**Rise Up: An Examination of White Nationalist Social Media Content and its Effect on
White Americans' Collective Actions**

by

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Abstract

Recent data from anti-hate organizations finds that pro-White events, propaganda, and groups are steadily increasing in the United States. Additionally, large collective actions and mass shootings that are racially motivated have become highly visible in the past few years. Given social media's role in both influencing and acting as a platform for the far-right, its impact cannot be ignored. Across two studies, this dissertation examines the themes underlying White nationalist social media content and its influence on White Americans' intra and intergroup relations. In Study One, a content analysis of videos from five White nationalist YouTube channels finds that outgroups are both frequently discussed and mentioned in threatening or negative ways. Additionally, these videos regularly include content that references psychological mechanisms known to increase collective action intentions in the real world. In Study Two, a cross-sectional survey finds that self-reported exposure to social media content containing references to White injustice are associated with intentions to engage in collective action to improve the status and position of Whites in American society. Further, exposure to White injustice on social media has an especially strong influence on the real-world attitudes of Democrats. These findings reflect the important role played by digital media in the rise of White nationalism in Western nations with multicultural societies.

Chapter 1: Introduction and the Rise of White Nationalism

Introduction

In American society discussions of race are increasingly common in both public and political spheres. For example, recent discussions of Critical Race Theory, and whether it should be taught in schools, resulted in emotionally charged conversations and school board meetings (Ellis & Sanchez, 2021). These events and their associated commentary are frequently discussed in traditional forms of media but also digital and social media. For example, public opinion data show that 43% of individuals say most or some of the social media posts they see are about race or race relations (Pew Research Center, 2016a). Of importance, some of these conversations might result in or be centered on content that is explicitly racist. Yet, individuals are less angered or disturbed by racist rhetoric compared to the past (Valentino, Neuner, & Vandenbroek, 2018), suggesting changing norms with respect to explicit forms of hate speech.

Social media, due to its unfiltered and unregulated nature, is especially useful in perpetuating hateful content targeting marginalized groups (Gaudette et al., 2020). Additionally, online platforms can be used to promote perceptions that Whites are treated unfairly or disenfranchised, a sentiment increasingly held by many White Americans (Norton & Sommers, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2019). Pro-White extremist groups have a strong and growing presence on social media sites and the content created and disseminated by these groups is posited to significantly influence individuals who may intentionally or unintentionally come across this content (DeCook, 2018). The increase in access, ease of use, and reach of social

media in the last decade has likely contributed to the recent real-world rise in far-right, Alt-Right, and pro-White ideologies in both the United States and Europe.

Outside of media, White nationalist groups in the U.S. have increased by 55% since 2017 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020). More recent reports from the Anti-Defamation league find that White nationalist incidents doubled in 2020 from the previous year (Anti-Defamation League, 2021). The number of incidents is not inconsequential, with 5,125 cases in 2020. Rising support for a pro-White ideology is important as it likely contributes to the increase in non-normative collective actions including violent protests, domestic terrorism, and hate crimes motivated by White ideology (Anti-Defamation League, 2019). Recent examples of such incidents in the U.S. include the Wisconsin Sikh temple shooting (O'Brien, 2012), the Charleston Church shooting in 2015 (Ellis, Payne, Perez, & Ford, 2015), the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia (Keneally, 2018), the 2018 mass shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Robertson, Mele, & Tavernise, 2018), and the 2019 mass shooing in El Paso, Texas (Francescani et al., 2019). Beyond the United States, there are similar incidents reported in other parts of the world, including the 2019 Christchurch Mosque shooting in New Zealand (Perry, 2019) and the 2011 attacks in Norway (Beaumont, 2011).

Many of the perpetrators of these incidents are reported to have been influenced and motivated by digital content created by far-right groups (Perry, 2020). For example, Brenton Tarrant (the perpetrator in the Christchurch Mosque shooting) related to officials that he regularly used far-right websites like 8chan and found inspiration to commit this act on YouTube (Perry, 2020). Additionally, Anders Behring Breivik (the perpetrator in the Norway attack) was found to have frequently commented on far-right blogs and forums and was radicalized by propaganda on social media (Ravndal, 2013).

In 2020, pro-White propaganda online and offline had a significant impact on American society. During the riot at the U.S. Capitol building on January 6th, 2021, social media platforms were used to explicitly spread disinformation and organize individuals who collectively aimed to "Stop the Steal" of the 2020 U.S. presidential election (Cellan-Jones, 2021). On the day of the event, for example, social media allowed users a means to communicate with each other, served as a source of information for the best routes to the Capitol to avoid police, and were used to provide suggestions on how to break into the building (Frenkel, 2021). Much of this communication was posted and shared through the social media pages of the groups that had organized the protest (Cellan-Jones, 2021; Frenkel, 2021).

Social media are of particular importance for the Alt-Right (a group of individuals who subscribe to a far-right ideology), as many in this group feel disenfranchised from mainstream media and place little trust in it (Forscher & Kteily, 2020). This magnifies, the role of digital platforms as a means through which individuals are influenced and exposed to pro-White ideas for the first time. This content is typically promoted on digital over traditional media as the latter encompasses stricter content standards (e.g., no explicit racist content, no pornography, no excessive violence). Consequently, White nationalist content creators regularly use digital media as a platform to produce and distribute information (Lewis, 2018; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). While social media websites have the option to remove or take down profiles, this is often not effectively carried out, and it does not stop the spread of content (Wong, 2018; 2019). Other online platforms do very little to regulate their content, even allowing hate speech (e.g., 8chan/8kun, Montgomery, 2019).

Altogether, this is problematic as adopting these platforms to promote their ideas allows the spread of pro-Whites messages that cause both the viewers and the creators of this content to

become more and more radicalized (Lewis, 2018). Further, media's socializing influence is important in this context as information about fringe political groups (e.g., White nationalists) and their ideas often comes from the mass media and not from personal interactions (Shoemaker, 1984). Because pro-White groups use social media platforms to circulate and promote their ideology, it is essential to understand two broad questions. First, what are the common pro-White themes and messages that viewers of this content are exposed to? Second, how does this exposure influence attitudes and behaviors relevant to pro-White ideology and outgroups perceived as threatening to White people?

Overview

Although research has begun to explore how White nationalists use and produce social media content (Lewis, 2018), few studies have attempted to identify the psychological themes discussed within this content that could motivate harmful collective action behaviors (e.g., riots, protests, etc.) amongst White individuals. Additionally, little research has examined how exposure to pro-White messaging influences related attitudes and beliefs. In this dissertation, guided by the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), I systematically examine the social media content created by White nationalists and investigate how participants' self-reported exposure to similar content affects White American audiences.

More specifically, in Study 1 I conducted a quantitative content analysis of White nationalist videos on YouTube to examine: 1) how often and in what ways are outgroups referenced and 2) the frequency with which White identity, collective efficacy, and injustice towards White are discussed. These psychological constructs were specifically examined as they are known to influence collective action intentions in the SIMCA model. Additionally, this

content analysis explored the social identities of the individuals present in White nationalist videos on YouTube and the frequency of politically relevant content. As the far-right have an increasingly active political presence and influence it is important to examine how they refer to politics.

Study 2 extended Study 1 by empirically testing the relation between exposure to pro-White social media content and behaviors/attitudes related to intra and intergroup attitudes. Specifically, White participants' self-reported exposure to different far-right themes and messaging on social media. Using a cross-sectional survey methodology, I investigated how exposure to this social media content can predict pro-White attitudes, emotions, and behaviors in the real world. Based on previous research (Forscher & Kteily, 2019), these relationships are tested using a sample that includes Democrats, Republicans, and those who identify as Alt-Right.

In the following chapters, I begin by exploring in-depth the history of the White nationalist movement in the United States, the antecedents of pro-White attitudes, and how White nationalist groups use/create content on social media. I then dive into a theoretical examination of how this engagement with far-right digital media can lead to negative intergroup outcomes in the real world. I argue that motivations to participate in collective action events meant to uphold Whiteness is facilitated by social media. This is followed by a description, analysis, and discussion of Study 1 and Study 2. I end by outlining the theoretical and practical implications of this work as well as suggestions for future research that can address the limitations of the present studies.

Chapter 2: White Nationalism and Social Media Literature Review

The Far Right and White Nationalism

Although they may go by different names White nationalism and the far-right (e.g., Alt-Right) are similar and interrelated. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2019a) describes White nationalists as groups who "espouse white supremacist or white separatist ideologies, often focusing on the alleged inferiority of nonwhites." By comparison, the Alt-Right is defined as "a set of far-right ideologies, groups, and individuals whose core belief is that "white identity" is under attack by multicultural forces using "political correctness" and "social justice" to undermine white people and "their" civilization" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019b). Other descriptions have placed the Alt-Right as a segment of the White nationalist movement (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.). Altogether, they both place importance on and express concern for White identity and Whites. Because of this, research relevant to both White nationalists and the Alt-Right is discussed.

While this dissertation examines the influence and relationship of social media on White nationalism, White supremacist ideology and groups existed long before the Internet. In the United States, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) can be traced as the oldest organized White supremacist group. Formed in the mid-1800s after the events of the American Civil War, the KKK has worked towards the goal of White male dominance in the U.S (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). After a series of disbandments and revivals, the KKK reformed in the 1960s to push back against civil rights and policies such as desegregation. Since reforming in the 1960s, the KKK has kept a continued and active presence in the U.S. In the present day, the KKK has adapted to

using social media websites and platforms to promote its ideology and organize (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d).

While White nationalist groups like the KKK might be the oldest and most recognizable, the Alt-Right is steadily gaining traction in the United States. Viewed as a new school type of White nationalism, the Alt-Right is decentralized (e.g., lacking a top-down formal hierarchy) and members heavily use social media to interact with each other and spread messages (Forscher & Kteily. 2019). Although this group has no de facto leader, the term "Alt-Right" was coined by Richard Spencer in 2008 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019b), and started to gain traction online in 2010 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019b). Because of this and his visibility, Spencer is considered to be a prominent leader within the Alt-Right. While the Alt-Right has various objectives, its common ideology is centered on White identity and has the specific goal of protecting White culture in the United States (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.).

Because of its mostly online structure and the relative recency in which the Alt-Right was formed, many Americans' first introduction to this group was the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville (Keneally, 2018). In part, this event began because of a proposal to remove a confederate statue (Heim et al., 2017). Taking place on the University of Virginia campus, it involved a nighttime march with tiki torches, reports of racial and ethnic slurs, multiple acts of violence, and the death of one counter-protester. Altogether, this event resulted in a state of emergency being declared by the governor of Virginia (Doss, 2017). This rally was notable as it received widespread national and international media coverage setting in motion public and political discourse about the growth of pro-White ideologies and White extremism in the United States.

Social and political antecedents of rising Pro-White attitudes

Many psychological and political explanations have been presented to understand the recent rise of White nationalism in the U.S. Jardina (2014) argues that the first election (e.g., 2008) of President Barack Obama was symbolic of White people losing political power and thus was a turning point when Whites began to place importance on their racial and collective group identity. White identity importance and centrality is not only associated with hostility towards racial outgroups (Jardina, 2014) but also with support for and engagement with pro-White ideology and groups (Bai, 2020). The relationship between White identity and extremism is likely further moderated and strengthened by beliefs that White people are superior to other outgroups. Importantly, any individual who does not meet the White male demographic (e.g., the dominant identity to White nationalists) is an outgroup member.

Others point to the changing demographics of the U.S., and the comparative growth of non-White outgroups as being an evolving threat to the status, power, and position of White Americans. For example, White American participants who read an article suggesting that Whites would become a racial minority by 2042 were more likely than those in the control condition to display outgroup hostility and support for conservative and ingroup protective policies (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; 2014b). The authors noted that perceptions of one's ingroup becoming a numerical minority is likely to elicit status and power threat amongst participants (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; 2014b). Similarly, because a population decline is associated with beliefs that White Americans are facing an existential threat, it contributes to support for the far-right and conservatism (Bai & Federico, 2020; 2021). The different circumstances discussed are important as both affective (e.g., sensation seeking) and cognitive (cognitive rigidity) dispositions identified above can influence extreme forms of political action (Zmigrod & Goldenberg, 2021).

In addition to the points discussed above, White Americans might feel disenfranchised because of an increased focus on DEI (Bryan, 2020) and White privilege (McIntosh, 2004) in the last decade. These frustrations are not inconsequential as they have led some to argue that related topics such as systematic racism do not have a place in public spaces. For example, the teaching of Critical Race Theory has been banned in schools across the U.S. (Asmelash, 2021). Altogether, these factors have likely contributed to White Americans' belief that they are becoming increasingly disenfranchised. Indeed, recent public opinion data finds that a majority of Republicans (55%) and a fifth of Democrats (20%) believe White people are discriminated against (Pew Research Center, 2019). This is supported by empirical research that finds starting in the year 2000 White Americans report that they face more racial discrimination as compared to Black people (Norton & Sommers, 2011). The belief in their disadvantaged position is partly explained by White American's perceptions that they are not being given a voice and that they are being silenced (Takahashi & Jefferson, 2021).

Importantly, much of the research discussed above examines political and social antecedents of far-right beliefs using a general sample of White Americans. Little quantitative research has attempted to directly sample participants who identify as pro-White or with pro-White groups. To my knowledge, only one peer-reviewed quantitative study has directly sampled the Alt-Right. Indeed, Forscher and Kteily (2019) employ a sample of Alt-Right participants to examine the psychological makeup of this group.

Using a nationally representative sample, Forscher and Kteily find that 6% of Americans and 10% of Trump voters identify as Alt-Right. Psychologically, they find that individuals who identify with the Alt-Right place importance on the dominance of Whites and men and are more concerned about discrimination toward these groups as compared to groups typically thought of

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as disadvantaged (Forscher & Kteily, 2019). Additionally, Alt-Right participants were found to strongly differ from others (non-Alt-Right Trump voters and non-Trump voters) in their support for collective action that benefits White people. Examples of this included belief that organizations should look out for the interests of Whites. Although the research by Forscher and Kteily (2019) extends our knowledge of social and political factors that influence the far-right, it remains unknown how media, and specifically social media are used by these groups to spread their message and motivate the general public to join their movement. More specifically, a systematic examination of the kinds of psychological themes discussed in social media created by pro-White groups and the effects of exposure to this information on the White audience is unknown.

Examination of media's role is important as the influence of political (e.g., ideology) and psychological (e.g., racial identity) factors on White extremism is likely further magnified by the availability and use of social media. For example, in 2008 Facebook had 100 million users; in 2019 this number has reached 2.26 billion (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). This rise in use is reflected in the difference in the number of hours spent using digital media between 2008 (2.7 hours) and 2018 (6.3 hours). In addition to general use, more individuals are specifically discussing politics and race (Pew Researcher Center, 2016a) on social media. However, public opinion data show that political conversations online are sometimes negative and contentious (Pew Research Center, 2016b). Indeed, compared to discussions of politics in other areas of life, on social media, they are seen as less respectful, less civil, and angrier. The content discussed on social media platforms is influential as information, accurate or inaccurate, spreads easily through them (Menczer & Hills, 2020). In the next section, I discuss in detail the ways in which White nationalist groups use social media to spread their message.

White Nationalism and Social Media

   Organizing and connecting on social media. Social media is a useful tool to organize groups, communities, and events without meeting in a physical capacity (Barrett, 2019). In other words, digital media platforms are influential in helping form online communities. For example, hashtags can be used to focus conversations and spread discourse (Blevins et al., 2019; Kuo, 2018). Since hashtags can be used on any platform this may help communities form across different social media platforms. For example, the use of the hashtag Black Lives Matter (BLM) was popularized and used by individuals to communicate during the protests in Ferguson, Missouri. BLM, in its early stages, became synonymous with its hashtag (#BLM). Through this, it was able to reach a broader range of people by trending on multiple social media websites and giving protesters something to gather around and identify with (Sidner & Simon, 2015). Importantly, the use of social media platforms is quantifiably effective at generating media attention for social movements (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016; Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2018).

   In the same way that marginalized groups like BLM use social media to organize and distribute information, White nationalists also use it as a tool to spread their message. Indeed, highly influential far-right users on Twitter are more likely to post original content as compared to retweeting others (Åkerlund, 2020). This allows influential members in this community to dictate the direction of the messaging online more completely. Additionally, digital media is beneficial for those that feel threatened, disenfranchised, or are experiencing extreme scrutiny from mainstream society, like far-right groups (Stieglitz et al., 2018). Beyond presenting, sharing, and controlling information easily, digital media has facilitated connection and belonging with individuals who share similar far-right interests and ideologies. For example,

when banned from mainstream platforms like Facebook, far-right individuals were able to recreate their connections and networks on other social media apps like Telegram (Urman & Katz, 2020). These connections are important as data from qualitative in-depth interviews point to new recruits' engagement with experienced right-wing extremists online as helping to facilitate and accelerate radicalization (Gaudette, Scrivens, Venkatesh, 2020).

How do White nationalists use social media? Altogether, two ways White nationalists use social media are: (1) to form a collective identity and (2) to create content directed toward outgroups. For instance, Proud Boys, a fast-growing far-right group, use Instagram to spread their message, mostly through the use of memes (DeCook, 2018). Specifically, Proud Boys use humor and twist pop culture images to convey messages that support their Alt-Right and often pro-White ideas. As an example, Alt-Right groups commonly use "Pepe the Frog" as a type of mascot or symbol in their content.

Figure 1. Pepe the frog meme

Interestingly the frog emoji referencing this meme has also been found to be regularly used by those who support a White nationalist ideology on Twitter (Hagen et al., 2019). This indicates that popular far-right memes and messaging often travel across social media platforms (e.g., Instagram and Twitter). Indeed, the pairing of pop culture, humor, and hate speech allow

social media users to view racist content in a way that is more disarming than just seeing hate speech alone. DeCook (2018) goes on to discuss how the use of memes and social media allows this group to highlight White identity and create a message to draw in White supporters. Together, these practices allow groups like the Proud Boys to strategically use social media as a way to both spread their message and to recruit individuals.

The use of social media by these groups might be particularly influential because of the focus on Whiteness or the supremacy of White people. For example, data show that when individuals see information about their racial group online, they are more likely to share that content when they have high racial identification (Bigman et al., 2019). In the context of future research, Bigman and colleagues discuss how conversations about disadvantaged Whites online could lead to increased racial identity and subsequently increased sharing of stories that highlight how White people are negatively impacted.

White nationalist messaging on social media. Other platforms allow far-right communities to form around various White nationalist related topics and messaging. Examining hashtags on Twitter, data show that Alt-Right users regularly clustered around hashtags associated with Donald Trump (e.g., #maga, #trump, #draintheswamp; Xu, 2020). These hashtags were also found to be a connection between the Trump movement and examples of populism across the world (e.g., #brexit). Also related to Donald Trump, the popular but now banned subreddit "r/The Donald" became an online meeting place for individuals to develop a pro-White collective identity. An analysis of user comments found community identity was formed around discussing two White nationalist outgroups (e.g., Muslims, the Left) in hate-filled contexts (Gaudette, Scrivens, Davies, & Frank, 2020).

In addition to Reddit, data from Facebook (Scrivens & Amarasingam, 2020) and Twitter (Berger, 2016) find that White nationalists on these websites also discuss Muslims as a threat to White people. Other groups, including immigrants/refugees (Ekman, 2018), are likewise considered risks to White's dominant status. Importantly, critiques of feminism and promoting the manosphere are used online in expanding White nationalist ideology on social media (Bjork-James, 2020). In addition to the more traditional platforms discussed above, negative conversations about outgroups are also found on non-mainstream right-wing extremist social media websites (Scrivens et al., 2021). Altogether, Muslims, immigrants, and feminists are negatively discussed by the far-right online as this allows users to highlight and place an emphasis on the supremacy of White males.

Although not social media related, Forscher and Kteily (2019) asked participants about their trust in mainstream media (e.g., CNN, The New York Times, etc.) and alternative media (e.g., Fox News, Sean Hannity) institutions. This data shows that Alt-Right participants had significantly less trust in mainstream media and significantly more trust in alternative media institutions as compared to non-Alt-Right Trump voters and non-Trump voters. Although this research did not explore the predictive influence of media, the differences found in the context of mainstream and alternative media for the Alt-Right point to its potential importance. Because many in the Alt-Right do not trust mainstream forms of media (Forscher & Kteily, 2019), these individuals are especially likely to seek and be susceptible to alternative forms of media (e.g., social media). While far-right individuals might use a wide range of social media platforms to disseminate their message, one influential platform for this group, and the focus of Study 1 of this dissertation, is YouTube.

