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Rise UP!: A content analytic study of how collective action is discussed within White nationalist videos on YouTube

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Abstract

There are worldwide concerns about the rise of White nationalism and its implications for intergroup relations in multicultural societies. Social media, in particular, has allowed far-right groups to easily share their perspectives with and influence others in support of their ideologies. Yet, few studies have empirically examined what psychological factors are discussed within this content to motivate collective action. A quantitative content analysis of 100 White nationalist videos on YouTube reveals that social outgroups (Muslims, immigrants, feminists) are frequently discussed as threats to Whites' status. Not only were calls for collective action discussed in at least 12% of videos, themes surrounding White identity and injustice faced by Whites were often underlying these calls, consistent with the theoretical propositions of the Social Identity Model of Collective Action. These results are novel as they identify psychological mechanisms referenced in White nationalist social media that motivate collective actions among White Americans.

Keywords

Collective action, content analysis, social media, White nationalism, YouTube

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In the current social landscape, digital media platforms are an effective way to bring people together and provide information quickly. However, usage of social media can also have negative and unintended consequences in the real world, such as the riot at the US Capitol building on 6 January 2021 (Barrett et al., 2021). Social media platforms were used to explicitly spread disinformation and organize individuals who collectively aimed to "Stop the Steal" of the 2020 US 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 was used to provide suggestions on how to break into the building (Frenkel, 2021).

While the role of digital platforms in facilitating the US Capitol riot is a recent and highly visible example, support for far-right extremist groups and ideologies on and offline is increasing. Data show that the number of White nationalist groups in the United States has increased by 55% since 2017 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020). This surge in support of pro-White ideologies is associated with a rise in White extremist behaviors and incidents of domestic terrorism such as the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia (Keneally, 2018), the 2018 mass shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Robertson et al., 2018), and the 2019 mass shooting in El Paso, Texas (Francescani et al., 2019). This article examines the role of White nationalist social media in motivating collective action among White Americans.

The function of social media to the Alt-Right, a group of individuals who subscribe to a far-right ideology, is important as many in this group feel disenfranchised from mainstream media and place a little trust in it (Forscher and Kteily, 2020). Consequently, White nationalists regularly use digital media as a platform to produce and distribute content (Marwick and Lewis, 2017). Adopting these platforms to promote their ideas allows White nationalists to spread messages that cause both the viewers and the creators to become more radicalized (Lewis, 2018). Media's socializing influence is important in this context as information about fringe political groups (e.g. White nationalists) often comes from the mass media and not from personal interactions (Shoemaker, 1984).

Although research has begun to explore how White nationalists use social media (Lewis, 2018), few studies have attempted to identify the psychological themes discussed within this content that could motivate collective action among White individuals. Using the theoretical framework of the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (e.g. SIMCA; van Zomeren et al., 2008), the current research advances this through a quantitative content analysis of White nationalist videos on YouTube. Through two hypotheses and three research questions, we explore how outgroups are discussed within White nationalist videos and how themes of White identity, collective efficacy, and group injustice are referenced in order to motivate White individuals to collectively improve the status and position of Whites in multicultural societies.

This work makes three important contributions to our understanding of White nationalist social media. First, we 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, we examine if and how frequently psychological mechanisms known to influence collective actions are referenced within these videos. Third, we 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 United States. Examining collective action is important as many White nationalists feel there is extensive injustice toward their ingroup and suggest that behavioral actions must be taken to address those injustices. Documenting the motivations behind such calls for collective action may provide useful insights to better understand the risk factors associated with White extremist ideologies and behaviors.

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, 2020). Altogether, they both place importance on and express concern for White identity and Whites. Because of this, research relevant to both is discussed.

White nationalism on social media platforms

Many psychological and political explanations have been presented to understand the rise of White nationalism in the United States. Jardina (2014) argues that the election 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 identity. Others point to the changing demographic of the United States in which Whites are projected to be a racial minority by 2042 eliciting status and power threat among White individuals (Craig and Richeson, 2014). The influence of these political and psychological factors on White extremism was likely further magnified by the availability and use of social media in the last 15 years (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019) and the ease with which information, accurate or inaccurate, spreads through these platforms (Menczer and Hills, 2020).

