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The Backlash of the Online-Right during and after the 2020 United States Presidential Election

Luis Roberto Lopez Jr.
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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THE BACKLASH OF THE ONLINE-RIGHT DURING AND AFTER THE
2020 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A Thesis

by

LUIS ROBERTO LOPEZ JR.

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2021

Major Subject: Political Science

THE BACKLASH OF THE ONLINE-RIGHT DURING AND AFTER THE
2020 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A Thesis
by
LUIS R. LOPEZ JR.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Daniel Chomsky
Chair of Committee

Dr. Natasha Altema-McNeely
Committee Member

Dr. Clyde Barrow
Committee Member

Dr. Dongkyu Kim
Committee Member

May 2021

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ABSTRACT

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What type of Internet memes were utilized by the Online-Right to show support to former-President Donald Trump and to delegitimize the 2020 Presidential Election? In this thesis, I argue that the Online-Right used Internet memes for two purposes. The first was to discredit and attack the election and former President Trump's opponents. The second purpose is that the Online-Right created a cult of personality around Donald Trump with the usage of Internet memes. Most of the literature focuses on the type of groups that use Internet memes on the Internet. I focus on what type of Internet memes were used by the Online-Right while also making a connection between the Internet memes and Donald Trump's rhetoric on Twitter. I archive both Donald Trump's and the Online-Right tweets to be able to answer these questions and find a link to their relationship.

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this project to Dr. Chomsky, Dr. Gordon, and Dr. Jorgensen who all showed interest and supported me in this project. Without them, I would have not gone through with it and would have probably done something completely different. In addition, I am also thankful to my friends Cesar Villegas and Corey Snodgrass for pushing me with this project. Their moral support has been of great help, especially during the days where I just wanted to quit. I also want to thank my parents Luis and Leticia Lopez, my brother Josue Lopez, and my abuela (grandmother) Juani for supporting me through this painful journey as a graduate student. In addition, I also want to give thanks to my girlfriend Karolina de la Rosa and to her family for supporting me in this journey. Lastly, I am grateful to my Lord Jesus Christ and the Saints for being with me all this time during these two years of the master's program.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the month of November, during the 2020 United States Presidential Election, former-President Donald Trump began sending out, tweets intended to discredit the election result. Examples of these tweets were “STOP THE COUNT!” or “I WON THIS ELECTION, BY A LOT!” His most famous tweets were those where he claimed there was voter fraud in the election. The primary focus of this thesis, however, is not Donald Trump’s tweets, but the tweets posted by the Online-Right in response to Trump’s efforts to delegitimize the results of the 2020 election by mobilizing a base of online activists. Thus, the focal point of this thesis is how tweets by the Online-Right echoed Donald Trump’s narrative through the usage of Internet memes, which further discredited the 2020 United States Presidential Election. The Online-Right also used Internet memes to portray Donald Trump as a strong man and, in the process, created a cult personality around him. Consequently, the thesis aims to show how *Internet memes were utilized by the Online-Right to demonstrate support for former-President Donald Trump and to delegitimize the 2020 Presidential Election in response to his call to action?*

When looking at the literature of right-wing spaces on the Internet, most of it focuses on specific right-wing groups, individuals, and ideologies, or how Internet memes can be used to attack political figures. In this thesis, I concentrate on how a political figure, in this case former-President Donald Trump, can influence the creation of right-wing Internet memes through his

rhetoric. I also look at how Internet memes can be used to portray a political figure as heroic even when that portrayal is contrary to the mainstream view of this political figure.

This thesis will consist of six chapters: introduction, literature review, theory, tweets and events, data and analysis, and conclusion and discussion. In the literature review chapter, there is an emphasis on Richard Dawkins' (2006) definition of memes and Shifman's (2014) definition on Internet memes. The reason for this emphasis is because these two authors establish the foundation for understanding memes and Internet memes. In this chapter I also connect the literature that revolves around Internet memes, political humor, and the Alt-Right. The theory chapter focuses on both Ross and River's (2017) and Marquez's (2018) work to understand delegitimization and the cult of personality, respectively. The tweets and events chapter reviews Donald Trump's tweets and surrounding events that took place in the months of November 2020 to January 2021. These tweets illustrate the type of rhetoric that influence the creation of the Online-Right's Internet memes. The data and analysis chapter features the Online-Right's Internet memes and how they echo Trump's rhetoric, create a cult of personality around him, and serve to delegitimize the 2020 U.S. Presidential election. Finally, in the discussion and conclusion chapter, I discuss the importance of continuing to study the Online-Right and their Internet memes.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Memes and Internet Memes

There are two types of definitions that define memes. The first definition of a meme is defined in Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* and the other definition which relates specifically to Internet memes; is defined by Limor Shifman. The term "memes" is an abbreviated from the Greek word mimemes (Dawkins 2006). Richard Dawkins' defines mimemes or memes as a cultural unit(s) that transfers from person to person by being duplicated (Dawkins 2006). Some examples of memes that Dawkins gives are tunes, ideas, catch phrases, and even fashion (Dawkins 2006). When memes are transferring from person to person by being duplicated, they tend to evolve (meaning change in form) and this leads to a successful meme (Dawkins 2006). Memes that are successful keep transmitting themselves from person to person like a parasite (which Dawkins compares it to), while those that were not successful; end up "dying" (Dawkins 2006). Dawkins' definition of memes is still used by academics who study internet memes, but it is important to look at Shifman's definition of memes because it adds a modern twist to the term.

In Shifman's (2014) "Memes in Digital Culture," she mentions that internet users use the word meme to describe the rapid spread of ideas that are presented in written text, images, and other cultural units (Shifman 2014, p.17). Shifman (2014) defines Internet memes as a group of digital items that share common characteristics (content, form, and stance), while having an

awareness of each other, and being created and distributed on the Internet (Shifman 2014, p.36-37). This definition is different from Dawkins' definition by emphasizing that memes have aware of each other. Furthermore, Internet memes and memes do have some similar characteristics with the main commonality being the concept of an evolutionary phase (being remade or remixed (Dawkins 2006; Shifman 2013; Shifman 2014). Describing the definition of memes and Internet memes is the first step in understanding the meaning of memes and Internet memes. The second step is what constitutes an Internet meme and how they are used on the Internet.

Internet Memes and the Internet

Internet memes consists of images, sound, videos, GIFS that contain text, humor, sarcasm, satire, and symbols (Dean 2019; DeCook 2018; Pelletier-Gagnon, Diniz, Shifman 2014; Woods and Hahner 2019). Furthermore, DeCook (2018) mentions that memes help establish online communities because memes create "shared cultures" (DeCook 2018, p.488). When Internet memes have references to popular culture, they help create a shared cultural experience among Internet users (Milner 2013; Shifman 2013; Smith 2019). Members of these communities will also adapt Internet memes that aid in the creation of a unifying identity for these communities (Ross and Rivers 2017). Internet memes alone are not the only driving force that contributes to the creation of online communities/subcommunities as members of the communities and subcommunities must also participate in the creation of the Internet memes (Fang 2018).

The reason why participation is an important factor for Internet memes is that Internet memes are a form of online participatory culture (Lamerichs, et al. 2018; Wood and Hahner 2019). Internet memes allow online users create, edit/remix, and distribute Internet memes, thus creating a participatory culture in the Internet (DeCook 2018; Ross and Rivers 2017). Social media in particular is fertile ground for new cultural communities and identities because it facilitates that sharing and creation of content, while creating networks of interaction between online users (Lamerichs, et al. 2018; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Smith 2019). Social media also helps create homogeneous echo chambers for community members to gather and express themselves (Gal, et al. 2016; Gal 2019). As community members share Internet memes on social media, this leads to the creation of a collective identity (Gleason 2015). As Internet memes spread through the Internet and form online communities and collective identities, they can also be utilized for political purpose within the virtual world.

Social Media, and Political participation

The concept of political participation has mainly been restricted to voting, campaigning, and communicating with public officials (Ross and Rivers 2017; Verba and Nie 1987). However, some scholars have argued that participating in social media is another form of political participation (Iosifidis 2018; Ross and Rivers 2017; Shahin and Margaret Ng 2020). Social media is viewed as a tool for political participation because it helps create a space where citizens can discuss politics, especially among the youth (Bennett, et al. 2012; Schwarzenegger and Wagner 2018). Social media also has a negative effect which leads to the creation of highly

partisan echo chambers that lead online users to become entrenched in polarized or extreme political positions (Shahin and Margaret Ng 2020).

