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Down the Rabbit Hole: Understanding the Instigators of the Qanon Conspiracy

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Introduction

A Review of the Literature
This study will analyze the impact of social media consumption and party affiliation and their effect on increasing acceptance of the Qanon movement. In addition, this study shall further delve into the "conspiratorial mindset" and how individuals who are predisposed to believe in conspiracy theories are more likely to believe in one or more.

Social media consumption and Q'anon.
Studies have sown that a boom of conspiratorial ideas has erupted on the online platform in recent years. However, these studies have yielded inconclusive evidence to determine a coloration between conspiratorial belief and social media consumption.
- Social media platforms such as Meta and Reddit allow individuals to find information regarding modern-day conspiracies quickly.
- Platform's trending features and "hashtagging" push conspiratorial ideas toward the general populous.
- Meta's Q'anon pages have cultivated millions of followers, crossing over thousands of groups.

Party Affiliation and Q'anon.
Studies have shown a slight correlation between republican party members and Q'anon memberships. However, the same studies have shown that members of any political party have shown interest or affiliation with the Qanon conspiracy.
- Research conducted through surveys and observational studies has concluded that conspiratorial ideology is increasingly likely to occur on the extremes on tither sides of the political spectrum
- Conspiracy by nature requires an antagonist- an outgroup. Creating an opponent gives those in the most extreme of the political spectrum the opportunity to create an enemy out of their opponents.

Hypotheses and Methods

H1: There will be a correlation between social media consumption and the belief in the Q'anon conspiracy.

H2: Republicans will tend to be more likely to agree with the Q'anon conspiracy.

H3: Individuals who believe in the Q'anon conspiracy will believe in one or more other conspiracy's.

The first and second hypotheses are contingent on the assumption that external factors can shape and influence the adoption of conspiratorial ideologies. Hypothesis 1 is reliant is based on the incredible uptick and conspiratorial ideology during the 21st century and the introduction of social media platforms. Hypothesis 2 relies on the assumption of social factors and how they influence the adoption of conspiracy ideas. Finally, hypothesis 3 delves into the psychology of conspiracy theorists- this is based on the assumption and research found that individuals who believe in one conspiracy are predisposed to believe in another.
By analyzing the FEAR VI 2019 data, this study will examine the relationship(or lack thereof) between social media consumption, party affiliation, and belief in alternate conspiracy theories. The variables used are directly drawn from the survey questions asked to the participants during 2019 (2 years after the appearance of Q'anon).
The dependent variable used in this study will be recorded to units of "agreement" or "disagreement" while the independent variables will be recorded in their extremities- resulting in the showing of extremes of consumption and ideological spectrum.
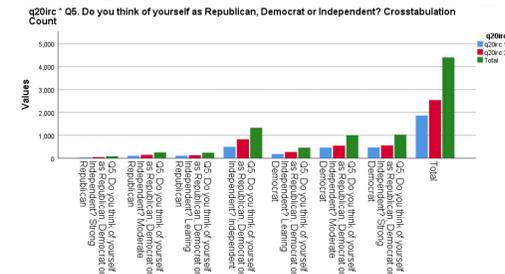
Acknowledgments

Results

Hypothesis 1

Correlations		Q20i. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. The government is concealing what it knows about... Q'Anon?	Q9k. How often do you... Get news from social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)?
Q20i. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. The government is concealing what it knows about... Q'Anon?	Pearson Correlation	1	.037*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014
	N	4408	4408
Q9k. How often do you... Get news from social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)?	Pearson Correlation	.037*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	
	N	4408	4419

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between the conspiracy theory Q'anon and social media consumption shows no coronation between the two variables. This proves that there is more to an individual believing in a conspiracy than social media consumption.

Hypothesis 2

q20irc * Q5. Do you think of yourself as Republican, Democrat or Independent? Crosstabulation
Count

The cross tab between party affiliation and belief in the Q'anon conspiracy proved my hypothesis incorrect. According to the data, there is no correlation between party affiliation and belief in the conspiracy Q'anon. This data could be due to the lack of political influence in conspiracy beliefs.

Hypothesis 3

Q20i. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. The government is concealing what it knows about... Q'Anon?	Pearson Correlation	1	.487**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	4408	4408
Q20h. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. The government is concealing what it knows about... Mass shootings such as those at Sandy Hook, Las Vegas, and Parkland?	Pearson Correlation	.487**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	4408	4419

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 3 proved conclusive results. The correlation table presented above followed a trend that existed compared to all conspiracy theories. By interpreting this data- it can be concluded that those who believe in one conspiracy are increasingly likely to believe in another.

Conclusions

Hypothesis 1
- •The lack of a correlation between media consumption and the Q'anon conspiracy shows that although social media can play a role in disseminating information regarding the conspiracy, it does not directly cause belief.

Hypothesis 2 & 3
- Although there is a slight increase in belief in the republican party in regard to the Q'anon, it is not a significant amount. Although the conspiracy is widely considered a republican and Trumpian conspiracy, the data does not support this hypothesis.
- Hypothesis 1and 2 support the finding of hypothesis 3. As no correlation or data was supporting either the influence of party affiliation or social media consumption, it appears there is a third factor that is more significant than the two.
- •Hypothesis 3's findings suggest more to the conspiratorial belief than external factors. The factors which were believed to be the most direct causation of conspiratorial beliefs yielded no results. In contrast, the comparison between beliefs of two separate conspiracies showed a correlation of extreme significance.

Overall, the research parties and the data point to one conclusion- that belief in a conspiracy does not rely on external factors but rather on a "conspiracy mindset." Furthermore, factors commonly believed to correlate with conspiracy beliefs proved insignificant to the cultivation of conspiracy beliefs. As a result, I argue that individuals are predisposed to believe in conspiracies. Although party affiliation and social media consumption may play a minute factor in conspiracy beliefs, they are not directly responsible.

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