Beyond presenting and sharing information easily, digital media has facilitated connection and belonging with individuals who share similar interests and ideologies (Urman and Katz, 2020). Social media, in particular, is a useful tool to organize groups 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. Altogether, 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). Two specific ways White nationalists use social media are the following: (1) to form a collective identity and (2) to create content directed toward outgroups. For example, Instagram is used frequently

by the Proud Boys, one of the fastest growing Alt-Right groups in the United States (DeCook, 2018). The Proud Boys strategically use social media as a way to both spread their message and to recruit individuals.

Other platforms allow communities to form around various topics. 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 et al., 2020). In addition to Reddit, data from Facebook (Scrivens and Amarasingam, 2020) and Twitter (Berger, 2016) find that White nationalists on these websites also discuss Muslims as a threat to Whites. Other groups, including immigrants or refugees (Ekman, 2018), are likewise considered risks to White's dominant status. Finally, critiques of feminism and promoting masculinity are also important and used to expand White nationalist ideology on social media (Bjork-James, 2020). Altogether, Muslims, immigrants and feminists are negatively discussed online as this allows users to highlight and place an emphasis on the supremacy of White males. While far-right individuals might use a wide range of websites, one influential platform for this group and the focus of the present research, 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).

On YouTube, far-right networks and user comments show widespread concern over the threats posed by refugees (Rauchfleisch and Kaiser, 2020). Far-right videos on YouTube also frequently emphasize topics such as feminism, social justice, and White genocide (Munger and Phillips, 2020). 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. Arguably, any individual who does not meet the White male demographic (e.g. the dominant identity to White nationalists) is an outgroup member. 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. Indeed, both minority racial progress (Wilkins et al., 2017) and shifting demographics (Craig and Richeson, 2014) 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. Indeed, while much of the far-right narrative explicitly discusses non-White outgroups (e.g. immigrants and Muslims) as a threat to Whiteness

(Berger, 2016; Rauchfleisch and Kaiser, 2020), feminism is typically critiqued or discussed in a generally negative context (Bjork-James, 2020). Considering this, we propose the following research questions:

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

RQ2a. When Muslims and immigrants are mentioned, how often are they discussed as a threat in White nationalist videos on YouTube?

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

Other research on far-right groups and individuals finds that they create YouTube videos to increase visibility (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. In addition, White nationalists use the audio or 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). Once this content draws someone in, they can navigate the extensive and likeminded networks that exist on YouTube. Indeed, Lewis (2018) notes that far-right networks on social media allow these groups to do the following 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 from a design standpoint 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 use of video and financial incentives has created a supply and demand type relationship that contributes to the increasing creation and viewing of far-right content on YouTube.

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. This 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. Yet, few studies have examined the psychological factors explaining *how* exposure to White nationalist social media could motivate collective action among White individuals. Applying the theoretical propositions of the SIMCA model (van Zomeren et al., 2008), we examine

how references of (1) the injustice Whites face relative to racial outgroups, (2) White identity, and (3) collective efficacy may motivate collective action tendencies among consumers of White nationalist social media.

The Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA)

The SIMCA is an extension of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and Self Categorization Theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987). When faced with perceived group-based inequalities, SIMCA suggests that individuals engage in collective actions to improve the position of their ingroup. Collective action is typically described as actions "directed at improving the conditions of the group as a whole" (Wright et al., 1990: 995). Applied to this study, this could involve actions aimed at improving Whites' status, position, and conditions in society. Collective action through digital media might be beneficial to White nationalists as it can be scaled quickly and allows personal networks to play a more significant role in mobilization (Bennett and Segerberg, 2011). The SIMCA model argues that the likelihood of participating in collective action is a function of three psychological mechanisms or routes, group identity, perceptions of group injustice, and beliefs of collective efficacy (van Zomeren et al., 2008).

