

Content Diffusion in A Political Echo Chamber: The Impacts of Emotional and Moral Divergence

Early stage paper

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ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed political communication from top-down propaganda to bottom-up “ampliganda,” forming political echo chambers and deepening the political divide. However, little research has drawn attention to the content diffusion mechanisms inside an echo chamber. Using information processing theories, we develop an integrated research framework to investigate the factors that drive early respondents' emotional and moral opinion divergences and their impacts on political content diffusion inside a political group. Results from Parler are expected to show that content exhibiting emotions with high affective commitment and high certainty leads to less emotional divergence, whereas content featuring emotions with low affective commitment and low certainty leads to more. Moreover, we propose that moral divergence is tied to the induced political motivations of a political group and expect the differential impacts of emotional and moral divergence on content diffusion.

Keywords

Political Information Diffusion, Homogeneous Social Network, Motivated Information Processing, Emotion, Morality, Opinion Divergence, National Security.

INTRODUCTION

On January 6, 2021, protestors rioted because they deemed the outcome of the 2020 presidential election undesirable. In today's social media context, such offline violence is attributed to the networked subjectivity enhanced through homophily-driven algorithms (e.g., liking-based recommending systems) (Boler and Davis, 2018), which has greatly amplified moral rhetoric, immersed partisans with illusory truth (Fazio et al., 2015), and deepened the political divide in mediatized politics (e.g., Mooijman et al., 2018).

Both emotion and morality have facilitated political engagement and diffusion in online heterogeneous social media (e.g., Twitter). Emotionally charged political content is found to trigger opinion inversion toward political conflict (Matalon et al., 2021), create affective feedback loops among users (Boler and Davis, 2018), and elicit information sharing behaviors in social media (e.g., Bi, 2021). Also, social media users tend to disseminate content that advocates moral good or bad (e.g., Crockett, 2017) and adheres to their moral values and worldviews (Cinelli et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2018).

However, little research has drawn attention to the political information diffusion inside an online echo chamber, where like-minded partisans interact. While users in heterogeneous social media are likely to form an echo chamber and behave collectively against the pressure coming from competing or opposite political opinions (e.g., Bail et al., 2018), users in homogeneous social networks may be more prone to other ingroup members' opinions and emotions (Jasper, 2018; Parkinson, 2020). Also, there is a lack of understanding of how emotions and moral values conjointly influence content diffusion in the political social media context. Whereas emotions are contingent states that are situational, highly sentimental, and responsive (Cohen, 2014; Kušen and Strembeck, 2021), moral values are internalized regulations that guide our behaviors and beliefs

and are highly sensitive to opposing alternatives (e.g., Bayes et al., 2020). Furthermore, information diffusion is not simply a dyadic interaction between the content creators and content receivers in social media. A recent study has shown that early interactions in online conversations can accurately predict other participants' future behaviors (Bao et al., 2021). Reactions to a political message from early discourse participants may exert "referent informational influence" (Turner, 1991; Turner et al., 1989), referred to as both normative and informational influence in a social group, on other content receivers' information processing and sharing (e.g., Segesten et al., 2020). Therefore, the negligent impacts of conversational interactions in online political discourse may misattribute the content diffusion effect to the initial content attributes (Chuai and Zhao, 2020).

Given the national security implications, practical relevance, and theoretical importance of understanding the political content diffusion inside homogeneous social media, we seek to answer the following research questions. In the context of homogenous social networks, 1) how do different discrete emotions expressed in a political message influence emotional divergence in early responses? 2) How do different moral values expressed in a political message influence moral divergence in early responses? 3) How do divergences in emotions and moral values among early responses to a political message influence its diffusion? Specifically, this study integrates information processing theories and literature on political content and employs natural language processing and econometric models to explore the dynamics of political content diffusion within echo chambers. We hypothesize the differential impacts of discrete emotions (moral values) on emotional (moral) divergence in the early responses to a political message, as well as the differential influences of emotional and moral divergence on political content diffusion. We aim