YouTube and White Nationalism

Undoubtedly, YouTube is one of the most popular social media websites on the Internet. Launched in 2005, YouTube reports that over a billion hours of content is viewed every day (YouTube Press, n.d.). YouTube highlights that it is defined by four essential freedoms, including freedom of expression, information, opportunity, and to belong. At its core, YouTube is a social media website where individuals can record videos and post for others to see. Once a video is posted, individuals can view, provide comments, like, dislike, and share with others. Although it has an explicit definition and policy for handling hate-related content and recently made headlines for banning White nationalists (Perez, 2020), there is an extensive White nationalist presence (Lewis, 2018).

Why do White nationalists use YouTube? Research on far-right groups and individuals points to the importance of YouTube as a social media platform in making the message of White nationalist groups highly visible (Ekman, 2014). Heightened visibility is important as it can lead to cross-platform promotion and new connections with Whites who might be sympathetic to their message. Additionally, White nationalists use the audio/visual components of YouTube to influence viewer affect. By displaying visual ideas of friendship and resistance, far-right video creators hope to build an emotional connection to draw in individuals (Ekman, 2014). Far-right groups on YouTube can also use affective messaging subtitled in both English and other western European languages to focus individuals on the importance of a White racial community (Feshami, 2021). By strategically concentrating on linguistics and Whiteness these videos are set to unite viewers against outgroups that might imperil the White race.

Once this content draws someone in, they can navigate the extensive and like-minded networks that exist on YouTube (Chen et al., 2021). This is problematic on this platform as in the far-right context individuals often trend from milder to more extreme content over time (Ribeiro

et al., 2019). Indeed, Lewis (2018) notes that far-right networks on social media allow these groups to do three things: (1) build an alternative media, (2) promote an ideology, and (3) radicalize through social networking. While the far-right is present on almost all social media websites, a combination of features and content available through YouTube make it an important platform.

First, YouTube is explicitly made for individuals to broadcast themselves and their ideas (Lewis, 2018). As compared to similar websites (e.g., Facebook, Reddit, Twitter), the almost sole focus of YouTube is to create vlogs or video content about a specific issue. This concentrates the viewer on whatever the video's topic is and reduces distractions associated with other social media (e.g., networking with friends and family). Second, YouTube has built-in financial incentives where content creators with large followings can receive a part of the advertising revenue concerning the content they post. This incentivizes individuals and groups to create videos that will generate a high number of views and recruit individuals to follow a specific channel. As Munger and Phillips (2020) note, the ease in which videos can be posted and watched, along with the presence of financial incentives has created a supply and demand type relationship on YouTube. Further, this contributes to the increasing creation and viewing of far-right content on YouTube. This is because far-right channels on YouTube are able to form communities that contribute to further radicalization through not only viewing the videos but also with the engagement of messaging present in comment sections for individual videos.

White nationalist messaging on YouTube. Because far-right and problematic content on YouTube is common, it is easily accessible to people who engage with this platform. Using a sample that approximates being nationally representative, Chen and colleagues (2021) find that just under 9.2% of participants have viewed a video from an *extremist* channel. Additionally,

22.1% of participants reported having watched a video from an *alternative* channel. Alternative

channels are described as "YouTube channels that potentially serve as gateways to more extreme

forms of content" (Chen et al., 2021, pg. 16). Of importance, most participants (90%) who

viewed this far-right content are also individuals who were identified as being high in racial

resentment, a belief that is focused on perceptions of anti-Blackness, moral traditionalism, and

racial individualism. This suggests that extremist content may be especially appealing to

individuals who espouse animosity towards other groups and have extremist and radicalized

intergroup attitudes. In this context, it is especially harmful given YouTube's recommendation

software that can guide users to view additional content that often has a similar and biased theme

(Chen et al., 2021).

   Examination of YouTube content reveals that far-right networks and user comments

show widespread concern over the threats posed by refugees (Rauchfleisch & Kaiser, 2020) and

are discriminatory toward LGBT communities (Ottoni et al., 2018). Far-right videos on YouTube

also frequently emphasize topics such as feminism, social justice, and White genocide (Munger

& Phillips, 2020). Additionally, YouTube videos regularly discuss war and terrorism as well as

Muslims in a stereotyped/biased way (Ottoni et al., 2018). As stated earlier, any individual who

does not reflect the White male dominant identity is an outgroup member. Stereotyped portrayals

of outgroups (e.g., Muslims, immigrants, and feminists) on social media websites like YouTube

are important, as they are used to benefit White nationalists. For example, Johns (2017) notes

that platforms like YouTube can be used to mobilize like-minded far-right individuals to attend

demonstrations and harass outgroups. Additionally, these outgroups are typically discussed

negatively in far-right content as they are threatening to White males. This is because they

believe non-White male outgroups are endangering their dominant status.

As referenced above, both minority racial progress (Wilkins et al., 2017) and shifting demographics (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; 2014b) threaten Whites' advantageous position in American society. Discussing the growing rise of outgroups in the context of physical, economic, or symbolic threats to Whites on YouTube could be an effective recruiting tool that strengthens and radicalizes online member's collective identity. While much of the far-right narrative explicitly discusses non-White outgroups (e.g., immigrants and Muslims) as a threat to Whiteness (Berger, 2016; Johns, 2017; Rauchfleisch & Kaiser, 2020), feminism is typically critiqued or discussed in a generally negative context (Bjork-James, 2020).

To summarize, because of the content, networks, and incentives, YouTube is a popular website for White nationalists to use. As Ekman (2014) notes, by creating videos that focus on collective White identity and the ability to mobilize, far-right groups use YouTube to strengthen individuals sympathetic to their cause. Content is important as it has the potential to both recruit and engage new users, as well as continue to radicalize the beliefs of those who already hold White nationalist attitudes. The spread of radicalization, fake news, and paranoia through digital media can in turn lead to violence and deadly consequences in the real world (Johnson, 2018).

White nationalism, collective action, and digital spaces. Despite the use of social media regarded as an important tool in motivating several recent violent incidents perpetuated by White extremist (Cellan-Jones, 2021*;* Frenkel, 2021), few studies have examined the psychological factors that could explain the relation between social media use and collective actions in the real world. Olson (1965) argues that groups of individuals will work together to maximize their gains and decrease their potential losses. While various factors can influence a person's ability to collectively act, Olson adds that the size of the group is important to consider. Indeed, smaller groups as compared to larger groups can more easily organize. Because

segments of the larger White nationalist movement such as the Alt-Right are largely

decentralized and scattered, it might make it easier for them to work together and promote

various pro-White actions, especially online. Although Olson's (1965) propositions about

collective action were formed before the Internet and social media, arguably online platforms are

a unique form of action and interact with in-person examples of participation.

Of interest, the ability to use social media to organize is important as it expands the

opportunities for groups to engage in collective action (Bimber, 2017). For example, longitudinal

data finds that when individuals participate in collective actions offline it spills over into

additional online actions (Chayinska, Miranda, & Gonzalez, 2021). For Whites, offline examples

of collective action could include signing a petition in support of a policy that benefits White

people or participating in a protest against something that might be threatening to this group. In

the context of social media, collective actions could include signing an online petition, liking or

following a group that is supportive towards Whites, and providing supportive comments to pro-

White groups (Schumann & Klein, 2015).

Online collective action might be especially useful to White nationalist groups as it is

described as being able to scale quickly and be more flexible at bridging different issues and

political targets (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Using social media also allows individuals to

create programs and bots that can work toward a specific goal without the user's active

participation. This strategy is shown to be regularly used by far-right members on platforms like

Reddit (Flores-Saviaga, Keegan, & Savage, 2018). Indeed, as Flores-Saviaga and colleagues

(2018) note, on the White nationalist subreddit /r/The Donald bots were used to strengthen a

shared identity and promote continued engagement. Additionally, digital media affords personal

networks to play a greater role in protests and mobilization (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011).

Altogether, the technological abilities and features on social media allow individuals to control, shape the environment, and disseminate information quickly to increase the success of digital forms of activism (Ahuja, Patel, Suh, 2018). In the next section I discuss the importance of examining three key psychological mechanisms known to influence collective actions within social media content created by White nationalist.

Chapter 3: SIMCA and Collective Action

The Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA)

The Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) is an extension of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self Categorization Theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987) and is a useful theoretical model to understand the psychological underpinnings of collective action

Figure 2. The social identity model of collective action
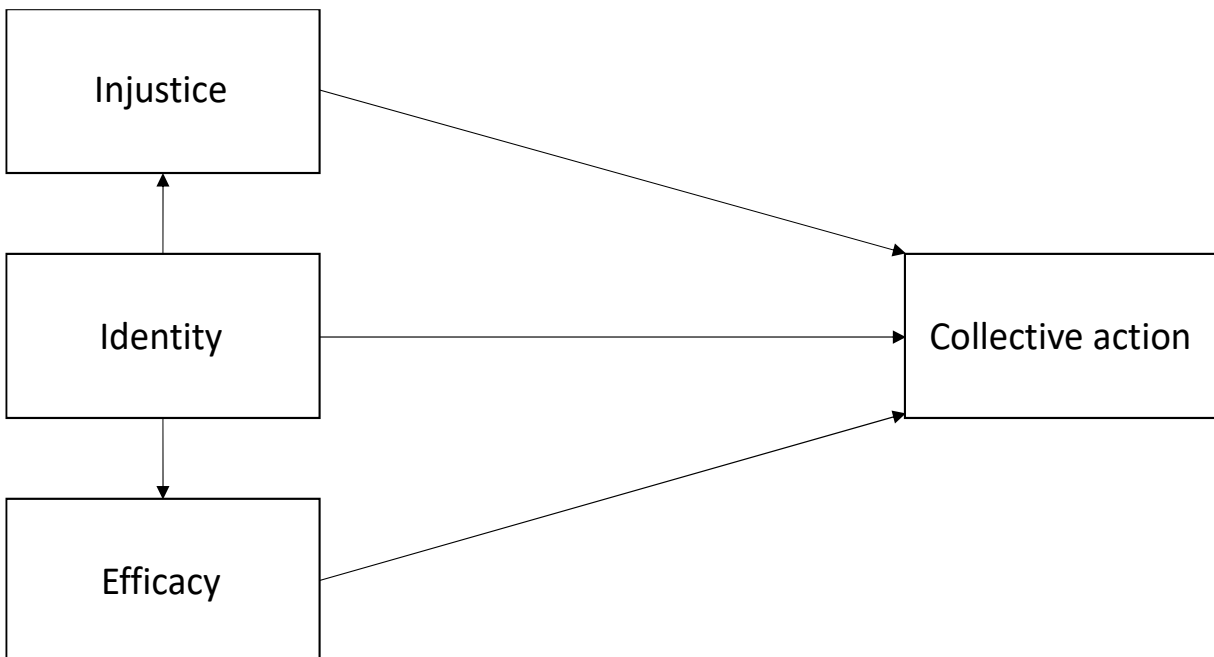
When faced with perceptions of group-based inequalities, SIMCA suggests that individuals will engage in collective actions to improve the position of their ingroup. Collective action is described as actions ″directed at improving the conditions of the group as a whole″ (Wright et al., 1990, p. 995). Collective action can take different forms depending on the

circumstances. Indeed, both the social/psychological determinants of the action and the

protesters' objective state of disadvantage can influence a demonstration (van Zomeren,

Postmes, & Spears, 2008). These factors along with others could affect the extent of the action

and whether it is peaceful or involves violence. Similarly, collective action is flexible and takes

place both online and offline as referenced in Chapter Two. For example, individuals might have

the option to participate in a single action by signing a petition either online or in person.

Because collective actions are difficult to directly assess researchers typically rely on

indirect measures (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). These measures are often classified

as attitudes (e.g., I support collective action), intentions (e.g., I would be willing to participate in

collective action), and behaviors (e.g., participants sign a petition). Importantly, although

attitudes and behaviors are related to each, intentions are key in strengthening this relationship

(van Zomeren et al., 2008). Van Zomeren et al (2008) suggest that "whereas attitudes can be

relatively idealistic, intentions tend to take more account of practical limitations and

opportunities" (p. 510). Altogether, this highlights the important role that intentions play in

predicting whether an individual participates in an actual collective action.

SIMCA relative to disadvantaged and advantaged groups. Much of existing research

using SIMCA is in the context of marginalized and disadvantaged groups (Duncan, 2012). This

work documents how unfair group disadvantages and injustices can motivate individuals to work

together as a group to improve their group status, position, and/or image in the mainstream

society. Extending this work in the context of media, research finds that exposure to negative

media depictions of one's ingroup can increase stigmatized members to engage in collective

action efforts especially when those depictions are perceived to be inaccurate (Saleem, Hawkins,

Wojcieszak, & Roden, 2021. Negative media depictions of one's ingroup can also increase

perceptions of discrimination and subsequently raise participation in non-violent collective actions (Schmuck & Tribastone, 2020). Of interest, Schmuck and Tribastone (2020) exposed Muslim participants to stereotyped far-right social media content about their ingroup. Other research on SIMCA finds that alternative and social media news affect protest intentions through injustice, identity, and efficacy (Chan, 2017).

Comparatively less work has examined how these processes influence the collective action intentions of advantaged group members, such as White Americans. However, some similar patterns have been observed for advantaged members (e.g., Whites) when they perceive that they are experiencing an injustice (Thomas, Zubielevitch, Sibley, & Osborne, 2020). Indeed, Thomas and colleagues (2020) find that perceived economic injustice experienced by their ethnicity mediated the long-term relationship between ingroup identity and willingness to participate in collective action to benefit their ingroup for members of advantaged (e.g., Whites) and disadvantaged groups. Other work focuses on what underlying reasons motivate advantaged members to act in solidarity with movements aimed at improving the status of marginalized groups (Adra, Li, & Baumert, 2020; van Zomeren, Postmes, Spears, Bettache, 2011). For instance, feelings of guilt related to group-based advantages are known to influence White Americans beliefs in White privilege and support for affirmative action (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003).

SIMCA and extremist/radicalized behaviors. Notwithstanding the contributions of these studies, there is almost no research to date applying the SIMCA theoretical framework to understand the collective action motivations of White extremist groups. This is surprising given the growing perception of collective disadvantage that Whites in America are experiencing (Pew Research Center, 2019). It is important to state that the accuracy or objectivity (or lack thereof)

of these perceptions does not undermine their potential to influence related cognitions, feelings, and behavioral intentions. For example, viewing race as a zero-sum game is likely associated with increases to White American's belief that their culture is being threatened and decreases in support for affirmative action (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

By identifying the antecedents and predictors of extremist (or radicalized) behavior, SIMCA can be an especially useful framework for understanding the activism of pro-White individuals and organizations. Indeed, existing research applying this model to extremist groups reveals that increased collective efficacy can significantly influence violent forms of action (Setiawan, Scheepers, & Sterkens, 2020). The SIMCA model also identifies that a stronger social identity mediates the relationship between feelings of injustice/efficacy and support for terrorism (Yustisia, Shadiqi, Milla, & Muluk, 2020). In other words, efficacy, social identity, and injustice are each associated with radicalized examples of collective action. As White nationalism is inherently an extremist ideology, the SIMCA framework, its proposed mechanisms, and the existing research can be used to theoretically evaluate the underlying motivations of how White nationalists engage in protest. Recent real-world examples show that this can range from online petitions to propaganda flyers to violent demonstrations (e.g., Charlottesville and the Capitol riot).

SIMCA Mechanisms

The SIMCA model argues that the likelihood of participating in collective action is a function of three psychological mechanisms, group identity, perceptions of group injustice, and beliefs of collective efficacy (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Individually, meta-analyses show that each of these factors is significant and has a moderate effect in predicting collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). However, van Zomeren and

colleagues discuss that integrating all three routes into a single model provides a more complete and nuanced explanation of collective action. For example, social identity is found to influence collective efforts, both directly and indirectly, through injustice (e.g., anger) and efficacy (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). According to the authors, this finding helps bridge explanations of how injustice and efficacy affect collective action.

The SIMCA mechanisms are powerful as they mediate the relationship between digital participation and continued willingness to organize into the future (Odağ, Uluğ, & Solak, 2016). Indeed, the authors discuss that their data point to protests being kept alive indirectly through digital collective actions. This research and others (Velasquez & Montgomery, 2020) highlights the potential usefulness of online collective action in the context of SIMCA. To summarize, the studies discussed throughout (Chan, 2017; Odağ, Uluğ, & Solak, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020; Schmuck & Tribastone, 2020) show that media can affect the psychological mechanisms identified by SIMCA to motivate collective actions. Given the Alt-Right's extensive use of digital spaces (Forscher & Kteily, 2019), below I explain how references to each of the three proposed psychological mechanisms deriving collective action are explicitly and implicitly prevalent in pro-White social media content.

Injustice. Injustice is described as "generally aroused by perceptions of unfair treatment or outcomes… feelings of injustice tend to be based on subjective perceptions of group-based inequity (i.e., some inequality or disadvantage that is perceived as illegitimate)" (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, p. 512). Importantly, injustice can either be classified as objective or perceived. Research examining this mechanism has typically focused on the influence of perceived injustice as objective injustice is less effective at predicting participation in collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Perceptions of injustice can increase when an

individual perceives that they or their group are treated unfairly compared to another group. In turn SIMCA argues that perceptions of injustice motivate collective action efforts to address or push back against the perceived injustice (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Indeed, research finds that both perceptions of inequality and injustice can motivate collective action (Renger, Eschert, Teichgräber, & Renger, 2019).

Application to the present research. References to unjust treatment, reverse racism, and marginalized and disenfranchised status of Whites is frequently discussed by White extremists. For instance, quotes from qualitative in-depth interviews with White nationalist groups revealed that many members consider "What white people need to realize is that it doesn't matter if they are racist or not but the majority of blacks and Hispanics are racist against whites and they don't care what your political beliefs are or whether you voted for Obama or not" (Dentice & Bugg, 2016, pp. 118-199). Other research discusses how terms (e.g., White genocide) that indicate Whites are in danger because of their perceived marginalized status are present in alternative far-right networks on social media (Munger & Phillips, 2020). Similarly, references to Whites no longer being the majority and racial minorities having advantages over Whites (i.e., reverse racism) are frequently made on platforms such as Twitter (Petray & Collin, 2017; Shafer, 2017). As Petray and Collin (2017) note, reverse racism can be used in a defensive way when Whites discuss racism online. For example, it can be used to push back against programs beneficial to marginalized groups like affirmative action that some Whites may view as unjust (e.g., claiming these programs are racist toward White people). Because individuals in most cases can post without moderation, digital media is an outlet where pro-White content creators can claim injustice toward their group and argue against ideas like White privilege.

However, it is still unknown the extent and frequency with which discussions of injustice toward Whites are present in far-right social media and how exposure to this content might radicalize those who view it. Indeed, social media content generated by White nationalist groups might not only make audiences aware of the "injustices" faced by Whites but also reference the need for Whites to "wake up" and collectively work together to resolve these injustices before it is too late.

Social Identity. The unjust treatment of one's ingroup is especially likely to motivate collective action when individuals highly identify with their ingroup (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). SIMCA argues that when individuals highly identify with a group and perceive the treatment of that group as unjust vis-a-vis other groups, then members will participate in collective action to alter that status differential. Though historically much work on social identity didn't focus on the racial identity of Whites, current research reveals that White identity is indeed important to White Americans and influences their group dynamics in similar ways as racial minorities (Jardina, 2019). Jardina (2014; 2019) reports that 30-40% of White Americans see their racial identity as important to them. Increased identification with White identity is associated with attitudes such as authoritarianism and social dominance orientation (Jardina, 2014), both of which are related to collective actions aimed at improving the status and position of Whites in society.

