

University of Groningen

Weaponizing white thymos

Ganesh, Bharath

Published in:
Cultural Studies

DOI:
[10.1080/09502386.2020.1714687](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2020.1714687)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2020

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Ganesh, B. (2020). Weaponizing white thymos: Flows of rage in the online audiences of the alt-right. *Cultural Studies*, 34(6), 892-924. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2020.1714687>

Copyright

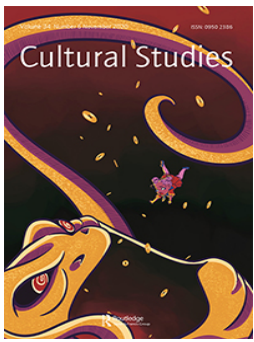
Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.



Weaponizing white thymos: flows of rage in the online audiences of the alt-right

Bharath Ganesh

To cite this article: Bharath Ganesh (2020) Weaponizing white thymos: flows of rage in the online audiences of the alt-right, *Cultural Studies*, 34:6, 892-924, DOI: [10.1080/09502386.2020.1714687](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2020.1714687)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2020.1714687>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 23 Jan 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 5568



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Weaponizing white thymos: flows of rage in the online audiences of the alt-right

Bharath Ganesh 

Centre for Media and Journalism Studies, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

The alt-right is a growing radical right-wing network that is particularly effective at mobilizing emotion through digital communications. Introducing ‘white thymos’ as a framework to theorize the role of rage, anger, and indignation in alt-right communications, this study argues that emotive communication connects alt-right users and mobilizes white thymos to the benefit of populist radical right politics. By combining linguistic, computational, and interpretive techniques on data collected from Twitter, this study demonstrates that the alt-right weaponizes white thymos in three ways: visual documentation of white victimization, processes of legitimization of racialized pride, and reinforcement of the rectitude of rage and indignation. The weaponization of white thymos is then shown to be central to the culture of the alt-right and its connectivity with populist radical right politics.

KEYWORDS Alt-right; populist radical right; white nationalism; social media; affect; Twitter

The recent increase of research into the alt-right has uncovered much of the structure and ideology of this movement. However, how the alt-right captures the attention of its audiences and the forms of affect and emotion that it mobilizes are aspects of this movement that are not well understood. While the ‘alt-right is unlike any racist movement we have ever seen. It is atomized, amorphous, predominantly online, and mostly anonymous’ (Hawley 2017, p. 3), it is a product of decades of white supremacist organizing in the United States and far right ideology and narratives in Europe and North America. Moreover, the term alt-right is challenging to define, but it can be understood as an umbrella term for a set of radical right social movements active primarily (but not exclusively) in Anglophone countries. It has come to be understood in the literature as a contingent coalition of activists, usually networked online, that span online troll cultures, misogynists in the manosphere, neofascists, ultranationalists, identitarians, and white

CONTACT Bharath Ganesh  b.ganesh@rug.nl

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

supremacists, with significant variance in the influences, practices, and vernaculars of groups associated with the alt-right (Marwick and Lewis 2017, May and Feldman 2018, Tuters et al. 2018, Deem 2019).

In this article, I consider the alt-right as a radical right digital subculture. This article focuses on Twitter, just one among numerous digital platforms on which influential pundits, Internet personalities, and users interact. Based on a study of the activity of an audience of a set of influential alt-right accounts on Twitter, this paper argues that their discourse constructs whiteness as a state of marginalization and oppression. It is thus deeply connected to the mythologies of the radical right, white supremacists, ultranationalists, identitarians, and nativists in Europe and North America (Ferber 1999a, Zúquete 2018, Winter 2019). This paper focuses on the activity of the followers of a range of influencers in alt-right networks to expose how the audience of the alt-right on Twitter describes itself and the central role played by the aspiration to 'take back' their societies from an invented crisis of white culture.

Far right online activism developed over three decades, using bulletin board systems, websites, webforums, and more recently, social media (Burris et al. 2000, Back 2002, Zickmund 2002). Social media has 'algorithmically amplified, sped up and circulated' a 'political backlash by White voters' that the alt-right has exploited enabling it to 'shift the Overton window', making extreme viewpoints more tolerable in public discourse (Daniels 2018, pp. 64–65). Much of this ability to manipulate public discourse is in part due to the alt-right's appropriation of the practices and aesthetics of misogynist, trolling, and gaming subcultures, where they have honed their ability to use text, irony, memes, and videos to use emotive appeals to encourage participation with anti-immigrant and white supremacist discourse (Marwick and Lewis 2017, Phillips 2018, Pollard 2018, Salazar 2018). The alt-right is particularly effective in using its creative labour to build participatory spaces in which users transgress norms of political correctness (Topinka 2018, Deem 2019). This work focusing on audiences and practices reinforces the necessity of studying what role participatory web cultures play in the collective production and circulation of alt-right ideology and narratives (Salazar 2018, p. 142).

Below I argue emotion plays a central role in encouraging engagement in alt-right digital culture and assert that the emotional order that the alt-right constructs connects with the appeal of the populist radical right. I accomplish this by showing that audiences of the alt-right are connected by an artificial crisis of white identity and amplify radical right politicians that confirm this belief. In order to make these contributions, the paper introduces the concept of *white thymos* to understand the ways in which the alt-right has weaponized affect and how the radical right has benefitted from it.¹ The term *thymos*, which refers to the part of our souls that desires recognition of injustices done to us, draws our attention to the nexus of pride, rage,

and indignation amongst audiences that is produced and circulated in alt-right digital culture. By weaponize, I refer to the cultivation of ensembles of users that are connected in their rage against the purported marginalization and oppression of white people and the channelling of this rage by pundits and radical right populists to advance their own aims.