to contribute to the discourse of online political content diffusion and provide practical implications to policymakers in the digital arena.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We review relevant literature in §2 and present our theories and hypotheses in §3. In §4, we describe our data collection and methodology. We conclude with potential research outcomes in §5.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Social media has transformed political communication from top-down propaganda, where regular audiences passively receive political news and ideas from authority figures to bottom-up *ampliganda* in which grassroots users take the initiative to amplify the political beliefs and moral values that are consistent with their ideological identities (DiResta, 2021). Extensive research on online political communication has been conducted to understand the political content diffusion mechanisms behind such social media ampliganda (e.g., Brady et al., 2017; Matalon et al., 2021; Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013), pointing us toward two equally impactful content cues – emotions and moral values.

Most online political content is strategically oriented. Groups or individuals are motivated to impact others to accomplish their own political goals (e.g., persuasion or coercion), and emotions pervade those strategic content (Jasper, 2018). In heterogeneous social media context (e.g., Twitter), the emotions and sentiments of messages from politically engaged users can be used to impact political opinions (Matalon et al., 2021), predict the virality of the messages (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013), forecast election voting turnout (Nir, 2011), and drive political divide and offline social movements (Crockett, 2017; Gorodnichenko et al., 2021). Political content that is highly emotional is diffused faster and more frequently (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013).

Moreover, negative emotions (e.g., anger and fear) are more likely to facilitate the spread of political content (Fine and Hunt, 2021; Heiss et al., 2019) and drive political opinion inversion, defined as a non-identical sentiment polarity between the response and its source information (Matalon et al., 2021). Beyond their valence, emotions evoked by uncertainty and ambiguity, such as anxiety, are found to facilitate the spreading of political rumors. Doing so relieves emotional tension experienced on social media as seeking more information decreases uncertainty (Oh et al., 2013).

Little research effort has been devoted to understanding online political content diffusion by considering conversational interactions and from the lens of intragroup communications. How receivers react to the emotion and moral values embedded in the political content is at the center of online political engagement (Jasper, 2018). Unlike Barsade (2002) 's homogenized view of the general positive and negative emotions and their contagion effects, we suspect that not all positive and negative emotions are necessarily contagious. Socially induced emotions can be identical, complementary, or contradictory to the emotions expressed in the received messages (Hatfield et al., 1993; Kušen and Strembeck, 2021). For example, anger expression is often accompanied by fearful responses (Hatfield et al., 1993), and displaying sadness may attract more complementary reactions, such as joy, from others who feel sympathetic and try to cheer up the messenger (Kušen and Strembeck, 2021). People may also intentionally avoid responding with the same emotions in an attempt to gain control over an intense situation (Hatfield et al., 1993). In other words, the virality of emotional content may not be solely attributed to the effect of emotional contagion, and the opposite could be true (Chen and Feng, 2020; Guerra et al., 2017). Similarly, seemingly appropriate moral values may not always lead to strong moral resonance. For instance, expressing

loyalty and endorsement of one's ingroup may not be as powerful as demeaning out-group members (Jasper, 2018).

Additionally, little is known about how divergence in group members' responses influences the political content diffusion in homogenous social media. While users in heterogenous social media are likely to form an echo chamber and behave collectively against competing or opposite political opinions (e.g., Cinelli et al., 2021; Halberstam and Knight, 2016), users' sharing decisions inside an echo chamber may be more prone to other members' opinions and emotions (Parkinson, 2020) and more sensitive and defensive against opposing political views. Thus, this study aims to bridge content attributes and conversational attributes in addressing the political content diffusion inside a political echo chamber through the theoretical lens of information processing (De Dreu et al., 2008; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). We theorize and develop our hypotheses in the following section.