In the context of media, SIMCA has been applied to understanding how exposure to negative depictions of one's ingroup can increase racial or ethnic minorities' efforts to engage in collective actions through increased beliefs of collective efficacy (Saleem et al., 2021). Ingroup media exposure that is biased can also influence perceived discrimination which raises participation in non-violent collective actions (Saleem et al., 2021; Schmuck and Tribastone, 2020). Other research finds that alternative and social media news affect protest intentions through these mechanisms (Chan, 2017). The SIMCA routes are powerful as they mediate the relationship between digital participation and continued willingness to organize into the future (Odağ et al., 2016). Altogether, this research shows that media can affect the psychological mechanisms identified by SIMCA to motivate collective actions. Below we discuss how references to each of the three proposed psychological mechanisms deriving collective action are explicitly and implicitly prevalent in far-right social media content.

Injustice

Perceptions of inequality and injustice are known to motivate collective action among individuals (Renger et al., 2019). Much of this work has examined how these perceptions derive collective action strategies among disadvantaged groups (Duncan, 2012), however similar patterns have been observed for advantaged members (e.g. Whites) when they perceive that they are experiencing an injustice (Thomas et al., 2020). For example, in-depth interviews have identified increasing immigration levels as an issue that Whites believe puts them at a disadvantage (Dentice and Bugg, 2016). In addition, references to Whites no longer being the majority and racial minorities having advantages over Whites (i.e. reverse racism) are frequently made on social media (Petray and Collin, 2017; Shafer, 2017). As Petray and Collin (2017) note, reverse racism can be used in a defensive way when Whites discuss racism online. Generally, digital platforms are a space

where Whites can control and construct a narrative of injustice toward their group and push back against ideas that portray them outside of this belief (e.g. White privilege). Based on this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Discussions of injustices faced by Whites will be more frequent than injustices toward other social groups.

Social Identity. Unjust treatment of one's ingroup is especially meaningful in deriving collective action when individuals highly identify with their ingroup (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Although historically much work on social identity did not 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). Indeed, 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. The importance of forming and strengthening White identity is routinely discussed in White nationalist social media (DeCook, 2018). For example, topics such as real-world intergroup conflict can influence and solidify a collective White identity in online groups (Bliuc et al., 2019). In fact, references to a collective White identity often serve as a means to include and radicalize casual consumers of this content within the White nationalist ingroup (DeCook, 2018; Lovett, 2019).

Collective Efficacy. When individuals are high in collective efficacy, they believe that collectively as a group they can enact change to their group status. Applied to Whites, high collective efficacy would mean that Whites have confidence in their ability as a group to overcome any challenges. As mentioned earlier, White nationalists regularly discuss issues that threaten their 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 minorities, political expression on social media sites is associated with increased collective efficacy beliefs to improve the status and position of minorities in the United States (Velasquez et al., 2019), yet no research has examined this relation for Whites. Theoretically, if far-right content suggests that Whites work together or mentions ways or 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, White nationalist social media content is likely to not only include references of collective action but each of the psychological mechanisms (injustice, identity, efficacy) underlying motivations to participate in collective action. Accordingly, we derive the following hypothesis and research question:

RQ3. What is the frequency in which injustices faced by Whites, White identity, and White collective efficacy are mentioned in White nationalist videos on YouTube?

H2. 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.

Method

Sample criteria and selection

As the goal of this study 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). We made this decision for the following reason. The research questions and hypotheses for this study focus on how outgroups are portrayed and whether collective action predictors are present in the content explicitly created by White nationalists. Consequently, our 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), most videos were of news stories 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 the content.

Subsequently, five identified White nationalist groups or figures were chosen and analyzed (Lewis, 2018). These channels were all found to have a prominent and official (e.g. designated YouTube channel) presence on YouTube. Once selected, 20 videos from each channel were randomly chosen using the equal probability of selection method (Dixon and Williams, 2015). This resulted in 100 total YouTube videos included in our corpus. Final analyses were conducted on a total of 99 videos as one video was a "test" video and did not contain any content. In addition, as some videos were 2 hours and longer, only the first 30 minutes were coded. Videos were selected, and all video information was collected during the week of 23 December 2019. The final corpus consisted of 30.85 hours of video. Importantly, this amount of content is similar to other analyses conducted on this platform (Dale et al., 2017; Krajewski et al., 2019). Of the content coded, the average length of the video in minutes was $M = 18.70$ ($SD = 10.22$). For additional video information, see the supplementary analyses in Supplemental Appendices A and B.

