Jerome Duberry. “Understanding Disinformation Operations in the 21st Century.” SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, December 29, 2020. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3757022.

Kumar, Deepa. “Media, War, and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 48–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420500505650.

Snow, Nancy, and Philip M. Taylor. “The Revival of the Propaganda State: US Propaganda at Home and Abroad since 9/11.” *International Communication Gazette* 68, no. 5–6 (October 1, 2006): 389–407. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048506068718.

Baum, Matthew A., and Philip B.K. Potter. “The Relationships Between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (2008): 39–65. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060406.214132.

Auditore, Peter. "Everyone Is a Journalist," *Social Media Today*, August 31, 2010. https://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/everyone-journalist.

Owen, Diana. “The New Media’s Role in Politics.” *OpenMind* (blog). Accessed March 1, 2021. https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/the-new-media-s-role-in-politics/.

Pomerantsev, Peter, and Michael Weiss. “How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money,” n.d., 44.

Tucker, Joshua, Theocharis Yannis, Roberts Margaret and Barbera Pablo, "From liberation to turmoil: social media democracy," *Journal of Democracy 28*, no.4 (2017). https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/from-liberation-to-turmoil-social-media-and-democracy/.

Baldwin-Philippi, Jessica. "The Myths of Data-Driven Campaigning." *Political Communication* 34, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 627–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1372999.

Tenove, Chris and Stephanie Maclellan, "*Confronting Disinformation: Journalists and the Conflict over Truth in #Elxn43*," In Cyber-Threats to Canadian Democracy, eds. Holly Garnett and Michael Pal (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021): 1.

Raychev, Yavor. "Cyberwar in Russian and US Military-Political Thought: A Comparative View," *Information & Security* 43, no.3 (2019): 349-361. https://connections-qj.org/system/files/4326_cybrid_russia_us_views.pdf

Nunziato, Dawn C. "Misinformation Mayhem: Social Media Platforms' Efforts to Combat Medical and Political Misinformation," *19 First Amendment L. Rev.* (2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3672257

Timberg, Craig and Elizabeth Dwoskin, "Twitter is Sweeping Out Fake Accounts Like Never Before, Putting User Growth at Risk," *WASH. POST*, July 6, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2018/07/06/twitter-is-sweeping-out-fake-accounts-like-never-before-putting-user-growth- risk/?utm_source=reddit.com

Broniatowski, David A, Amelia M. Jamison, SiHua Qi, Lulwah AlKulaib, Tao Chen, Adrian Benton, Sandra C. Quinn, and Mark Dredze, "Weaponized Health Communication: Twitter Bots and Russian Trolls Amplify the Vaccine Debate," *AJPH*, May 22, 2018, https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304567

Tucker, Joshua, Andrew Guess, Pablo Barbera, Cristian Vaccari, Alexandra Siegel, Sergey Sanovich, Denis Stukal, and Brendan Nyhan. "Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2018. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3144139.

Sunstein, Cass and Adrian Vermeule, "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cues," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no.2 (2009): 202-227. https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/10880581

Wiggins, Bradley. "Navigating an Immersive Narratology: Factors to Explain the Reception of Fake News," *International Journal of E-Politics 8*, no.3 (2017): 16- 29. https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/article/186961

Oliver, J. Eric, and Thomas J. Wood. "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 4 (2014): 952–66. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24363536.

Faris, Robert., Hal Roberts, Bruce Etling, Nikki Bourassa, Ethan ZXuckerman, and Yochai Benkler. "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 US Presidential Election," *Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society Research Paper*, accessed April 19, 2021, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn- 3:HUL.InstRepos:33759251

Jay, Martin. *The Virtues of Mendacity: On Lying in Politics*. University of Virginia Press, 2010.

Berinsky, Adam. "Rumors and Health Care Reform: Experiments in Political Misinformation," *British Journal of Political Science* 47, no.2 (2017): 241-262. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-political-science/article/rumors-and-health-care-reform-experiments-in-political-misinformation/8B88568CD057242D2D97649300215CF2/share/8bd983ffd812a52a61ff330ddffd8ed658878114

Mele, Nicco., David Lazer, Matther Baum, Nir Grinberg, Lisa Friedland, Keeneth Joseph, Will Hobbs, and Carolina Mattson. "Combating Fake News: An Agenda for Research and Action," May, 2017, https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/combating-fake-news-agenda- research-and-action

McGRANAHAN, Carole. "An Anthropology of Lying: Trump and the Political Sociality of Moral Outrage." *American Ethnologist* 44, no. 2 (2017): 243–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12475.