Theories of Information Processing in Group

Behavioral economists have long believed that people can choose either a heuristic strategy or a systematic way to process information and make decisions (Chaiken and Trope, 1999; Kahneman, 2011). Built upon the dual-process theories, information processing theories look for the motivations and peripheral cues that drive the processing depth during individuals' information processing, which influence their information dissemination behaviors (De Dreu et al., 2008; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

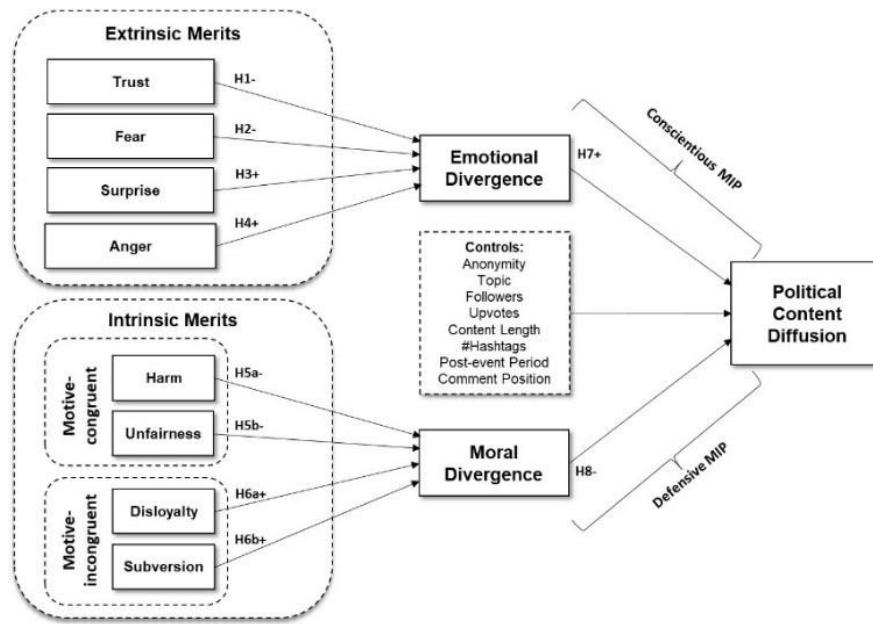


Figure 1. Research Framework

Motivated information processing (MIP) theory suggests that ingroup individuals' information processing depth is driven by their epistemic motivation (EM)—their willingness to strive for a thorough understanding of the world (De Dreu et al., 2008). High EM triggers divergent thinking among group members, whereas low EM amplifies group centeredness and conformity. The activation of EM follows the sufficiency principle (Chaiken and Trope, 1999), which posits that people are motivated to engage in deliberate information processing to meet their epistemic needs (i.e., high EM) when they perceive their current knowledge as insufficient to make a good decision. In contrast, when people are confident about the sufficiency of their current knowledge, they tend to be ignorant or reactant to process new or deviant information (i.e., low EM). The perceived insufficiency may result from situational cues (e.g., emotional cues and group preferences) that lead to opinion divergence and the feeling of uncertainty (Bechtoldt et al., 2010). It could also be induced by individual factors (e.g., political identity) that are often intrinsically persistent and drive biased behavioral decisions (Petty and Cacioppo, 1990; Teeny et al., 2016).

Moreover, under the high EM state, the direction of information processing may differ. Individuals can either behave conscientiously to seek and confirm the information correctness (Petty et al., 1988; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) or act defensively to avoid conflicts and external threats (Bartsch and Beth Oliver, 2011; Darke and Ritchie, 2007). The choice of MIP strategies may depend on whether the insufficiency lies in the intrinsic merits or extrinsic merits of information. Intrinsic merits of information refer to value- relevant aspects of the information, while extrinsic merits are situational cues and external stimuli displayed in the information or the discourse (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The elaboration likelihood model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) suggests that attitudes formed based on value-relevant thinking tend to be persistent and resistant to opposing opinions. Similarly, McGuire's inoculation theory (McGuire, 1964) illustrates individuals' tendency to defend against opinions that pose threats to their values and beliefs. Contradictorily, attitudes formed via peripheral cues could be transient and susceptible to divergent opinions. Consistent with this view, empirical evidence shows that injecting a mixture of emotions into a conversation stimulates cognitive reflection and elicits information seeking behaviors (Kušen and Strembeck, 2021; Myrick, 2015). Built upon the theoretical lens of information processing and examined within the novel homogenous social media context, we investigate the impacts of the two critical extrinsic and intrinsic merits – emotions and moral values – of political content on partisans' emotional and value-based responses.