The article, which focuses on American and British audiences of the radical right, shows that this transatlantic subculture synthesizes the sense that white identity is under attack by documenting purportedly 'anti-white' discourse and repeating the trope of protecting white women from allegedly sexually deviant men of colour. White thymos describes a complex of pride, rage, resentment, and anger that is created through informational and affective circuits that create the perception of a *loss* of white entitlement. The flows of white thymos that this article uncovers amongst the audiences of the alt-right are consistent with the history of white rage, from concerns about miscegenation between black slaves and white settlers in the late eighteenth century to protect the white race (Jordan 2013) to the contemporary backlash against equality, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism in the United States and Western Europe (Hewitt 2005, Hughey and Parks 2014, Anderson 2016, Zúquete 2018).

As described in the first section of this article, white thymos is neither a historical novelty nor an inherent quality; it is a product of white racial formation and white supremacist discourse that is not limited to those traditionally associated with the far right. Consequently, I consider weaponization as a metaphor that helps us account for the deliberate ways in which affective economies of white rage and pride produce cultural and political capital that mutually reinforces the digital culture of white supremacy and the political communication of the populist radical right. This study adds depth to critical work such as Giroux's (2018) contextualization of Trump's anti-immigrant discourse as 'theatrical performance in the service of white supremacy and racist violence' (p. 9), which draws on Brown's (2017) elucidation of 'apocalyptic populists' as 'the resentful and the humiliated ... they seek restored white male entitlement, or at least its political affirmation' (Brown 2017, p. 3 in Giroux 2018, p. 713). White thymos attempts to account for the network of dispositions that is produced and exploited in the theatrics of the radical right. The article develops white thymos in four steps. First it explores contemporary white rage in the context of white racial formation and white supremacist discourse. Next it explores how social media affords two sets of flows – connective and conjugative – for the production and circulation of white thymos. Then, it turns to a study of alt-right audiences on Twitter to demonstrate that three flows, the documentation of white victimization, the legitimization of racialized pride, and the reinforcement of the rectitude of white backlash, are central to the weaponization of white thymos on social media platforms.

Thymos & white entitlement

Thymos has been the subject of two studies by Francis Fukuyama (1993) and Peter Sloterdijk (2012 [2005]). For both, thymos is positioned at the centre of political change in the West. Both begin with the concept of thymos in Plato's *Republic*. In it, Socrates states that the soul is composed of reason, the appetites, and thymos (Plato 2000). The first is the locus of rationality and logic. The appetites, or desire, refer to the passions and bodily drives. Thymos is the third part of the soul and it is separate from reason and desire, though they are often intertwined (see Fukuyama 1993, p. 164 and pp. 172–177). It is defined as the part of the soul that seeks recognition and redress of the injustices done to it. It is the centre of rage, anger, indignation, and pride. For both authors, thymos is a (if not *the*) key driver of political change.

Thymos is relevant to recent research into populist radical right political parties across Europe and North America in which culture and nativism are stronger forces in motivating support for them than economic status alone (Mudde 2007, Rydgren 2017). In a study of post-Brexit discourse of far right pages, Evolvi (2019) notes a surge of anti-Muslim invective whose antagonistic forms use 'sarcasm, anger, and fear [that] are aimed at belittling minorities instead of confronting them' (2019, p. 396). This is common to other European radical right groups and movements, such as PEGIDA (a counter-jihad movement in Germany), for whom resentment can lead to a 'self-directed and self-organized' form of contestation that relies on a 'politics of passion' (Önnerfors 2017, p. 161). These two examples stress how germane Rensmann's (2017) proposition of a cultural turn in the study of populism is, turning attention to the role that resentment plays in European populism, cultivated by neo-conservative ideologies and absorbed by far right parties in what Ignazi (1992) refers to as a silent counter-revolution. Today, this is a 'noisy' counter-revolution in which populist parties 'thrive on and mobilize a significant cultural backlash that is directed against cultural inclusion and progressive cosmopolitan social value change' (Rensmann 2017, p. 131, see also Mulholland 2018, McVeigh and Estep 2019).

Fukuyama and Sloterdijk tell a story about thymos in the moment of advanced capitalism but have little to say about such a backlash, though their arguments are useful for exploring the anger of the 'excluded' that often dominates discussions about populism. For Fukuyama (1993), thymos in advanced capitalism is characterized by the decline of *megalothymia* after the Cold War, which refers to the struggle for the recognition of one's superiority over the other, and the rise of *isothymia*, which refers to the struggle for the recognition of one's equality to the other. In Sloterdijk's story, on the other hand, eroticism has come to replace thymos: 'the capitalist form of eroticism unfolds bit by bit the paradox of an "overcompensation for

everyone" ... consequently the market of appearance becomes the market of all markets' (2012, p. 200). Focusing on youth in the French banlieues following the 2005 riots, Sloterdijk argues that this segment of the population is excluded from status in the market of appearance and its members express a 'form of rage that has given up once and for all any striving to understand' (2012, p. 206). The rage expressed in the banlieues, in Sloterdijk's account, is the 'abreaction' of 'exclusively male adolescents' of Arab and African origin (2012, p. 206), from which, in Sloterdijk's view, the rage bank of political Islam absorbs support.² While Sloterdijk's diagnosis is too hasty and too narrow, this account of markets of appearance in advanced capitalism can be profitably be read alongside the loss of white entitlement that Brown (2017) references.

Both authors' accounts of thymos modulated by one's position in a market of appearance resonates with the sense of lost status that animates Tea Party supporters documented by Arlie Hochschild. In sharing with her participants a rendering of their 'deep story' to dig into 'the *subjective prism*' through which they see the world (2018, p. 135), the experience of dishonour and shame is foregrounded. Her respondents feel that African-Americans and immigrants are jumping ahead of them in the queue of aspirants waiting to move forward and attain the American dream: 'to feel honored you have to feel – and feel seen as – moving forward. But through no fault of your own, and in ways that are hidden, you are slipping backward' (2018, p. 144). While this is not stressed by Hochschild (see Bhambra 2017 for a detailed critique), her data brings the blame her respondents place on line-cutters who they perceive are African Americans, Latino Americans, illegal immigrants, and foreigners, helped along by 'Barack Hussein Obama', that are threatening their status in this market of appearance.