Application to the present research. The importance of forming and strengthening White identity is routinely discussed in White nationalist social media (DeCook, 2018). References to a collective identity are meant to include and radicalize the casual White consumer of this content (Lovett, 2019). This often occurs through Whiteness being situated as dominant and by focusing on the supremacy of Whites compared to other social identity outgroups. This

belief is a common narrative shown through quotes collected from White nationalist message

boards including "The White Race truly is THE Master Race. That's what Adolf Hitler preached,

and I most sincerely believe it. We ARE at the top of the food chain, and when the day comes

that we ALL start thinking that way again, this time the world will truly be OURS", and "To be

white is to be part of a small group possessing talents, conscience and beauty that cannot be

found in any other creatures on the planet" (Dentice & Bugg, 2016, pp. 112-118). Other topics

such as real-world intergroup conflict can influence and solidify a collective White identity in

online groups (Biluc et al., 2019). For example, conversations in a far-right online forum

(Stormfront) before a race-related riot in Sydney, Australia were centralized on discussions of

group membership based on who is allied with Whites. This shifted after the riot in the real-

world to focus more on opposing non-White outgroups (Biluc et al., 2019). The change in

messaging online situates users into an us vs. them mentality that is centered on White identity.

  Collective Efficacy. When individuals are high in collective efficacy, they believe that

collectively as a group they can enact change to their group status. While efficacy can focus on

the motivation of a single individual, group efficacy is the "shared belief that one's group can

resolve its grievances through a unified effort" (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, p. 507).

In other words, group efficacy is centered on individuals participating in action only when they

believe that it is likely they will be successful in achieving their goals. This mechanism can be

especially powerful as it gives individuals a sense of collective power beyond what they as an

individual are able to accomplish (Drury & Reicher, 2005). Because a combined sense of

efficacy is often stronger than individual efficacy this mechanism is most effective in motivating

action in groups that place importance on their shared identity. Applied to Whites, high group-

based collective efficacy would mean that White people have confidence in their ability as a group to overcome any challenges.

      Application to the present research. As mentioned above, White nationalists frequently discuss issues that threaten their racial ingroup. While there are likely different ways for White nationalists on social media to address group-based threats, one possible reaction is to consider how they can work together to overcome their perceived disadvantages (e.g., collective efficacy). For racial and ethnic minorities, political expression on social media sites is associated with increased collective efficacy beliefs to improve the status and position of minorities in America (Velasquez, Montgomery, & Hall, 2019). Yet no quantitative research has examined this relationship for White people. However, the following quote from an in-depth interview shows that some Whites place importance on working together, "When you take a small white community and everybody pulls together when times are tough, then that is a superior culture" (Dentice & Bugg, 2016, pg. 119). Theoretically, if far-right content suggests that Whites work together or mentions ways/strategies in which Whites can organize, this could increase viewers' beliefs in group-based collective efficacy. As SIMCA proposes, high group-based efficacy beliefs are likely to increase collective actions. In sum, each of three psychological mechanisms (injustice, efficacy, and identity) known to motivate collective actions are prevalent in the messaging created and disseminated by White nationalists. Despite the rich details learned from qualitative and big data studies examining White nationalist groups, several questions remain unanswered.

Hypotheses, and Research Questions

      First, little quantitative research has used content analytic methods to examine the underlying themes and messaging within White nationalist social media. Qualitative (Bjork-

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James, 2020; DeCook, 2018) and big data research (Chen et al., 2021; Gaudette et al., 2020) has identified that specific topics (e.g., immigration, social and political identity, discourse about other races) are present in far-right content online. However, a quantitative analysis is needed to extend this work to determine the frequency with which these themes (relative to others) are discussed and their co-occurrences within White nationalist social media. Considering this and the previous chapters, I propose the following hypotheses and research questions to be explored in Study 1.

RQ1: How frequently are Muslims, immigrants, and feminists discussed in White nationalist videos on YouTube?

RQ2a: When Muslims and immigrants are mentioned, how frequently and in what context are they discussed as a threat in White nationalist videos on YouTube?

RQ2b: When feminists are mentioned, how frequently are they discussed with a negative valence in White nationalist videos on YouTube?

RQ3: How frequently is politically relevant content discussed in White nationalist videos on YouTube?

Second, given the highly visible examples of recent far-right protests/riots (e.g., the Capitol riot and the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville) there is a need to further understand what motivates this group to engage in collective action. As discussed above, the SIMCA model might be especially useful as it is applicable to both extremist groups (Yustisia, Shadiqi, Milla, & Muluk, 2020) and social media (Chan, 2017). This is important given the strong White nationalist presence on digital media and this groups use of these online platforms to coordinate actions in the real world (Cellan-Jones, 2021). Considering this and the previous chapters, I propose the following hypotheses and research questions to be explored in Study 1.

RQ4: What is the frequency in which references to injustices faced by Whites, White identity, and White collective efficacy are made in White nationalist videos on YouTube?

H1a: Discussions of injustices faced by Whites will be more frequent than discussions of injustices faced by other social groups in White nationalist videos on YouTube.

H1b: Discussions of injustices faced by Whites will be more frequent than discussions of injustices faced by the content creators themselves in White nationalist videos on YouTube.

H1c: Discussions of injustices faced by the content creators themselves will be more frequent than discussions of injustices faced by other social groups in White nationalist videos on YouTube.

H2: Mentions of White people being under threat will be more frequent than mentions of other social groups as being under threat in White nationalist videos on YouTube.

H3: References to injustices faced by Whites, White identity, and White collective efficacy are more likely to be present in videos that call for collective actions than videos that do not call for collective action in White nationalist videos on YouTube.

Implications of Study 1

Study 1 makes important contributions to our understanding of White nationalist social media. First, I provide a quantitative assessment of how White nationalists discuss outgroups and their impact on Whites' group status and power. Second, using the theoretical propositions of SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), I examine if and how frequently psychological mechanisms known to influence collective actions are referenced within these videos. Third, I document the frequency and context in which calls to collective action are made within these videos to improve the status and position of Whites in the U.S. Insights from this research establish the ways in which social media created by White nationalists use references to

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social outgroups, White identity, efficacy, and group injustice to motivate collective actions amongst White Americans.

Chapter 4: Study 1 Method

Sample Criteria and Selection

As the goal for Study 1 is to understand the content White nationalists create on YouTube, the sample was drawn from research that has identified these groups (Lewis, 2018). This selection method is different from some previous research that has used search terms to collect YouTube videos (Dale et al., 2017). I made this decision for the following reason. The research questions and hypotheses for this study focus on: 1) how outgroups are portrayed, 2) how political parties and figures are referenced, and 3) whether collective action and predictors known to influence collective action are present in the content explicitly created by White nationalists. Consequently, the corpus required only videos that were produced by White nationalists. Thus, using a methodology that involves selecting videos based on search terms does not necessarily fit the scope of this study. A preliminary evaluation found that when searching terms associated with White nationalism on YouTube (e.g., White nationalism, White identity, White heritage, White discrimination, reverse racism, Whites under threat; Anti-Defamation League, n.d.), most videos were of news stories or interviews about White nationalist figures or events. While these videos are informative and future research should examine their content, they are not relevant to the current study because White nationalists did not create this content.

Subsequently, five White nationalist groups or influencers were chosen and analyzed. These individuals and groups were chosen based on existing research which using social network analysis identified various White nationalist channels on YouTube (Lewis, 2018). The chosen

channels were all found to have a prominent and official (e.g., designated YouTube channel) presence on YouTube. Once the five channels were selected, twenty videos from each channel were randomly chosen using the equal probability of selection method. This technique allows each video on a given channel an equal chance of being selected, thus strengthening the notion that the included videos are representative of the channel (Dixon & Williams, 2015). This method yielded 100 total YouTube videos included in the corpus. Final analyses were conducted on a total of 99 videos as one video selected in the random draw was a "test" video and did not contain any content that could be coded. Additionally, as some videos were two hours and longer, only the first 30 minutes of each video was examined. The videos were selected and coded for initial descriptive information during the week of 12/23/19. The final corpus consisted of 30.85 hours of video. Importantly, this amount of data is similar to other content analyses conducted on YouTube (Dale et al., 2017; Krajewski, Schumacher, & Dalrymple, 2019).

Of the content coded, the mean length of the video in minutes was $M = 18.70$ ($SD = 10.22$). On average, these YouTube channels had 250,000 subscribers and 831 videos. Out of the five channels, four of the creators are male, and one is female. Lastly, the videos selected had on average $M = 49,802$ views ($SD = 65,546$), $M = 927$ comments ($SD = 1,583$), $M = 2,946$ likes ($SD = 3,211$) and $M = 101$ dislikes ($SD = 186$). This excludes all video engagement information from the channel altright.com (e.g., Richard Spencer) and two videos from American Renaissance, as YouTube had suspended these videos for content moderation reasons at the time of analysis.

Table 1. White nationalist YouTube Channels

White nationalist figure	YouTube Channel	Number of videos	Number of subscribers
Rebecca Hargraves	Blonde in the Belly of the Beast	125	130k
Stefan Molyneux	Stefan Molyneux	3241	924k
Colin Robertson	Millennial Woes	416	54k
Richard Spencer	Altright.com	153	24k
Jared Taylor	American Renaissance	222	118k

Training and Reliability

Three trained individuals worked as coders on this study: one White male and two White females. Training occurred over roughly three months and consisted of approximately 25 hours. Tasks completed during the training included discussion of the codebook and coding scheme as well as practice coding. For example, regular weekly meetings were held where each variable coded was examined among coders and discussed until an adequate level of understanding was reached for each individual. Next, to create a training experience that would mirror the actual coding process, each individual participated in practice coding. This involved selecting White nationalist videos that were not chosen for this study's corpus to practice coding. Individuals watched the practice videos, followed the coding steps and process, and then met after to discuss any confusion or irregularities in the variables examined.

Once training was completed, 10% of the total sample (e.g., ten videos) was randomly selected and assigned to all coders for reliability purposes. Conducting reliability analyses on 10% of the total sample is considered best practice for content analytic research (Dixon & Williams, 2015; Neuendorf, 2017). These videos were included in the final corpus and the following analyses. To evaluate the reliability of coding, Krippendorf's alpha was computed using the ReCal software program (Freelon, 2013). Krippendorf's alpha reliability coefficients ranged from .54 to 1.00. When Krippendorf's alpha was unable to be calculated, percent agreement between coders was used. Specific variables examined in this study are detailed below (see Appendix A and B for a full description of each variable).

Variables Coded

Level of analysis - video. Only videos that were determined to be from White nationalist groups/figures were included in the corpus. All variables below were coded as "Yes" or "No" unless specified otherwise.

Outgroup social identity codes.

Feminism and feminists. Videos were coded for mentions of feminism and feminists. Feminism is defined as a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define, establish, and achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. Reliability was found to be within an acceptable range $\alpha = .87$.

Feminism valence. If feminism or feminists were mentioned as defined in the code above, coders then established whether it was generally discussed in a positive, negative, or neutral way, $\alpha = .90$. Positive representations could include content creators discussing the ways feminists are beneficial to gender relations. An example of a negative representation would be discussions of the ways in which feminists harm cultural values. A neutral representation is neither negative nor positive, such as stating an individual is a feminist without elaborating further.

Immigrants and immigration. Videos were coded for whether the individuals mention or discuss immigrants or immigration within a U.S. context. Immigration was defined as "the international movement of people to a destination country of which they are not natives or where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens, or to take up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker" (Refugee Council, n.d.). This included mentions of specific immigrant groups, people trying to immigrate to the United States, or imagery of immigrants. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of reliability $\alpha = .84$.

Immigrant groups. If immigrants or immigration were mentioned as defined by the code above, it was evaluated whether a specific immigrant group was discussed. If a specific immigrant group was explicitly described, it was then listed.

Immigrants as a threat. If immigrants or immigration were mentioned as defined in the code above, coders evaluated whether the video talked about them as a threat. Based on integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), examples of threats immigrants could pose included national security threats, public safety threats, political threats, economic threats, cultural and identity threats. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of reliability $\alpha = 1.00$

Islam and Muslims. Given the prevalence of Islamophobic content and explicit concerns of Muslim-perpetrated violence and terrorism in White nationalist social media groups (Gaudette et al., 2020), I focused on documenting references to Islam as opposed to other religious groups. Specifically, videos were coded for whether content related to Islam or Muslims was present. This was defined as "A follower of the religion of Islam, a Muslim is one who believes in God and that Muhammad was the supreme messenger of God" (Arab-American anti-discrimination committee, n.d.). Examples might include talking about Muslims from Middle Eastern countries and Muslims in the United States or Europe. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

Muslims as a threat. If Muslims or Islam were mentioned as defined by the code above, it was then examined for whether they were discussed as a threat. Similar to the immigration threat code, examples of threats Muslims could pose included national security threats, public safety threats, political threats, economic threats, cultural and identity threats.

SIMCA-derived codes.

Injustice toward Whites. Videos were coded for whether individuals discuss or talk about injustice toward Whites or Whites being treated unfairly. Injustice tends to be based on subjective perceptions of group-based inequity (inequality or disadvantage perceived as illegitimate; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Examples include content concerning Whites' beliefs about being treated unfairly by an outgroup and that Whites are being put at a disadvantage. Reliability for this variable was found to reach acceptable levels $\alpha = .74$.

Injustice toward minorities. Following a similar code to injustice toward Whites, I also coded for if videos discussed minorities being treated unjustly. This was defined as whether videos mentioned minorities are suffering injustice or being treated unfairly based on the description of injustice above. For this study, I focused on non-White racial/ethnic groups and non-Christian religions. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

Injustice toward themselves. Based on the definitions of injustice as described in the above code, videos were examined for whether the content creators mentioned that they themselves are experiencing some form of injustice or being treated unfairly, $\alpha = .86$.

Collective efficacy. Videos were coded for whether individuals discuss or talk about efficacy or Whites having efficacy. Conceptually, efficacy refers to a sense of control, influence, strength, and effectiveness to change a group-related problem (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Examples of this include conversations that Whites working together can change injustice or discrimination, or bias towards their group. Acceptable levels of agreement were found between coders (87%).

White identity. Videos were coded for whether White identity is discussed. Identity is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of

his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Concerning White identity, examples include the idea that Whites have a specific membership or some type of affiliation with each other or mentioning that White identity is under attack. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of reliability $\alpha = .77$.

Collective action. Videos were coded for whether individuals mention discuss or give examples of Whites taking collective action. This included individuals in the video discussing attitudinal support for protests as well as protest intentions or behaviors of Whites directed at removing the perceived causes of the group's disadvantage (Wright et al., 1990). For example, signing a petition, participating in a protest/demonstration, or donating money to pro-White groups. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of reliability $\alpha = .86$.

Whites under threat. Videos were coded for whether the content creators mention in any way that either White individuals or that Whites people as a group are under threat. Examples of threats can include abstract threats such as immigration affecting the U.S. economy or more direct threats like immigration will lead to increased crime in the White viewers cities and neighborhoods. This could also include explicit statements like "Whites are being threatened" without further elaboration, $\alpha = .54$. Acceptable levels of agreement were found between coders (87%).

Minorities under threat. Based on the description of threat in the code above, videos were coded for whether they discussed threat in the context of minorities. For this study, I focused on non-White racial/ethnic groups and non-Christian religions. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

Video information codes.

Total number of people. For each video, the total number of individuals was recorded. This was considered people that have some type of speaking role or who are being interviewed as part of the video, $\alpha = 1.00$.

Video style (interview, personal vlog, public). Videos were coded for whether an interview took place. It was considered an interview if it involved more than one person in the video and followed an active and structured conversation between the individuals (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Videos were coded for whether a personal vlog was used. This is described as a video in which only one individual is present. It also often includes the individual speaking into a camera about a specific topic or things that occur in their lives. Videos were also coded for whether they took place in a public rather than a private setting. A public video could involve the recording taking place out in public such as a rally, an event, or a conference. These variables reached acceptable levels of agreement, $\alpha = 1.00$.

Use of infographics, graphs, or charts. Videos were coded for whether they included some type of visual demonstration of information. This can include infographics which are one way to visually represent data, or the use of graphs or charts, $\alpha = .83$.

Outside news media coverage. Videos were coded for whether they included some form of news media coverage that did not originate from within the YouTube video. This is described as clips or embedded clips that show the presence of news reports, news stories, or news related to other YouTube videos. Additionally, this could include still shots from newspapers or television news, $\alpha = .86$.

YouTuber social identity codes- gender. Gender presentation is described as "external appearance, dress, mannerism, and behavior through which each individual presents their gender identity or the gender they want to appear as. Gender presentation may change, for example, a

Drag King may present as a male during his performance, but as a female in her daily life."
(Positive space network, n.d.).

Male in video. Videos were coded for whether there was a male individual present in the video, $\alpha = 1.00$.

Female in video. Videos were coded for whether there was a female individual present in the video, $\alpha = 1.00$.

Trans male in video. Videos were coded for whether there was a trans male present in the video. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

Trans female in video. Videos were coded for whether there was a trans female present in the video. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

YouTuber social identity codes- race. Racial categories are socially constructed, that is, race is not intrinsic to human beings but rather an identity created, often by socially dominant groups, to establish meaning in a social context. Different cultures define different racial groups, often focused on the largest groups of social relevance, and these definitions can change over time.

White individual in video. Videos were coded for whether a White individual was present in the video. In this context, White is described as a person having origins in any of the original peoples typically of Europe. It includes people who would indicate their race(s) as "White" or report entries such as German, Italian, British or Caucasian (U.S. Census, n.d.). Additionally, it can be thought of as someone who is perceived to be White based on his or her

skin color. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

Non-White individual in video. Videos were coded for whether a non-White individual was present in the video. This would include individuals who do not meet the criteria of "White" as described above. Examples could consist of people who would be perceived as Black, Asian, Arab, etc. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

Political codes. A political movement is a social group that operates together to obtain a political goal, on a local, regional, national, or international scope. Political movements develop, coordinate, promulgate, revise, amend, interpret, and produce materials that are intended to address the goals of the base of the movement.

Republican party. Videos were coded for whether individuals in the video specifically mention the Republican party. This could also include discussing the GOP, conservatives, or the right, $\alpha = .86$.

Democratic party. Videos were coded for whether individuals specifically mention the Democratic party. This could include discussing liberals or the left, $\alpha = 1.00$.

Donald Trump. Videos were coded for if they discuss Donald Trump in any way or show any images or videos of him. This could also include mentioning political slogans that are specifically associated with Donald Trump (e.g., make America great again), $\alpha = 1.00$.

Barack Obama. Videos were coded for if they discuss Barack Obama in any way or show any images or videos of him. This could also include mentioning political slogans that are explicitly associated with Barack Obama (e.g., change we can believe in), $\alpha = 1.00$.

Hillary Clinton. Videos were coded for if they discuss Hillary Clinton in any way or show images or videos of her. This could also include mentioning political slogans that are specifically associated with Hillary Clinton (e.g., I'm with her), $\alpha = 1.00$.

Chapter 5: Study 1 Results

Given the dichotomous nature of most variables analyzed, Chi-square analyses were performed when appropriate to test the proposed hypotheses and research questions.

Outgroup Social Identity Variables

RQ1 asked how often different outgroups (e.g., Muslims, immigrants, feminists) would be mentioned in the videos analyzed. The data show that immigrants were discussed in 26:99 of total videos (26%), Muslims were mentioned in 27:99 of videos (27%), and feminists were mentioned in 28:99 of videos (28%). This resulted in 60:99 of the total videos (61%) discussing at least one outgroup. Next, I investigated whether any of these outgroups were present more than the others. Results revealed that no identity group was featured more than others.