Moreover, we also study how the divergences in emotions and moral values that activate EM differentially impact political content diffusion. We present our research model in Figure 1 and develop our hypotheses as follows.

Political-Relevant Emotions

Emotion theory suggests that individuals draw inferences about others and situations based on the available emotional expressions (Miron-Spektor and Rafaeli, 2009), which may affect individuals' perceived sufficiency in the current knowledge. Emotional cues can be categorized by their perceived affective commitment (PAC) and perceived certainty (PC). In the political context, PAC refers to the reflection of one's long-term emotional attachment to a political group and personal involvement in a political issue (Goodwin et al., 2004; Jasper, 2018; Meyer and Allen, 1991). PC reflects one's confidence level in the predictability of a political event, which is influenced by the individual's past experience with similar events (Smith and Ellsworth, 1985; Yin et al., 2014).

Emotions involving high affective commitment (e.g., trust and fear) are often more elaborated and stable (Jasper, 2018). Such emotions may frame a political message as a deliberative thinking product, which enhances the content trustworthiness as well as the perceived sufficiency of the provided information. Therefore, emotions reflecting high affective commitment may lead to low EM and evoke conformity to the emotions expressed in the initial content among the group members. This effect may be further amplified when the emotional cues also display great certainty. Emotions categorized by the reflex nature that requires little affective commitment (e.g., anger and surprise), on the other hand, may frame a political message as a heuristic thinking product with reduced credibility, especially when coupled with uncertainty. Lacking credibility in the political message could then negatively affect the perceived sufficiency of the available information, activating high EM and inducing divergent emotional opinions among group members. We categorize the four political-relevant emotions – trust (Hetherington, 1998), fear (Salamon and Evera, 1973), surprise (Ely et al., 2015), and anger (Holmes, 2004) – based on their PAC and PC (see Table 1).

		Perceived Affective Commitment (PAC)	
		Low	High
Perceived Certainty (PC)	Low	Surprise	Fear
	High	Anger	Trust

Table 1. Emotion Categorization for Online Political Communication

Trust, one of the primitive emotions (Plutchik, 1982), arises from the interaction between expectations and experience with the political groups and the group members (Jasper, 2018). Political scholars have emphasized the importance of trust to mediated political engagement and success (Hetherington, 1998; Hetherington and Husser, 2012). The social emotion of trust is accumulated and reinforced over time through repeated reciprocal experiences and demonstrates one's positive loyalty and high level of affective commitment toward the political group. Thus, the presence of trust in political content may positively affect content recipients' perceptions of the good intention of the content. Moreover, expressing a high level of trust in the political content may also reduce content recipients' perceived uncertainty in the informational value and credibility of the content (Colquitt et al., 2012). With enhanced content trustworthiness, partisans are likely to be more confident about the sufficiency of the received messages, which lowers their EMs to assess the true merits of the information and evoke the feeling of trust among them. Furthermore, the display of trust is shown to foster individuals' prosocial behaviors (Berg et al., 1995; Friedman et al., 2000), which further enhance their group centeredness and conformity. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis#1. Political messages expressing more intensive trust receive less emotionally divergent responses in a political echo chamber.

Fear, a persistent emotion that undermines political rationality, often reflects partisans' committed anxiety toward unpredictable threats that could endanger their political beliefs and freedom (Jasper, 2018). Risky political events, such as protests, often evoke fear of violence, in addition to the social or economic coercion that contributes to the variations in political participation (Salamon

and Evera, 1973). Fearful individuals are more likely to engage in elaborative and mindful information processing, which involves considerable affective commitment and cognitive effort (Tiedens and Linton, 2001). Therefore, the political content that highlights intense fear may be perceived as a thoughtfully weighed opinion, enhancing the perceived content sufficiency and appropriateness and evoking the fearful feeling among other group members. However, the fear toward unpredictable political threats is also categorized with low PC, which may offset the positive effect induced by its high level of PAC. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis#2. *Political messages expressing more intensive fear receive less emotionally divergent responses in a political echo chamber; however, such negative impact is relatively less than political messages with intensive trust.*