Francis Fukuyama's recent book *Identity* (2018) revises his 1993 thesis in light of Trump's victory and the Brexit vote and draws directly on Hochschild's work. For Fukuyama (2018), the populist right absorbs the anger and rage of the white working class 'left behind' that are rendered invisible in advanced capitalism by representing their struggle for recognition. On the other hand, Sloterdijk's diagnosis of rage in advanced capitalism is far too narrow. His focus on the rage of the excluded, primarily migrants, risks encouraging interpretations that reproduce cultural racism in which migrant youth are the only ones whose thymos presents a threat because of their exclusion from the 'market of appearance'. This diagnosis leads Sloterdijk to fail to locate endogenous thymotic capital within right-wing politics in Western democracies. Both arguments fail to consider the possibility that anxieties over the erosion of the structural privilege of white over non-white people in the West are at the centre of a white identity backlash in post-war Europe and North America (Hughes 2014) rather than solely based on the inclusion or exclusion of certain people from status in a market of appearance.

In fact, this backlash is not based on class or status, but racial identity and particular constructions of whiteness.

Toni Morrison rendered this construction in the *The New Yorker* (2016) after Trump's election, connecting thymos, status, and the political platform of Donald Trump as 'whiteness in mourning':

in America today, post-civil-rights legislation, white people's conviction of their natural superiority is being lost. Rapidly lost. There are "people of color" everywhere, threatening to erase this long-understood definition of America. And what then? Another black President? A predominantly black Senate? Three black Supreme Court Justices?

White thymos provides a framework to understand the apprehension of the loss of status of white 'natural' superiority that is inextricable from the history and social structures of the United States that have maintained white privilege and been foundational to the construction of white identity (Roediger 2007, Halley et al. 2011, Omi and Winant 2014, Bonilla-Silva 2017). It is also impossible to separate this loss of status from the story of a 'white backlash' in waves from the civil rights movement, individualism and colour-blindness in the Reagan/Thatcher era, anti-Obama birtherism, and the sense that whites are in a zero-sum game with others (Hewitt 2005, Longazel 2013, Hughey 2014, p. 723, Anderson 2016, Garner 2017). The sense that white privilege has collapsed points to an identity crisis that resonates far beyond the narrow construction of the 'white working class left behind' as the support base for the populist radical right (Mondon and Winter 2019).

The relevance of white thymos is borne out further in recent research, which reinforces these claims about a white backlash and the purported notion that whites are getting a 'raw deal' (Cramer 2016, Eckhouse 2018). In the United States, 2016 election data demonstrates that the belief that the 'United States is abdicating its Christian heritage' was a significant factor in predicting voter preference for Donald Trump (Whitehead et al. 2018, p. 5, see also Gorski 2017). Similarly, American voters for Trump apprehended a 'collective status threat' to majority ethnicities and gravitated towards his campaign (Bonikowski 2017). Data on Brexit also confirms that the result was a consequence of middle class white voters rather than the 'white working class' imagined by contemporary work on populism, an elision that Bhabra refers to as 'methodological whiteness' (see Bhabra 2017, Mondon and Winter 2019). This body of work (of which just a few examples are referenced here) stresses the role that white identity, rather than class, plays in support of the populist radical right. While populism has been a dominant frame for explaining shifts in European and North American politics, it does not accurately reflect the racial – rather than economic – differentiation of the people from the 'other' that alt-right discourse constructs and that is mobilized by the radical right.

White thymos is a synthetic product that is centred around producing and affirming the belief that white identity is being erased and that white people are facing oppression in 'their' homeland. In this, white thymos is deeply connected to white supremacist discourse. Ferber's (1998) analysis of white supremacist discourse highlights how it produces an essentialist sense of whiteness that is internally contested but biologically determined. Ferber (1998) thus argues that any attempt at policy to redress inequalities are perceived as a threat to the recognition of the essential 'superiority' of white people. This analysis suggests that there are often three targets of the rage of white power activism: against equality, which is seen as an imposition by the state and the establishment; against the left, who allegedly wish to degrade and debase white culture with communism and multiculturalism; and against migrants, who are seen as illegitimate beneficiaries of accommodations by the state despite their alleged 'inferiority'. Such discourse influenced American white power paramilitary movements, which regularly attacked and confronted communists after the Vietnam war and targeted black and minority communities across the United States with violence (Belew 2018). Research on Stormfront, one of the best known white power subforums (Bowman-Grieve 2009, Daniels 2009, Perry and Scrivens 2016) and ethnographic work into the white power movement (Simi and Futrell 2015) shows us that while the techniques of the movement have changed, these enemies of the white power movement remain consistent.

White thymos takes on particular forms for the alt-right, but it reproduces central themes of white supremacist discourse. The sense of being a 'stranger in your own land' is taken much further in the alt-right, which uses terms such as 'white genocide' and 'grand replacement' that cultivate existential alarm over the purported erasure and replacement of the 'white race', often rendered as a conspiracy between the 'establishment', 'liberals', and 'immigrants' (Bjork-James and Maskovsky 2017, Doerr 2017, Scrivens and Perry 2017, Shaohua 2017, Atkinson 2018). The content that the alt-right produces seeks to create spaces for participants to transgress social injunctions against racist or 'politically incorrect' views, producing a community that repeats the sense that white identity is under attack by 'awakening' audiences to these myths (Ganesh 2018, Pollard 2018, Deem 2019). In doing so, the alt-right incorporates the thymotic energy of white backlash against equality, diversity, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism in the service of spreading its extreme racial imaginary.