Political memes/Internet memes and Political participation

Political memes and or Internet memes have various uses when it comes to political participation. For example, political memes/Internet memes are used to challenge the status quo, help create identities for social movements, be a persuasive tool in electoral campaigns, and can be used for commentary on social and political issues (DeCook 2018; Fang 2018; Lamerichs, et al 2018; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Shifman 2014; Smith 2019; Suherman 2020). Political memes like Internet memes, are also composed of images and texts that are humorous and have references to pop-culture (Penny 2020). Furthermore, because memes can be instantaneously distributed on the Internet, this allows citizens to respond in real time to political events with no fear of censorship (Ross and Rivers 2017; Shifman 2014; Smirnova 2018). For example, Internet memes were used by Singaporeans to protest and resist the Singaporean government after the 2017 Presidential election (Yang Soh 2020). By using Internet memes, Singaporeans were able to avoid charges of sedition (Yang Soh 2020). Nevertheless, what makes Internet memes popular to use as a tool of political participation is their humor.

Kulkarni (2017) mentions how political humor attracts regular people into the political system by helping them become aware, form opinions, and learn about political issues. This interaction leads to an increase in political efficacy and political interest (Kulkarni 2017). The way humor helps individuals become politically aware is by making them laugh, allowing them

to connect with the political system, and simultaneously allowing them to politically express themselves (Penny 2020; Smirnova 2018). Political humor enables citizens to criticize their government, delegitimize political candidates by mocking them, as well as target and mock people of the opposition (Becjerm 2020; Gal 2019; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Penny 2020; Smirnova 2018). There is also a dark side to humor, and that is using humor to spread hate speech and to dehumanize others (Hakoköngäs, et al. 2020; Hodson and MacInnis 2016; Schwarzenegger and Wagner 2018). In addition, political memes and or Internet memes can be transformed by the dark corners of the Internet that spread anti-democratic and radical right-wing propaganda (Dean 2019; DeCook 2018; Smith 2019; Woods and Hahner 2019).

The Alt-Right

The term *Alt-Right* was coined by white-supremacist Richard Spencer in 2013 and although Spencer quite using the term, it resurfaced two years later as part of the U.S. political discourse (Hawley 2019). The Alt-Right does not have a solid definition because it is used as an umbrella term that puts different right-wing ideologies, individuals, and groups; under one category (Ganesh 2020; Hawley 2019; Woods and Hahner 2019). These individuals and groups tend to promote right-wing ideologies that range from libertarianism to white nationalism (Hawley 2017; Wood and Hahner 2019). The Alt-Right is also an Internet phenomenon because it relies on blogs, podcasts, forums, and Internet memes to promote its agenda and ideologies (Hawley 2017; Woods and Hahner 2019). The main focus of this part of the literature review will be how the Alt-Right used Internet memes in the 2016 United States Presidential Election.

Internet memes are humorous, but this humor can become toxic when it dehumanizes others. In Milner's (2013) article "FCJ-156 Hacking the Social: Internet Memes, Identity, Antagonism, and the Logic of Lulz", the logic of lulz is brought up to explain how hate speech is able to spread through the usage of Internet memes. The logic of lulz explains that Internet memes enable humor, irony, and satire to spread hate speech on the Internet (Milner 2013; Wood and Hahner 2019). The humor, irony, and satire that Internet memes contain often make it difficult to differentiate humor/satire/irony from hate speech and extremist rhetoric (Milner 2013). Being unable to distinguish humor from hate speech allows the Alt-Right to use Internet memes to deploy their hateful messages and agenda (Wood and Hahner 2019). The humor characteristic of Alt-Right Internet memes allows the Alt-Right to dismiss their content as being playful (Wood and Hahner 2019).

A second and important characteristic of these members are the websites that allow the Alt-Right to form their enclaves and produce their content. There are two important websites for the Alt-Right 4-chan and Reddit. 4-chan is an imageboard that consists of various sub-boards created in 2003 by a teenager named Christopher Poole (Wood and Hahner 2019). Poole was influenced by a late 1990s' comical website known as Something Awful (SA) (Wood and Hahner 2019). SA, like 4-chan, was a meme factory that consisted of other subforums (Wood and Hahner 2019). One of the important subforums from SA, which Poole used during its early days was called Anime Death Tentacle Rape Whore House (ADTRW) (Wood and Hahner 2019). In ADTRW users would usually have conversations about anime but would also troll around within the subforum (Wood and Hahner 2019). After the creation of 4-chan, users on 4-chan

would create popular Internet memes such as LOLCats which would later become mainstream (Wood and Hahner 2019). An important aspect of 4-chan is the anonymity that users have because it keeps their identity safe when conducting raids on other websites or individuals (Wood and Hahner 2019). The second important website for the Alt-Right is known as Reddit.

Reddit was created in 2005 by Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian just two years after the creation of 4-chan (Wood and Hahner 2019). Like 4-chan, Reddit has various subcommunities known as subreddits, and these subreddits often do not have strict rules for their community members (Wood and Hahner 2019). What makes 4-chan and Reddit different is that Reddit users have pseudonymity, unlike 4-chan users, who have full anonymity when using the website (Wood and Hahner 2019). This is due to Reddit asking for identification when registering (Wood and Hahner 2019). The administrators of Reddit have stated that they would not intervene on the subreddits because they believe each community can govern itself (Wood and Hahner 2019). Their perspective did change, however, after hateful subreddits began to appear on the website which caused the administration to purge them (Wood and Hahner 2019).

Both 4-chan and Reddit were built to give their users some form of anonymity, while new subcultures were being formed on these two websites. Furthermore, these two websites also allowed for Internet mobs to mobilize and target individuals. One of the first instances of online mob mobilization was during an event called the Fappening where naked images of celebrities were leaked and posted on both 4chan and Reddit (Wood and Hahner 2019). Some of the subreddits dedicated to these naked images were later removed from Reddit because they broke

child pornography laws and resulted in a DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act) complaint (Wood and Hahner 2019). The mobilization event by online mobs was during the Gamergate controversy where participants would target video game journalists (Nagle 2017; Wood and Hahner 2019). During the Gamergate controversy, participants would issue violent rape and death threats, and dox people's personal information (Nagle 2017; Wood and Hahner 2019). During this time, people from Reddit would use 4-chan to obtain content, then migrate as a "refugee," or use 4-chan as a rallying point (Wood and Hahner 2019). 4-chan users also use Reddit to their advantage; they use Reddit as a stop point to mainstream social media (Wood and Hahner 2019). These events are important because they showed people how to mobilize on the internet.

The Alt-Right and 2016 Election

During the 2016 presidential election, the Alt-Right uploaded their Pro-Trump memes on either 4-Chan, 8-Chan, and Reddit; occasionally making their way to mainstream social media (8chan, and Reddit) (Dickerson and Hodler 2020; Heikkila 2017; Lamerichs, et al. 2018; Wood and Hahner 2019). The specific subforums and subreddits that the Alt-Right would upload were the r/The_Donald (on Reddit) and on /pol/ (on-4chan) (Heikkila 2017; Wood and Hahner 2019). The Internet memes that were pro-Trump would portray him as an imperialistic hero, while others edited his appearance with Pepe the Frog (Lamerichs, et al. 2018; Wood and Hahner 2019). Besides pro-Trump Internet memes being uploaded, the Alt-Right also uploaded other Internet memes that consisted of Nazi imagery, historical figures, religious symbols, and new

characters like Pepe the Frog (DeCook 2018; Hakoköngäs, et al. 2020; Heikkila 2017; Lamerichs, et al. 2018; Wood and Hahner 2019). The Alt-Right (like the Gamergate participants) used the Internet to target their political opponents from both the Left and Right (Heikkila 2017; Wood and Hahner 2019). Some examples would be Conservatives being called “cuckservatives” while people on the Left would be demonized and have their symbols claimed by the Alt-Right (Heikkila 2017; Wood and Hahner 2019). Besides attacking political opponents, the Alt-Right also posted anti-Clinton memes as a way to delegitimize her presidential campaign (Wood and Hahner 2019). This concept of delegitimization is important and will be explained in the upcoming chapter of this project.

CHAPTER III

THEORY

Internet memes are more than just humorous content on the internet. They also play a role as a political tool to criticize the status quo and to add commentary to social and political issues (DeCook 2018; Fang 2018; Lamerichs, et al 2018; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Shifman 2014; Smith 2019; Suherman 2020). Because Internet memes contain humor, the humorous characteristic can be used to delegitimize political candidates and political opponents by humiliating and mocking them (Becjerm 2020; Gal 2019; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Penny 2020; Smirnova 2018). Internet memes, by enabling the delegitimization of political actors, leads to the concept of “delegitimization by Internet memes.” This concept comes from Ross and Rivers’ (2017) article “Digital cultures of political participation: Internet memes and the discursive delegitimization of the 2016 U.S. Presidential candidates,” which examines how Internet memes were used in the 2016 presidential election to delegitimize presidential candidates.