Surprising content in the political domain increases the demand and incentives to acquire non-instrumental information and therefore has been strategically adopted to attract political audiences' attention (Ely et al., 2015). Surprise is a spontaneous emotion that signals the deviation in the information from one's expectation (Varshney, 2019) and shifts over time with little affective commitment attention (Ely et al., 2015). Hence, surprised individuals are likely to be perceived as impulsive without adequate assessment of their produced political content. This then lowers the perceived sufficiency and trustworthiness of the given information and introduces controversial opinions among other group members. Further, surprising content is novel and attracts involuntary attention (Kahneman, 1973). However, novel content often deviates from existing beliefs and is supported by less trustful evidence (Ely et al., 2015), which trumps the content validity and credibility, further evoking respondents' high EM and divergent emotional responses. For these reasons, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis#3. *Political messages expressing more intensive surprise receive more emotionally divergent responses in a political echo chamber.*

The emotion of anger matters politically because it motivates and sustains political activities and conflicts (Holmes, 2004). Angry people are thought to be heuristic and mindless when making their judgments and decisions (Chaiken and Trope, 1999; Tiedens and Linton, 2001). Also, anger in the political domain is often a reflex emotion that involves a personal attack toward a specific politician or an event with little affective commitment. Therefore, the political content categorized by intensive anger is likely to be perceived as biased and inconsiderate. This, in turn, may lead other group members to suspect the content appropriateness, activating their high EM and stimulating controversial emotional reactions. Nevertheless, the high level of certainty residing in an angry political content may offset one's perceived insufficiency induced by its low PAC. We, thus, hypothesize that:

Hypothesis#4. *Political messages expressing more intensive anger receive more emotionally divergent responses in a political echo chamber; however, such a positive effect is relatively weaker than political messages with intensive surprise.*

Moral Values in Political Content.

Moral values are intrinsic merits of political content that are closely tied to individuals' political identities and ideologies, which guide their political engagement behaviors and are highly sensitive to opposing alternatives (Bayes et al., 2020; Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954; Shi et al., 2018). Beyond the intuitionist thinking of what is right or wrong (Haidt, 2001), evolutionary thinking encourages the pluralistic view of moral values. The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) (Graham et al., 2013) classifies moral values into five core dimensions: Care/Harm, Fairness/Unfairness, Loyalty/Disloyalty, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. The foundation of Care/Harm refers to the virtue of kindness and the vice of cruelty; Fairness/Unfairness produces ideas of justice and autonomy; Loyalty/Disloyalty underlies self-sacrifice for the group and self-

interested betrayal; Authority/Subversion differentiates leadership and followership; and Sanctity/Degradation explains the tolerance for immoral and unethical events.

Empirical evidence has consistently shown that distinct political identities endorse different moral foundations, in which conservatives are more likely to endorse the foundations of Loyalty/Disloyalty, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation, while liberals are leaning toward the moral values of Care/Harm and Fairness/Unfairness (Graham et al., 2013, 2009; Hofmann et al., 2014).

Individuals who hold strong political identities are likely to have clear political motives. This is because the formation and development of political identities collectively strengthen the political group boundaries and emphasize the need for positive group distinctiveness (Turner et al., 1987) that facilitates intragroup cooperation as well as intergroup conflicts (Hatch and Schultz, 2004). A strong political identity also strengthens one's feelings of sufficiency and confidence in the moral values and the motives held by the political group, leading to low EM and a tendency to conform to the group beliefs and motives and resist the opposing values and opinions (Bechtoldt et al., 2010; Chaiken and Trope, 1999). Consistent with this view, social psychologists have shown that political communications are most effective when paired with messages and information congruent with the partisans' political motives (Bayes et al., 2020). Huddy (2013) has also suggested that, inside a political echo chamber, political messages that amplify partisans' existing moral beliefs (e.g., conservatives' belief in loyalty) or, in extreme political events, devalue opposing views (e.g., liberals' belief in fairness) may trigger greater political cohesion.