Kessler, Glenn., Salvador Rizzo and Meg Kelly, "Trump's false or misleading claims total 30,573 over 4 years," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2021,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/24/trumps-false-or-misleading-claims-total-30573-over-four-years/

Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol. “Select Committee Subpoenas Social Media Companies for Records Related to January 6th Attack,” January 13, 2022. https://january6th.house.gov/news/press-releases/select-committee-subpoenas-social-media-companies-records-related-january-6th.

Kuo, Rachel, and Alice Marwick. “Critical Disinformation Studies: History, Power, and Politics.” *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, August 12, 2021. https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-76.

The United States Department of Justice, "Capitol Breach Cases," accessed December 12, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/capitol-breach-cases

NRP, "How Conspiracy Theorists Are Disrupting Efforts To Fight Human Trafficking," October 14, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/10/12/923019289/how-conspiracy-theorists-are-disrupting-efforts-to-fight-human-trafficking

Schaeffer, Katherine. “The Changing Face of America’s Veteran Population.” *Pew Research Center* (blog). Accessed March 1, 2022. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/05/the-changing-face-of-americas-veteran-population/.

Milton, Daniel and Andrew Mines, "This is War: Examining Military Experience Among the Capitol Hill Siege Participants," *Combating Terrorism Center*, April 12, 2021, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/This_is_War.pdf

“U.S. Constitution - Twelfth Amendment | Resources | Constitution Annotated | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress.” Accessed March 2, 2022. https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-12/.

Center For Strategic & International Studies, "Examining Extremism: The Oath Keepers," June 17, 2021, https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-oath-keepers

Anti-Defamation League. “Oath Keepers.” Accessed Dec 1, 2021. https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/oath-keepers.

Lederman, Josh. "The founder of a far-right militia once warned of federal tyranny. Then came Trump." *NBCNEWS*, February 3, 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/founder-far-right-militia-once-warned-federal-tyranny-then-came-n1256546

Southern Poverty Law Center. “Elmer Stewart Rhodes.” Accessed Nov 12, 2021. https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/elmer-stewart-rhodes-0.

Lucas, Ryan. "Oath Keepers Founder is Under Scrutiny, Court Documents Show," *Capradio*, April 5, 2021, https://www.capradio.org/news/npr/story?storyid=984353179

Kriner, Matthew and Jon Lewis. "The Oath Keepers and Their Role in the January 6 Insurrection," *Combating Terrorism Center*, December 2021 https://ctc.usma.edu/the-oath-keepers-and-their-role-in-the-january-6-insurrection/

Anti-Defamation League. "Three Percenters," accessed November 13, 2021, https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/three-percenters

SPLC: Southern Poverty Law Center. "Proud Boys," accessed November 12, 2021, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/proud-boys

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "5th superseding indictment," August 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1422696/download

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. "Case 1:21-cr-00175-TJK," October 3, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case- multi-defendant/file/1415116/download

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. "Nordean, Biggs, Rehl, Donohoe - Indictment," March 10, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1377586/download

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "Third Superseding Indictment," March 31, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1382471/download

“GARCIA, Gabriel Augustin,” February 4, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/garcia-gabriel-augustin.

The George Washington University: Program on Extremism, "This is Our House!" March, 2021, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/This-Is-Our-House.pdf

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,"Case: 1:21-mj-00071," accessed November 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/opa/case-multi-defendant/file/1355811/download

Hineman, Brinley. "Lisa Eisenhart, mom of Capitol riot zip-tie suspect, to remain in custody, reversing earlier decision," January 25, 2021, https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2021/01/25/mom-zip-tie-guy-lisa-eisenhart-released-federal-custody-riot/4248209001/

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. "Criminal Complaint," February 22, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1371551/download

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. "Statement of Facts," March 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi defendant/file/1378481/download

The United States Department of Justice. "Vinson, Lori Ann," July 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/vinson-lori-ann

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. "Statement of Facts," March 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1383086/download

Omar, Abdel. "Sean Carlo Cordon biography: 13 things about US Capitol riot suspect from Los Angeles, California," March 10, 2021, https://conandaily.com/2021/03/10/sean-

carlo-cordon-biography-13-things-about-us-capitol-riot-suspect-from-los-angeles-california/