Coding and reliability

Three trained individuals worked as coders on this study: one White male and two White females. After approximately 25 hours of training and practice coding, 10% of the total sample (e.g. 10 videos) was randomly selected and assigned to all coders for reliability purposes. 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). The reliability coefficients all reached acceptable levels of agreement, ranging from .74 to 1.00. When Krippendorf's alpha was unable to be

calculated, percentage agreement between coders was used. Specific themes examined in this study are detailed below.

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

Outgroup social identity codes

Feminism. Videos were coded for mentions of feminism. 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 $\alpha = .87$. If feminism was mentioned, coders then established whether it was discussed as positive, negative, or neutral, $\alpha = .90$.

Immigrants. Videos were coded for whether the individuals mention or discuss immigrants or immigration within a US 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 $\alpha = .84$. If immigrants were mentioned, coders evaluated whether the video talked about them as a threat. Based on integrated threat theory (Stephan and 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. 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), we 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). If Muslims were mentioned, it was then coded for whether they were discussed as a threat. Examples of potential threats were the same as described earlier for immigrants.

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 et al., 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, we 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, we focused on non-White racial or ethnic groups and non-Christian religions. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of agreement (100% agreement between coders).

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 et al., 2008). Examples of this include conversations that Whites working together can change injustice or discrimination, or bias toward 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: 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 or demonstration, or donating money to pro-White groups. This variable was found to reach acceptable levels of reliability $\alpha = .86$.

Results

Given the dichotomous nature of the variables, Chi-square analyses were performed to test for the proposed hypotheses and research questions. For proportions of social outgroup and SIMCA codes, see Tables 1 and 2. For Chi-square statistics of social outgroup and SIMCA mechanism comparisons, see Tables 3 and 4.

Outgroup social identity

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

Table 1. 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%)

% is the percentage of the total number of mentions for that variable.

Table 2. 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%)

SIMCA: Social Identity Model of Collective Action.
% is the percentage of the total number of mentions for that variable.

Table 3. Chi-square tests social identity outgroup comparisons.

Test	*N*	χ^2 value	*p* value
Immigrant versus Muslim mentions	198	.026	.872
Immigrant versus feminist mentions	198	.102	.750
Muslim versus feminist mentions	198	.025	.874
Immigrant threat versus Muslim threat	53	.453	.501
Muslim threat versus feminist negative	55	2.55	.110
Immigrant threat versus feminist negative	54	5.00	.025

26% of total videos, Muslims were mentioned in 27%, and feminists were mentioned in 28%. This resulted in 61% of videos discussing at least one outgroup. Next, we investigated whether any of these outgroups were present more than the others. No statistical difference was found when comparing how often immigrants and Muslims were mentioned, $p = .872$, or between immigrants and feminists, $p = .750$, or finally between Muslims and feminists, $p = .874$. This provides evidence that no identity group was featured more than others in the videos analyzed.

In addition, we were also interested in the context in which these outgroups would be discussed (RQ2a and RQ2b). The data show that when immigrants were present, they

Table 4. Chi-square tests SIMCA mechanism comparisons.