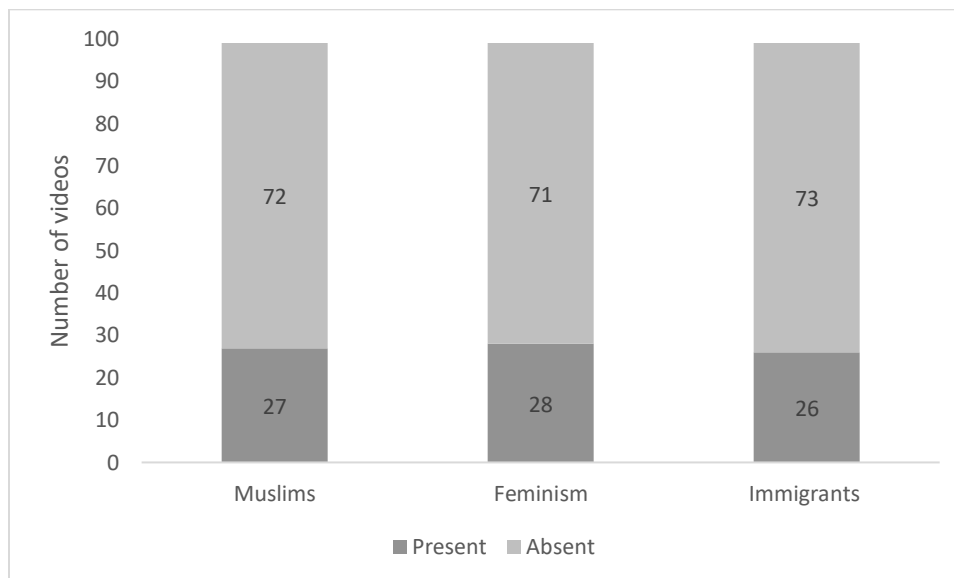Figure 3. Presence of social identity outgroups

Table 2 Social identity outgroup proportions

Variable	Mentions	Total videos
Immigrants	26	99 (26%)
Muslims	27	99 (27%)
Feminists	28	99 (28%)
Social outgroups combined	60	99 (61%)
Immigrant's threat	14	26 (54%)
Muslim's threat	17	27 (63%)
Feminist's negative	23	28 (82%)

Note. % is the percent of the total number of mentions for that variable.

Additionally, I was also interested in the context in which these outgroups would be discussed (RQ2a and RQ2b). The data show that immigrants were mentioned as a threat in 14:26 of videos (54%), Muslims were mentioned as a threat in 17:27 of videos (63%), and feminists were mentioned in a negative valence in 23:28 (82%) of videos. Next, I examined whether differences existed in how they were discussed. No significant difference was found between immigrants and Muslims, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 53$) = .453, $p = .501$ or between Muslims and feminists, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 55$) = 2.55, $p = .110$. However, I did find a significant difference between immigrants and feminists, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 54$) = 5.00, $p = .025$, with feminists discussed in a negative light more so than immigrants.

Figure 4. Negative mentions of outgroups in White nationalist YouTube videos
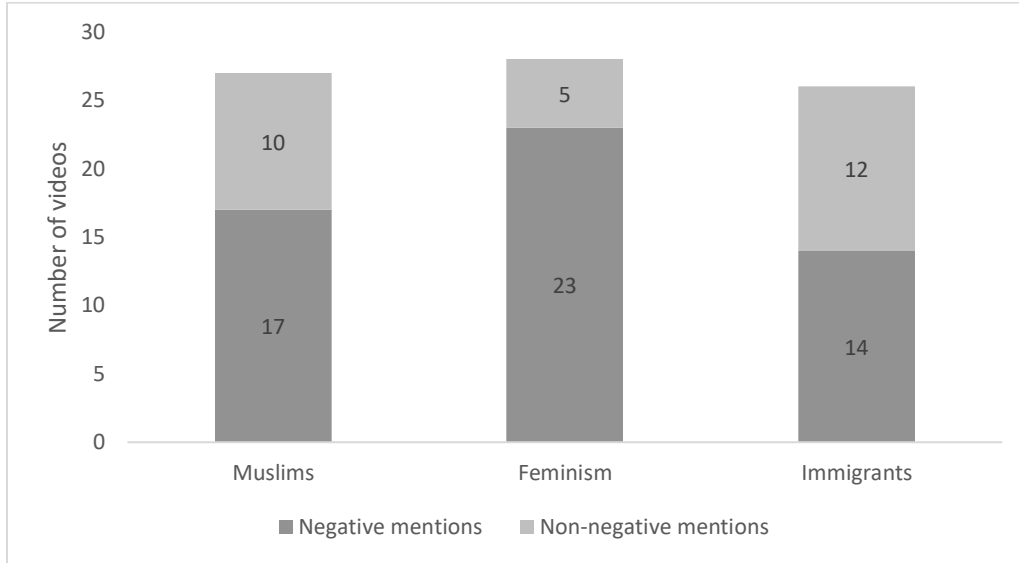
In the context of the threats that immigrants and Muslims might pose, I examined whether the videos mentioned if they would be considered specific threats to national security, public safety, politics, economics, or cultural identity (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). With both groups, videos included content that discussed multiple threats. For immigrants, I found that 14 videos mentioned specific threats that this group poses. The most frequently discussed threat was to public safety in 8:14 of videos (57%). This was followed by threats to culture and identity in 6:14 of videos (43%) and economic threats which were present in 2:14 of videos (14%). Political threats and national security threats were each found to both be mentioned in 1:14 of videos (7% each). Overall, 18 references to threats were made with respect to immigrants across the 14 videos.

For Muslims, I found that 17 videos referenced threats to this group. Both public safety and cultural identity threats were each found to be discussed most often in 9:18 of videos (50% each). This was followed by political and economic threats which were each mentioned in 1:18

of videos (6% each). No videos featured discussion of Muslims posing a national security threat. Altogether, 20 threat references were made with respect to Muslims across the 17 videos.

Lastly, when immigrant groups were mentioned, I coded for which specific groups were discussed. Twelve videos explicitly mentioned an immigrant group. Within these videos, some included content that discussed multiple groups. Overall, immigrants from "Mexico and Latin America" were the group that was most frequently mentioned in 6:12 of videos (50%). This was followed by "refugees, third-world immigrants, and illegal immigrants" which were discussed in 4:12 of videos (33%). Next, both "Muslim" and "Asian" immigrants were discussed in 3:12 of videos (25% each). Finally, both "European" and "Black or African" immigrants were mentioned in 2:12 of videos (17% each). Altogether, 20 immigrant groups were mentioned throughout the 12 videos.

SIMCA Predictors

In addition to investigating how outgroups are portrayed in White nationalist social media, I was interested in the prevalence of psychological constructs known to influence collective action. To answer RQ4, I found that White identity was mentioned in 32:99 of videos (32%), injustice in 45:99 of videos (45%), and collective efficacy in 10:99 of videos (10%).

Figure 5. Presence of SIMCA mechanisms in White nationalist YouTube videos
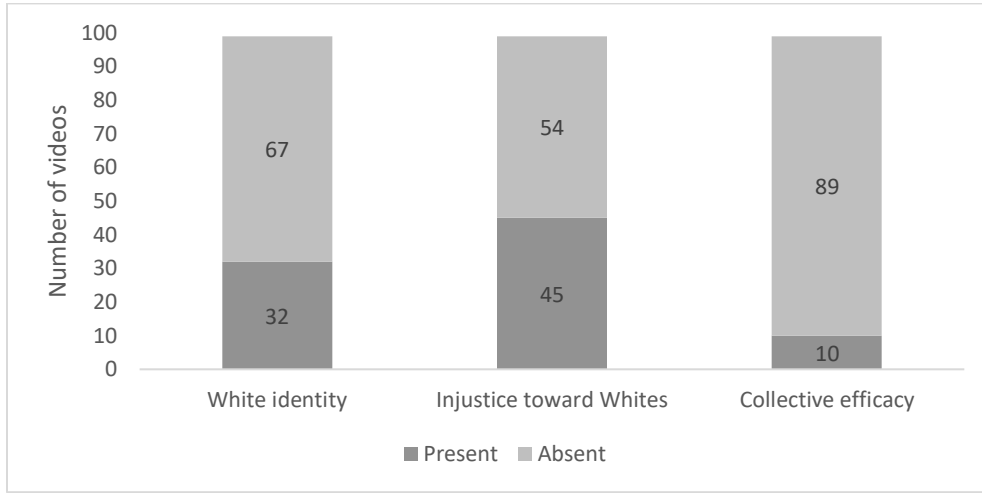
Altogether, this equaled 57:99 of total videos (58%), featuring at least one SIMCA predictor. Next, I examined whether differences exist in how often the SIMCA predictors were mentioned in the corpus. Although not significant, injustice toward Whites was discussed more than White identity, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 198$) = 3.59, $p = .058$. White identity, however, was significantly discussed more than collective efficacy, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 198$) = 14.63, $p < .001$. I also found that injustice toward Whites was mentioned significantly more than collective efficacy, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 198$) = 30.84, $p < .001$.

Table 3 SIMCA proportions

Variable	Mentions	Total videos
White identity	32	99 (32%)
Injustice	45	99 (45%)
Collective efficacy	10	99 (10%)
SIMCA combined	57	99 (58%)
Injustice toward minorities	2	99 (2%)
Collective action	12	99 (12%)

Note. % is the percent of the total number of mentions for that variable.

To further examine the context in which injustice is discussed, H1a and H1b proposed that injustice toward Whites would be more prevalent than both discussions of injustice toward other social groups and toward themselves. Additionally, I proposed (H1c) that injustice toward themselves would be mentioned more frequently than injustice toward other social groups. Indeed, I found a significant difference in that injustice toward Whites (45:99, 45%) was mentioned more often than injustice toward other social groups (2:99, 2%), $\chi2$ $(1, N = 198) =$ 51.59, $p < .001$, thus finding support for H1a. Similarly, I also found injustice toward Whites as a group was significantly more prevalent than discussing injustice toward themselves (23:99, 23%), $\chi2$ $(1, N = 198) = 10.84$, $p = .001$, providing support for H1b. Lastly, my data show that these videos were more likely to feature discussions of injustice toward themselves as compared to injustice toward other social groups, $\chi2$ $(1, N = 198) = 20.19$, $p < .001$, supporting H1c.

Next, I examined how frequently these videos included content that focused on whether Whites and minority groups are under threat. I found that 31:99 (31%) of the videos mentioned that Whites are under threat. Of importance, videos that mentioned minority groups being under threat were much less prevalent (2:99 of videos, 2%). To address H2 this data show that this content was significantly more likely to feature Whites being under threat as compared to minorities being under threat, $\chi2$ $(1, N = 198) = 30.58$, $p < .001$, thus finding support for H2.

As the SIMCA model proposes that injustice, efficacy, and identity are all predictive of and related to collective action, H3 examined if videos that featured collective action were also more likely to include the SIMCA mechanisms. Overall, I found that content focusing on Whites taking collective action was discussed in 12:99 of videos (12%). To address H3, I then examined if at least one SIMCA predictor was more likely to be present in videos that featured collective action compared to videos that did not. My data show that SIMCA predictors were significantly

more likely to be included in videos when collective action was mentioned 12:12 of videos

(100%) as compared to when collective action was not mentioned 45:87 (52%), $\chi2$ (1, $N = 99$) =

10.06, $p = .002$, thus providing support for H3.

Video Information Variables

To evaluate the corpus of White nationalist social media I examined the average number

of people in the YouTube videos. I found that on average, just over one person was present in

this content ($M = 1.42$, $SD = .86$). Next, I investigated the style in which the video was recorded

(e.g., interview, vlog, public place). This data shows that vlog was overwhelmingly the type of

recording style that was most frequent in 70:99 (71%) of videos, followed by an interview in

15:99 (15%) of videos, and a public place in 5:99 (5%) of videos. Similar to a podcast, 9 videos

(9%) included only audio and did not feature any visuals. Next, I examined how frequently this

content included the use of infographics, charts, and graphs. Overall, I found that the videos in

the corpus were unlikely to include these types of visuals with only 6:99 (6%) of videos

including infographics, charts, or graphs. Lastly, I examined the prevalence of outside news

coverage in the videos analyzed. This data shows that outside news coverage was present in

29:99 of videos (29%).

YouTube Content Creator Social Identity Variables

Next, I examined the social identity information (e.g., gender and race) of individuals

present in the corpus of videos. In the context of gender, I found that 80:99 (81%) of videos

included a male individual. Whereas 25:99 of videos (25%) featured a female individual.

Additionally, while no videos were found to include any trans male individuals, one video (1:99,

1%) was found to include a trans female individual. In the context of race, I found that all videos

included a White person (99:99, 100%). Lastly, 3:99 (3%) of videos were found to include a non-White individual.

Political codes

RQ3 asked how often political parties (e.g., Republicans and Democrats) would be discussed within White nationalist YouTube videos. Overall, I found that the Republican party was mentioned in 39:99 (39%) of videos and that the Democratic party was present in 56:99 (57%) of videos. Additionally, I was interested in the possibility of one of these political parties being referenced more than the other. Indeed, the data show that videos were more likely to include mentions of the Democratic party as compared to the Republican party, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 198$) = 5.85, $p = .016$.

Other than political parties, these videos were also found to frequently include content that focuses on politicians. Donald Trump was the political figure that was most prevalent in the videos analyzed (35:99 of videos, 35%). This was followed by two Democratic politicians, Barack Obama who was discussed in 15:99 of videos (15%), and Hillary Clinton in 13:99 of videos (13%). Further, I examined whether any of these three politicians were more likely to be mentioned as compared to the others. The data show that Donald Trump was more likely to be discussed as compared to both Barack Obama, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 198$) = 10.70, $p = .001$, and Hillary Clinton, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 198$) = 13.31, $p < .001$. There was no significant difference found between mentions of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, $\chi2$ (1, $N = 198$) = .17, $p = .683$.

Chapter 6: Study 1 Discussion

Across the U.S. the existence and influence of the far-right is growing (Anti-Defamation League, 2021; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020). By providing a space to recruit and facilitate online networks, social media is helping to fuel this growth (Ekman 2014; Lewis, 2018; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Because White nationalist groups and figures have a strong presence on almost all social media platforms (DeCook, 2018; Gaudette et al., 2020; Munger & Phillips, 2020), they now have unparalleled reach to audiences worldwide. Altogether, what is occurring in these digital spaces has important and significant implications for what happens offline and in physical spaces. For example, given the role of social media messaging in inciting recent extremist behaviors such as the Capitol riot (Barrett, Raju, & Nickeas, 2021; Cellan-Jones, 2021; Frenkel, 2021), an examination of the topics within White nationalist media and their influence on viewers is needed.

Accordingly, this dissertation study examined the content that White nationalist groups produce themselves on social media. In this analysis, I examine the social identities of the individuals present in the YouTube videos and provide video production information. Additionally, I apply the SIMCA model (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) to these White nationalist videos to explore the prevalence of mechanisms known to motivate collective action. Lastly, I investigate how frequently White nationalist figures discuss groups including Muslims, feminists, and immigrants, as well as how they discuss these specific social identity outgroups when they are present in the content.

SIMCA Derived Data

Study 1 results revealed that each of the SIMCA predictors (e.g., group identity, injustice, collective efficacy) are regularly present in the corpus of far-right YouTube videos. Indeed, more than half of the videos (e.g., 58%) featured at least one of the SIMCA predictors. When examining the prevalence of each mechanism, the data did not show any significant differences between the occurrences of White identity and injustice toward Whites. However, both of these predictors were found to occur more frequently when compared to collective efficacy.

Examining the differences in the frequency in which SIMCA theorized psychological mechanisms are present in White nationalist social media content reveals interesting trends. References to injustices faced by Whites was the most frequently referenced SIMCA mechanism. This coincides with existing offline data revealing that White individuals perceive a rise in discrimination against their ingroup and perceptions of reverse racism in society (Norton & Sommers, 2011). Further, references to the idea of White privilege are known to frustrate many White individuals who do not perceive their individual life experiences to be privileged in any way (Edwards, 2017). Indeed, just under one-fourth of videos (e.g., 23%) featured discussions of injustice that they personally are perceiving to experience. These perceptions are consistent with the idea of thinking about racial progress as a zero-sum game, another perception that has sharply risen in the last decade (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

To show that far-right social media does not discuss injustice generally, I compared the occurrence of videos that mentioned injustice toward Whites to injustice toward other social groups and the content creators themselves. Overwhelmingly, I found that injustice toward Whites (e.g., 45%) was referenced more frequently than injustice toward other social groups (e.g., 2%), and injustice toward themselves (e.g., 23%). I also found that speakers discussed

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injustice toward themselves more often than injustice toward other social groups. Altogether, this demonstrates that when White nationalists discuss injustice, they do so in a way that is beneficial to White people. Conceptually related to feelings of injustice, a similar pattern was found when examining references to threats faced by Whites. Specifically, the analyzed videos were significantly more likely to feature content that mentioned the ways in which White individuals are under threat (e.g., 31%) compared to the ways in which minorities are under threat (e.g., 2%). Altogether, these results have important implications for how White Americans who view this content are likely to perceive the treatment of both White majority and non-White minority groups in the United States.

White identity was the SIMCA theorized mechanism found to be mentioned the second most (e.g., 32% of videos). While little quantitative research has examined the connection between the far-right, White identity, and social media, this is an area that qualitative research has explored in-depth (DeCook (2018). Regular mentions of Whiteness online are significant as digital media can be used to construct a collective White identity. The current data provide quantitative support for the frequency and presence of White identity on social media and the trends observed in qualitative research for this topic (DeCook, 2018). While establishing the prevalence of White identity on social media is important, this study did not provide data on how and when White identity is mentioned and whether it was in a negative or positive context. Future work can address these limitations.

Conceptually, positive vs. negative discussions of White identity could have significant and differing implications. For example, frequent exposure to positive mentions of White identity on social media could increase attitudes and emotions related to "White pride". On the other hand, viewing content that focuses on negative aspects of White identity could serve as a

social identity threat for White viewers. Such identity threats are known to induce a variety of cognitive, affective, and behavioral coping strategies (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; 2014b; Wilkins et al., 2017), including collective action efforts. Indeed, similar research has found that exposure to negative representations of their group in the news motivates Muslim Americans to engage in collective actions to improve the position and status of their ingroup in the mainstream society (Saleem et al., 2021). Thus, more research is needed to examine the context in which White identity is discussed within far-right social media.

Lastly, although collective efficacy was the predictor found to occur least often, there are likely a few reasons for this. Mainly, efficacy is more difficult to encode into media as it is an abstract perception. For example, regardless of an individual's identity, injustice and racial identity are both concepts that are likely more common and applicable in one's everyday life. Because of this, creating social media content that focuses on efficacy is conceptually more difficult. Although this mechanism was not found to be frequently discussed within White nationalist videos this does not mean it is not important.

For example, it is possible that watching White nationalist videos motivate efficacious beliefs, as opposed to it being explicitly referenced in the content. If exposure to White nationalist social media increases feelings of White collective efficacy, then SIMCA argues it would be influential at affecting collective action intentions. With this mechanism, the overall messaging of the content as a whole rather than specific mentions or examples of efficacy should be considered. Given the present study's findings, continued research should look at how the idea of efficacy is discussed within the social media content created by White nationalists.

Social Identity Outgroup Data

Previous research has identified Muslims (Gaudette et al., 2020), immigrants (Ekman, 2018), and feminists (Munger & Phillips, 2020) as outgroups that underly many of the grievances of White extremist ideology (Squire, 2019). However, little quantitative content analytic research has examined 1) the frequency in which these groups are discussed and 2) the context (e.g., threats, etc.) of how these social outgroups are referenced in social media content created by White nationalists. Negative references to these three outgroups are especially likely given that past work suggests these outgroups are perceived as most threatening to White American males' dominant status in the U.S (Berger, 2016; Bjork-James, 2020; Johns, 2017; Rauchfleisch & Kaiser, 2020).

Overall, I find that each of these three groups was mentioned in just over one-fourth of the videos. This resulted in at least one social identity outgroup being discussed in 61% of the videos analyzed. Arguably, this establishes that White nationalist YouTube videos frequently and regularly feature one of these outgroups. Additionally, the data show that when all three groups are discussed, it is typically in a negative way (feminists) or as a threat (Muslims and immigrants). Closer examination of differences in how these groups are portrayed suggested that there is no significant difference between Muslims and immigrants in the context of threat. This suggests that White nationalist groups consider Muslims and immigrants to pose similar levels of overall threat to White Americans. In addition to coding the context of how these groups were portrayed, I also investigated the specific types of threats that were discussed concerning Muslims and immigrants.

Using categories identified by Stephan and Stephan (2000), I found that the two types of threats most commonly attributed to both Muslims and immigrants were threats to public safety and cultural identity. Indeed, these specific types of threats have theoretical implications. White

nationalist social media highlighting that both Muslims and immigrants are endangering safety fits with their overall narrative that these groups are the *most* dangerous to White Americans. By focusing on an individual's safety, it is likely to make White people who view this content question if both themselves and their families are safe from these outgroups. Research suggests that perceptions of Muslims as aggressive and violent can increase support for harmful public policies targeting members of this group (Saleem et al., 2017).