Finnegan, Michael. "FBI arrests two brothers from Southern California in Capitol riot case," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 2021, https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-03-09/capitol-riot-arrests-california-cordon-brothers

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "Statement of Offense." August 27, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1428566/download

Omar, Abdel. "Kevin Cordon biography: 13 things about US Capitol riot suspect from Alhambra, California," *Conan Daily*, March 10, 2021, https://conandaily.com/2021/03/10/kevin-cordon-biography-13-things-about-us-capitol-riot-suspect-from-alhambra-california/

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,"STATEMENT OF FACTS," accessed November 11, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1395396/download

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "STATEMENT OF FACTS," February 24, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1378401/download

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "STATEMENT OF FACTS," January 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1353461/download

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "STATEMENT OF FACTS," March 15, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1386286/download

Omar, Abdel, "Elias Irizarry biography: 13 things about Vincent Irizarry's son, US Capitol riot suspect from South Carolina," *Conan Daily*, March 16, 2021, https://conandaily.com/2021/03/16/elias-irizarry-biography-13-things-about-vincent-irizarrys-son-us-capitol-riot-suspect-from-south-carolina/

Tnovelly, Thomas. "Citadel cadet charged in Capitol riot booted from school Republican club, remains a student," March 17, 2021, https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/citadel-cadet-charged-in-capitol-riot- booted-from-school-republican-club-remains-a-student/article_5eb9efea-8752-11eb-a64c-63129eca0dcf.html

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. "BROCK, Larry Rendall," July 28, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/brock-larry-rendall

Farrow, Ronan. "An Air Force Combat Veteran Breached the Senate." *The New Yorker*, January 8, 2021. https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-air-force-combat-veteran-breached-the-senate.

The George Washington University: Program on Extremism, "Larry Rendall Brock Government Detention Exhibits," accessed November 11, 2021, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Larry%20Rendall%20Brock%20Government%20Detention%20Exhibits.pdf

The United States Department of Justice. "CALHOUN JR., William Mccall," August 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/calhoun-jr-william-mccall

Joyner, Chris. "Georgia Attorney among Those Who Broke into U.S. Capitol." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, n.d., sec. News. https://www.ajc.com/news/georgia-attorney-among-those-who-broke-into-the-us- capitol/MF3IWF57WRGHBO2G2GTSZII374/

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "Affidavit in support of criminal complaint and Arrest Warrant." January 12, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/opa/page/file/1356036/download

The United States Department of Justice, "STEPAKOFF, Michael." February 4, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/stepakoff-michael

Omar, Abdel. "Michael Stepakoff biography: 13 things about rabbi from Palm Harbor, Florida." *Conan Daily*, January 29, 2021, https://conandaily.com/2021/01/29/michael-stepakoff-biography-13-things-about-rabbi-from-palm-harbor-florida/

Sullivan, Dan. "Palm Harbor Messianic rabbi is the latest Floridian accused in U.S. Capitol riot." January 30, 2021, https://www.tampabay.com/news/nation-world/2021/01/29/palm-harbor-rabbi-is-the-latest-floridian-accused-in-us-capitol-riot/

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, "Statement of Offense," September 24, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1436786/download

Omar, Abdel. "Jenny Cudd biography: 13 things about US Capitol riot suspect from Midland, Texas." *Conan Daily*, October 13, 2021, https://conandaily.com/2021/10/13/jenny-cudd-biography-13-things-about-us-capitol-riot-suspect-from-midland-texas/

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,"Statement of Offences - Jenny Cudd." October 13, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1442576/download

The United States Department of Justice, "CUDD, Jenny Louise," October 19, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/cudd-jenny-louise

Stafford, Kat and James Laporta, "Decades of DOD efforts fail to stamp out bias, extremism," *AP NEWS*, December 30, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/business-donald-trump-lloyd-austin-veterans-arrests aa564fe473dd4c347189bb39ad8a9201?utm_source=dailybrief&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DailyBrief2021Dec30&utm_term=DailyNewsBrief

Jones, Christopher. “Does the American Military Have a Problem With Far-Right Extremism?” *Pacific Standard*. March 26, 2019. https://psmag.com/social-justice/does-the-american-military-have-a-problem-with-far-right-extremism.