Test	*N*	χ^2 value	*p* value
White injustice versus White identity	198	3.59	.058
White identity versus White efficacy	198	14.63	.001
White injustice versus White efficacy	198	30.84	.001
White injustice versus other group injustice	198	51.59	.001

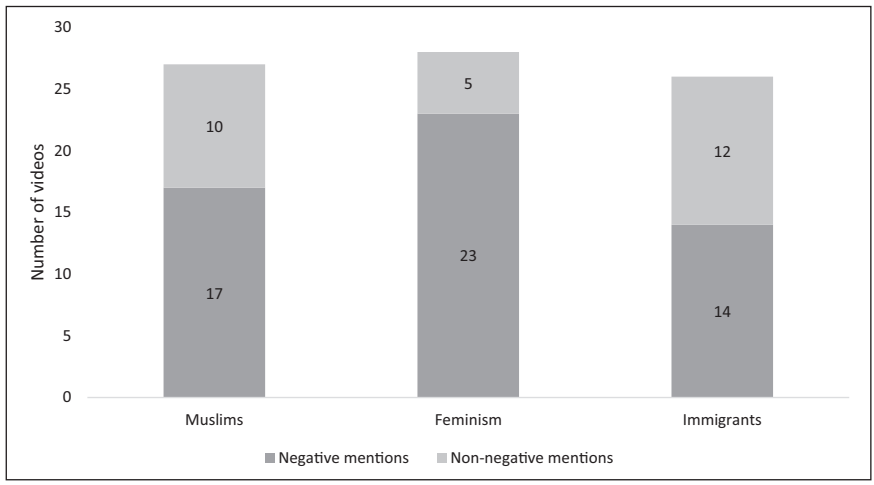


Figure 1. Negative mentions of outgroups in White nationalist YouTube videos.

were mentioned as a threat in 54% of videos. When Muslims were present, they were discussed as a threat in 63% and when feminists were present, they were portrayed in a negative valence in 82% (see Figure 1). Although there were no differences in the total mentions between groups, we examined whether differences existed in how they were discussed. No difference was found between immigrants and Muslims, $p = .501$, or between Muslims and feminists, $p = .110$. However, we did find a significant difference between immigrants and feminists, χ^2 (1, $N = 54$) = 5.00, $p = .025$, with feminists discussed in a negative light more frequently than immigrants as a threat.

SIMCA predictors

In addition to investigating how outgroups are portrayed in White nationalist social media, we were interested in the prevalence of psychological constructs known to influence collective action. To answer RQ3, we found that White identity was mentioned in 32% of videos, injustice in 45%, and collective efficacy in 10% (see Figure 2). Altogether, this equaled 58% of videos featuring at least one SIMCA predictor. Next, we examined whether differences exist in how often the SIMCA predictors were mentioned in our corpus. Although not significant, injustice toward Whites was discussed

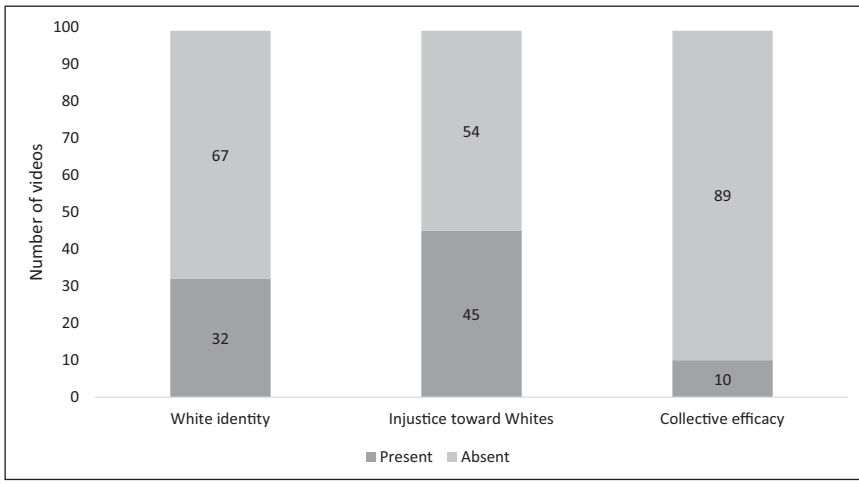


Figure 2. Presence of SIMCA mechanisms in White nationalist YouTube videos.

more than White identity, χ^2 (1, N = 198) = 3.59, p = .058. White identity, however, was significantly discussed more than collective efficacy, χ^2 (1, N = 198) = 14.63, $p < .001$. We also found that injustice toward Whites was mentioned significantly more than collective efficacy, χ^2 (1, N = 198) = 30.84, $p < .001$. To further examine the context in which injustice is discussed, H1 proposed that discussions of injustice toward Whites would be more prevalent than discussions of injustice toward other social groups. Indeed, we found a significant difference in that injustice toward Whites (45%) was mentioned more often than injustice toward other social groups (2%), χ^2 (1, N = 198) = 51.59, $p < .001$, thus finding support for H1.