What does it mean to delegitimize a political candidate? Or what does delegitimization mean in Ross and Rivers’ (2017) article? In the authors’ article, delegitimization is defined as an “absence of rhetorical alignment with prevalent social values of the time in addition to the absence of positive, beneficial, ethical, understandable action” (Ross and Rivers 2017, p.3). Adding to the Ross and Rivers’ (2017) definition, delegitimization creates and transmits a

negative image of the other (Ross and Rivers 2017, p.3-4). Furthermore, to delegitimize a political institution and or politician comes when they lose their legitimacy by either being challenged or opposed by their political opponents (Ross and Rivers 2017). When looking at Internet memes, Ross and Rivers (2017) asks their question of what stances and strategy Internet memes take and use to illustrate delegitimization within discourse.

For Internet memes to delegitimize politicians, political institutions, and opposition they will have some form of negative characteristic (Ross and Rivers 2017). Some examples of these negative characteristics would be comparing politicians to wicked historical figures, attacking them for their sex, and promoting outright bigotry (Becjerm 2020; Ross and Rivers 2017; Smirnova 2018). Internet memes enable this because it is connected to the idea that this content is “humorous” even if it is offensive and attacking politicians and institutions. Again, humor as Hodson (2016) mentions, is used to mock other groups to the point of dehumanization or delegitimization. Also, when going back to Milner’s (2013) *logic of lulz*, negative content can pass through memes because it is hard to distinguish between playful humor and hate speech. This leads to Internet memes being weaponized in discourse because they are then used to target and damage the legitimacy and credibility of individuals and institutions (Smith 2019).

However, there is a second concept that is important to this thesis, and that is the cult of personality. The cult of personality deals with a population having a high degree of affective attachment to a leader (Marquez 2018). Such attachment to the leader is crafted by using certain symbols that stressed that the leader is the legitimate ruler (Marquez 2018). Images and symbols

alone cannot simply create this attachment between the population and the leader. Marquez (2018) mentions that the symbols are pushed and propagandized by the bureaucracy and elite to legitimize the ruler as well as to push the regime's rhetoric. Looking at the cult of personality seems like a different route because the first part of this chapter focused on the concept of delegitimization by Internet memes, but the cult of personality theory is important to this project. The first part of my question deals with the cult of personality because some of the memes archived portray Donald Trump as a hero and others contained a very pro-Trump rhetoric. Portraying Trump as a hero on Internet memes is not new, Lamerichs et al. (2018) mentions in their article "Elite male bodies: The circulation of alt-right memes and the framing of politicians on Social Media" how Donald Trump is portrayed as an imperialistic hero on a Facebook page known as God Emperor Trump. Before applying the theories and concepts to the Internet memes archived, I must first explain some of the events that occurred in November up to January 6 to make sense of the Internet memes.

CHAPTER IV

TWEETS AND EVENTS

Before presenting the data and analysis for this project, I must first display the tweets that former-President Donald Trump posted about there being voter fraud in the 2020 Presidential Election. On top of this, I also need to introduce the events that took place from November 2020 to January 6, 2021 because these events and Trump's tweets influenced the memes that were produced by the *Online-Right* on Twitter. Going back to former-President Donald Trump's tweets, these tweets were archived by going through his Twitter account (before it was suspended) and archiving them by using Snip & Sketch (which is a free Microsoft Windows' application). Donald Trump's tweets range from November 4, 2020 to January 3, 2021. Any tweet going past January 3rd was not archived because Twitter had suspended Donald Trump's twitter account, preventing me from archiving anymore tweets.



Figure 1: Nov.7 Tweet

In this first tweet from Donald Trump, he claimed that he won the 2020 Presidential Election. Donald Trump’s tweet was posted on the same day in which Joe Biden became president-elect after winning Pennsylvania (Stahl 2020). Seeing such results, Donald Trump asserted various claims of voter fraud such as manipulation of votes, deceased people voting, and the dumping of votes overnight (McEvoy 2020). To further delegitimize the electoral results, Donald Trump later tweeted two tweets on November 27, 2020 asserting that he won the state of Pennsylvania, and that he only lost the state due to voter fraud.

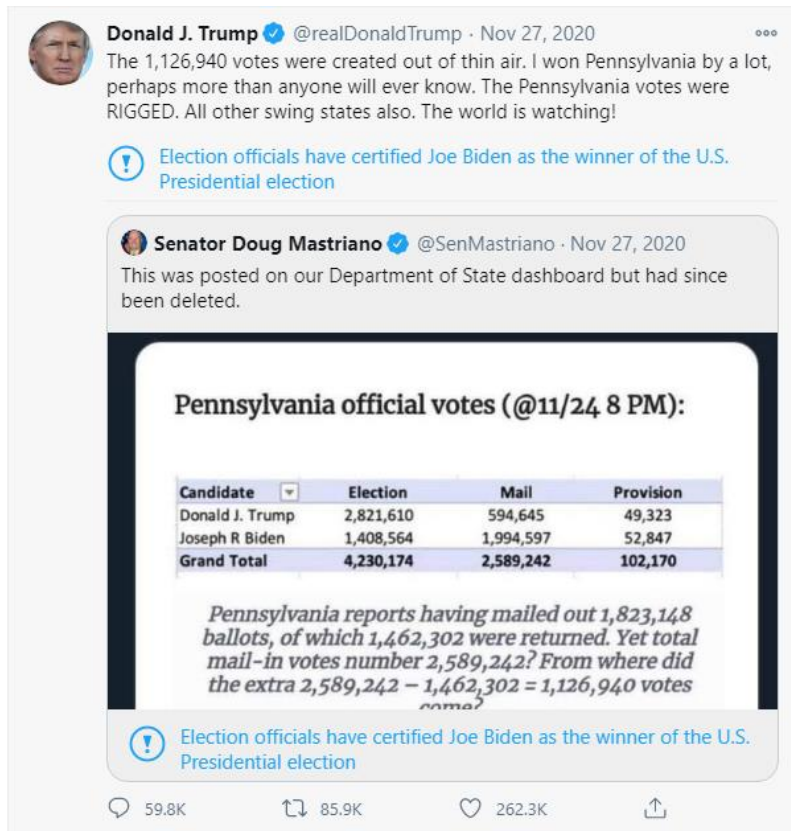


Figure 2: Nov. 27 Tweet

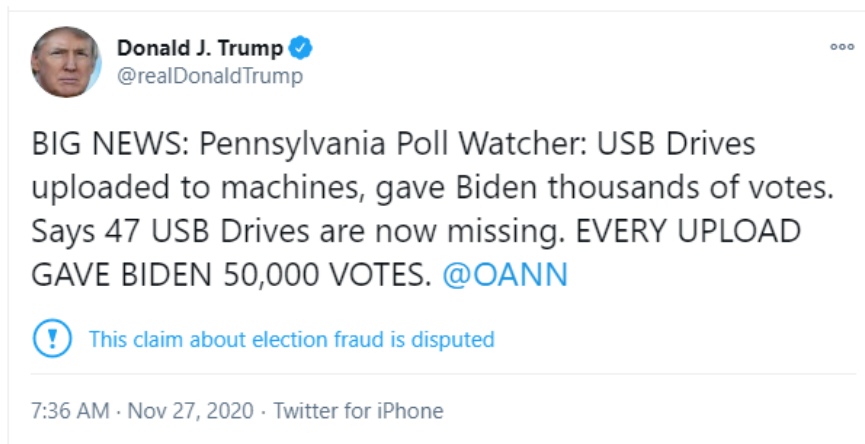


Figure 3: Nov. 27 Tweet 2

In the first tweet, Donald Trump retweets Senator Mastriano’s tweet claiming that the Department of State dashboard was deleted. In the retweet, Trump wrote how votes were created out of thin air (reassuring his claim of voter fraud) and that he won Pennsylvania. In the second tweet, Trump claims from a Pennsylvanian Poll Watcher that USB drives were used to upload votes in favor of Joe Biden. At the same time Donald Trump was tweeting about voter fraud, there were protests taking place against the results of the 2020 Presidential Election.