Similar to the effects of safety threat, perceptions of an outgroup as a cultural or identity threat can influence hostile attitudes and behaviors towards members of that group (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). The rise of non-Western immigrants in general and Muslim immigrants more specifically is especially considered to be threatening to Western nations that perceive a cultural clash between their values and those of the incoming immigrants (Gaudette et al., 2020). These threats are even more prominent among those who highly identify with their White identity and perceive their culture and norms to be superior to those of other groups. Beyond these threats, political, economic, and national security threats were found in the context of both groups, albeit in a smaller number of videos.

While no difference existed between Muslims and immigrants in the context of threat, I did find that feminists, relative to immigrants, were more likely to be negatively discussed. Though this finding was unexpected, Alt-Right content online does portray gender as a zero-sum game between men and women (Waltman & Mattheis, 2017). This might help explain the results of the current study as well as other work (Munger & Phillips, 2020) which identifies feminism as a common topic within far-right social media. In fact, because this group challenges and is seen as threatening to masculinity, critiques of feminism and promoting the manosphere are used online in expanding White nationalist ideology on social media (Bjork-James, 2020).

Video Information and Identity Data

As very little quantitative content analytic data exists on White nationalist social media, I examined how these videos were produced as well as the identities of the individuals present. This information provides a clearer picture of social media that is created specifically by White nationalists on YouTube. First, I found that the majority of the videos in the corpus were recorded using a vlog style (e.g., 71%). Although, this is arguably an outcome of the norms associated with posting videos on YouTube. However, as vlogs are potentially more personal as compared to other video styles and are used to express oneself (Christian, 2009) the significant use of this type of recording is important to consider. Second, the data shows that in just under one-third of videos (e.g., 29%) outside news coverage was present. Interestingly, one reason these videos might feature outside news is to try and legitimize the social media content they are creating. Additionally, the use of outside news helps create a context for the various issues or topics that are being discussed. This is especially important given the amount of misinformation online generally and specifically in far-right social media. Indeed, news in these videos can be used and blended with misinformation to create more believable messaging. This has serious implications for the potentially harmful narratives individuals might believe as truth when they view social media content that might contain misinformation.

For the social identities of the people present in the videos I found that the majority of individuals were both White (e.g., 100%) and male (e.g., 81%). Of interest, this fits with the narrative discussed above that White American males are considered to be the dominant ingroup identity for White nationalists. Understanding the identities of those present in White nationalist social media is important for a few reasons. Mainly because researchers do not have much demographic information about those who self-identify as a White nationalist or part of the Alt-

Right (e.g., individuals likely to view White nationalist social media; Forscher & Kteily, 2019). The data from this analysis could be used in future research to explore whether the identities of those who create and are present in the online content match those who are viewing it.

Political Data

Arguably politics and White nationalism are two concepts that are related and intertwined (Clark, 2020). Because of this, I investigated the presence of both American political parties and key political figures in the corpus of videos. The data show that both the Democratic (57%) and Republican (39%) parties were frequently mentioned in White nationalist social media. Additionally, Donald Trump (35%), Barack Obama (15%), and Hillary Clinton (13%) were also regularly featured in these videos. Altogether, this data points to the fact that in White nationalist content online some form of discussion around politics is very common. This is important as continued exposure to discussions of politics in these videos is likely to influence viewers' real-world political attitudes in line with the content. Additionally, depending on how the political figures and parties are discussed in these videos it could also have significant implications on and influence individuals' voting intentions in current and future elections. Of note, this study only coded for the presence of political parties and figures. Future research should further explore the valence (e.g., positive or negative) and framing of these political entities to better understand how they are discussed within White nationalist social media.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study has important limitations that require attention. First, the videos in this content analysis represent only a small fraction of the White nationalist content present on YouTube. Indeed, data show that this platform is popular and used by many far-right groups (Lewis, 2018). Additionally, within the channels analyzed, only a specific number of videos

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were randomly selected to be coded. However, the amount of data included in the corpus is comparable with other content analysis work on this platform (Dale et al., 2017; Krajewski, Schumacher, & Dalrymple, 2019). Although this study accomplishes its goal of providing a snapshot of White nationalist content on YouTube, future research should continue to explore the videos and channels not included in the present corpus. To this point, the variables of interest were also only examined on one social media website (e.g., YouTube). As White nationalism is present on almost all mainstream (DeCook, 2018; Gaudette et al., 2020; Munger & Phillips, 2020) and non-mainstream platforms (Lima et al., 2018), future research needs to consider the differences that might exist across social media.

Investigating White nationalist content between platforms could identify themes that cut across all social media websites. Additionally, it could identify platforms that might include the highest percentage of problematic content. Pairing this knowledge with information from other methodologies such as big data (Chen, Nyhan, Reifler, Robertson, & Wilson, 2021) might be an especially important area for future research. For example, content analysis paired with big data analytics could identify usage trends and themes from a macro perspective and might be especially powerful at understanding how specific messages and engagement with specific platforms might be most harmful to the individuals who use them.

Second, when examining the presence and coverage of social identity outgroups I only coded for Muslims, immigrants, and feminists. While existing research highlights that these three groups are perceived as the most threatening to White nationalists, they are by no means the only outgroups to the far-right. Indeed, any individual or group who does not fit the White American male demographic is likely considered an outgroup member to White nationalists. Additionally, other religious groups (e.g., Judaism) and sexual minorities (e.g., LGBTQ) might also be

frequently present and portrayed in negative ways in this content. Future research should examine a wider range of social identity outgroups to fully understand how these depictions can influence attitudes and behaviors toward minority individuals.

Third, while content analyses are useful in contributing information about the unique messages in a piece of media, they do not provide evidence about how viewing said content affects those who watch it. For example, while the finding that SIMCA predictors are present in White nationalist YouTube videos is important, it does not provide an effects-based link between viewing this content and taking collective action. Indeed, exposure to White nationalist narratives or messaging might be an especially powerful mechanism for influencing real-world attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. Accordingly, in Study 2 I empirically test the effects of exposure to White nationalist social media content on White Americans' intra and intergroup attitudes.

Chapter 7: Study 2 Introduction

Study 1 uses a message system approach to understand the relationship between social media and White nationalism. Study 2 builds upon the data collected in Study 1 by investigating the predictive influence of participants' self-reported use, engagement, and exposure to pro-White social media content on real-world attitudes and behaviors. Study 2 employs a unique sample by examining these relationships among those who identify as Republican and *not Alt-right*, Democrat and *not Alt-Right*, and Alt-Right. To my knowledge, only one other peer-reviewed quantitative study has directly sampled those who self-identify as Alt-Right (e.g., Forscher & Kteily, 2019). From this we know that those who identify as Alt-Right are psychologically different on a wide range of social and political attitudes compared to non-Alt-Right (Forscher & Kteily, 2019). These differences tend to be related to their explicit and robust support for a pro-White ideology. Considering this I propose the following hypotheses for Study 2.

H4: Participants who self-identify as Alt-Right will have a stronger Alt-Right identity compared to Democrats and Republicans.

H5: Participants who self-identify as Alt-Right will identify with their White racial identity more than Democrats and Republicans.

Additionally, examining the quantity of viewing pro-White social media for Alt-Right participants is important as these individuals are arguably most likely to be exposed to this content. Indeed, engagement with pro-White themes on social media is likely predictive of radicalization and pro-White attitudes in the real world. However, it is currently unknown how

Alt-Right individuals use and engage with social media in similar and different ways as Republicans and Democrats, and subsequently how they are different on certain real-world beliefs. Because of this I propose the following research questions.

RQ5: How do Alt-Right individuals compare to Democrats and Republicans with respect to their social media use, exposure, and engagement?

RQ6: How do the Alt-Right individuals compare to Democrats and Republicans with respect to their social, political, and policy attitudes?

Study 2 examines these questions and others through an online survey. Because there is little information about how Alt-Right individuals use social media, participants were asked about the different ways in which they engage with various social media platforms, websites, and apps. Participants were asked about the extent to which they come across references of White collective efficacy, White identity, and White injustice, psychological mechanisms proposed by the SIMCA model to motivate collective action intentions (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). In line with the propositions of SIMCA, participants were also asked about their willingness to participate in online and offline forms of collective actions to benefit White people as a group. Considering this I propose the following hypotheses.

H6a: Self-reported exposure to White injustice on social media will be positively associated with participants' perceptions related to White injustice.

H6b: Self-reported exposure to White efficacy on social media will be positively associated with participants' attitudes related to collective efficacy.

H6c: Self-reported exposure to White identity on social media will be positively associated with participants' attitudes related to strength of White identity.

H7: Self-reported exposure to White injustice on social media will increase willingness to participate in collective actions that benefit Whites via increased perceptions of injustice toward Whites and be moderated by political identity.

Lastly, public opinion data shows that many White Americans (both Republicans and Democrats) feel that they are facing discrimination because of their race (Pew Research Center, 2019). While these individuals feel disenfranchised, they also believe that social outgroups (Muslims, feminists, immigrants) are a threat to their dominant status. Given the messaging relative to White disenfranchisement and social outgroups, exposure to these groups on social media is likely to influence related real-world attitudes. I propose the following hypotheses to be examined.

H8a: Exposure to general content about immigrants on social media will be positively associated with increased negative attitudes toward this group.

H8b: Exposure to general content about Muslims on social media will be positively associated with increased negative attitudes toward this group.

H8c: Exposure to general content about feminists on social media will be positively associated with increased negative attitudes toward this group.

Implications Study 2

Study 2 makes the following theoretical contributions. First, I provide an empirical examination of how self-reported exposure to SIMCA themes on social media influences collective action willingness. This is important as I demonstrate a theoretical connection between pro-White messaging on digital media and subsequent behaviors motivated to improve Whites' status and position in the U.S. Second, based on existing research (Bjork-James, 2020; Ekman, 2018; Gaudette et al., 2020), I explore how social media exposure to specific outgroups known to

threaten pro-White ideology influences attitudes toward the depicted groups. All of the relationships investigated in this study do so in a unique sample made up of Republicans, Democrats, and the Alt-Right. One way these individuals might differ is in their exposure to/belief in pro-White narratives online. Theoretically, this examination will provide novel data on if this difference explains diverging attitudes for members of the different political groups. Methodologically, by employing cross-sectional surveys to sample this group and their social media use I help provide additional and quantifiable data to what is known from previous qualitative studies. Additionally, I provide a methodological foundation for future research on this topic that will use experimental and longitudinal methodologies to more completely examine both the media and psychological relationships of the far-right compared to other White Americans.

Chapter 8: Study 2 Method

Participants

All participants ($N = 740$) were from the United States, racially White, and social media users. Quotas were specified to recruit participants from each of the political groups of interest. Of the 740 participants, 258 self-identified as Republican and not Alt-Right, 239 as Democrat and not Alt-Right, and 243 as Alt-Right. Alt-Right participants were considered those who identified as Republican and who scored five and above on the identification with Alt-Right views scale. This strategy of identifying Alt-Right participants is adapted from previous research (e.g., Forscher & Kteily, 2019). Republican and Democrat participants who were not Alt-Right were considered those who self-identified as Republican or Democrat respectively and scored a four and lower on the identification with Alt-Right views scale. Data were collected from March 8th through April 12th. All participants received monetary compensation for their participation. The median time of completion was 17.75 minutes. Of the 740 participants, 348 identified as female and 392 identified as male, $M_{age} = 57.92$, $SD = 16.32$. Most participants reported their religion as Christian ($N = 578$, 79.3%), followed by "None" ($N = 74$, 10.0%), "Other" ($N = 39$, 5.3%), and Judaism ($N = 31$, 4.2%). No additional individual religions included more than 10 participants ($N = 9$, 1.2%).

Procedure

Because Alt-Right participants are highly skeptical and often mistrust academics, all individuals read a prompt before answering survey questions. This prompt adapted from

Forscher and Kteily (2019) is as follows, "There are a lot of misunderstandings about people's media use and their political attitudes. We want to address this issue. We'll be asking various questions about your political beliefs and your experiences with media. As you answer these questions, remember that all your responses are confidential. We'll never reveal who you are. In order for us to understand your views accurately, it's important that you answer these questions honestly."

Materials

    Demographics. Because little information exists about who individuals are that self-identify as Alt-Right, participants were asked a series of demographic questions. This included sex, age, location in the U.S. (e.g., state), religion, political party and strength of identification with that party, political ideology, income, education, living environment classification (e.g., urban, rural, etc.), and 2020 Presidential election vote choice.

    Identification with Alt-Right views. One item was adapted from previous research (Forscher & Kteily, 2019) to assess identification with Alt-Right views (e.g., "How often do you identify with the views of the Alt-Right?"). Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*), $M = 3.41$, $SD = 2.12$.

    Strength of identity with the Alt-Right. One item was used to assess how strongly participants identify with the Alt-Right (e.g., "How strongly do you identify with the Alt-Right"). Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very strongly*), $M = 2.79$, $SD = 2.09$.

    Exposure to SIMCA mechanisms on social media.

    Injustice toward Whites on social media. Three items were adapted from previous research (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) to assess how often participants see content in

which White people are treated unjustly on social media. For example, how often do you see content: 1) where Whites are being treated unjustly, 2) in which Whites are experiencing injustices because of their race, and 3) in which Whites are being put at a disadvantage because of their race. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*most days*), $M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.36$, $\alpha = .96$.

White Identity on social media. Exposure to positive portrayals of White identity on social media was adapted from previous research (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) and assessed using two items. Specifically, how often do you see social media content that: 1) discusses White identity positively and 2) places importance on White identity. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*most days*), $M = 2.13$, $SD = 1.31$, $r = .83$.

White collective efficacy on social media. White collective efficacy on social media was assessed using two items and adapted from previous research (Glasford & Calcagno, 2012). Participants rated their agreement with statements such as: 1) Social media can be used to improve the position of Whites in America and 2) Social media can be used to improve the image of Whites in America. on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.04$, $r = .88$.

SIMCA related beliefs and attitudes in the real world.

Strength of White identity. Participants were asked about how strongly they identify with their race using three items adapted from previous research (Andreychik & Gill, 2009). Participants rated their agreement with statements such as: 1) I identify very closely with White people as a group, 2) Being White is an important reflection of who I am, and 3) I'm proud to think of myself as a White person. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M = 3.76$, $SD = .99$, $\alpha = .91$.

Injustice toward White people. Participant's perceptions of injustice toward White people were adapted from previous research (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) and assessed with three items. Participants rated their agreement with statements such as: 1) Whites are put at a disadvantage in America because of their race, 2) I think the way Whites are treated in America is unfair, and 3) Whites regularly experience inequality. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.22$, $\alpha = .95$.

White collective efficacy. Two items were adapted from previous research (Glasford & Calcagno, 2012) to assess participants' beliefs in White collective efficacy. Participants rated their agreement with statements such as: 1) Whites in America can work together to improve their status and position in society and 2) Whites can work together to improve their image in America. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M = 3.81$, $SD = .84$, S1 $r = .84$.

Collective action to benefit White people in the real world. Willingness to participate in collective actions that explicitly benefit White people was assessed using three items adapted from previous research (Glasford & Calcagno, 2012). Participants rated their agreement with statements including: 1) I would participate in a demonstration with the goal of improving the position of Whites in America, 2) I would sign a petition to stop discrimination against Whites in America, and 3) I would participate in raising awareness about injustices facing Whites in America. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.20$, $\alpha = .89$.

Collective action to benefit White people using social media. Three items were adapted from previous research (Chan 2014; Glasford & Calcagno, 2012) and used to assess participants' willingness to use social media to participate in collective actions that explicitly benefit White

people. Participants rated their agreement with statements including: 1) I would sign a petition online or on social media to stop discrimination against Whites in America, 2) I would like, retweet, or upvote a comment that is supportive of Whites as a group, and 3) I would take part in online or social media demonstrations with the goal of improving the position of Whites. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M =$ 2.80, $SD = 1.23$, $\alpha = .92$.

Outgroup measures.

Exposure to outgroups on social media. Three individual items were used to assess generally how often participants reported seeing content about various outgroups on social media. For example, how often on social media do you see content about 1) Muslims ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.26$), 2) Feminists ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.32$), and 3) Immigrants ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.50$). Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*most days*).

Attitudes toward immigrants. Participants' attitudes toward immigrants were adapted from previous research (Varela et al., 2013) and assessed using three items. Participants rated their agreement with statements such as: 1) Immigrants are a burden on American taxpayers, 2) Immigrants in large groups are dangerous, and 3) Immigrants are a threat to national security. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M =$ 3.28, $SD = 1.27$, $\alpha = .94$

Attitudes toward feminists. Two items adapted from previous research (Fassinger, 1994) were used to assess participants' attitudes toward feminists. Participants rated their agreement with statements including: 1) Feminist principles should be adopted everywhere and 2) Feminists are a menace to this nation and the world. Items were recoded so that higher scores indicated

more negative attitudes toward feminists. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M = 2.96$, $SD = .98$, $r = .30$.

   Attitudes toward Muslims. Attitudes toward Muslims were assessed using three items adapted from previous research (Cottrell, Richards, & Nicholls, 2010). Participants rated their agreement with statements such as Muslims: 1) Advocate values that are morally inferior to the values of people like me, 2) Promote values that directly oppose the values of people like me, and 3) Endanger the physical safety of people like me. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), $M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.17$, $\alpha = .93$.

Chapter 9: Study 2 Results

Analysis Plan

Most of the variables investigated in this survey were first tested in a smaller and exploratory sample to establish their validity. The current data were analyzed with the three proposed groups examined as distinctly separate from each other based on the definitions specified in the method section. As this dissertation is interested in how Alt-Right, Republican, and Democrat participants are similar and different from each other on a wide range of individual media and non-media items, a series of one-way ANOVA's and subsequent post hoc tests comparing the means between groups were conducted to examine if there were significant mean differences on each measure between Democrats vs. Alt-Right and Alt-Right vs. Republicans. Additionally, I was interested in how engagement and use of social media would predict various attitudes and behaviors across the political groups. These analyses were carried out using a series of GLM ANOVA's and tests of moderated mediation. For these tests Alt-Right participants were used as the reference group.

Demographic Information

As little is known about those who self-identify as Alt-Right I investigated the participants reported demographic information for each group (for a full demographic breakdown of the variables discussed see Appendix C). Indeed, the results show that for Democrat participants most reported their gender as female (52.7%). However, for Republicans (53.5%) and Alt-Right (58%), the majority of participants reported their gender as male. In the

context of income, Democrat participants reported "$100,000 to $149,999" (22.2%) as their most common total income. For Republicans, the most common total income was lower "$25,000 to $49,999" (24.8%). Whereas the Alt-Right were most frequently in the middle of the three groups "$50,000 to $74,999" (21.0%). Next, for education, Democrats were most likely to list "college graduate, four-year degree" (34.7%) as their highest level of education. Republicans most frequently listed "some college, but no four-year degree" (32.6%). For Alt-Right participants, an equal number of participants reported "some college, but no four-year degree" (25.9%) and "post graduate training or professional degree" (25.9%). Lastly, participants were asked about what type of environment they currently live in (e.g., rural, suburbs, city). For all three groups, Democrats (39.7%), Republicans (37.6%), and Alt-Right (32.1%) most indicated that they currently live in a suburban-type area in the U.S. Altogether, this data points to the fact that Alt-Right participants are both similar and different to those who self-identified as Democrats and Republicans depending on the demographic variable considered.

Comparisons Between Groups

  Strength of ingroup identities. Hypothesis 4 proposed that Alt-Right participants would also have the strongest Alt-Right identity. Indeed, I found that Alt-Right participants reported a significantly higher strength of Alt-Right identity as compared to Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = 1.67$, and Republicans, $p <. 001$, $d = 1.85$. No significant difference was found between Democrats and Republicans, $p > .999$. Next, hypothesis 5 stated that Alt-Right participants would more highly identify with their Whiteness as compared to Democrats and Republicans. Data indicated that Alt-Right participants did have a significantly stronger White identity compared to both Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = .99$, and Republicans, $p < .001$, $d = .52$. Additionally, Republicans were also found to have a significantly stronger White identity as compared to Democrats, $p < .001$, d

= .51. To summarize, in the context of dominant identities to the far-right, Alt-Right participants to a greater extent than either Democrats or Republicans identify with these aspects (e.g., the Alt-Right and Whiteness).