In our research context, most Parler users consist of conservatives and far-right partisans who hold strong conservative ideologies and value loyalty and authority. During the event of Capitol Riot, they are motivated to seek justice for and delegitimize the undesirable presidential election

outcome by devaluing the virtues of liberals' moral beliefs (i.e., Care and Fairness). With such a strong political identity and motives, which may result in low EM, Parler users are less likely to process value-intensive content objectively. Instead, they are more likely to conform to motive-congruent moral values (i.e., Harm and Unfairness) and reactant to the motive-incongruent values that pose threats to their own moral beliefs (i.e., Disloyalty and Subversion)¹. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis #5: *In a political echo chamber, political messages expressing motive-congruent values—Harm(5a) and Unfairness(5b)—receive less morally divergent responses.*

Hypothesis #6: *In a political echo chamber, political messages expressing motive-incongruent values—Disloyalty(6a) and Subversion(6b)—receive more morally divergent responses.*

Divergence in Political Discourse.

The divergence in emotions and moral values among political group members could also serve as critical situational cues that reduce one's perceived sufficiency to reach correct or appropriate conclusions, activating their high EMs and MIP. Emotional divergence occurs when political content triggers diverse emotional responses among political group members. Because emotional opinions are formed from the peripheral routes and are transient and susceptible to others' emotional responses (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), emotional divergence may exert "referent informational influence" (Parkinson, 2020; Turner, 1991) on other members, infusing their mixed emotional experiences (King and Frondozo, 2021). This, in turn, facilitates their cognitive reflections and encourages their conscientious MIP that drives their information seeking and sharing behaviors (Kušen and Strembeck, 2021; Myrick, 2015). We, thus, hypothesize that:

¹ We exclude the Sanctity/Degradation dimension for two reasons. Our observational data shows that among all five moral foundations, Sanctity/Degradation has the lowest average MFSSs, indicating the dimension is less relevant than other moral foundations. In addition, this is aligned with Hofmann et al., (2014)'s study showing Sanctity/Degradation mentioned less frequently in partisans' everyday life.

Hypothesis#7. *The degree of emotional divergence among responses to a political message is positively associated with the diffusion of the message in a political echo chamber.*

Moral divergence occurs when political group members respond to political content with diverse moral value orientations. Moral opinions are shaped intrinsically based on value-relevant thinking and are persistent and resistant to divergent opinions that may pose threats to their political beliefs (McGuire, 1964; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Therefore, moral divergence in group members' responses may lead to one's defensive MIP that motivates neglect or denial of information in the interest of political motives (Darke and Ritchie, 2007; Das and Fennis, 2008). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis#8. *The degree of moral divergence among responses to a political message is negatively associated with the diffusion of the message in a political echo chamber.*

METHOD

Research Context.

Parler, an alternative online social media advocating free speech and covering a far-right user base, was launched in August 2018 with 13 million user accounts in January 2021 (Stanford University, 2021). The site was suspended by its service provider Amazon Web Services on January 10, 2021, four days after the U.S. Capitol Riot and accused of its failure to moderate violent content and control conspiracy theories during the presidential election, leading to a direct threat to public safety. The site officially relaunched its operations in January 2024. On Parler, users can post content and comment on others' content. They may also repost and upvote others' posts and comments.

Data Collection.

The Parler data during Capitol Riot (January 5, 2021, to January 10, 2021) was scrapped and shared through the Wayback Machine publicly. The original data contains 1.6 million HTML files. Each

HTML file is supposed to represent a thread, including the parent posts and their corresponding first-page comments. We filtered out empty HTML files as well as non-organic threads (e.g., echoed posts), non-textual, non-English, or with less than two comments. This leaves us with 13,798 organic parent posts with 139,265 comments. Each organic parent post contains ten first-page comments per post, on average. Using first-page comments is an appropriate approach in our study because it helps avoid the potential confounding effect of opinion herding (Rocklage et al., 2021). Thread attribute data, such as the number of echoes, comments, and upvotes along with parent poster ids, commenter ids, posting and commenting dates, are also included in the dataset.