As the SIMCA model proposes that injustice, efficacy, and identity are all predictive of and related to collective action, H2 examined if videos that featured collective action were also more likely to include the SIMCA mechanisms. Overall, we found that content focusing on Whites taking collective action was discussed in 12% of videos. To address H2, we 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. Our 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%), χ^2 (1, N = 99) = 10.06, p = .002, thus providing support for H2.

Finally, as both social identity outgroups (e.g. Muslims, feminists, and immigrants) and relevant SIMCA predictors (e.g. injustice and identity) were found to be frequent in the content, we conducted a series of post hoc analyses to see how these variables potentially interact. The data show a significant difference in the mentions of White identity when comparing videos that featured Muslims (17:27, 63%) and feminists (10:28, 36%), χ^2 (1, N = 55) = 4.08, p = .043. Indicating videos that include portrayals of Muslims are also more likely to have mentions of White identity as compared to videos that feature feminists. All other comparisons were non-significant, $p > .219$ (for further details, see the supplementary analyses in Supplemental Appendix C).

Discussion

Across the United States, the presence and influence of the far-right is growing (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). Given the role of social media in inciting recent extremist behaviors (e.g. the Capitol riot), the content of White nationalist media and its influence on White audiences needs to be examined. Accordingly, this study applies the SIMCA model (van Zomeren et al., 2008) to White nationalist videos on YouTube to explore the prevalence of mechanisms known to motivate collective action.

Our content analysis discovers that each of the SIMCA predictors (e.g. identity, injustice, collective efficacy) are regularly present in the corpus of far-right YouTube videos. Further analysis revealed that more than half of the videos (e.g. 58%) contained 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. These data were the first to identify the presence of psychological mechanisms in White nationalist social media that call for collective action. In doing so, we provide a theoretical extension of the SIMCA framework by establishing its connection to far-right social media content. Although previous studies have explored White nationalism on digital platforms, none have examined it in the context of motivating collective action. This is crucial, as we identify the psychological mechanisms that are commonly present in far-right social media, and research supports their influence on collective actions (Chan, 2017; Saleem et al., 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2008). By way of exposure to these ideas in White nationalist social media, it is possible viewers of this content experience an increased sense of White identification, feelings of injustice toward Whites, and efficacious beliefs.

Altogether, these data and the SIMCA model provide a theoretical explanation of how far-right social media can be used to increase White Americans' willingness to participate in collective actions. Specifically, references to injustices faced by Whites, White collective identity, and collective efficacy are prevalent in videos calling for Whites to engage in collective action. The potential for these psychological mechanisms and calls for collective action on social media sites to lead to real-world consequences is significant given the rise of White nationalist groups (Anti-Defamation League, 2019) and the increases in cases of domestic terrorism perpetrated by White extremists (Francescani et al., 2019).

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 were the most frequently referenced SIMCA mechanism. Indeed, existing data show that Whites discuss injustices offline such as immigration (Dentice and Bugg, 2016) and online like reverse racism (Petray and Collin, 2017). These frequent references to injustice faced by Whites are likely to increase White media consumers' beliefs in reverse racism and frustration with the idea of White privilege, both of which are prevalent online. To show that far-right social media does not discuss injustice generally, we compared the occurrence of videos that

mentioned injustice toward Whites to injustice toward other social groups. Overwhelmingly, we found that injustice toward Whites (e.g. 45%) was much more frequent than injustice toward minorities (e.g. 2%). This demonstrates that when White nationalists discuss injustice, they do so in a way that is beneficial to their ingroup.