The Million MAGA March first began at the Freedom Plaza at noon and as the day went on, the protestors headed to the Supreme Court (Shultz 2020). Before the protestors traveled towards the Supreme Court, they were chanting “four more years” and “stop the steal” in support of former-President Donald Trump (Hayes, et al. 2020). The march also incited violence as skirmishes broke out between protestors and counter-protestors which led to the arrest of many (Hayes, et al. 2020). Protests by Donald Trump’s supporters continued throughout the months, and some went as far as to harass government officials. An example of such extremism would be

when armed Trump protestors gathered outside the house of Michigan's Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson (Chappell 2020; O'Kane 2020;). Michigan's Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson mentioned how protestors were using bullhorns to shout obscenities and chants while outside her house (O'Kane 2020).

As of November, Donald Trump stated that he would bring his case of voter fraud to the United States Supreme Court (Keith, et al. 2020). Subsequently, Donald Trump filed multiple lawsuits to the Supreme Court, in efforts of overturning the 2020 election results (Rutenberg, et. 2020). Other Republican politicians also came to aid Donald Trump in his efforts to overturn the election. Republican Representative Mike Kelly placed a lawsuit to overturn the results in Pennsylvania (Sprunt 2020). In Texas, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, with the support of 17 Republican Attorney Generals, and 100 Republican members of Congress, filed a lawsuit to overturn the votes in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin (Liptak 2020; Segers 2020). Each of these cases were rejected by the Supreme Court due to the lack of evidence of voter fraud (Keith, et al. 2020; Sprunt 2020; Quinn 2020). Unable to convince the United States Supreme Court to overturn the election, Donald Trump shifted to attacking the Supreme Court on his Twitter account.



Figure 4: Dec. 11 Tweet

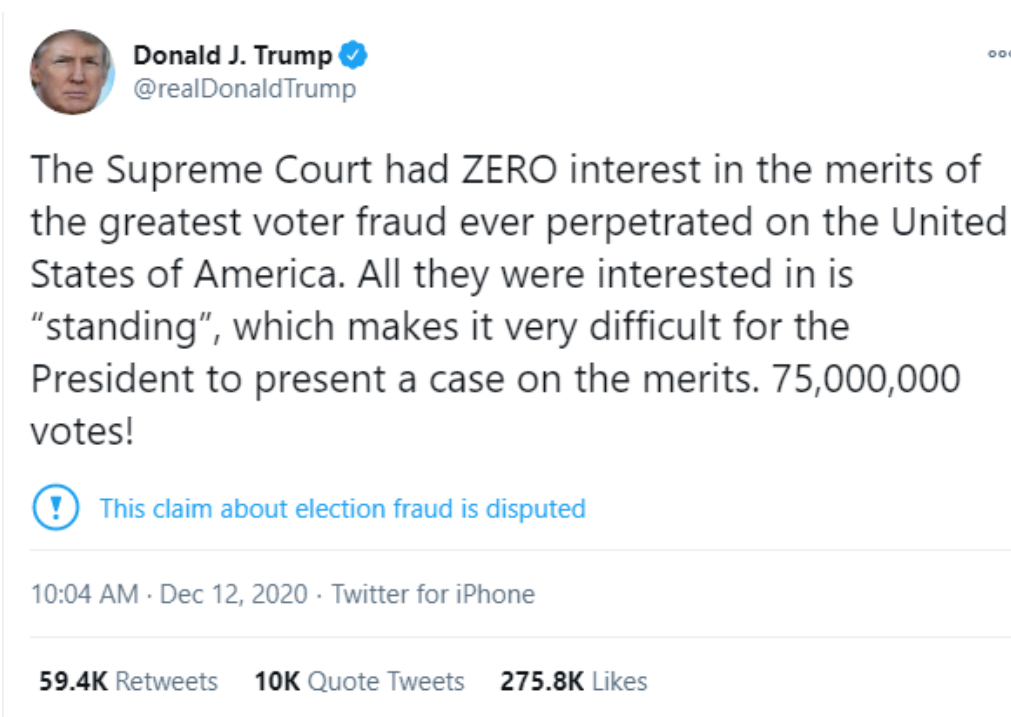


Figure 5: Dec. 12 Tweet

The First attack towards the Supreme Court came on December 11 where Donald Trump stated that the Supreme Court had no courage and wisdom. In his second tweet, Donald Trump claimed

that the Supreme Court did not care about there being voter fraud in the election, while showing that he obtained more “valid” votes than Joe Biden.

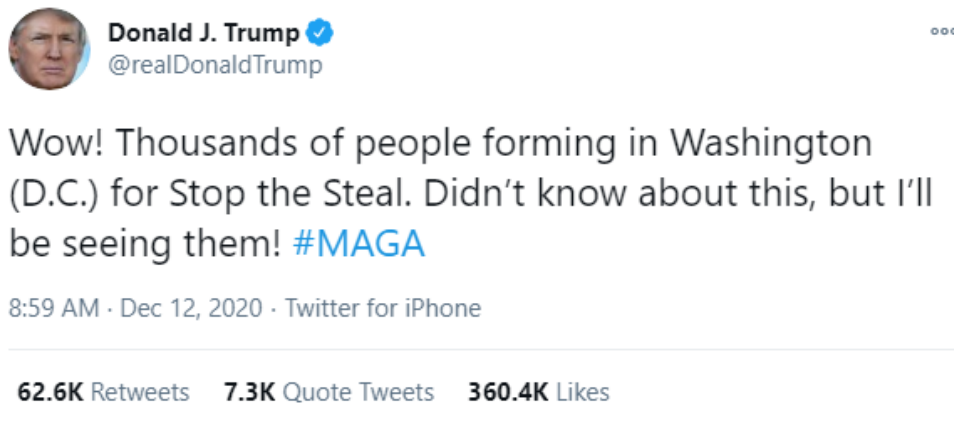










Figure 6: Dec. 12 Tweet 2

Figure 6 is a tweet that Donald Trump made on his Twitter account, while the second Million MAGA March was taking place in Washington D.C. Unlike the first Million MAGA March that took place in November, this one was smaller (Davies, et al. 2020). Like the first march, Trump supporters continued to protest the election result because of their belief of electoral fraud in the 2020 presidential election. An article from CBS News titled “Thousands gather in Washington D.C. to show support for Trump”, mentions that the march’s website organized this second march to face “evil, censorship, suppression, and manipulation” while defending freedom from fascism, socialism, and communism. Nevertheless, radical groups such as the Proud Boys and controversial figures such as Alex Jones, were present at the second Million MAGA March (Slotkin, Nuyen and Doubek 2020). This second rally was more dangerous than the first rally. The clashes between the protestors and counter-protestors led to 33

arrests, four stabbings, and nine transported to local hospitals (Slotkin, Nuyen, and Doubek 2020).

Before moving into the January 6 insurrection, Donald Trump continued to tweet about fraud in the election, while attacking Republican politicians, the Supreme Court, and other government institutions.

 <p>Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump</p> <p>I saved at least 8 Republican Senators, including Mitch, from losing in the last Rigged (for President) Election. Now they (almost all) sit back and watch me fight against a crooked and vicious foe, the Radical Left Democrats. I will NEVER FORGET!</p> <p> This claim about election fraud is disputed</p> <p>5:06 PM · Dec 24, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>75.3K Retweets 13.7K Quote Tweets 325.7K Likes</p>	 <p>Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump</p> <p>The U.S. Supreme Court has been totally incompetent and weak on the massive Election Fraud that took place in the 2020 Presidential Election. We have absolute PROOF, but they don't want to see it - No "standing", they say. If we have corrupt elections, we have no country!</p> <p> This claim about election fraud is disputed</p> <p>7:51 AM · Dec 26, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>48.7K Retweets 4K Quote Tweets 185.3K Likes</p>
 <p>Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump</p> <p>The "Justice" Department and the FBI have done nothing about the 2020 Presidential Election Voter Fraud, the biggest SCAM in our nation's history, despite overwhelming evidence. They should be ashamed. History will remember. Never give up. See everyone in D.C. on January 6th.</p> <p> This claim about election fraud is disputed</p> <p>7:14 AM · Dec 26, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>47.4K Retweets 3.5K Quote Tweets 174.3K Likes</p>	 <p>Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump</p> <p>"Breaking News: In Pennsylvania there were 205,000 more votes than there were voters. This alone flips the state to President Trump."</p> <p> Election officials have certified Joe Biden as the winner of the U.S. Presidential election</p> <p>3:00 PM · Dec 28, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>122.3K Retweets 13.1K Quote Tweets 454.3K Likes</p>