Differences in social media content across groups. For a full listing of all means for each group see Table 4 below.

Table 4. Means for each group media-related measures

Measure	Alt-Right	Democrats	Republicans
1. Injustice Whites SM	3.06[23]	1.67[13]	2.17[12]
2. Positive White identity SM	2.53[23]	2.16[13]	1.73[12]
3. White efficacy SM	3.60[23]	3.16[1]	3.18[1]
4. Exposure to feminists SM	2.83[23]	2.18[1]	2.15[1]
5. Exposure to Muslims SM	2.63[23]	1.97[1]	1.98[1]
6. Exposure to immigrants SM	3.62[23]	2.51[13]	2.87[12]

Note. ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, $N = 740$. SM = social media. All measures were examined on a 1-5 scale. 1 = significantly different than Alt-Right, 2 = significantly different than Democrats, 3 = significantly different than Republicans.

RQ 5 asked how Alt-Right individuals generally compare to Democrats and Republicans in the context of social media engagement and exposure. Overall, I found differences in the themes participants were exposed to in their social media diets based on their ideology. Alt-Right participants, for instance, reported significantly higher exposure to injustice toward Whites on social media compared to Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = 1.15$ and Republicans, $p < .001$, $d = .67$. Alt-Right individuals also reported more exposure to positive portrayals of White identity on social media, compared to Democrats, $p = .005$, $d = .27$ and Republicans, $p < .001$, $d = .62$. Lastly, Alt-Right participants had higher levels of White collective efficacy on social media compared to Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = .41$ and Republicans, $p < .001$, $d = .40$.

Next, I examined how these identity groups differed with respect to their exposure to outgroups within their social media content. Results revealed that Alt-Right participants reported

significantly higher exposure to feminists on social media compared to both Democrats, $p <$ .001, $d = .50$ and Republicans, $p < .001$, $d = .52$. Similar patterns were found for Alt-Right

individuals' exposure to Muslims on social media compared to Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = .52$ and

Republicans, $p < .001$, $d = .51$. Finally, exposure to immigrants on social media was also higher

for the Alt-right compared to Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = .82$ and Republicans $p < .001$, $d = .51$.

Altogether, the results addressing RQ5 indicate that Alt-Right participants are significantly and

frequently different from Democrats and Republicans in how they use and engage with social

media as well as the types of content they view.

Differences in social and political attitudes and behaviors across groups. For a full

listing of all means for each group see Table 5 below.

Table 5. Means for each group non-media related measures

Measure	Alt-Right	Democrats	Republicans
1. Alt-Right identity	4.76[23]	1.90[1]	1.76[1]
2. White identity	4.22[23]	3.29[13]	3.78[12]
3. Injustice toward Whites	3.75[23]	2.13[13]	3.13[12]
4. White collective efficacy	4.08[23]	3.58[13]	3.76[12]
5. Collective action offline	3.50[23]	2.43[13]	2.76[12]
6. Collective action online	3.53[23]	2.38[1]	2.51[1]
7. Attitudes toward immigrants	4.03[23]	2.41[13]	3.39[12]
8. Attitudes toward feminists	3.53[23]	2.31[13]	3.03[12]
9. Attitudes toward Muslims	3.80[23]	2.34[13]	3.00[12]

Note. ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, $N = 740$. All measures were examined on a 1-5 scale. 1 = significantly different than Alt-Right, 2 = significantly different than Democrats, 3 = significantly different than Republicans.

RQ 6 asked how Alt-Right participants are similar and different to Democrats and

Republicans in the context of social/ political attitudes and behaviors. Comparisons between

these groups found that Alt-Right participants were significantly higher than both Democrats and

Republicans on the mechanisms proposed by SIMCA. This included, White identity as specified

above, belief in injustice toward Whites, Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = 1.57$, Republicans, $p < .001$, d

= .61, and White collective efficacy, Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = .58$, Republicans, $p < .001$, $d =$

.40. Further, Alt-Right participants were also significantly more likely to be willing to participate

in collective actions that explicitly benefit Whites both offline, Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = .91$,

Republicans, $p < .001$, $d = .69$, and collective actions online, Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = .98$,

Republicans $p < .001$, $d = .91$.

   With respect to outgroup attitudes, I found that Alt-Right participants had significantly

higher negative outgroup attitudes compared to both Democrats and Republicans. This included

attitudes toward immigrants compared to Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = 1.53$, and Republicans, $p <$

.001, $d = .62$, attitudes toward feminists, Democrats, $p < .001$, $d = 1.41$, Republicans, $p < .001$, d

= .57, and attitudes toward Muslims, Democrats $p < .001$, $d = 1.44$, Republicans, $p < .001$, $d =$

.80.

Regressions Examining Social Media's Predictive Influence

   Considering the differences between Alt-Right, Democrats, and Republicans, I next

examined how for each group the media variables discussed above influence social and political,

attitudes. With a parsimonious analysis in mind, I decided to examine these relationships among

two contexts. First, I investigated the relationships proposed by the SIMCA model (van

Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Second, I examined how exposure to outgroups on social

media (e.g., Muslims, immigrants, feminists) influences attitudes toward these groups.

   SIMCA relationships. Hypotheses 6a-6c proposed that exposure to the SIMCA

mechanisms on social media would result in participants being higher in each mechanism (for

correlations between key variables see Table 6 below). Predictor variables were standardized for

the following analyses.

Table 6. Bivariate correlations for key SIMCA measures

| Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Injustice toward Whites on social media	-							
2. Positive White identity on social media	.43**	-						
3. White efficacy on social media	.35**	.40**	-					
4. Injustice toward Whites	.58**	.19**	.30**	-				
5. White identity	.35**	.23**	.36**	.47**	-			
6. White collective efficacy	.26**	.30**	.43**	.28**	.46**	-		
7. Collective action	.53**	.38**	.45**	.62**	.50**	.39**	-	
8. Collective action on social media	.53**	.42**	.53**	.56**	.48**	.37**	.81**	-

Notes. ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, $N = 740$.

SIMCA injustice. Consistent with H6a, there was a significant and positive association between exposure to injustice toward Whites on social media and perceptions of injustice toward Whites, $F (1, 734) = 229.71$, $b = .44$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .24$. As discussed above, political groups were also significantly different with respect to their perceptions of injustice toward Whites, $F (2, 734) = 63.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .15$. Specifically, Alt-right participants reported higher perceptions of injustice compared to Republicans and Democrats. Each of these comparisons were statistically significant (See Table 5 for details). Finally, the interaction between participant political identity and exposure to White injustice on social media was significant, $F (2, 734) = 4.42$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2_p = .01$.

Simple slopes analyses (see figure 6 below) show that exposure to social media content was positively and significantly associated with perceptions of injustice for individuals from all three political groups (Alt-Right $b = .44$, $p < .001$; Republicans $b = .54$, $p < .001$; Democrats $b =$

.72, $p < .001$). A follow up using contrasts to examine the differences in slopes revealed a

significant effect when comparing Democrats versus Alt-Right, $F (1, 734) = 8.84$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2_p =$

.01 and a marginally significant difference when comparing Democrats versus Republicans, $F (1,$

$734) = 3.64$, $p = .057$, $\eta^2_p = .01$. Lastly, I found no significant difference when comparing the

slopes between Republicans and the Alt-Right, $F (1, 734) = 1.43$, $p = .233$, $\eta^2_p = .00$. These

results reveal that the positive association observed between exposure to social media content

referencing injustices towards Whites and perceptions of injustice towards Whites in the real

world is similar for Alt-right and Republican individuals. However, this relation between social

media content about injustice and real-world perceptions of injustice towards Whites is much

stronger for Democrats when compared to Alt-right and marginally stronger when compared to

Republicans.

Figure 6. Relationship between injustice on social media on perceptions of injustice between

political identity groups
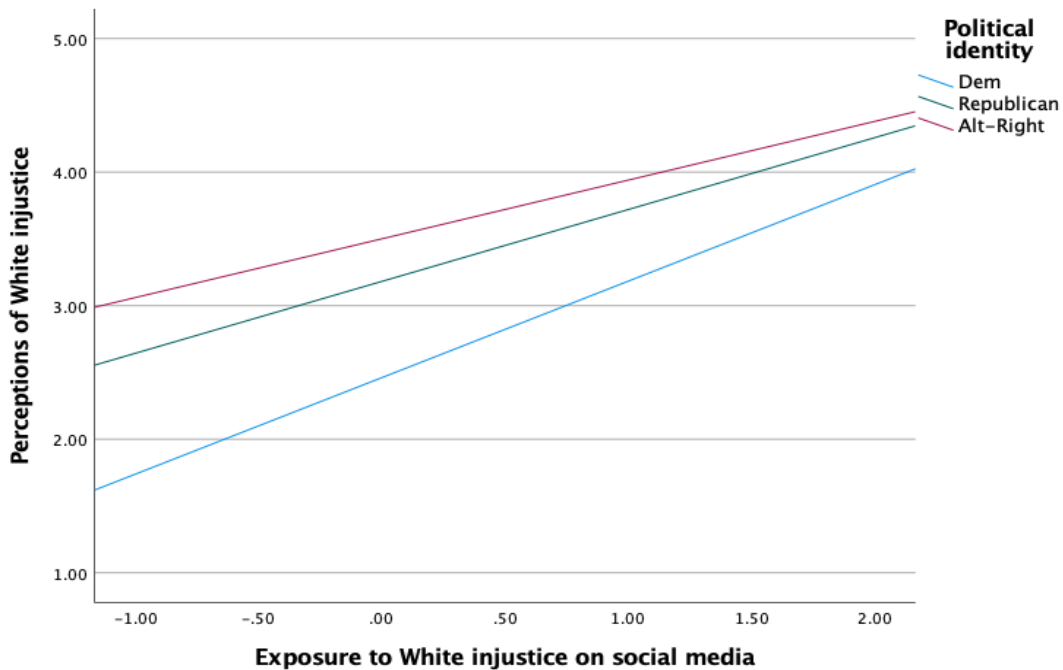
SIMCA collective efficacy. Supporting H6b, belief in social media messages about collective efficacy were positively associated with collective efficacy attitudes in the real world, $F(1, 734) = 141.26$, $b = .33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .16$. As discussed before, political groups differed in their collective efficacy real world beliefs, $F(2, 734) = 13.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .04$. Specifically, Alt-Right participants reported statistically higher levels of collective efficacy as compared to Democrats and Republicans (see Table 5 for details). The interaction between belief in social media messages about collective efficacy and political group was not significant, $F(2, 734) = .08$, $p = .924$, $\eta^2_p = .00$. An analysis of the simple slopes found a positive and significant relationship for belief in collective efficacy on social media with attitudes of collective efficacy for all three groups (Alt-Right $b = .33$, $p < .001$; Republicans $b = .33$, $p < .001$; Democrats $b = .36$, $p < .001$). However, a comparison of the slopes shows that none of the contrasts between political groups were significant, Democrats and Republican, $p = .712$, Democrats and Alt-Right, $p = .748$, Republicans and Alt-Right, $p = .936$. This indicates that the positive relationship observed between belief in collective efficacy messages in social media and attitudes of collective efficacy in the real world are of a similar magnitude for Democrats, Republicans, and the Alt-Right.

SIMCA White identity. Consistent with H6c, exposure to references of White identity on social media was positively and significantly associated with identification of White racial identity, $F(1, 734) = 26.98$, $b = .23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .04$. As noted before, political groups significantly differed with respect to White identity, $F(2, 734) = 55.50$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .04$. The data show that Alt-Right individuals significantly and more strongly identify with being White compared to Democrats and Republicans (see Table 5 for details). The interaction between exposure to references of White identity in social media and political group was non-significant,

F (2, 734) = 1.01, p = .367, $\eta^2{}_p$ = .00. The test of simple slopes revealed a significant and positive relationship between exposure to references of White identity on social media and strength of White identity for Alt-Right b = .23, p < .001 and Democrat b = .22, p < .001 participants. The slope for Republicans was non-significant b = .11, p = .126. The contrasts comparing the slopes between political groups found that none were significant, Democrats and Republican, p = .250, Democrats and Alt-Right, p = .892, Republicans and Alt-Right, p = .173. Altogether the data shows the relation between exposure to White identity references on social media and strength of White identity is not significantly different across political groups.

   SIMCA Mediated Moderation.

   Collective action offline. Next, because the SIMCA variables related to injustice revealed a significant interaction between exposure to injustice on social media and political identity on perceptions of injustice I further explored this relationship (e.g., H7). Using the PROCESS macro Model 8 (Hayes & Preacher, 2014) with 5000 bootstrapped samples. I examined how exposure to injustice toward Whites on social media (i.e., x) influences willingness to participate in collective actions offline that benefit White people (i.e., y) through perceptions of injustice (i.e., m) and moderated by political identity (i.e., w) (see Figure 7 below).

Figure 7. Conceptual model 1
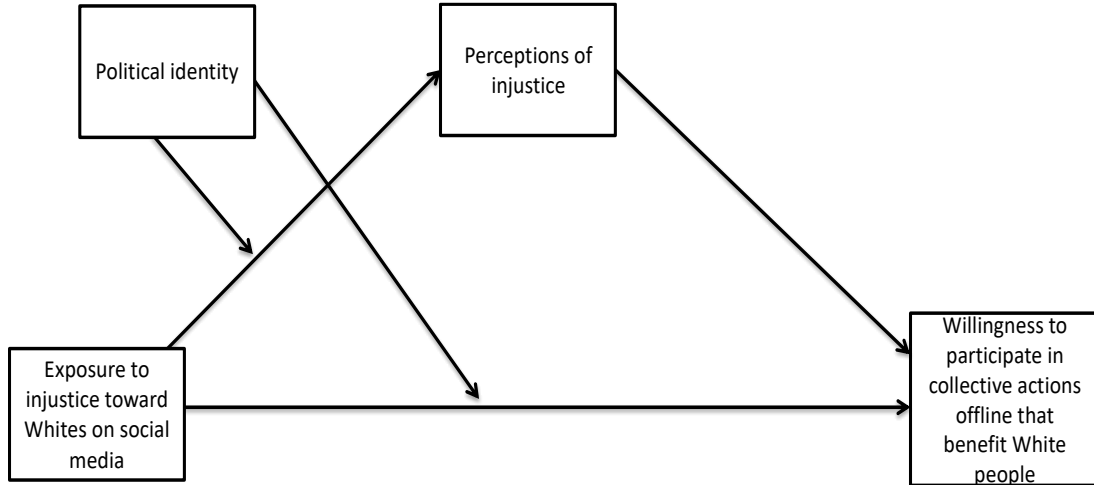
For the multi-categorical moderator Alt-Right participants were treated as the reference group. The moderated mediation model comparing Democrats and the Alt-Right was supported with a significant index of moderated mediation = .14, *SE* = .05, 95% CI [.04, .24]. Because the confidence interval for this index does not include zero this indicates a significant conditional indirect effect when comparing Democrats and the Alt-Right. Indeed, the conditional indirect effect for Democrat participants, *b* = .35, *SE* = .05, CI [.26, .44] was stronger than for Alt-Right participants, *b* = .21, *SE* = .04, CI [.14, .29]. The moderated mediation model comparing Republicans and the Alt-Right was not found to have a significant index = .05, *SE* = .04, CI [-.03, .13]. In other words, the conditional indirect effect for Republican participants, *b* = .26, *SE* = .04, CI [.19, .33], was not statistically different than the Alt-Right.

Collective action online. A similar pattern was found for willingness to participate in collective actions online that benefit White people (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Conceptual model 2
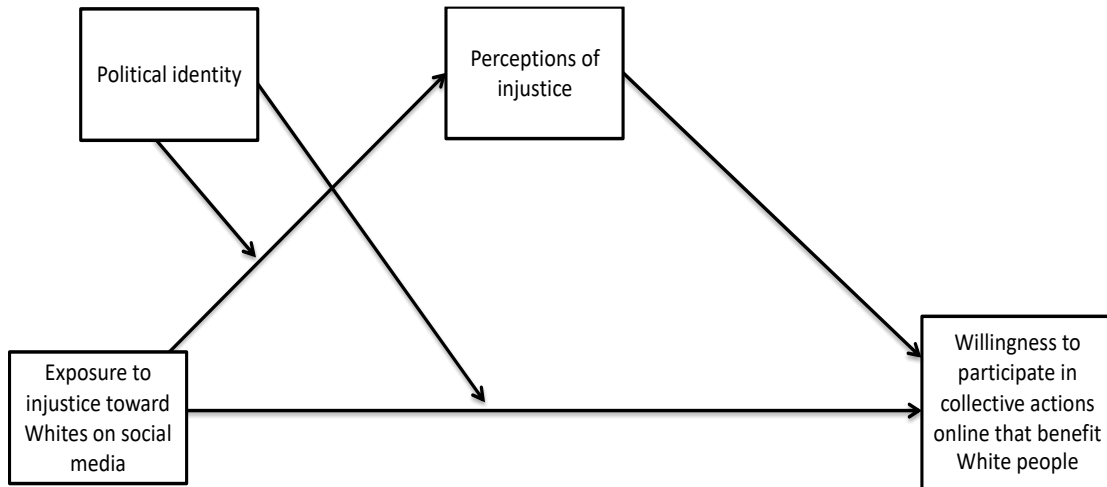
The comparison between Democrats and the Alt-Right was again supported with a significant index of moderated mediation = .11, SE = .04, CI [.03, .20]. This indicates that the conditional indirect effect is stronger for Democrats b = .28, SE = .04, CI [.20, .37] as compared to the Alt-Right, b = .17, SE = .03, CI [.11, .24]. When comparing Republicans to the Alt-Right the moderated mediation index was not significant, = .04, SE = .04, CI [-.03, .11]. Showing that Republican participants, b = .21, SE = .03, CI [.15, .28], are not significantly different from the Alt-Right.

Outgroup attitudes. Based on the data from study 1, hypothesis 8a-8c proposed that exposure to content about outgroups (immigrants, Muslims, feminists) on social media will lead to increased negative attitudes toward each group (for correlations between key variables see Table 7 below).

Table 7. Bivariate correlations for key outgroup measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Immigrant social media exposure	-					
2. Muslims social media exposure	.65**	-				
3. Feminist social media exposure	.67**	.71**	-			
4. Attitudes toward immigrants	.25**	.22**	.22**	-		
5. Attitudes toward Muslims	.27**	.36**	.31**	.67**	-	
6. Attitudes toward feminists	.17**	.13*	.17**	.45**	.50**	-

Notes. ** p < .001, * p < .05, N = 740.

Immigrants. Referencing H8a, increased exposure to immigrants on social media was associated with more negative attitudes toward this group, $F(1, 734) = 10.62$, $b = .17$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2_p = .01$. Additionally, this data shows a significant main effect for political identity, $F(2, 734) = 105.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .22$. Specifically, Alt-right participants had more negative attitudes about immigrants compared to Republicans and Democrats (see Table 5 for specifics). However, the interaction did not reveal a significant relationship between these variables, $F(2, 734) = .459$, $p = .632$, $\eta^2_p = .00$. An analysis of the simple slopes found a significant and positive slope for exposure to immigrants on social media with negative attitudes toward immigrants for Republican participants, $b = .16$, $p = .013$ and Alt-right participants, $b = .17$, $p = .022$. For Democrats it was not significant, $b = .08$, $p = .318$. An examination comparing the interaction slopes for each group showed that none of the contrasts were significant, Democrats and Republican, $p = .411$, Democrats and Alt-Right, $p = .388$, Republicans and Alt-Right, $p = .917$.

Muslims. Supporting H8b, viewing more content on social media about Muslims was related to increased negative attitudes about this group, $F(1, 734) = 67.57$, $b = .37$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .08$. A second significant main effect was also found for political identity, $F(2, 734) = 101.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .22$. This main effect indicated that Alt-Right participants have significantly more negative attitudes toward Muslims compared to Democrats and Republicans (see Table 5 for specifics). The interaction was not found to be significant, $F(2, 734) = 1.47$, $p = .231$, $\eta^2_p = .00$. A further investigation of the interaction slopes revealed a significant and positive relationship for exposure to Muslims on social media with negative attitudes toward Muslims for each political group (Alt-Right $b = .37$, $p < .001$; Republicans $b = .34$, $p < .001$; Democrats $b = .22$, $p = .003$). However, none of the contrasts comparing these interaction slopes between political groups were significant, Democrats and Republican, $p = .196$, Democrats and Alt-Right, $p = .097$, Republicans and Alt-Right, $p = .776$.