Hanrahan, A. C. Thompson, Ali Winston,Jake. “Ranks of Notorious Hate Group Include Active-Duty Military.” ProPublica. Accessed March 1, 2021. https://www.propublica.org/article/atomwaffen-division-hate-group-active-duty-military?token=QWMHNu1frTkwNtZ9tn8Uvt0O9Qq1EbGO.

Mathias, Christopher "Exclusive: 7U.S. Military Members Identified As Part of White Nationalist Group." *HUFFPOST*, March 18, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/white-nationalists-military-identity-evropa_n_5c8ab70ae4b0d7f6b0f1094b

The Associated Press, "2 men kicked out of National Guard Over alleged white supremacist ties." *NBCNEWS*, December 27, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/2-men-kicked-out-national-guard-over-alleged-white-supremacist-n1107591

"THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT," accessed January 10, 2022, https://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf

Dresibach, Tom and Meg Anderson, "Nearly 1 in 5 Defendants in Capitol Riot Cases Served In the Military," *NPR*, January 21, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/01/21/958915267/nearly-one-in-five-defendants-in-capitol-riot-cases-served-in-the-military

Beirich, Heidi L. "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy in the military - How to Stop It?" *Congress.GOV*, February 11, 2020, https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110495/witnesses/HHRG-116-AS02-Wstate-BeirichH-20200211.pdf

Thrush, Glenn. "Congress Passes Measure Challenging Trump to Denounce Hate Groups." *The New York Times*, September 13, 2017, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/us/congress-trump-hate-groups-charlottesville.html.

McCammon, Sarah. "From Debate Stage, Trump Declines To Denounce White Supremacy." *NPR*, September 30, 2020, sec. Elections. https://www.npr.org/2020/09/30/918483794/from-debate-stage-trump-declines-to-denounce-white-supremacy.

Thesiss-Morse, Elizabeth. *Who Counts as an American*? (London: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Hodges, Eric B. "'Storming the Castle.' Examining the Motivations of the Veterans Who Participated in the Capitol Riots." *Journal of Veterans Studies* 7, no. 3 (November 2, 2021): 46–59. https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v7i3.274.

J. Sidanius and Petrocik, J. R. *Communal and national identity in a multiethnic state: A comparison of three perspectives*. In R. Ashmore, L. Jussim, & D. Wilder (Eds.), Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction (London: Oxford University Press, 2001): 101–129.

Yuki, Masaki. “Intergroup Comparison versus Intragroup Relationships: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Social Identity Theory in North American and East Asian Cultural Contexts.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2003): 166–83. https://doi.org/10.2307/1519846.

M. B. Brewer, Hong, Y.-Y., & Li, Q. *Dynamic entitativity: Perceiving groups as actors*. In V. Yzerbyt, C. M. Judd, & O. Corneille (Eds.), The psychology of group perception: Perceived variability, entitativity, and essentialism (Psychology Press, 2004): 25–38.

Schatz, Robert T., Ervin Staub, and Howard Lavine. “On the Varieties of National Attachment: Blind Versus Constructive Patriotism.” *Political Psychology* 20, no. 1 (1999): 151–74. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00140.

Blank, Thomas, and Peter Schmidt. “National Identity in a United Germany: Nationalism or Patriotism? An Empirical Test with Representative Data.” *Political Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2003): 289–312. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792352.

De Figueiredo Jr., Rui J. P., and Zachary Elkins. “Are Patriots Bigots? An Inquiry into the Vices of In-Group Pride.” *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 1 (2003): 171–88. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5907.00012.

Feshbach, Seymour. “Nationalism, Patriotism, and Aggression.” In *Aggressive Behavior: Current Perspectives*, edited by L. Rowell Huesmann, 275–91. The Plenum Series in Social/Clinical Psychology. Boston, MA: Springer US, 1994. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-9116-7_12.

Huddy, Leonie, and Nadia Khatib. “American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement.” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 63–77. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122906.

Li, Qiong, and Marilynn B. Brewer. “What Does It Mean to Be an American? Patriotism, Nationalism, and American Identity after 9/11.” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004): 727–39. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792341.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,"Caldwell, et al - Indictment," January 27, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1361086/download

Naylor, Brian. “Read Trump’s Jan. 6 Speech, A Key Part Of Impeachment Trial.” *NPR*, February 10, 2021, sec. Politics. https://www.npr.org/2021/02/10/966396848/read-trumps-jan-6-speech-a-key-part-of-impeachment-trial.