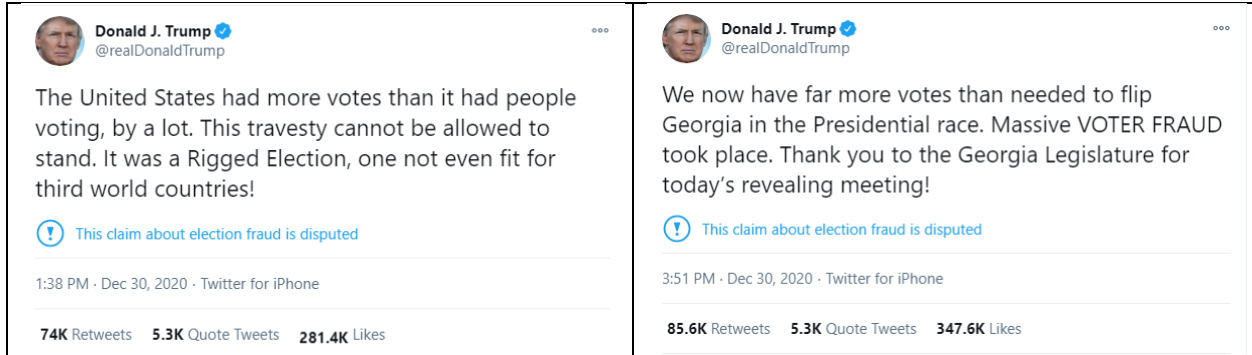


Figure 7: Dec. 24-30 Tweets

On his 24th tweet, Donald Trump called out Republican Senators (especially Senator Mitch McConnell) for not helping him in his “fight” against the “Radical Left Democrats.” The Tweet sounds a threat at the end of it because he typed in capitalized letters “I will NEVER FORGET!” As if he is going to do something against the Republican Senators in the future. In his tweet from December 26, he is claiming the Justice Department and FBI did not intervene in the 2020 election, and that they should be ashamed for not doing anything. As a further matter, he refers to the January 6th rally in this same tweet.

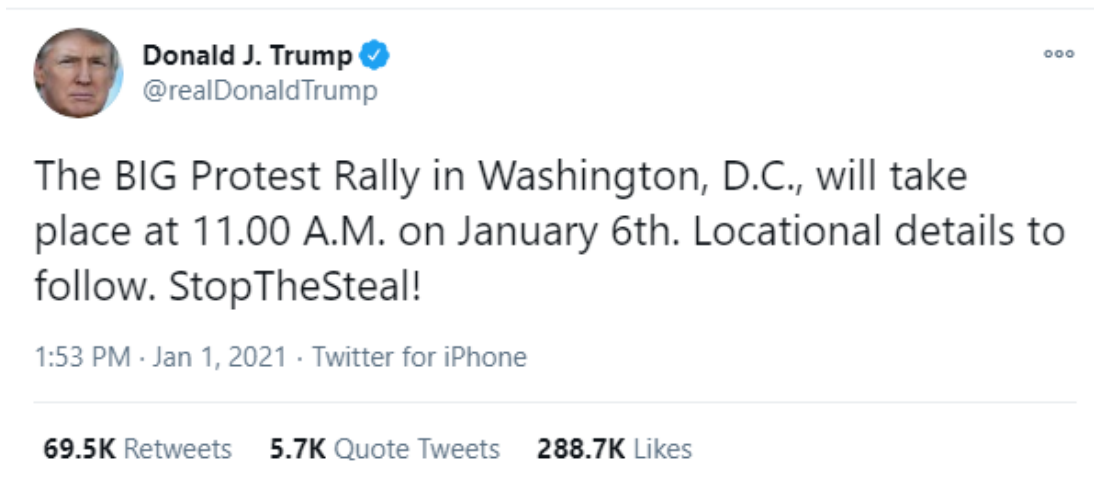


Figure 8: Jan. 1 Tweet

Donald Trump announced the protest that would lead to the Insurrection on the Capitol on January 1st. In this tweet, he mentions that the rally will take place in Washington D.C. at 11:00 A.M. Moving forward to the day of the Insurrection, Donald Trump gave a speech at the Ellipse to his supporters (Wamsley 2021). In his speech, Donald Trump attacked Big tech for censoring him, he went after the Supreme Court, Republican politicians, the Democratic Party, and the media (Associated Press 2021). Within his speech, he also called for Mike Pence to block Joe Biden's confirmation (American Press 2021). In response, Mike Pence went against Trump's demand, which resulted in Donald Trump attacking Mike Pence on his Twitter account (Mangan and Breuninger 2021). At the end of his speech, Donald Trump called for his followers to walk down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol (American Press 2021). After his speech, protestors marched to the Capitol. The protestors reached the Capitol by 1:10 P.M and by 2:11 P.M. the protestors breached the west side of the Capitol (Petras, et al. 2021; Wamsley 2021). Inside the Capitol the rioters entered the Senate floor, entered Nancy Pelosi's office, and stole items from the Capitol (Petras, et al. 2021). By 6 P.M., the Capitol was secured by the National Guard, Capitol Police, and the MPD (Wamsley 2021). While all these events were taking place in the United States, the *Online-Right* was producing memes in support of former-President Donald Trump and to delegitimize the 2020 Presidential Election.

CHAPTER V

DATA AND ANALYSIS

To demonstrate my thesis *on how Internet memes were replicated and utilized by the Online-Right to show support to former-President Donald Trump and to delegitimize the 2020 Presidential Election*. I will analyze 295 Internet memes that I archived from the social media platform Twitter. To protect the privacy of the individuals that posted these Internet memes, I have cropped out their profile pictures and Twitter usernames. The Internet memes are divided into three sections; (1) memes that were posted in November, (2) memes that were posted on December, and the (3) memes that were posted on the day of the Insurrection. Many of these Internet memes contain highly offensive content, including expressions of antisemitic, sexist, racist, and violent sentiment. These memes also contain vulgar language and offensive imagery.

Section 1: November Internet Memes

The first wave of Pro-Trump and anti-election memes were posted before Joe Biden won the presidency. In the bottom section of Figure 9, these two Internet memes question the legitimacy of the votes. The Internet meme on the left depicts Joe Biden printing votes from a USPS desk, in which the Internet meme intends to delegitimize mail in ballots. The Internet meme to its right is expressing antisemitic sentiment as the graph lines that represent Donald Trump and Joe Biden votes were edited to look like The Happy Merchant. The Happy Merchant

(who is on the right) is an antisemitic meme that portrays a Jewish man with stereotypical facial features and rubbing his hands (Anti-Defamation League [ADL], n.d.). Looking at the top Internet memes in Figure 9, the Internet memes are delegitimizing the election through violence. The Internet memes are displaying a violent sentiment where Donald Trump, his son Barron, and his followers will do an armed insurrection to nullify the election.

<p>MAGA NIGHT AT WHITE HOUSE SOON</p>  <p>0:11 1.6K views</p> <p>9:50 PM · Nov 4, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>40 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 261 Likes</p>	 <p>8:53 PM · Nov 5, 2020 · Twitter Web App</p> <p>46 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 285 Likes</p>
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Figure 9: Set 1 of Nov. Internet Memes



Figure 10: Happy Merchant

In this next set of Internet memes, the Internet memes continue to delegitimize the election, but they begin to target the voters and Vice President Kamala Harris. The Internet meme on top-left side of Figure 11 mocks Kamala Harris by comparing her to the Joker from the

1989 Batman movie. The meme to its right, is portraying George Floyd (who died this last summer) in hell with the “I Voted” pin. This Internet meme is reinforcing Donald Trump’s rhetoric of there being votes from deceased individuals in the 2020 presidential election. The memes located in the bottom section of Figure 11, are demonstrating a new term that the *Online-Right* created during the election. The term “Riggers” has a racist background because it is connected to the racist slur that is used against African Americans. The memes now are not primarily referring to African Americans but is referring to the alleged fraud that democratic voters committed during the election. Just how Ross and Rivers (2017) mention, Internet memes will propagate content to target institutions and people to delegitimize their legitimacy within the political system. The pair of Internet memes exhibit how the *Online-Right* was desperately trying to delegitimize the election results in the early month of November.