Feminists. Consistent with H8c, increased viewing of content that included feminists on social media was associated with negative attitudes toward this group, $F(1, 734) = 5.02$, $b = .10$, $p = .025$, $\eta^2_p = .01$. A significant main effect was also found for political identity, $F(2, 734) = 117.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .24$. Specifically, Alt-right participants reported increased negative attitudes toward feminists compared to Republicans and Democrats. (See Table 5 for specifics). However, the interaction between these variables was not significant, $F(2, 734) = 1.35$, $p = .259$, $\eta^2_p = .00$. I next examined the interaction slopes and found a significant and positive relationship with exposure to feminists on social media for negative attitudes toward feminists in Republican participants $b = .12$, $p = .028$. For Alt-Right it was marginally significant, $b = .10$, $p = .061$. For Democrats the slope was non-significant, $b = .00$, $p = .94$. Lastly, none of the contrasts

investigating the interaction slopes between political groups were significant, Democrats and

Republican, $p = .120$, Democrats and Alt-Right, $p = .194$, Republicans and Alt-Right, $p = .765$.

Chapter 10: Study 2 Discussion

Digital media is a powerful influence that can be used by individuals to seek out information, spread discourse, connect with others, and form communities (Kuo, 2018). One community that engages with social media extensively to help define its identity is the Alt-Right. Indeed, social media platforms like Parler (Aliapoulios et al., 2021; Prabhu et al., 2021) and websites like 8chan/8kun (Askanius, 2021) were specifically created to cater to those on the far-right fringe. However, mainstream platforms used by all Americans including, Twitter, Reddit, YouTube, and Facebook regularly contain pro-White content and ideas (Gaudette et al., 2020; Lewis, 2018). Despite the Alt-Right collective identity and their ideology becoming more visible with the presidency of Donald Trump, many Americans are still unaware of who they are and what they stand for (Pew Research Center, 2016a). This general lack of information related to the Alt-Right likely also contributes to the dearth of academic research on this group (c.f., Forscher & Kteily, 2019). Examining this group, in comparison to others, is important as the Alt-Right have integrated themselves into the larger political and social landscape in the United States (Friedersdorf, 2019).

Critically, no research has directly sampled Alt-Right participants to understand in-depth how they use social media, the types of content that they are regularly exposed to, and how they compare to other political identities. Study 1 of this dissertation examined the messaging that was present in White nationalist digital media (e.g., YouTube videos). Study 2 builds upon Study 1 by examining how self-reported exposure to pro-White messaging on social media influences different attitudes and behaviors. I accomplish this by collecting a sample of White participants

who either self-identified as Alt-Right, Republican and not Alt-Right, or Democrat and not Alt-Right. Employing this unique sample based on existing research (Forscher & Kteily, 2019) allows me to theoretically investigate how Alt-Right participants use social media in potentially unique ways compared to Democrats and Republicans.

SIMCA Derived Data

Given the recent real-world examples of collective actions perpetuated by the far-right (Barrett, Raju, & Nickeas, 2021), I was interested in examining the relation between exposure to the SIMCA mechanism themes on social media, beliefs in the SIMCA mechanisms, and collective action intentions across Democrats, Republicans, and Alt-Right individuals. Study 2 results comparing differences in social media exposure to SIMCA themes (e.g., injustice toward Whites, White identity, and White collective efficacy) revealed that Alt-Right participants come across these themes more so than Democrats and Republicans (see Table 4). In other words, those who identify as Alt-Right are more likely to report that on social media they see Whites treated unjustly, positive portrayals of White identity, and believe that White people can use social media to improve their status.

Examining exposure to these themes in social media is significant given their potential to affect related psychological attitudes and motivate pro-White collective actions (van Zomeren et al., 2008). This influence was particularly evident with respect to perceptions of Whites' being treated unjustly. Indeed, not only does viewing online content about White injustice influence real-world perceptions of Whites being treated unfairly but it interacts and is significantly different across the political groups of interest (e.g., Democrats vs. Republicans vs. Alt-Right). The positive relation between exposure to messages referencing White injustice in social media and perceptions of Whites being treated unfairly in the real world is the strongest among

Democrats, followed by Republicans, and the Alt-Right (see Figure 6). This effect of injustice has critical theoretical implications both generally and for collective action subsequently.

This highlights the robust influence that pro-White social media content can have on groups that are not typically associated with far-right attitudes (e.g., White Democrats). For example, while Alt-Right individuals had the *highest* overall exposure to White injustice on social media, it is Democrats who when exposed to it have their perceptions of injustice toward Whites influenced the *most*. Theoretically for Democrats increased viewing of certain pro-White themes on social media might have harmful consequences that brings their attitudes associated with White injustice more closely in line with Republicans and the Alt-Right (see Figure 6). In other words, although Democrats are usually unlikely to perceive Whites experiencing injustice, when they are exposed to this concept on social media it has the potential to shift their real-world beliefs about White injustice. Arguably social media is even more relevant in this context considering it is where many people are exposed to pro-White ideas for the first time (DeCook, 2018). By referencing themes associated with White injustice pro-White groups have the potential to radicalize the attitudes of casual viewers in line with those of the Alt-Right.

The findings relevant to perceptions of injustice are consistent with those reported in other research (Dentice & Bugg, 2016; Norton & Sommers, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2019). As in the present study, there is a significant percentage of White Americans, irrespective of political identification, who feel disenfranchised and treated unfairly. The rise of equity and justice for marginalized groups might be perceived as coming at the expense of White Americans (Bryan, 2020; Norton & Sommers, 2011). Perceptions of "reverse racism" against Whites is not only associated with hostility towards marginalized groups but is also known to influence support for policies aimed at helping these groups (e.g., affirmative action; Wilkins et al., 2017).

Perceptions of injustice, in turn, are a key psychological mechanism known to influence collective actions aimed at improving one's ingroup status and position in society. Indeed, findings from the moderated mediation analysis revealed that exposure to social media injustice (proposed predictor) significantly and positively influenced collective action (proposed outcome) via perceptions of injustice (proposed mediator). Though this effect was observed for each of the political groups, it was the strongest for Democrats. Theoretically, this provides additional support for the critical influence that viewing White injustice on social media can have on both attitudes and behaviors (e.g., collective action) for each group examined.

It might be unlikely that Democrats will participate in actions like the 2017 Charlottesville Rally. However, the relationships above still have implications for this group as well as Republicans and the Alt-right in the context of collective action. This is because exposure to certain social media messages (e.g., injustice) have a strong motivational effect on White Americans' collective action willingness. In other words, certain types of digital media use could lead to further trends of individuals participating in actions to benefit their ingroup. Conceptually the role social media plays in this context is critical as a predictor (exposure to injustice on social media). But it might also be important as an outcome. For example, digital media can provide additional opportunities for action (Bimber, 2017). Especially if in-person forms of collective action are particularly costly (Pulver et al., 2021).

Additionally, while the effect was strongest for Democrats this should not take away from the finding that for Republicans and the Alt-Right there was also a significant mediating relationship of social media on willingness to participate in collective action. Indeed, this might especially be important to these two groups given the recent and actual examples of far-right collective action carried out and facilitated by social media (Cellan-Jones, 2021). To summarize,

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there is a strong indication that exposure to White injustice on social media is what motivates some White Americans to go out and participate in action. Although perceptions of White injustice/discrimination are distorted from reality, this is unimportant. This is because it is something that these individuals *perceive* to be true. I show that this feeling is influential, and that White Americans belief in it affects collective action in similar patterns as actual marginalized groups (Schmuck & Tribastone, 2020).

The relationships discussed above are important as study 1 data showed that injustice was the mechanism most prevalent in social media (e.g., YouTube videos). This is the first study to establish a theoretical connection between viewing social media, belief in SIMCA psychological mechanisms, and collective action willingness in a pro-White context for Democrats, Republicans and the Alt-Right. These results further extend the situations in which the SIMCA model (van Zomeren et al., 2008) is conceptually relevant and can be used to help explain the role that social media plays in motivating all White Americans, regardless of political identity, to engage in various types of pro-White collective action. Altogether, the effect of social media in this situation is important as the data from Study 1 and Study 2 indicate that digital media acts as both a platform for the message (injustice toward Whites) and a predictor that indirectly influences collective action behaviors.

While White identity and collective efficacy are mechanisms also proposed by SIMCA to be influential at affecting collective action, the data from this dissertation did not show that the influence was uniquely different across political groups. In the context of White collective efficacy, each group experienced a significant and positive relationship between collective efficacy on social media and beliefs about collective efficacy in the real word. A similar pattern was also found for viewing positive representations of White identity on social media and

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strength of White identity (minus the significant relationship for Republicans). Given the magnitude of these relationships were roughly similar across groups and the interaction between social media and political identity on both outcomes were not statistically significant, I choose to not further examine their influence as I did with injustice (e.g., moderated mediation). Based on the analyses above it is unlikely that they would have influenced collective action in meaningfully different ways across Democrats, Republicans and the Alt-Right (e.g., when moderated by political identity). Although, it is critical for future research to examine situations in which mechanisms like collective efficacy and White identity might be different for White Americans and lead to differing motivations to engage in collective action.

Finally, not only were the mean differences between groups for individual measures relative to the SIMCA model significant, but they were also large. Indeed, when comparing Democrats and the Alt-Right, effects sizes as indicated by Sawilowsky (2009) and Cohen (1988) that reached the large threshold included exposure to injustice toward Whites on social media, belief in injustice toward Whites, and willingness to engage in collective actions both offline and online. For the comparisons between the Alt-Right and Republicans, only willingness to participate in collective action online was considered large. Altogether the compelling number of effect sizes that reached a medium or large threshold indicates that in the context of SIMCA mechanisms and outcomes the mean differences for individual measures between the Alt-right and Democrats/Republicans are drastic and robust.

Social Identity Outgroup Data

As White males are considered to be the dominant ingroup to the Alt-Right and White nationalists, I examined how participants' self-reported exposure to outgroups on social media would influence their attitudes toward the depicted groups. For each outgroup (immigrants,

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Muslims, feminists) increased viewing of content related to these groups on social media was positively associated with negative attitudes. This is especially reflected in Alt-Right and Republican participants considering their slopes were positive and significant (or marginally significant) between viewing content about each outgroup on social media and negative attitudes. For Democrats the slope was only significant in the context of Muslims. However, when comparing contrasts across the respective political groups none of the slope comparisons were found to be statistically different/significant.

More broadly these relationships indicate that the influence of viewing social media content about outgroups is not just staying in the digital world but rather is bleeding into how individuals negatively think about them in real life. Negative outgroup attitudes are important as existing research shows that when White individuals consider a group to be a threat to their dominant status, they are more likely to adopt/support more conservative policies (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; 2014b). Further identifying these references within media is critical as exposure to negative representations can influence real-world behaviors that are harmful towards marginalized groups (Hawkins et al., 2021).

The results relevant to these specific outgroups could be partly explained by existing research which shows stereotyped far-right narratives about Muslims, immigrants, feminists are especially common on traditional social media platforms (Bjork-James, 2020; Gaudette et al., 2020). This is also supported from data in Study 1 which examined the messaging around the three specific outgroups in White nationalist social media. Though the groups examined (e.g., Muslims, immigrants, and feminists) are distinct from each other in important ways, results from the current dissertation reveal that each of these groups tends to be referenced in a similar negative light within pro-White social media.

Demographic Information

Much is unknown about individuals who identify as Alt-Right (Forscher & Kteily, 2019). Because of this, general demographic information and comparisons to other groups (Democrats and Republicans) are important (see Appendix C for further details). I found that the income category that had the highest percent of Alt-Right participants was in between Democrats (higher average income than Alt-Right) and Republicans (lower average income than Alt-Right). For education, Alt-Right participants most commonly selected both the "some college, but no four-year degree" and "post graduate training or professional degree" options. In the context of education and income, this data roughly maps on to information identified by existing research. Indeed, Forscher and Kteily (2019) found that for Alt-Right participants a majority (57%) reported their education combined as some college or college and beyond. The demographic information collected builds upon this existing research by also examining what type of environment they currently live in (e.g., rural, suburbs, city). Results revealed that the suburbs are the area most listed by Alt-Right, Democrats, and Republicans. This is of interest as rural areas are generally considered to be more strictly conservative (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Altogether, this demographic information has important implications for both pollsters and political scientists. Indeed, one common narrative in both the 2016 and 2020 Presidential elections was the inaccuracies related to Donald Trump and the nationwide polls (Blumenthal et al., 2017). In short, the polls often underestimated the popularity of Donald Trump. While there are various theories related to this (Blumenthal et al., 2017; Kurtzleben, 2020), it is possible that Alt-Right support for Donald Trump and the pollster's inability to accurately access this group was an issue. Using a nationally representative sample, Forcher and Kteily (2019) find that by applying the most conservative estimates 5% of Trump voters identify as Alt-Right. However,

this number is potentially and likely much higher. Because the Alt-Right is hard to access, if they make up a medium percent of Donald Trump's voting base then this could potentially skew the polls. This highlights the continued importance of understanding who the Alt-Right are and being able to accurately sample them in nationwide surveys. By providing additional information about the demographic identities of the Alt-Right this study has practical significance to those interested in polling and accessing this group.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has important limitations that require attention. First, this survey employed a cross-section methodology to examine the relationships discussed above. This methodology was chosen given the difficulty of sampling the Alt-Right as well as the ethical complications of experimentally exposing participants to Alt-Right or White nationalist social media content. Because of the cross-sectional nature of this study, I am unable to make any causal claims about the data or with certainty establish the direction of influence between social media predictors and offline attitudes and behaviors. With this limitation in mind future research should use other methodologies to explore the connections examined in this study. For example, ethically conducted experimental research could establish short-term causal relationships between exposure to SIMCA themes in White nationalist social media, beliefs in these mechanisms, and subsequent collective action behaviors that benefit White Americans. Exposing Democrat, Republican, and Alt-Right participants to examples of White injustice from social media (as compared to a control video or stimulus) could theoretically increase perceptions of White injustice and subsequent collective action behaviors as proposed by the cross-sectional data.

Additionally, longitudinal methods would also be useful in this context. Longitudinal studies that survey Alt-Right participants would allow researchers to investigate the long-term

consequences of exposure to White nationalist social media. Currently, information on these long-term effects does not exist. Arguably viewing White nationalist social media over time might have additive effects, or individuals might eventually reach some type of ceiling. However, further data is needed to understand this fully. Experimental and longitudinal methodologies would also be helpful to more concretely explore the moderated mediating relationships proposed in the current research.

Second, this study only sampled participants who self-identified as racially White. Although most who identify with the Alt-Right are likely White, other racial and ethnic groups might have members who also identify with certain aspects of this movement. For instance, some Latinx individuals are part of far-right organizations such as the Proud Boys (Almada, 2017). Future research should examine the role of those who are not racially White in far-right groups. Related to this, the data in this survey was collected using convenience sampling and was not nationally representative. Employing a nationally representative sample and including Alt-Right participants is difficult (Forscher & Kteily, 2019) and requires extensive resources that were outside the scope of this project. As understanding who the Alt-Right are is important future research should use samples that approximate the general population of the United States. The fact that the sample was only from the United States is also a limitation. Far-right and pro-White ideology is not unique to the U.S. Indeed, existing research has explored how White people throughout Europe also identify with far-right ideology (Ali, 2021; Mieriņa & Koroļeva, 2015; Mulhall & Khan-Ruf, 2021). As the underlying mechanisms that influence White individuals in Europe and the U.S. are likely related, future research should explore these relationships and similarities across Western countries.

Third, similar to Study 1 only data related to three specific outgroups (e.g., Muslims, immigrants, and feminists) were explored in this survey. This is because these three groups are considered the biggest threat to the Alt-Right and the White nationalist ideology. However, these are not the only outgroups to the far-right. Future research should explore participants' self-reported exposure to social media and attitudes toward a wider range of social outgroups. Fourth, all constructs assessed in the current research were based on self-report. Self-report data in the context of media can be problematic as individuals can sometimes report their media use in inaccurate ways (Prior, 2013). Continued research should explore the most effective ways to record participants' media use. Self-report data is also a limitation when assessing collective action. Because collective action is difficult to measure (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) many rely on either intentions or attitudes. This can be problematic as these might not always translate to actual collective actions. Future research should examine the relationships in this study using behavioral measures which more accurately map onto this construct.

Lastly, the present research examined media use and exposure strictly in the context of social media. While data from both studies show that this is a relevant predictor for pro-White attitudes, it is likely not the only one. Indeed, the role that mobile communication has in allowing individuals to access far-right content should not be ignored. Further, mobile communication might be especially important to consider when examining outcomes like collective action. For example, accessing social media platforms on mobile devices can allow users to coordinate with others in real time when engaging in various forms of far-right collective action. Both micro coordination (Ling & Yttri, 1999), and violent collective action (Bailard, 2015) using mobile phones have previously been examined. However, this has not been applied to White nationalism and recent examples of far-right collective action. To further understand the unique influence

that mobile communication might have future research should explore how these devices allow White nationalists to interact digitally while actively participating in collective action.

Conclusion of Study 2

Altogether, Study 2 makes a significant theoretical contribution by identifying that participant exposure to pro-White themes on social media influences real-world attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, I extend the research in this area by examining these relationships using a unique sample of Democrats, Republicans and the Alt-Right. This is important as is it allows for a comparison with a group who is often directly associated with the White nationalist movement. As Study 1 indicates, far-right social media generally focuses on a strong pro-White narrative. However, both general exposure to these themes within digital media and the influence they have on participants real-world beliefs might be theoretically different across political identities. For example, in the present research Alt-Right participants reported higher overall exposure to pro-White SIMCA themes on social media compared to the other two groups. While viewing White injustice on social media was found to influence willingness to engage in collective action to benefit Whites for all three political identities, the effect was strongest for Democrats. This highlights the theoretical significance of social media content and the robustness of pro-White feelings in the United States for many. Just like how the growing spread of White supremacy cannot be solely attributed to social media, it also cannot be attributed to a single political identity or group (the Alt-Right). Rather as this study identifies, pro-White attitudes and White supremacy is a systemic issue that needs to be addressed in a multifaceted way.

Practical Implications Across Studies

In addition to the important theoretical extensions, this research also makes a significant practical contribution. Public opinion data identifies rising support and actions taken by White nationalists in the U.S. as a reason for concern (Mehta, 2019). Additionally, public and private think tanks continue to explore the presence and activities of the far-right and White nationalists in the U.S. For example, the Southern Poverty Law Center has identified that White nationalist groups are growing (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020) and the Anti-Defamation League has investigated how these groups are increasingly using propaganda (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; 2021). Data from the Study 1 content analysis can be practically used by think tank organizations to help explain why pro-White groups are growing and also how they are using propaganda.

Indeed, one reason these groups are experiencing growth is that many White Americans are concerned about the threats to their dominant status (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; 2014b) as well as the threats that outgroups generally pose. My data supports this by showing narratives about outgroups, and their potential threat, are being regularly pushed on social media. This has implication as exposure to this content could contribute to negative outgroup beliefs as identified in Study 2. Additionally, the data from Study 1 on the presence of mechanisms that motivate collective action supports and helps explain the findings from the Anti-Defamation League (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; 2021). Lastly, the methods used in this study could be useful to think tank organizations, as currently they very rarely investigate what is in the social media content that White nationalist and far-right groups are creating and producing themselves online. Further understanding of the messages in this social media could help think tanks design interventions to reduce the effects of radicalization and misinformation and identify harmful content that individuals should avoid.

Final Summarization

      Overall, the goal of these two studies was to more completely understand the relationship between social media and the growing pro-White trend in the United States (Anti-Defamation League, 2021; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020). Many have argued that social media is facilitating the rise in far-right movements in the U.S. and across Europe. Previous research has used social network analysis (Lewis, 2018), qualitative methods (DeCook, 2018), and big data approaches (Chen, Nyhan, Reifler, Robertson, & Wilson, 2021). However, data that both quantitatively content analyzes White nationalist social media (Study 1) and directly examines individuals' exposure to pro-White themes on social media (Study 2) is lacking. While many important concepts both psychological and media-related were explored in this dissertation, arguably the examination of collective action is most timely.