This account of the 'loss' of white status cannot be disentangled from white supremacist discourse and white racial formation. Anderson (2016), for example, writes that after the Voting Rights Act, white people in the United States believed that the tables were turned on them, with black people 'getting a government-sponsored free ride to the good life on the backs of honest, hardworking white Americans' (no page, digital edition). Similarly,

Donald Trump's birtherism in the 2010s that called Obama's Americanness into question benefitted from the Tea Party's racial resentment against him (Hughes and Parks 2014, Anderson 2016, Hochschild 2018). In Europe, multiculturalism (rather than the discourse of civil rights) has similarly (and more recently) been maligned by conservative and radical right political candidates (Minkenberg 2000, Hewitt 2005, Dennison and Geddes 2019). By the 1990s, white rage had amassed a significant amount of thymotic capital, yet Fukuyama (1993) and Sloterdijk do not consider it systematically. By engaging with scholarship on whiteness and cultural backlash, in North America and Western Europe, the dynamics of thymos that both authors describe can account for how anger over the loss of racial privileges is exploited by the alt-right.

Social media and the flows of white thymos

Today, new media has become a key theatre of thymotic expression, as a host of research into outrage and incivility online has demonstrated (Shea and Sproveri 2012, Sobieraj et al. 2013, Gervais 2015, Seta 2018, Wirz et al. 2018). Social media provides a useful vehicle for the exchange and aggregation of hate and anger towards other groups, which purveyors of extreme speech across the world take advantage of (Schweppe and Walters 2016, Pohjonen and Udupa 2017). Technology plays a central role in the articulation and circulation of white thymos. Rather than a pre-existing disposition inherent to white bodies, social media has been manipulated and exploited to *synthesize* white-thymotic dispositions both by key influencers in this network and through the participatory culture that they help construct. Thus, the flows that are described here refer to the production and circulation of white thymos by a decentralized network of users.

To understand this participatory structure of white thymos and its circulation on social media, it is worth turning to Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) description of 'microfascism'. For Deleuze and Guattari, 'fascism is inseparable from a proliferation of molecular forces in interaction, which skip from point to point, *before* beginning to resonate together in the National Social State' (2005, p. 214). Fascism, in Deleuze and Guattari's view, is micropolitical and molecular before it becomes aggregated into macropolitical and molar classes. Thus, 'by foregrounding the desiring subject, [Deleuze] offers an account of bio-political fascism that is all about *the active liberation of certain political subjectivities/agencies at the expense of others*' that is not limited to a historical period or particular formation (Evans 2013, p. 60, see also Patton 2002, p. 86, Bonta and Protevi 2004, p. 69). While Deleuze and Guattari do not specifically consider thymotic forces, they provide an image of a microfascist network of dispositions and emotions that are felt and embodied, connecting a molecular mass from which thymotic capital can be mined.

White thymos is both produced by and collected from a 'molecular mass' hosted on platforms with the goal of integrating white supremacist discourse into mainstream politics. Participants in alt-right cultures produce, remix, and repeat content to normalize radical right politics and reinforce the rectitude of the expression of white rage. Evidence of this is presented below, in which examples of how Paul Nehlen (a white supremacist running for Congress in Wisconsin) uses the slogan 'It's Okay to Be White' or in how pundit Ann Coulter and white supremacist activist Mark Collett both dramatize how attacks on white women are a consequence of diversity, political correctness, and multiculturalism. These networks make use of the participatory culture of immaterial digital labour that platforms built around user-generated content afford (Terranova 2000, Bratich 2005, Jenkins et al. 2015, Paasonen 2015). Further, algorithmic recommendation systems on Twitter and other platforms play an important role in enculturating audiences into the 'ideological bubble' of the extreme right and amplifying these views (O'Callaghan et al. 2015, Farkas et al. 2018). The act of sharing content is therefore highly relevant because it represents activity that attempts to connect audience members together and to encourage their participation in this digital culture.

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the molecular and the molar speaks to one of the central issues in understanding political community online: the difference between connective and collective action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012). While Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argue that connective action is more characteristic of mediated forms of political action, in the analysis below it becomes clear that white thymos flows in connective (returning to 'personal action frames') and conjugative modes (that reinforce 'collective action frames'). Affect plays a crucial role in this process; as Zizi Papacharissi (2015) shows in her introduction of 'networked structures of feeling', the affective attunements of social media users are predisposed to *connective* action that is not necessarily productive of a political community (cf. Dean 2010, Papacharissi 2016, Han 2017).

There are two types of flows between the molecular mass that are accessed by manipulators of white thymos. These are connective or conjugative and occur simultaneously. Connective flows repeat, remix, and reproduce content, generating lines of flight that decompose existing states and orders of meaning and value (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, p. 220). On the other hand, conjugative flows are 'like a point of accumulation that plugs or seals the lines of flight ... and brings the flows under the dominance of a single flow capable of overcoding them' (2005, p. 220). The distributed communities of the alt-right exchange connective flows of thymos that deterritorialize and escape from the norms of political civility, and are reinscribed by conjugative flows from radical right personalities and parties that channel these lines of flight into new political forms (cf. Hartzell 2018). White thymos is weaponized through the interplay of both of these types of flows.

Connective flows that appeal to white thymos are coordinated with the explicit purpose of hijacking public opinion by 'shitposting' and flooding particular discussion zones with poorly constructed but emotive content, thereby hacking existing content aggregation algorithms used by sites such as Twitter and Facebook, building on techniques from previous generations of internet trolls (Massanari 2017, Matamoros-Fernández 2017, Zannettou et al. 2017, Ludemann 2018). This shitposting might be conceived of as a kind of '*jouis-sance*' (Dean 2010) in spreading and repeating messages across networks as a kind of affective labour based on a 'revolutionary education' (Jutel 2018) and the distribution of 'counter-knowledge' obscured by the 'mainstream media' (see Bratten 2005). Connective flows of white thymos expand the audience and use appeals to rage, indignation, and the loss of status to encourage users to participate in producing and circulating content. Like trolling content on other sites, that produced by the alt-right audience on Twitter is not geared towards reason or desire; it is directed specifically to elicit rage, anger, indignation, and synthesize a sense of white victimhood using coded language and dog-whistles (see Topinka 2018).