NBC News. *DeGette Makes Case That Rioters Were Invited To Capitol By Trump | NBC News NOW*, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TXfH7yxhyU.

Lucas, Ryan. "Who are the Oath Keepers? Militia Group, Founder Scrutinized in Capitol Riot Probe." *NPR*, April 10, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/04/10/985428402/who-are-the-oath-keepers-militia- group-founder-scrutinized-in-capitol-riot-probe

Fox, Lauren. "Democratic Rep. Zoe Lofgren quietly releases massive social media report on GOP colleagues who voted to overturn the election." *CNN*, March 8, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/05/politics/lofgren-social-media-report-gop-lawmakers/index.html

Kertscher, Tom. "Sharpiegate, vote fraud claim in Arizona is Flase." *PolitiFact*, November 4, 2021 https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/nov/04/facebook-posts/voting-machines-dont-read-ballots-filled-sharpies-/

Jacobson, Louis. "Video of 'ballot stuffing' is not from a Flint, Mich., polling place. It's from Russia."*PolitiFact*, November 5, 2021, https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/nov/05/facebook-posts/video-ballot-stuffing-filmed-russia-not-flint-mich/

"Face Check: Courts have dismissed multiple lawsuits of alleged electoral fraud presented by Trump campaign," *Reuters*, February 16, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-courts-election/fact-check-courts-have-dismissed-multiple-lawsuits-of-alleged-electoral-fraud-presented-by-trump-campaign-idUSKBN2AF1G1

Finkel, Eli J., Christopher Bail, Mina Cikara, Peter Ditto, Shanto Iyengar, Samara Klar, Lilliana Mason, Mary Mcgrath, Brendan Nyhan, et al, "Polityical sectarianism in America." *Science*, vol 370 (2020): 533-536, https://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.abe1715

Cohn, Nate. “Why Political Sectarianism Is a Growing Threat to American Democracy.” *The New York Times*, April 19, 2021, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/us/democracy-gop-democrats-sectarianism.html.

Edsall, Thomas B. “Opinion | America, We Have a Problem.” *The New York Times*, December 16, 2020, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/16/opinion/trump-political-sectarianism.html.

"Impeachment of Donald Trump, 2021," *BALLOTPEDIA*, accessed Dec 12, 2021, https://ballotpedia.org/Impeachment_of_Donald_Trump,_2021

LeBlanc, Paul. "Here are the 35 House Republicans who voted for the January 6 commission," *CNN*, May 19, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/19/politics/house-republicans-january-6-commission/index.html

CNN. *Keilar Calls out Tucker Carlson and Ted Cruz's Live TV Spar*, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wUx0K2AxkM.

Wade, Peter. "Tucker Carlson Minion Ted Cruz pushes Tucker Carlson's favorite Jan.6 Conspiracy Theory in Senate Hearing." *Rolling Stone*, January 11, 2022, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/ted-cruz-tucker-carlson-ray-epps-conspiracy-theory-1282885/

Talev, Margaret. “Poll: Republicans Favor Greene over Cheney.” Axios, February 4, 2021. https://www.axios.com/marjorie-taylor-greene-liz-cheney-a8f966eb-2a4b-452c-a1f4-61922bd07980.html.

Zanona, Melanie and Olivia Beavers, "Cheney booted from Republican leadership spot," *Politico*, May 12, 2021, https://www.politico.com/news/2021/05/12/liz-cheney-removed-leadership-position-487522

Wade, Peter. "Compare and Contrast: Fox News Anchors' Frantic Jan 6. Texts to Mark Meadows vs. what they told viewers," *Rolling Stone*, Dec 14, 2021, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/hannity-ingraham-kilmeade- fox-news-texts-on-air-1271349/

Metzger, Bryan and Jake Lahut, "Fox News host Laura Ingraham told Mark Meadows on January 6 that 'the president needs to tell people in the Capitol to go home' but suggested Antifa was to blame hours later on her show," Business Insider, Dec 14, 2021,

https://www.businessinsider.in/politics/world/news/fox-news-host- laura-ingraham-told-mark-meadows-on-january-6-that-the-president-needs-to- tell-people-in-the-capitol-to-go-home-but-suggested-antifa-was-to-blame-hours- later-on-her-show/articleshow/88283277.cms

Beitsch, Rebecca. "Hannity after Jan. 6 Texted McEnany 'no More Stolen Election Talk' in Five-Point Plan for Trump." Text. TheHill, January 20, 2022. https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/590650-hannity-after-jan-6-texted-mcenany-no-more-stolen-election-talk-in.