Figure 11: Set 2 of Nov. Internet Memes

When the first Million MAGA March was advertised by Donald Trump supporters, the *Online-Right* produced two sets of Internet memes. The first set were Internet memes promoting the march and the other promoting a mischievous rhetoric during the march. Figure 12 Internet memes that were posted on November 8th and November 10th manifest the cult of personality of Donald Trump within the *Online-Right*. The Internet memes are portraying Trump as a great leader by perceiving him as the next Juliet Cesar or the next Benito Mussolini. In addition, the Internet memes also contain enthusiastic aesthetics as if Donald Trump will overthrow the government to install himself as dictator. Because I archived nineteen Internet memes on November 14, only four will be used for the next analysis because of their large number of likes. The Internet memes in Figure 13 continue with the narrative of Trump being this “great leader”

like Julius Cesar. The meme on the bottom right side of Figure 13 pushes a violent narrative. That meme is delineating Donald Trump’s older voters (boomers) as a paramilitary group with the name “BOOMERWAFFEN DIVISION.” Additionally, the user who posted that Internet meme is also asking Donald Trump (by tagging him on the post) to give an order to the “BoomerWaffen Division” to rebel.



Less than 5 days

0:21 7.3K views

12:18 AM · Nov 10, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

110 Retweets 4 Quote Tweets 740 Likes

LETS FUCKEN GOOOOOOOOOOO

0:24 2.5K views

Disclose.tv @disclosetv · 18h

BREAKING - Trump plans to hold rallies to lead his followers in a "war" to stop Biden from taking office:

"Team Trump is ready to announce specific recount teams in key states, and it plans to hold a series of Trump rallies focused on the litigation," said Axios.

[Show this thread](#)

7:01 PM · Nov 8, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

58 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 300 Likes

Figure 12: Set 3 of Nov. Internet Memes

HAIL CEASAR

[Translate Tweet](#)



1:06 PM · Nov 14, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

25 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 223 Likes

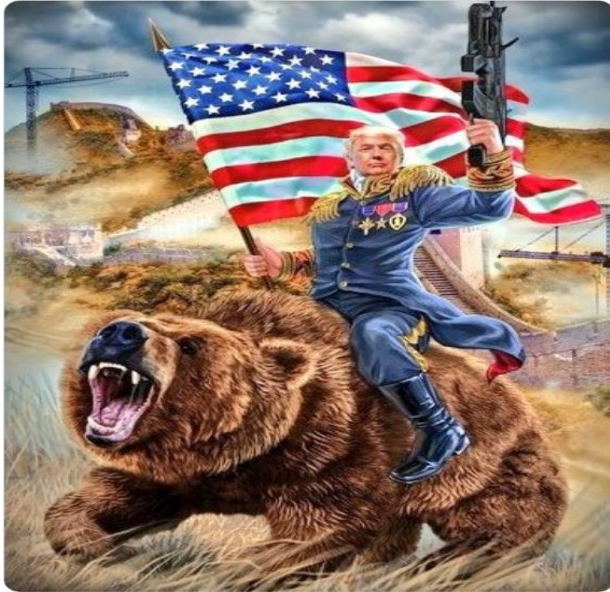
was blinded by the sun then saw this??



12:37 PM · Nov 14, 2020 · Twitter Web App

135 Retweets 17 Quote Tweets 990 Likes

Blackpilled bitches log off we're making America great again



6:04 PM · Nov 14, 2020 · Twitter for Android

29 Retweets 6 Quote Tweets 337 Likes

GIVE THEM THE WORD @realDonaldTrump



6:02 PM · Nov 14, 2020 · Twitter Web App

45 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 275 Likes

Figure 13: Set 4 of Nov. Internet Memes

The last set of Internet memes for the month of November deal with the Supreme Court because the *Online-Right* believed that the Supreme Court was actually going to overturn the election due to the claims of voter fraud. Unlike the Internet memes from Figures 9, 11, 12, and 13; the Internet memes from Figure 14 are giving support to an institution. This set of Internet memes were posted during the time that Donald Trump went to the U.S. Supreme Court to “fight” the results from the election. The *Online-Right* following Trump’s rhetoric, went on to support the U.S. Supreme Court, believing that it was going to do something about the results and the voting fraud. In spite of the support to the Supreme Court by the *Online-Right*, their attitude towards the Supreme Court changed after it rejected Trump’s and other Republican politician cases. Figure 15 shows this hate towards the Supreme Court, but primarily towards Supreme Court Judge Amy C. Barrett. The December 11th Internet meme also shows antisemitic sentiment by stating the Judge Barrett and the other Supreme Court Judges are working for the Jewish people. The Internet meme is also expressing how the Republican Party betrayed Donald Trump’s supporters.

Figure 14: Set of 5. Nov. Internet Memes




<p>You'll get what you fuckin deserve Joseph</p>  <p>12:10 PM · Nov 26, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>38 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 221 Likes</p>	<p>"Look Joe, you take the blue pill and your candidacy ends. You wake up in your bed and you believe what you want to believe because of your dementia. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the election fraud goes."</p>  <p>3:41 AM · Nov 12, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>26 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 110 Likes</p>
<p>Do you feel elected</p>  <p>Heather McGhee @hmcghee · Nov 9 83% of Trump voters think Biden stole the election despite zero evidence. All but two GOP Senators have failed to acknowledge Biden's win. This is seriously dangerous. We need institutions to speak up now: no airing Trump rallies, civil society statements. Don't be distracted.</p> <p>6:28 PM · Nov 9, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>70 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 437 Likes</p>	<p>Take a seat, Joe. We've been waiting for you.</p>  <p>11:48 AM · Nov 9, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>187 Retweets 9 Quote Tweets 1.2K Likes</p>



Figure 15: Anti- Barrett Internet Memes

Section 2: December Internet Memes

This second section will focus on the Internet memes that the *Online-Right* posted through the month of December. The sample size is smaller for this month because the *Online-Right* were not as energetic and enthusiastic as they were in November. In the month of December, the *Online-Right* lost faith in Donald Trump. One of the early sets of Internet memes that were being uploaded on Twitter were Internet memes that promoted secession, dictatorship, and anti-GOP sentiment. In Figure 16, the Internet meme on the left shows an Apu Apustaja (Help Helper) pressing two buttons one labeled “Trump WINS!!” and the other labeled “CIVIL WAR!!!!” This Internet meme shows that the *Online-Right* desperately wanted Donald Trump to

win the 2020 Presidential Election even if it meant inciting a civil war. The Internet meme to its right, represents the *Online-Right* extremist idea of wanting Donald Trump as the sole dictator of the United States. The bottom Internet memes are promoting secession from the United States by jokingly promoting the idea of “Jesusland” In addition to this meme, they are calling the remaining part of the United States and Canada “Shithole” as a way to mock the more progressive states and country. Figure 17 shows the hate toward the Republican Party politicians because many people in the *Online-Right* genuinely feel that the Republican Politicians betrayed Donald Trump. To further continue this belief that Donald Trump was betrayed by the Republican Party, Figure 18 (which is not a meme but a Tweet) is stating that Donald Trump is a modern Julius Caesar who has been stabbed (betrayed) by those he supported during his Presidency.



4:29 PM · Dec 6, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

68 Retweets 4 Quote Tweets 335 Likes

Soon



7:39 PM · Dec 1, 2020 · Twitter Web App

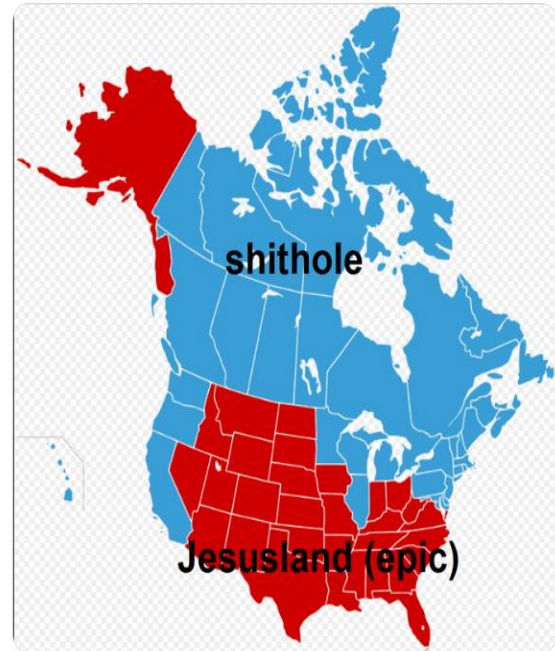
24 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 259 Likes

Jesusland sounds pretty good to me tbqh



3:51 PM · Dec 10, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

47 Retweets 11 Quote Tweets 620 Likes



7:47 PM · Dec 12, 2020 · Twitter Web App

201 Retweets 35 Quote Tweets 2.3K Likes

Figure 16: Set 1 Dec. Internet Memes



Figure 17: Photoshop tweet from Donald Trump's twitter account.

Truly the Julius Caesar of our time, you are watching the betrayal of our greatest leader in real time. From Bill Barr to Brett Kavanaugh, Trump has been repeatedly stabbed in the back by his allies. Like Caesar, he must cross the Rubicon before it is too late.