Conjugative flows operate differently. Conjugative flows aggregate white-thymotic sensibilities around particular individuals and events. These conjugative flows gather the rage, anger, and indignation of an audience and channel them towards a particular purpose that can be identified in attacks on liberal or left-wing personalities, issues such as the protection of white women from men of colour or mobilized by a radical right figure like Donald Trump. Conjugative flows bring the molecular mass of the alt-right together in which they become a 'thymotically mobilized pack' (see Sloterdijk 2012, p. 152).³ The study below shows that connective and conjugative flows of white thymos are everyday repetitions that respond to manufactured outrage. In this sense, white thymos and its manipulation by the alt-right can make what seems an 'acephalic swarm' (Dean 2010) a collective one. It is through the proliferation of connective flows – which expand this swarm's *reach* – and the precision of conjugative ones – aiming the energies of this swarm at a target or aspiration – that white thymos is *weaponized*.

Tracing white thymos in new media networks

Having proposed the concept of white thymos and developed its connective and conjugative flows in theory, the essay turns to an empirical application of these flows to understand the relation between alt-right audiences and the conjugative flows that connect them to the radical right. The study's focus on Twitter is a specific choice because as Zannettou et al. (2017) find, the platform is used as a 'mainstream disseminator' of the content produced by a smaller, more specific mass of users on sites such as 4Chan (cf. Ludemann 2018). The essay employs a mixed method study of 248 Twitter users that,

in varying degrees of intensity, follow the alt-right online. Focus is placed on groups that are currently associated with the 'alt-right' as well as the extreme 'counter-jihad' movement that became closely connected in 2016 and 2017 (Davey and Ebner 2017, Phillips 2018). While it could be argued that some of those included in the seed are not alt-right per sé (an attribution which many of these accounts would hasten to deny), they (and their followers) are determined to be part of this molecular mass based on their professed ideologies, their use of social media and digital communication, and long-term observation of their audiences by the author.⁴ Further, the construction of the seed focuses only on influencers based in the UK or the US that tweet in English to explore the alt-right from a transatlantic perspective, following findings from Davey and Ebner (2017).

The research design and data collection process are designed to explore the connective and conjugative flows of white thymos that are theorized above. Digital trace data were collected from Twitter's API (application programming interface) that allows access to an archive of the last 3,200 tweets produced by a user. To identify the relevant audience, a seed of 20 accounts was selected based on identification of accounts as extreme right-wing or alt-right by civil society groups and observation of the network by the author for four months.⁵ As the focus of this article is on the audience of this seed, rather than the accounts in the seed themselves, the seed was only a starting point to identify Twitter users that subscribed to one or more influencers in the seed. The analysis below focuses on the activity of this sample of the audience rather than the activity of the users in the seed. This is a conscious choice to expand on the behaviour of the audiences that follow these key figures. From this analysis, white thymos emerges as a key flow that is both produced and circulated between this audience and the influencers with whom they connect. This approach to research design seeks to expose the affective attunements of the followers of these accounts and explore how the production and circulation of white thymos is weaponized through specific flows, contexts, and narratives.

The use of a stratified sample allows the examination of a continuum of the audiences of the extreme right to be studied. The users are placed into five bins based on how many accounts in the seed they followed. Consequently, those in the Mainstream MAGA (A) bin are much closer to mainstream conservatism where those in the Committed and Extreme Alt-Right bins are fully enculturated into the alt-right milieu (hence their relatively small numbers). From the total audience in each bin (see the second column in Table 1), 50 users are randomly selected for further study (except in the Extreme Alt-Right Bin, for which only 48 accounts existed), comprising a total of 248 users in five bins. In a certain sense, this sampling method stratifies the molecular mass into subdivisions that take into account a spectrum of audiences of the alt-right rather than just focus on the network's most extreme voices.

Table 1. Audience Bins A – E.

User Bin	Accounts in all followers collected	Accounts in stratified random sample of audience	Range of seed accounts followed
A: <i>Mainstream MAGA</i>	268,115	50	1–4
B: <i>Open to Alt-Right</i>	15,353	50	5–8
C: <i>Moderate Alt-Right</i>	4412	50	9–12
D: <i>Committed Alt-Right</i>	999	50	13–16
E: <i>Extreme Alt-Right</i>	53	48 (five accounts were shut down or not available, preventing collection of 50 users)	17–20
Total	288,932	248	

From the sampling method three sources of data are analysed: the self-description of users, the content of the most popular retweets in the audience, and the most repeated visual content in the network.

The analysis below uses quantitative methods to explore the activity of these users on Twitter at scale. Quantitative measures are used to explore specific patterns and trends, such as using word collocation methods to understand how users describe themselves as a part of this molecular mass, or to identify the most popular or most repeated content amongst these users. The measures are only used descriptively rather than as a way of testing and confirming relationships between variables. The measures are used to see if the most repeated content (based on repeated images and tweets) contain flows of white thymos and identify the different forms these flows take. Studying traces of activity afforded by data collection from Twitter, I attempt to reconstruct and contextualize these flows of white thymos with an interpretive approach. In this sense, I draw on the concept of quali-quantitative methods proposed by Venturini and Latour (2010) rather than detect thymotic language using computational methods and quantitatively testing its relative salience amongst these users (as might be possible with logistic regression or word vectors, for example). The present objective is to understand the flows of white thymos that might support future qualitative and quantitative inquiry into the alt-right.

Understanding the molecular mass: white thymos in user self-descriptions

Twitter requests that users provide a short description of themselves when they set up an account for the first time in 160 characters or less. This is particularly useful in profiling audiences on Twitter (Boutet et al. 2013, Hanusch and Bruns 2017, Crosset et al. 2019). Shared identification with collective frames increases likelihood of participation with such a collective group (Jost et al. 2018);

consequently, the descriptions identify a participatory culture with a shared discourse and ideology. Given that there are 288,932 members of the audience whose descriptions were collected, it is possible to give some sense of *who* composes this molecular mass and whether they express white-thymotic sentiments when describing who they are. To do so, a word collocation technique is used, which computes the probability of the co-occurrence of two words in a given text represented as a log-likelihood statistic (Baker 2006).

