

USE OF TWITTER BY PROGRESSIVE PROSECUTOR: CONTESTED ROLES AND IDENTITIES

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Overview

In the past decade, the number of prosecutors identifying as “progressive” or “reform” has surged, with over seventy such officials nationwide in 2022. Progressive prosecutors aim to change sentencing methods and explore alternative opportunities within the justice system (Pfaff 2022) . This study examines prosecutors use of Twitter (X) to communicate their occupational role and distinguish themselves from traditional prosecutors while reinforcing their legitimacy and authority.

Results (3 overlapping themes)

1. Upholding Justice through Active Prosecution:

Highlighting the impact of prosecutorial efforts and legal successes.

2. Community Improvement and Connection:

Informing the public of justice-related programs and creating positive relations with the public.

3. Political support and Public Endorsement:

Expressing support for colleagues, elected officials, and community leaders.



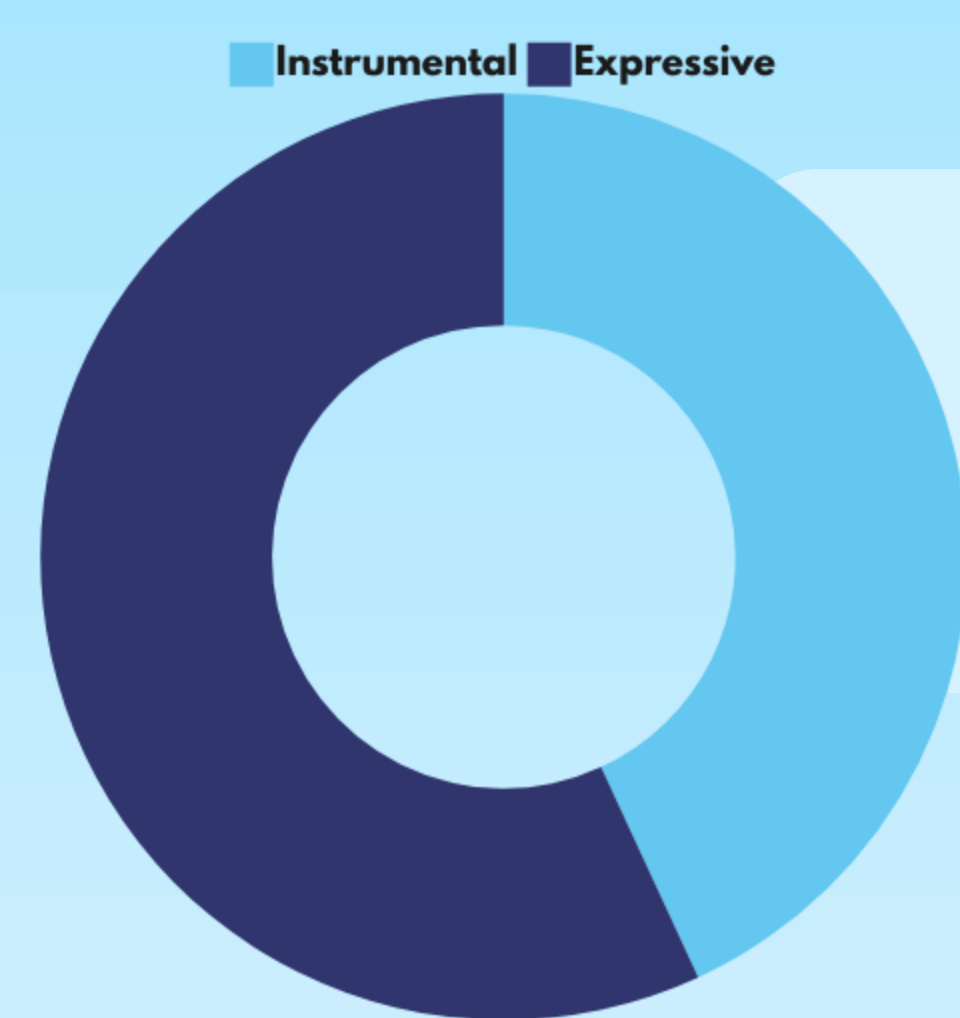
Upholding Justice through Active Prosecution