8:33 AM · Dec 12, 2020 · Twitter for Android

31 Retweets 7 Quote Tweets 208 Likes

Figure 18: Comparing Donald Trump to Julius Caesar

Section 3: Insurrection and Post-Insurrection Internet Memes



Figure 19: Fake Wikipedia page

Figure 19 is an example of one of the many Internet memes that I archived on January 6th on the day of the Insurrection. During the day of the Insurrection, the enthusiasm of the *Online-Right* grew and began to post Internet memes on Twitter. This last section will look at memes that were posted on the day of the Insurrection (fifty-eight Internet memes were archived) and at the Internet memes that were posted post-Insurrection. Figure 20 shows an Internet meme with Adam Johnson (a Floridian who stole the Speaker's podium) carrying Nancy Pelosi podium during the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans. This Internet meme is displaying that the storming of the United States Capitol is equivalent to the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans. This Internet meme is not the only one that mocks Nancy

Pelosi and the removal of the Speaker's podium. Figure 21 is an Internet meme in the format of a video which continues to mock Nancy Pelosi and the snatching of her podium. This Internet meme also has the caption "TAKE BACK WHAT'S YOURS" and contains the Black Sun (neo-Nazi) symbol photoshopped in the middle of the podium. The messages of this Internet meme can be interpreted as promoting white-nationalist propaganda, or as an extreme joke as a way to mock the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.

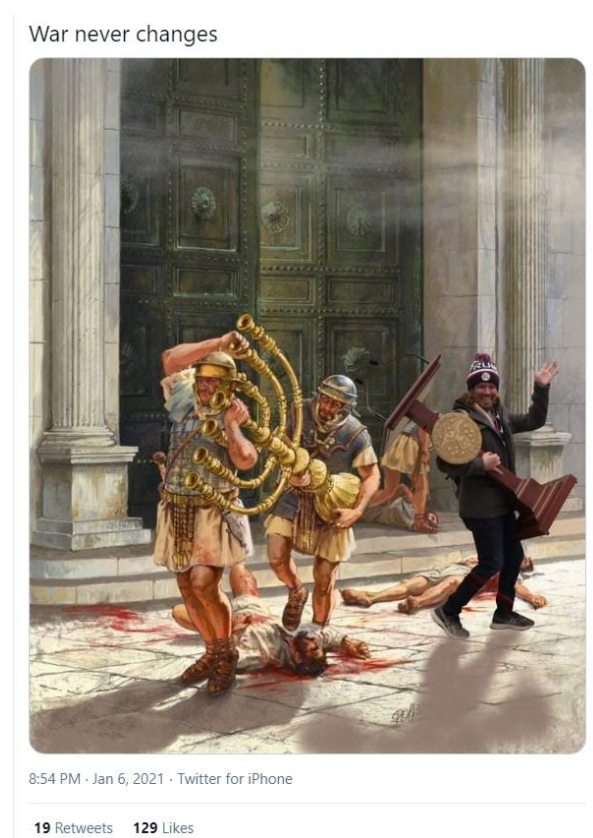


Figure 20: Trump voter with Roman soldiers.

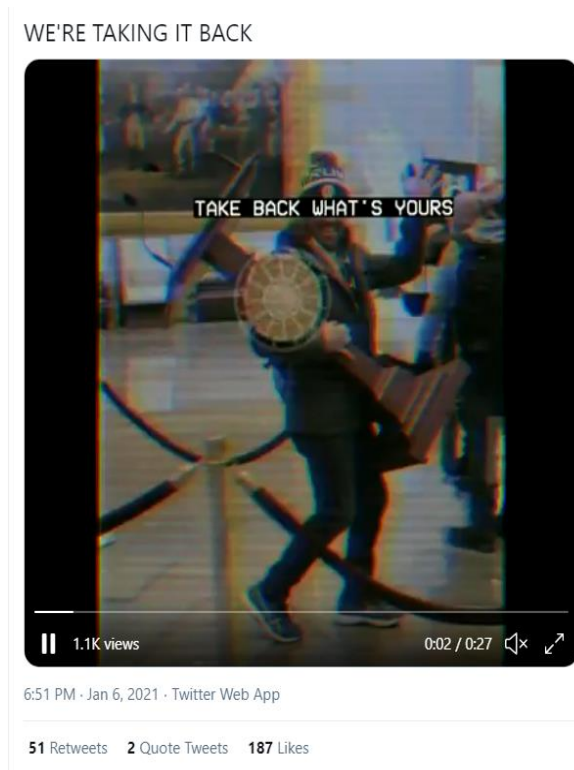


Figure 21: Vaperwave edit.

Figure 22 presents two Internet memes, the meme on the left is indicating that the character (Doge) has defecated on the desk of a member of Congress. The second meme with the caption “POV (point of view) you’re hiding under a desk in the Capitol” shows a Pepe going to punch a member of Congress who is hiding under their desk. Both of these Internet memes exhibit how the *Online-Right* mock members of Congress by threatening them with violence. Figure 23 on the other hand, shows the hate that Mike Pence received from the *Online-Right* after he refused to help Donald Trump in preventing Joe Biden from becoming President. The Internet meme on the left in Figure 23 shows Donald Trump putting a rope around Mike Pence’s

neck and contains the word “TREASON” in big bold red letters. The meme on the right, is a photoshopped tweet from The Associated Press mocking Mike Pence. Figure 22 and Figure 23 display how the *Online-Right* is mocking members of Congress and the former-Vice President by threatening them with violence or having them seem to get executed. This connects to how the literature mentions that the humor of Internet memes enables people to target and mock government members, institutions, and those that simply hate (Becjerm 2020; Gal 2019; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Penny 2020; Smirnova 2018).



Figure 22: Set 1 of Insurrection Internet Memes



Figure 23: Anti-Pence Internet Memes

Politicians were not the only people that were targeted by the *Online-Right* during the day of the Insurrection. Figure 24 shows two Internet memes that target Black Lives Matter (BLM) and ANTIFA (Anti-Fascist). The Internet meme that is targeting BLM is stating that cops did not kill or harm anyone during the BLM protests in the summer of 2020 and allowed protestors to “destroy” the country. The meme is also stating that on the day of the insurrection, cops killed an innocent woman (the meme is referring to 35-year-old Ashli Babbitt who was killed at the Capitol) who just wanted a fair election. Now, the Internet meme that is targeting ANTIFA, is based on the Virgin VS. Chad meme which illustrates and compares two different individuals,

one being weak and the other being strong (Don 2017). The Virgin Antifa and The Chad MAGA Protestor meme portrays ANTIFA as being weak with the captions of it being a tool of Wall Street, being ugly, hating their life, and being unable to do anything in protests besides crying. The meme then describes the Trump protestors or the “CHAD MAGA Protestor” as being patriotic, Christian, healthy, and loyal to Trump. This meme is elevating the portrayal of the protestors disregarding them breaking the law.

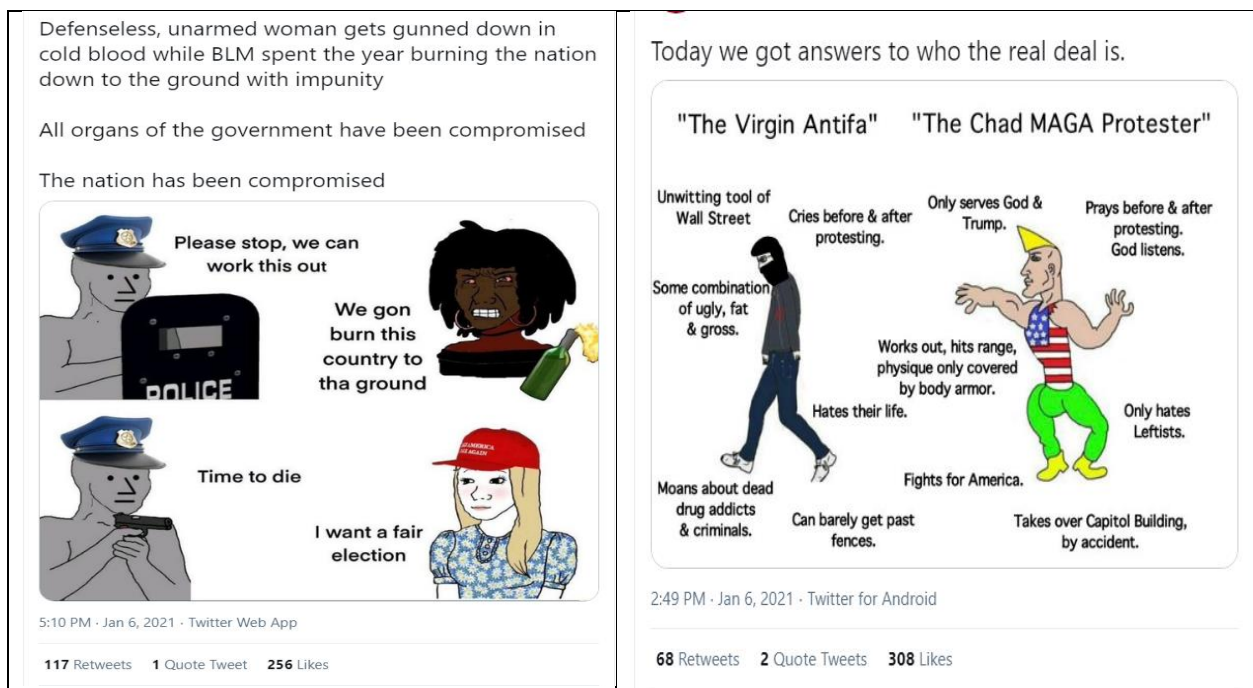


Figure 24: Internet Memes criticizing BLM and ANTIFA.