Love is one of the most common words used in the self-descriptions in the audiences under study. For this audience, love reveals an imagined community which is under threat. In Table 2 we see that the word 'love' is most commonly collocated with 'country' and in-group referents (eg. 'God', 'family'). Country is frequently invoked in audience descriptions alongside the words 'take' and 'back', revealing an imagination of the country that is at risk of escaping the grasp of its community. The expression of love in these descriptions takes on a thymotic tone, as evident in the following: 'we are prepared to take the country back from the sjw [social justice warrior] filth that are destroying it!! I love God, friends, and country, and will take a bullet for them!'⁶ This convergence of love, family, religion, and country alongside the affirmation to 'take the country back' indicates a thymotic impulse to redress the injustices done to a community and national culture that has 'fallen apart'. Gardell (2015) similarly finds that ultranationalists in Sweden do not describe themselves as hateful, but rather justify their views through the lens of 'love' for their own nation and the need to protect it and its people. The intensification of love for the nation and the demand to protect it motivates a thymotic urge to reclaim the nation: 'The anger and hatred a national warrior may feel when he sees a Muslim becomes further evidence of the original crime: the racialized stranger has robbed him of the love to which is entitled' (2015, p. 114).

The high probability of the collocation of 'hate' with love is striking as all other collocations refer to what is loved rather than other emotions. Across the descriptions, hate often refers to 'hate speech', demonstrating a thymotic frame in which these designations are seen as a mobilization of unjust power on legitimate and *righteous* expression. Others take the designation on as a

Table 2. Collocates of 'love', span of 3 (all users).

Collocation	Log-likelihood
love, country	2075.88
love, family	1699.30
love, god	1398.82
love, jesus	518.12
love, america	427.73
love, love	411.72
love, animal	376.72
love, hate	358.70
love, life	284.73
love, usa	279.31

Table 3. Collocates of ‘white’, span of 4 in Committed and Extreme Alt-Right user bins.

Collocation	Log-likelihood
white, male	150.26
white, nationalist	67.60
okay, white	57.61
white, genocide	55.01
ok, white	38.25
white, guilt	37.80
white, child	34.42
existence, white	28.40
straight, white	28.00
future, white	25.00

badge of pride: a user describes herself as a ‘Purveyor of hate speech’, another as an ‘Anti-Hate Speech Crusader’. Reference to ‘hate speech’ is seen as a means of silencing this group: ‘free speech no longer exists thanks to the PC controlled EU!’ It becomes a matter of love for and pride in one’s self, family, God, and country to engage in what is considered by others to be hate speech. What is objectively considered hate is, in this milieu, rendered into transgressive expressions speaking back at boundaries of ‘political correctness’ that are purportedly ‘destroying’ the nation.

While in the Mainstream MAGA user bin these attunements are not focused on *white* thymos explicitly, in the Open to the Alt-Right to the Extreme Alt-Right user bins, white is the second most common word used in the descriptions (following ‘#MAGA’ in the Open to the Alt-Right bin and ‘nationalist’ in the Moderate to Extreme Alt-Right bins). White pride is clearly visible whereas in Bin A users mark identity with ‘American’ or ‘British’ rather than ‘white’. For all of the bins except the Mainstream MAGA bin, ‘white male’ and ‘white nationalist’ are the two most common collocates (see Table 3). The collocate ‘okay’ refers to the slogan of white nationalist GOP candidate Paul Nehlen, ‘It’s Okay to Be White’ (taken up in the penultimate section of this essay). One user’s self-description provides a clear representation of this white-thymotic disposition: ‘Totally white European ... diversity is #WhiteGenocide ... we must secure existence for our people!’

The self-descriptions show that white thymos aptly describes how users see themselves: angry about the ‘loss’ and ‘destruction’ of their country and culture by ‘liberals’ and hope and enthusiasm to ‘take it back’. Looking back at the binding of ‘love’ across all the users in the audience, we see a less explicitly *white* form of thymos but this racial marker is present in the imagined community that it references. We might revisit ‘Make America Great Again’ as a slogan that resonates with and channels white-thymotic rage into a political movement. As Giroux notes, ‘Catering to the notion that whites are under siege, Trump employs a rude, bullying, humiliating and hate-filled discourse to breathe new life into the forces of white supremacy, hyper-masculinity, and a bellicose nationalism’ (2018, p. 713). MAGA condenses this into four letters

that sanitize the disposition that Trump seeks to mobilize. The user descriptions reveal that more than simply breathing new life into white supremacy, their dispositions are formed through the circulation of narratives and the production of collective frames of reference. The intensive focus on white pride and the perception of the threatened existence of white people *connects* white-thymotic dispositions with the collective frame of 'MAGA'.

Connective and conjugative flows of white thymos

The user self-descriptions provide an insight into the role that love and whiteness play in how audiences of the alt-right construct their identities. Now, the study turns to three key flows by which white thymos circulates in the culture that these audience members participate in: documentation of white victimization, processes of legitimization, and reinforcement of rectitude. Following Deleuze and Guattari, this section illustrates how actors on social media platforms work to connect white thymos with the disposition of users at the molecular level, synthesizing rage by documenting the 'truth' of white victimization, with particular attention to narratives of attacks on white culture and white women. This section posits that technology affords the construction and circulation of 'postures, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, and semiotic systems' (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, p. 215) of white thymos, exploited by actors that seek to instrumentalize anger using conjugative flows that lend such expression credibility and righteousness, which is considered in the following subsection.

Visual media as documentation of white victimization

This section focuses on how memes and images are used as connective flows that produce latent forms of white thymos by documenting 'evidence' of attacks on white identity and reinforcing the sense of a loss of status. The images below are based on 67 images that appeared 10 or more times in the networks of the users. Many of these images are instances of text, photos of books, or screenshots of other tweets that seek to document what is perceived as 'anti-white' rhetoric. While memes are an important medium on sites such as 4chan, where they are created before they find their way to Twitter (cf. Zannettou et al. 2017, Ludemann 2018), they are not the primary form of content that has the most resonance amongst the alt-right audiences on Twitter. Rather, the visual medium is used to document and insist on the 'truth' of white persecution. The medium thus *connects* those who apprehend threats to white identity and mobilize their dispositions. To explore how visual appeals to thymos were present in images retweeted by members of the audience, the URL of any images in each user's most recent 3,200 tweets were extracted. This resulted in over 65,000 unique

images. 67 of these URLs were repeated 10 or more times and the pictures they point to were analysed, with the two most representative images reported on below.