Parker, Ashley and Josh Dawsey, "Trump's cable cabinet: New texts reveal the influence of Fox hosts on previous White House," *The Washington Post*, Jan 9, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-cable-cabinet/2022/01/09/96fac488-6fe6-11ec-b9fc-b394d592a7a6_story.html

Polantz, Katelyn "Republicans have downplayed the US Capitol riot violence. The evidence paints a different picture." *CNN*, May 20, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/20/politics/us-capitol-riot-evidence/index.html

"Representatives Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene on January 6 Anniversary | C-SPAN.Org." Accessed Feb 1, 2022. https://www.c-span.org/video/?517073-1/representatives-gaetz-taylor-greene-suggest-fbi-january-6-attack#.

Stewart, Phil and Idrees Ali, "Biden's defense secretary pick pledges to 'rid our ranks of racists and extremists." *Reuters*, January 20, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-pentagon/bidens-defense-secretary-pick-pledges-to-rid-our-ranks-of-racists-and-extremists-idUSKBN29O2II

DVIDS. "A Message From the Secretary of Defense on Extremism." Accessed Jan 1, 2022. https://www.dvidshub.net/video/784150/message-secretary-defense-extremism.

Slotkin, Jason. "Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin Signs Military 'Stand Down' Memo To Address Extremism." *NPR*, February 6, 2021, sec. National Security. https://www.npr.org/2021/02/06/964828770/defense-secretary-lloyd-austin-signs-military-stand-down-memo-to-address-extremi.

Defense.gov. "Office of the Secretary of Defense Leadership Stand-Down to address Extremism in the Force," accessed Dec 12, 2021,

https://media.defense.gov/2021/Feb/26/2002589872/-1/-1/1/LEADERSHIP-STAND-DOWN-FRAMEWORK.PDF

Cooper, Helene. "Pentagon updates its rules on extremism." *The New York Times*, Dec 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/20/us/politics/pentagon-military- extremism-rules.html

Nation, "Military still grappling with racism and extremism, investigation finds." *PBS*, Dec 29, 2021, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/military-still-grappling-with-racism-and-extremism-investigation-finds

Lazer, David M.J., Matthew A. Baum, Youchai Benkler, Adam J. Berinsky, Kelly M. Greenhill, Filippo Menczer, Miriam J. Metzger etal, Brendan Nyh, Gordon Pennycook, David Rothschild, and Michael Schudson et al."The science of fake news," *Science*, no.6380 (March 2018), https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aao2998.

Daskalopoulos, Ally, Nadia Hernadez, Felix Jason, Holly Jenvey, David Gustafson, Robin Mosley, Cam Rodriguez, Nika Schoonover, and Sitoria Townsend, "Thinking Outside the Bubble: Addressing Polarization and Disinformation on Social Media." *CSIS Journalism Bootcamp*, Sep 27, 2021. https://journalism.csis.org/thinking-outside-the-bubble-addressing-polarization-and-disinformation-on-social-media/

O'Sullivan, Donie and Daniel Dale, "One of Marjorie Taylor Greene's verified Twitter accounts permanently suspended from Twitter, *CNN*, Jan 2, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/02/politics/marjorie-taylor-greene-twitter-suspension/index.html

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky. “Schakowsky, Castor Introduce Online Consumer Protection Act,” May 10, 2021. https://schakowsky.house.gov/media/press-releases/schakowsky-castor-introduce-online-consumer-protection-act.

Colvin, Jill and The Associated Press, "A year after the Capitol insurrection, Donald Trump remains the de facto leader of the GOP," *Fortune*, Jan 7, 2022, https://fortune.com/2022/01/06/donald-trump-gop-leader-capitol-insurrection/

Shepherd, Brittany. "Majority of Americans think Jan. 6 attack threatened democracy: POLL," *ABC News*, Jan 3, 2022, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/majority- americans-jan-attack-threatened-democracy-poll/story?id=81990555

Balz, Dan., Scott Clement and Emily Guskin, "Republicans and Democrats divided over Jan. 6 insurrection and Trump's culpability, Post-UMD poll finds," *The Washington Post*, Jan 1, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/01/01/post-poll-january-6/