Sherry Boston
(@SherryBostonDA).
X, September 10, 2024



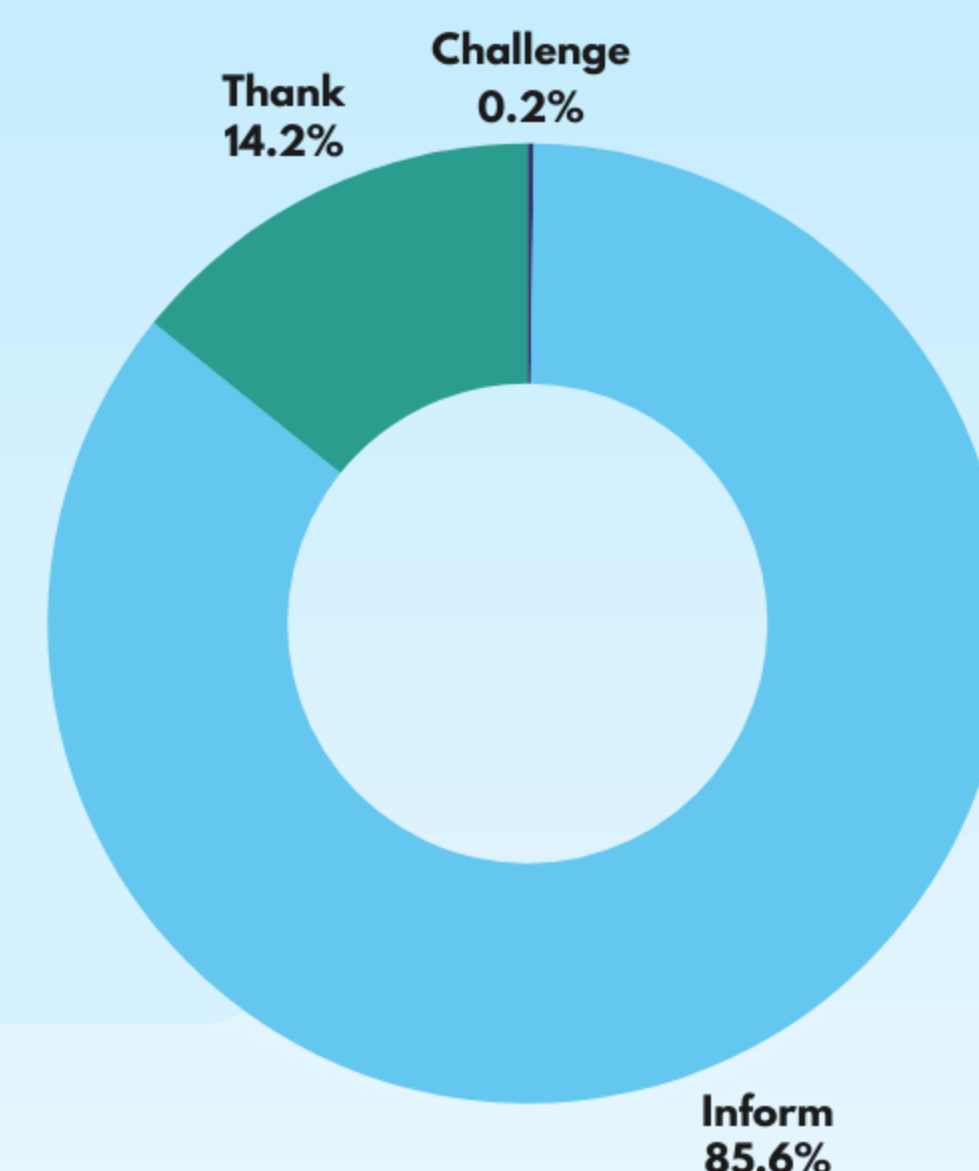
Political support & Public Endorsement

Gordon McLaughlin
(@DAMcLaughlinCO).
X, May 24, 2024



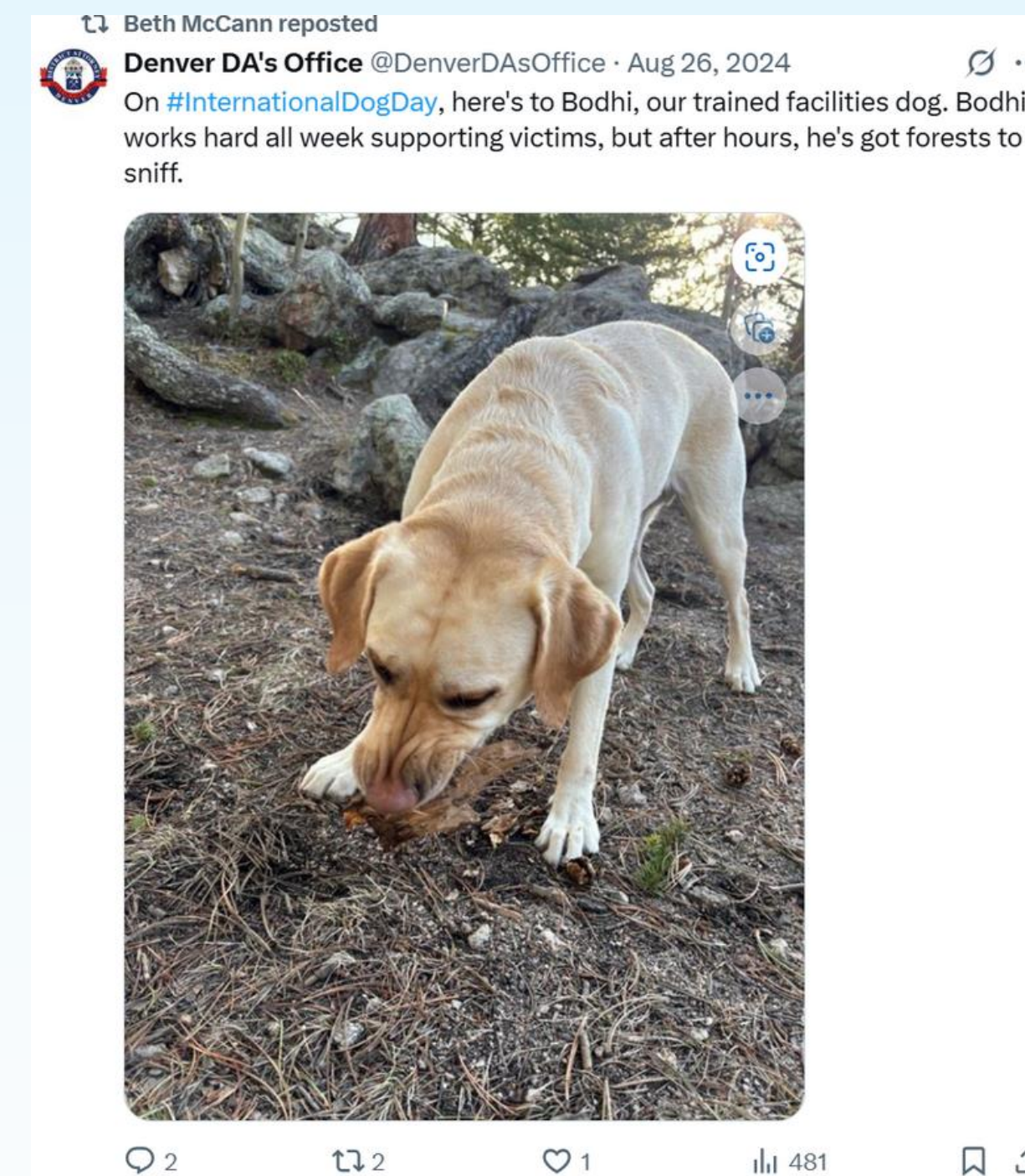
Expressive data was considered to be more emotionally driven showing connection with community and support for change. Whereas instrumental data is fact based and informative on criminal justice matters.

The primary purpose of the posts is to inform the audience about specific situations, thank particular individuals for their contributions, or challenge negative responses to their work.



Community Improvement & Connection

Laura Conover (@Conover17L).
X, February 2, 2024



Denver DA's Office (@DenverDAsOffice). X, August 26, 2024

Conclusion

Analysis of the themes emphasizes the evolving role of progressive prosecutors in the digital age, particularly through Twitter (now X), which prosecutors use to shape public perception and promote their interests. The tweets show prosecutors engaging in both expressive and instrumental communication, framing their work as a divergence from customary occupational practices while maintaining the authority and legitimacy of the Prosecutors' office. Social media plays a crucial role in defining progressive prosecutors as the movement evolves.

Future Research

Examine progressive prosecutors' online narratives across various social media platforms. Examine progressive prosecutors influence on public opinion and their effects on criminal justice reform efforts.

Methods

- 01 >> Qualitative content analysis (Altheide & Schneider 2012) was used to identify and thematically categorize (N=471) tweets by progressive prosecutors.
- 02 >> A coding document was developed by two researchers based on existing literature, familiarity with the topic, and initial review of the documents.
- 03 >> Following separate review and coding of all documents, researchers collectively reviewed data for agreement on major themes and concepts.
- 04 >> Tweets were analysed on three dimensions; content, function, and style (Denef et al. 2013).
- 05 >> Three non-exclusive, descriptive categories emerged from the data. Replies posted on the Twitter pages were also thematically analyzed

References

Altheide, D. L., & Schneider, C. J. (2012). Qualitative media analysis (Vol. 38). Sage publications.
Denef, S., Bayerl, P. S., & Kaptein, N. A. (2013, April). Social media and the police: Tweeting practices of British police forces during the August 2011 riots. In proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems
Pfaff, J. F. (2022). The Poor Reform Prosecutor: So Far From the State Capital, So Close to the Suburbs. *Fordham Urb. LJ*, 50, 1013.