Figure 1 (repeated 10 times) is a graphic from Paul Nehlen, a white supremacist that ran for Paul Ryan's congressional seat in Wisconsin in 2018. **Figure 1** is a meme from Nehlen that restages Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church. In this case, the thesis is that 'It's Okay to Be White'. Indeed, this slogan has been so effective that many of the users in the audience have described themselves with it, as evidenced in the collocations with 'white' in **Table 3** above. This slogan is particularly revealing about the operativity of white thymos in the audience: it returns to the notion of lost status and entitlement that accrued to bodies racialized as white. The slogan replays the tropes of white victimhood and indicates that whites are victims of the political establishment (represented in the image by Paul Ryan). Thus, the slogan cloaks the *megalothymia* of white backlash by alleging the loss of the *equality* of white people and positions Nehlen as the representative of this rage. In this sense, the image connects users and also attempts to elicit their investment in him as the representative of white-thymotic aspirations.

Other images included take aim at online publications which, in various ways, 'call out' whiteness and are often written by people of colour. This tendency is represented in the panel of headline clippings on the left from *The Root*, a popular online magazine on 'Black news, opinions, politics and culture' (**Figure 2**). On the right are headlines from Affinity Magazine, which is an online publication 'written by teens for teens' with an emphasis on



Figure 1. 'It's okay to be white'.

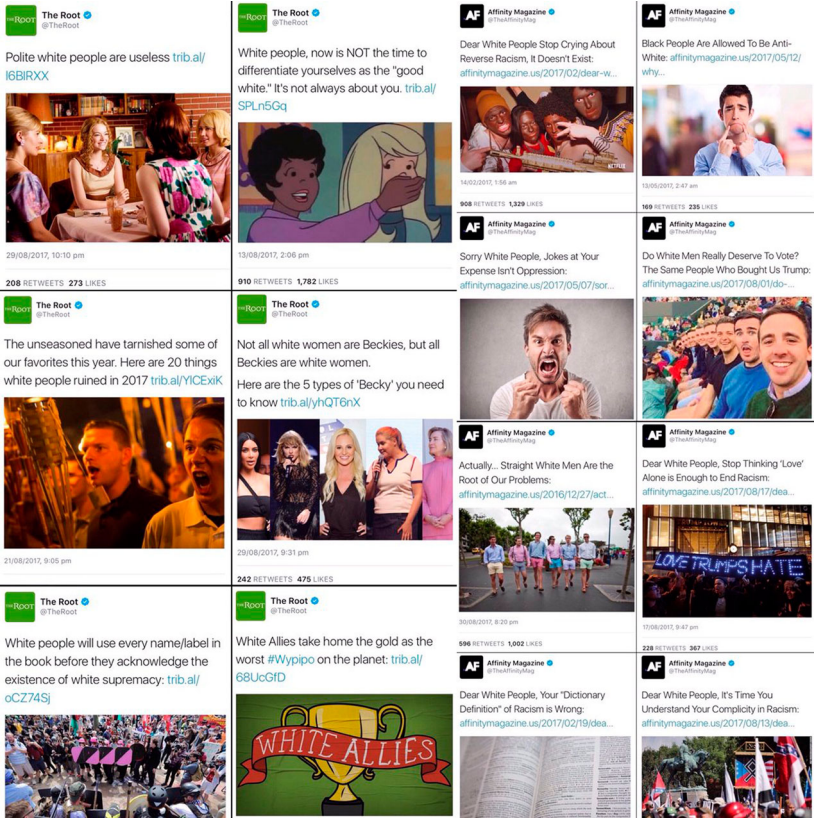


Figure 2. Tweet from RightWingStand.

‘social justice’, ‘politics’, and ‘culture’. The tweet, authored by an alt-right Twitter account, ‘The Right Wing Stand’ (@RightWingStand) has pinned these two images and the statement: ‘I can’t imagine why the Alt-right is becoming more and more popular’ to its timeline such that it is the first image seen by any visitor to the account’s page (Figure 2, repeated 12 times). The image is a matter of fact representation of a cultural threat that is gathering and continuing to degrade white culture. The screenshots again mobilize the indignation that Morrison (2016) points to in the loss of white status and fear of the loss of white superiority. The meaning of the headlines, which serve to document anti-whiteness and reproduce a narrative of white victimhood, are encapsulated in the white supremacist refrain ‘anti-racist is a code word for anti-white’ that frequently appears in these networks (Deem 2019, p. 3187, Greene 2019, p. 51).

By documenting these purportedly ‘anti-white’ statements, the visual media produced and consumed by alt-right networks expands its reach by connecting with wider audiences on Twitter. This *documentary* approach

has not been noted by recent studies of the alt-right, which have instead focused more specifically on trolling behaviour (see Marwick and Lewis 2017, Pollard 2018). At a higher scale, looking across the audience, the goal is to connect those disposed to white thymos with the affective circuits of the alt-right that confirm and repeat this rage. In the context of visual media on Twitter, the alt-right's focus is on connecting a latent sense of 'loss' and fear over white identity with emerging networks of white rage by supplying its audiences with 'evidence' of this process.

Legitimization and rectitude in white-thymotic discourse

Visual media is widely used to connect those with white-thymotic dispositions or document 'anti-whiteness'. The retweets, analyzed below, from the sample of the audience highlight two other flows that are particularly important for the mutual resonance of the alt-right and the radical right populism. To explore this, the retweets were first extracted ($n = 240,258$) from all of the users' tweets ($n = 603,788$), representing 40 percent of all activity of the sampled users. Then, the top 5 retweets for each of the bins of sampled users were tabulated and analyzed. From this, an interpretive analysis infers how appeals to white thymos are weaponized through the circulation and reproduction of tweets that legitimize and affirm the rectitude of the dispositions of the molecular mass, channelling them to maximize the resonance of radical right narratives.