White identity was the mechanism found to be mentioned the second most. 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 (see DeCook, 2018 for an example). Regular mentions of Whiteness online are significant as social media can be used to construct a collective White identity. For example, by pairing racist imagery and text with humor and pop culture references, memes can normalize and place importance on Whiteness (DeCook, 2018). Once recruited to far-right social media, further radicalization continues through collective actions meant to uphold White identity. Our data provide quantitative support for the trends observed in qualitative research on this topic. Finally, although 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, 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. It is possible that for this mechanism, watching White nationalist videos motivate efficacious beliefs, as opposed to the route being explicit in the content. Considering this study's findings, continued research should look at how efficacy is constructed by the far-right.

In addition to the SIMCA model, the data also reveal how certain social outgroups are referenced in content created by White nationalists. Previous research has identified Muslims (Gaudette et al., 2020), immigrants (Ekman, 2018), and feminists (Bjork-James, 2020; Munger and Phillips, 2020) as outgroups that underly many of the grievances of White extremist ideology (Squire, 2019a, 2019b). Indeed, we find each of these three groups was mentioned in just over one-fourth of the videos. We also find that all three groups are regularly discussed negatively (feminists) or as a threat (Muslims and immigrants). The data show that in the videos analyzed, there is no significant difference between Muslims and immigrants in the context of threat. However, we did find that feminists were more likely to be negatively discussed, relative to immigrants as a threat. This result was unexpected. However, far-right content online does portray gender as a zero-sum game between men and women (Waltman and Mattheis, 2017). In other words, this content portrays gains and equality for women as being costly for men. This might help explain both our results and other research (Munger and Phillips, 2020) which identifies feminism as a common topic within far-right social media. Altogether, these representations have important real-world consequences including affecting users' hostile attitudes, emotions, and support for public policies targeting members of the depicted groups (Saleem et al., 2017).

Altogether, the data point to messaging associated with SIMCA and social identity outgroups as being common topics in far-right social media. However, we did not typically find that these themes regularly interacted in a significant way. Indeed, post hoc analyses show that mentions of White identity were more frequent in videos that also featured Muslims as compared to feminists. Theoretically, this finding makes sense as

Whiteness is likely to be a salient topic when also discussing typically non-White outgroups. All other comparisons between social identity outgroups and the presence of White injustice and identity were non-significant.

Limitations and future research

This 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). In addition, within the channels analyzed, only a specific number of videos were randomly selected to be coded. However, the amount of data included in our corpus is comparable with other content analysis work on this platform (Dale et al., 2017; Krajewski et al., 2019). Furthermore, 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 and non-mainstream platforms, future research needs to consider the differences that might exist across social media. One area that might be of particular interest is examining how individuals across platforms develop and maintain a White nationalist identity.

Second, while this research examined the frequency and content in which three outgroups are discussed (e.g. Muslims, immigrants, and feminists), many other outgroups are mentioned within social media content created by White nationalists. For example, White nationalists regularly use both anti-Jewish and homophobic content online to recruit and radicalize individuals (Bjork-James, 2020). Third, this analysis examined how Muslims and immigrants are portrayed in the context of threat but did not code if feminists were discussed as a threat. Future research should investigate the extent to which White nationalists mention feminists as a threat online. Finally, 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 our 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. Future research should examine how exposure to these SIMCA mechanisms in White nationalist content is likely to influence collective actions among White individuals in the real world.

Conclusion

Overall, this study makes a significant theoretical contribution to research concerning social media platforms, White nationalism, and collective action. The present data find that not only are social outgroups regularly mentioned as threatening or in a negative manner but that White nationalist content on YouTube regularly features psychological mechanisms known to motivate collective actions. Our data were necessary for providing insight into the content that White nationalist groups are themselves creating and distributing on digital media. Because there is a little doubt that pro-White ideas are spreading both online (Lewis, 2018) and offline (Dentice and Bugg, 2016), continued research is needed to shed light on how White nationalists use social media to motivate and draw people to their ideology.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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