The set of Internet memes focus on the support that the *Online-Right* gave to Donald Trump on the day of the insurrection. Figure 25 shows an Apu (not a Pepe) inside the Senate Chamber mimicking the insurrectionists when they themselves entered the Chamber. The tweet of this Internet Meme also has the caption “Trump won.” This indicates that by storming the

Senate Chamber, it would allow Donald Trump to continue being President or even worse a Dictator of the United States. In Figure 26, three of the Internet memes portray Donald Trump as a strong man. The Internet meme on the right, portrays Donald Trump as Bane who was a strong villain in the Batman film, The Dark Knight Rises. In that same meme, there is the caption “DO YOU FEEL IN CHARGE” which is questioning the power of Congress and President-Elect Joe Biden. The last bottom Internet Memes are promoting that idea of Trump committing a coup d’etat to establish himself as dictator, and the meme on the left portrays as a monarch. Lastly, the Internet meme on the top left corner, is mocking the Congressmen and Congresswomen for hiding during the storming of the Capitol. In addition, there is a character which is portraying a boomer, holding a flag with an anti-Biden message.



Figure 25: Apu

Figure 26: Set 2 of Insurrection Internet Memes

<p>Artist's rendition of the event</p>  <p>Haley Britzky @halbritz · 20h This photo breaks my heart.</p> <p>Rep. Jason Crow, D-Colo., comforts Rep. Susan Wild, D-Pa., while taking cover as protesters disrupt the joint session of Congress to certify the Electoral College vote.</p> <p>(Photo By Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call via AP Images) Show this thread</p> 	<p>DO YOU FEEL IN CHARGE</p>  <p>1:07 PM · Jan 6, 2021 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>30 Retweets 274 Likes</p>
<p>"I hope Mike Pence comes through and upholds the constitution, if he doesn't it will be a very sad day for our country. If he doesn't we're just gonna have to march on the capitol!"</p> <p>LETS F*CKING GOOOOO!!!!</p>  <p>11:22 AM · Jan 6, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>49 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 355 Likes</p>	<p>Listen @realDonaldTrump just do it! What the hell do you have to lose?</p> <p>And is not just that, but you would win--we would all win so fast.</p>  <p>18 173 1.1K</p>

After the insurrection and the storming of the Capitol, the *Online-Right* continued their attacks on Donald Trump's enemies. The Internet meme attacking former-Vice President Mike Pence is labeling Pence as a traitor for not backing Donald Trump. The meme is also calling Pence a Zionist puppet because of the various Jewish symbols and organizations that the meme has incorporated. The other Internet meme in Figure 27 is mocking the politicians and journalists from the day of the insurrection. The meme also promotes the idea that the people rose up on January 6th against the ruling class of the United States. This meme is not just delegitimizing the politicians and journalists, but it is also legitimizing the storming of the Capitol. Lastly, Figure 28 is portraying Donald Trump as a hero who has been punished by his country. This meme was posted as a reaction to Donald Trump's suspension from Twitter.



Figure 27: Set 3 of Insurrection Internet Memes



Figure 28: Trump a Punished hero.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Internet memes are an interesting tool to examine during elections because they can support political candidates or discredit them (DeCook 2018; Fang 2018; Lamerichs, et al 2018; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Shifman 2014; Smith 2019; Suherman 2020). What is more interesting to see is the type of relationship Internet memes can develop with certain politicians. In this thesis, the Online-Right Internet memes echoed Donald Trump’s rhetoric about of fraud during the 2020 Presidential Election. In the Tweets and Events Chapter, I provided different tweets from Donald Trump’s twitter account where he claimed there was fraud in the election. This rhetoric was later produced in the Online-Right’s Internet memes by having a figure representing Joe Biden creating new votes, having Internet memes calling voters “riggers”, and even going beyond Trump’s rhetoric by claiming there was illicit Jewish intervention in the election.

Trump’s narrative of fraud was not the only thing that the Online-Right echoed within their Internet memes. The Online-Right also echoed Trump’s idea of going to the United States Supreme Court to overturn the election. The Online-Right portrayed the United States Supreme Court Justices as heroes (by using pop culture references) who were going to defeat Joe Biden. The Online-Right then echoed Trump’s frustration towards the U.S. Supreme Court after it

refused to overturn the election. Again, the Online-Right went further in their Internet memes by claiming that the U.S. Supreme Court was influenced by Jewish interests.

The Online-Right was not just echoing Donald Trump's rhetoric through their Internet memes on Twitter. They also produced Internet memes to give a negative image to the election, government institutions, Trump's opponents, and people that voted against Trump. The Online-Right push for delegitimization was most likely not effective because the Internet memes were produced, and then largely consumed, by members of the Online-Right. Going back to the literature review chapter, social media and Internet memes tend to create new communities with their own identities, but in doing so they create isolated echo chambers (Lamerichs, et al. 2018; Moody-Ramirez and Church 2019; Smith 2019). These communities have the tendency to create, share, and consume their own Internet memes to produce a collective identity and a form of participatory culture, but that culture does not extend beyond it to enfranchise new groups of followers (Lamerichs, et al. 2018; Wood and Hahner 2019). This is also true of the Internet memes that created the cult of personality around Donald Trump.

The creation of a cult of personality is to legitimize a ruler and his regime through the usage of symbols and propaganda (Marquez 2018). This cult will be created by elites within the government and within the ruler's political party (Marquez 2018). In this case, the cult of personality was not created by Donald Trump's political party or those loyal to him. The ones who created a cult of personality around him was the Online-Right with their production of pro-Trump Internet memes. The Internet memes portrayed Donald Trump as a strong leader. The

Internet memes compared him to historical leaders such as Julius Cesar and George Washington, while other Internet memes portrayed him as a dictator and emperor. Again, these Internet memes were produced by members of the Online-Right because they were the main individuals to circulate such Internet memes on Twitter.

In conclusion, the Online-Right echoed Donald Trump's rhetoric, tried to delegitimize the election, and create a cult of personality through the use of Internet memes. It is probably difficult to measure the impact that Internet memes had on the election when the audience consisted of members of the Online-Right; however, the January 6, 2021 insurrection did occur and it echoed many of the themes (and memes) that had earlier circulated on the Internet. In future research projects, might use surveys to see if the Internet memes that circulated in the 2020 election had any significant influence in American voters' views of the election. Furthermore, it is uncertain if Donald Trump's cult of personality within the Online-Right will continue to exist now that he is no longer President. After Trump's loss in 2020, and the failed insurrection in January 2021, the Online-Right seems pessimistic about any future Trump victory. It is also certain that the Online-Right will continue to produce Internet memes in future elections because of their dislike of the Republican Party. Nevertheless, future research on right-wing Internet memes should focus more on the relationship between Internet memes and political parties and prominent political figures. Finally, in the future I will continue to do research on right-wing Internet memes and compare their similarities and differences across the Western World. I will also compare left-wing and right-wing Internet memes and see which one is compelling to online users.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Luis R. Lopez Jr. earned an AA in Political Science from South Texas College in 2016, followed by a BA in Political Science from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) in 2019, and then followed by a MA in Political Science from UTRGV in the spring of 2021. Luis's main focus of research is right-wing politics, Internet memes in politics, and how the internet and social media is used within the political system. Luis has also done government internships and worked on political campaigns. Luis can be reached through email at luisrolop@hotmail.com.