      Indeed, the start of this project was directly situated in between two recognizable and deadly examples of collective action (the 2017 Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville and the 2021 U.S. Capitol riot). Critically both forms of action were racially motivated by White supremacy and have some connection to social media. The Unite the Right rally made the Alt-Right nationally and internationally recognizable and forced many of their interactions online. The Capitol riot was planned, facilitated, and coordinated using social media (Cellan-Jones, 2021; Frenkel, 2021). Consequently, the role of pro-White themes on social media cannot be ignored in this context. As this dissertation shows, social media can act as a platform for messages that radicalize and as a mechanism that drives pro-White attitudes and behaviors for *all White Americans*.

Appendix A: Coding Scheme for Study 1

Coding Scheme

Unit of Analysis: YouTube video. No commercials, December 12, 2019. 30 min time cut off.

Corpus: 20 YouTube videos from 5 pro-White channels.

Variables to code:

Total number of people in the video: List number

Video Style- (Interview/personal vlog/public/no video just audio)

Use info graphics, graphs or charts (Yes/No)

Show outside news media coverage (Yes/No)

Male in video- (Yes/No)

Female in video- (Yes/No)

Trans male in video- (Yes/No)

Trans female in video- (Yes/No)

Is Feminism mentioned?- (Yes/No)

What was the valence of coverage related to feminism if mentioned (Positive/Negative/Neutral)

White-European individual in video- (Yes/No)

Non-White individuals in video- (Yes/No)

Mention Immigrants or Immigration or migration- (Yes/No)

List immigrant groups mentioned

List threats mentioned by immigration or migration

Mention Muslims or Islam- (Yes/No)

List threats mentioned by Muslims or Islam

SIMCA related codes

Republican party mentioned- (Yes/No)

Democratic party mentioned- (Yes/No)

Donald Trump mentioned- (Yes/No)

Barack Obama mentioned- (Yes/No)

Hillary Clinton mentioned- (Yes/No)

Mention collective action or taking action- (Yes/No)

Mention injustice or unfair treatment of Whites- (Yes/No)

Mention injustice or unfair treatment of minorities- (Yes/No)

Do they mention that they themselves are being treated unfairly or are being attacked- (Yes/No)

Mention collective White efficacy- (Yes/No)

Mention White identity- (Yes/No)

Mention Whites under threat - (Yes/No)

Mention minorities as being under threat- (Yes/No)

Appendix B: Codebook for Study 1

Codebook

Total number of individuals:

Write down the total number of individuals in the video- These should be considered people that

have speaking roles or who are being interviewed as part of the video.

Video Information:

Video Style (Interview/personal vlog/public)- Choose which option the video style is. A

interview would involve more then one person in the video and is generally a structured

conversation where one participant asks questions, and the other provides answers (Merriam-

Webster, n.d.). A personal vlog would involve only one individual in the video and often entails

that person speaking into a camera about what is going on in their lives or about a certain topic.

Or does the video take place out in public at some type of rally or event or at some type of

conference.

Use info graphics, graphs or charts (Yes/No)- Info graphics are a way to visually represent data

in a video. This also include graphs or charts that are being used to try and get their point across

or to make data easier to understand.

Show outside news media coverage (Yes/No)- In the video do they show clips or embed clips

from other forms of news? This could include news reports or news stories or potentially other

news related YouTube clips. This can also include still shots from online newspaper sources and

television news.

Male/Female:

Gender presentation "Refers to the external appearance, dress, mannerism, and behavior through which each individual presents their gender identity, or the gender they want to appear as. Gender presentation may change, for example, a Drag King may present as a male during his performance, but as a female in her daily life." (positive space network)

Biological sex "Our biological sex is how we are defined as female, male, or intersex. It describes our internal and external bodies — including our sexual and reproductive anatomy, our genetic makeup, and our hormones. (Planned Parenthood).

Male- The individual is male.

Female- The individual is female.

Trans male- Those who were assigned female at birth but who now identify as male.

Trans female- Those who were assigned male at birth but who now identify as female

Feminist groups or individuals- Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define, establish, and achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes.

Race:

Modern scholarship views racial categories as socially constructed, that is, race is not intrinsic to human beings but rather an identity created, often by socially dominant groups, to establish meaning in a social context. Different cultures define different racial groups, often focused on the largest groups of social relevance, and these definitions can change over time.

White individual- "White" refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples typically of Europe, It includes people who indicated their race(s) as "White" or reported entries such as German, Italian, British or Caucasian (U.S. Census, 2010). Additionally can be thought of as someone who is perceived to be White based on his or her skin color.

Non-White individuals- Are individuals present physically in the video who do not meet the criteria of White individuals above. Examples could include people who would be perceived as Black, Asian, Latino, Arab, etc.

Immigration and Immigrants:

Considering this from a U.S. context, immigration is the international movement of people to a destination country of which they are not natives or where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens, or to take up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker. Immigrants would then be the individuals who are engaging in immigration and are immigrating to the United States.

Immigrants or Immigration- The individuals speaking in the video mention the words or discuss immigration or immigrants or people trying to immigrate or come into the United States. This could also include imagery or immigrants entering the U.S.

List immigrant groups- If people in the video mention immigration or immigrants do they mention or reference any specific groups of immigrants? If so list the groups that are mentioned with immigration.

Threats of immigration- If immigration or immigrants is mentioned do the individuals discuss any threats related to immigration? Examples of this could include national security threats, public safety threats, political threats, economic threats, cultural and identity threats. List the threats that are mentioned concerning immigration.

Islam and Muslims:

A follower of the religion of Islam, a Muslim is one who believes in god and that Muhammad was the supreme messenger of god" (Arab-American anti discrimination committee).

Muslims or Islam- The individuals speaking in the video mention the words or discuss Muslims or Islam. This can include discussions of Muslims in the Middle East, in European countries or the United States.

Threats related to Muslims- If Muslims or Islam is mentioned do the individuals discuss any threats related to these? Examples of this could include national security threats, public safety threats, political threats, economic threats, cultural and identity threats. List the threats that are mentioned.

SIMCA Related codes

Politics:

A political movement is a social group that operates together to obtain a political goal, on a local, regional, national, or international scope. Political movements develop, coordinate, promulgate, revise, amend, interpret, and produce materials that are intended to address the goals of the base of the movement. A social movement in the area of politics can be organized around a single issue or set of issues, or around a set of shared concerns of a social group.

Republican party- The individuals in the video mention the republican party explicitly, the GOP, conservatives or the right.

Democratic party- The individuals in the video mention the democratic party, liberals or the left.

Donald Trump- The individuals in the video mention Donald Trump in any way or show imagery of him, this can include political slogans associated with Donald Trump (make America great again)

Barack Obama- The individuals in the video mention Barack Obama in any way or show imagery of him, this can include political slogans associated with Barack Obama (change we can believe in).

Hillary Clinton- The individuals in the video mention Hillary Clinton in any way or show imagery of her, this can include political slogans associated with Hillary Clinton (I'm with her).

Collective Action:

A group member engages in collective action any time that he or she is acting as a representative of the group and where the action is directed at improving the conditions of the group as a whole (Wright et al., 1990). It could also include the attitudinal support for protest as well as the protest intentions or behaviors of members of a social group that are directed at removing the perceived underlying causes of the group's disadvantage or problem (e.g., signing a petition, participating in a demonstration).

Collective action or taking action- The individuals in the video discuss that Whites need to take collection action as a group or they discuss examples of when Whites have taken collective action or how Whites can take collective action as described by the definition above.

Injustice/Unfair Treatment:

Injustice is generally aroused by perceptions of unfair treatment or outcomes. Feelings of injustice tend to be based on subjective perceptions of group-based inequity (i.e., some inequality or disadvantage that is perceived as illegitimate). "I think the way we are treated by [out-group] is unfair," and "I feel angry because . . . ." Could also be considered as Whites being at a disadvantage. In the video they mention Whites as being disadvantaged or having a disadvantage that they are working against. This can be from a very general standpoint or it can be about other groups i.e. increasing immigration is going to put Whites at a disadvantage. They might also give

specific examples or case studies or talk about things happening in the news where they give examples of White individuals being treated unfairly.

Injustice or unfair treatment of Whites- The individuals in the video mention that Whites are suffering injustice or that Whites are being treated unfairly based on the definition described above.

Injustice or unfair treatment of minorities- The individuals in the video mention that minorities are suffering injustice or that minorities are being treated unfairly based on the definition described above.

Efficacy:

Conceptually, efficacy refers to a sense of control, influence, strength, and effectiveness to change a group-related problem. "To what extent do you think that this [collective action] will increase chances of the government changing their plans?" and, "I think that together we can change [the group-related problem]."

White collective efficacy- The individuals in the video talk about White efficacy or the extent that Whites working together can change injustice or discrimination or bias towards their group.

Identity:

Social identity is traditionally defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership"

(Tajfel, 1978, p. 63).

White identity- In the video, they mention the concept of Whites having an identity as described above or they discuss White identity. They could also frame this is Whites having a certain

membership or some type of affiliation with each other, this could also be mentioned as White's identity is being attacked.

Threat:

Whites under threat- In the video they mention in anyway that either Whites as individuals or that Whites as a group are under threat. This threat can either be more abstract such as immigration affecting the economy in the U.S. or more direct such as immigration will lead to more crime in Whites neighborhoods. Might also sound something like the individuals mentioning that Whites are being threatened.

Minorities under threat- Same as above but in relation to minorities.
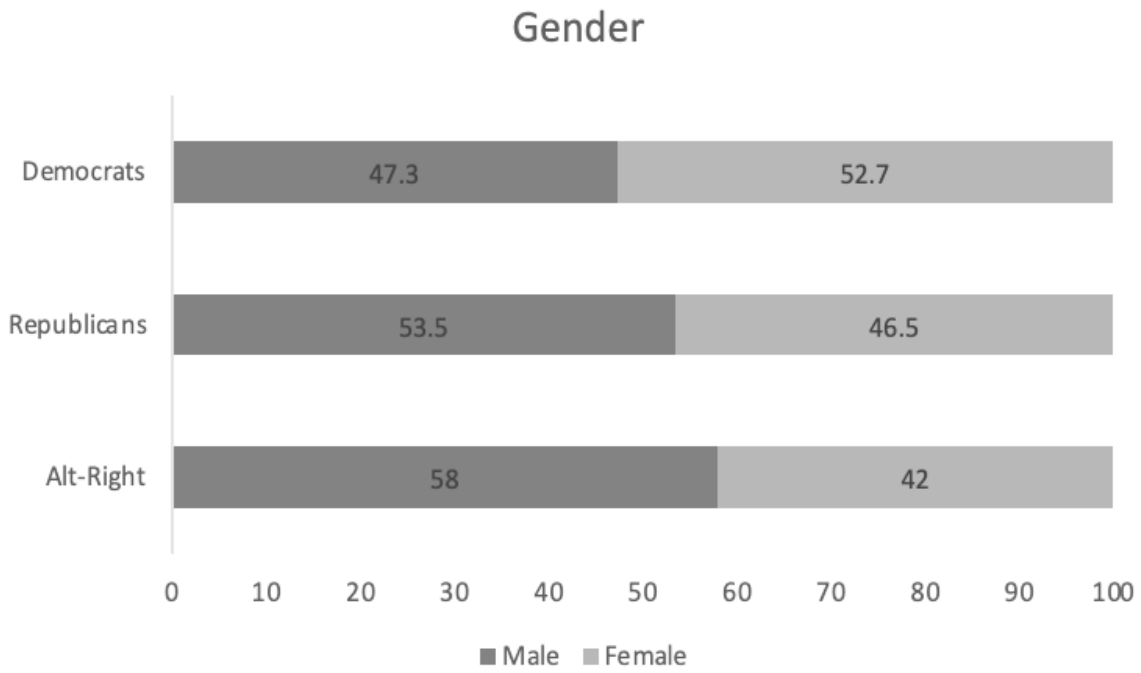
Appendix C: Demographic variables

Gender

Figure C1. Gender percent breakdown by political identity group.

Income

Democrats	15.9	19.2	15.5	16.3	22.2	10.9
Republicans	15.5	24.8	20.5	16.3	15.5	7.4
Alt-Right	15.6	19.8	21	13.6	20.6	9.5

Legend:
- $24,999 or less
- $25,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more
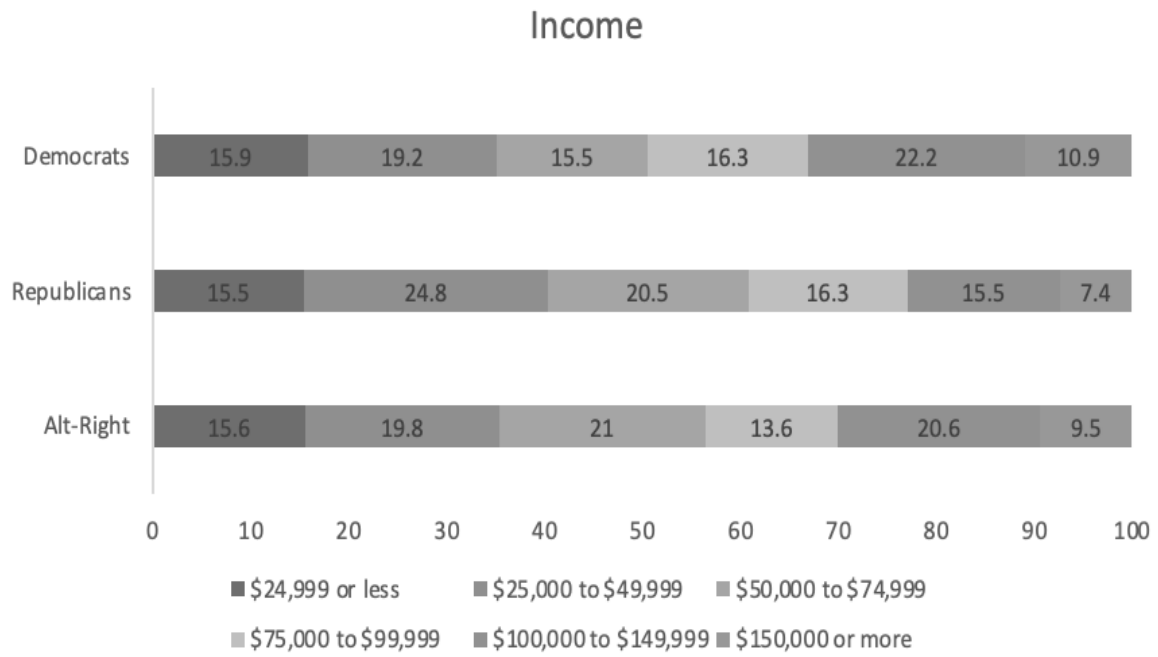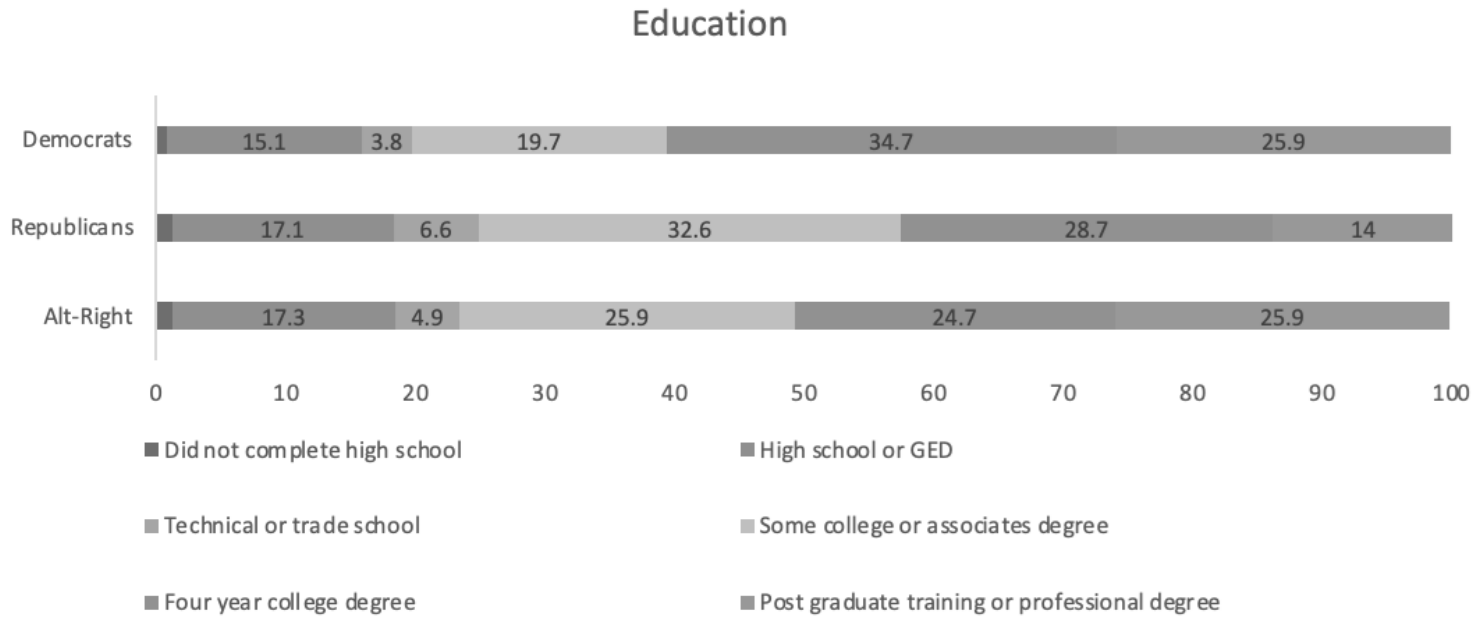
Figure C2. Income percent breakdown by political identity group.

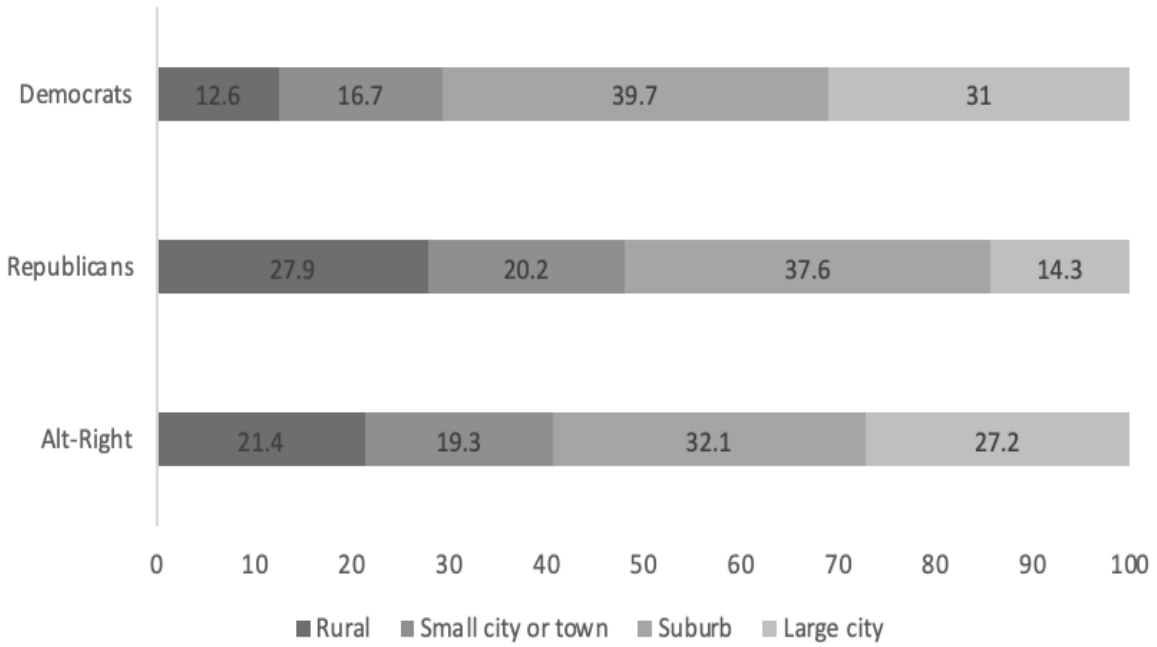Figure C3. Education percent breakdown by political identity group.

Figure C4. Living environment percent breakdown by political identity group.

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