Emotion Recognition

The emotions of the parent posts and comments are recognized using the National Research Council (Canada) (NRC) emotion intensity lexicon (Mohammad, 2018), which contains a list of about 10,000 English words with annotated emotion intensity scores of eight basic emotions (anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust) (Plutchik, 1982) through best-worst scaling method. For any given emotional word and emotion e , we capture an emotional intensity score $EIS_{w,e} \in [0,1]$, where 1 represents the highest intensity conveys given emotion e and 0 represents the lowest intensity. Next, for each parent post p and comment c , we calculate its average EIS defined as $avgEIS_{e,c} = \frac{\sum_{w \in D} EIS_{w,e}}{|D|}$ where D represents the set of emotion words in comment c or post p , and $|D|$ represents the total number of the words.

Moral Value Recognition

We identify the moral values proposed in the MFT (Graham et al., 2013) using the extended Moral Foundations Dictionary developed by Hopp et al. (2020). The original eMFD was developed through a robust annotation process involving 557 human annotators with 63,958 raw annotations.

The resulting dictionary contains 3,270 moral words. For a given moral word w and moral value m (i.e., Care vs. Harm, Fairness vs. Unfairness, Loyalty vs. Disloyalty, Authority vs. Subversion, and Sanctity vs. Degradation), the dictionary assigns vice and virtue foundation scores $MFS_{w,m} \in [0,1]$. Then, for each parent post p and comment c , we calculate its average MFS defined as $avgMFS_{m,c} = \frac{\sum_{w \in G} MFS_{w,m}}{|G|}$ where G represents the set of moral words in comment c or post p . In sum, we calculated the avgEISs and avgMFSs of all the eight basic emotions and ten moral values for each parent post and comment.

Divergence Measures

The emotional divergence (ED) is measured at the comment level using the cosine distance score based on the vector A consisting of comment's $avgEIS_{e,c}$ scores for the eight emotions and the vector B consisting of the post's $avgEIS_{e,p}$ scores for the eight basic emotions ($ED(A, B) = 1 - \frac{A \cdot B}{||A|| ||B||}$). Similarly, the moral divergence (MD) is also calculated at the comment level using the cosine distance score based on the vector M consisting of the comments $avgMFS_{m,c}$ scores and the vector N consisting of the posts $avgMFS_{m,p}$ scores for the ten extended moral foundations ($MD(M, N) = 1 - \frac{M \cdot N}{||M|| ||N||}$).

Political Content Diffusion (DV) and Controls

We measure the dependent variable – political content diffusion – based on the total number of shares (similar to retweet on X) of a Parler parent post. Moreover, based on the previous literature in information diffusion, we include post-level controls (anonymity, number of upvotes, content length, number of hashtags, and number of followers of post creators) and a comment-level control

(comment position). We also control for the topic effects using the Latent Dirichlet Allocation topic model (Blei, 2003).

Hypothesis Testing with Multilevel Modeling Approach

Our hypothesis testing is based on a two-level dataset consisting of measures at both parent-post and comment levels. Therefore, a multilevel structural modeling approach (Veldhoven and Peccei, 2015) is adopted to account for both between-level and within-level variations when analyzing the relationships among the various variables.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

Our study may extend the current political information diffusion literature in several ways. First, we extend the research context from well-studied heterogeneous social media to emerging homogenous social media, enriching the understanding of political content diffusion under different social media affordance. Second, beyond investigating the impacts of content attributes, we bridge content attributes (i.e., emotions and moral values) and conversational attributes (i.e., emotion and moral divergences) in addressing the political content diffusion inside an online echo chamber. We distinguish emotion and moral divergence, which deepens the theoretical understanding of the impact of information coherence. We have preliminarily tested our results, which will be presented at DRW 2024. We plan to extend our current theory to also include the intergroup setting to reach higher generalizability to the general social media domain and quantify our constructs through an aspect-based approach in the future study. Moreover, to ensure the relevancy of our research, we are continuing to collect recent political conversations from the newly launched Parler platform.

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