Figure 3 plots all users that were retweeted more than 500 times by the 248 users in the sample. The y-axis is a simple count of all the retweets a labelled user received. Tweets and users that are retweeted more often are indicative of messages that have some kind of resonance with the audience which they felt was necessary to share with their own networks (see Murthy 2013 on the relevance of retweeting). On the x-axis, users are plotted based on their score in a diversity index⁷ measured by the number of users in each bin that retweeted them, indicating whether only users in a few bins retweeted that user or whether that user has resonance *across* the sample (from moderate to more extreme). Hence, a user like Donald Trump that is retweeted by almost every user in the sample is on the right side of the plot while the American identitarian street movement 'DefendEvropa' that is retweeted by a less diverse group falls on the left. Turning to the upper-right of the graph, users that are particularly adept at circulating white-thymotic flows across the audience are identified.

The plot reveals specific positions that have a relatively diverse audience but a moderate number of retweets and a few outliers that have massive numbers of retweets and somewhat different diversity in their audience (eg. 'thetolerantman' versus 'PrisonPlanet'). More mainstream voices, such as Ann Coulter and Fox News appear as diversity increases. This means that

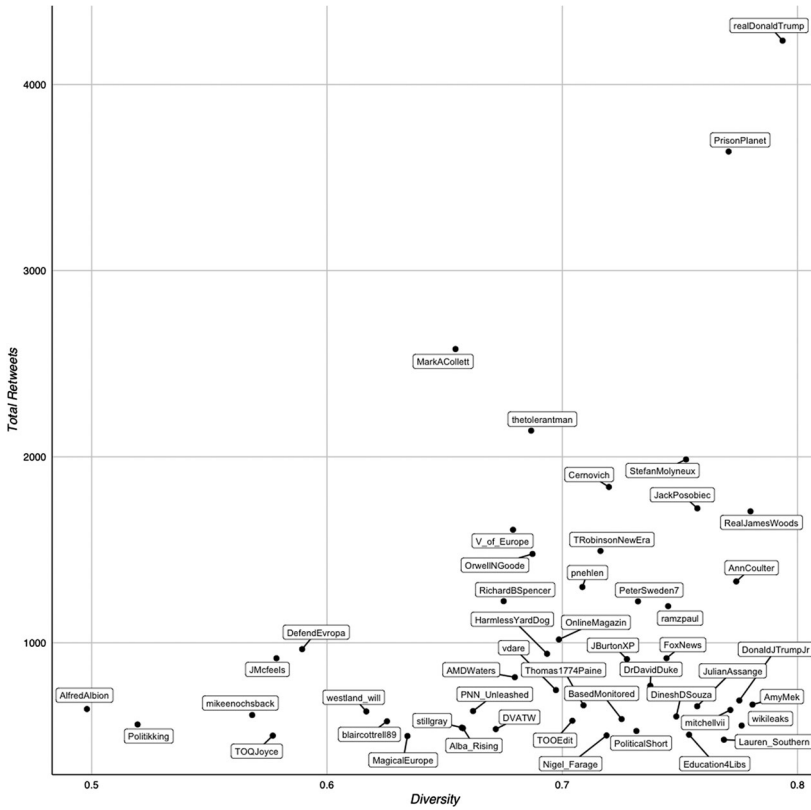


Figure 3. Most retweeted accounts in sample of audience by diversity.

mainstream conservative voices are more likely to be retweeted across the bins in this audience. While extreme voices are prevalent at a lower diversity (meaning they are not retweeted in many different audience bins), the resonance of mainstream conservative voices demonstrates the efficacy of white thymos in conjoining the alt-right and populist radical right. What is striking is that for the most retweeted content across *all* the bins is a fixation on violence towards white women. This central pole of white supremacist discourse (see Ferber 1999b) becomes a rallying point across the different bins for white thymos.

Ann Coulter has been retweeted by users in an almost equal distribution across all the bins. Coulter is a well-known conservative pundit that enjoys attention from a broad range of American conservatives, and by appealing to white thymos she has the effect of legitimizing its associated dispositions. Coulter’s most popular tweet references an attack on a white woman in Minneapolis: ‘NO news outlet would provide a description of the suspect ... Turns out: HE’S A SOMALI’. Coulter suggests that the media sought to hide the

ethnicity of the perpetrator because of political correctness, a trope common to far right discourse that reinforces anxiety that white women face sexual insecurity at the hands of Muslims invited to the US by multiculturalists, that is common to far right digital culture reported elsewhere (cf. Törnberg and Törnberg 2016). She elicits a response (a click, a retweet) from the audience of the alt-right that has been primed to apprehend the criminality of a black migrant from a Muslim country and the necessity of protecting white women from such alleged threats. Coulter's tweet has two consequences: first, it legitimizes both the belief that migrants and Muslims are inherently criminal and second, that the media is actively trying to hide his ethnicity and religion. Her tweet *conjugates* white thymos by suggesting (implicitly) that the liberals and the media that accommodate these others are traitors and that only the radical right is willing to protect white women.

Coulter's tweet stands in contrast to the more explicit one by Mark A. Collett (an account in the seed, alt-right author, and former BNP activist) who portrays an image of a woman killed in a terrorist attack in the UK: 'This is Sara, she was killed by Muslim terrorists because politicians care more about diversity & immigration than they do about our safety'. Coulter's and Collett's tweets show how such content about attacks on white women are used simultaneously to bind 'our' white community and direct outrage at the 'establishment' forces that are betraying the 'us' that they imagine, a point that reinforces 'love' for the nation and hate for those that threaten it (see above, and Gardell 2015). By sharing these tweets, users transgress political correctness to synthesize 'truths' about the insecurity and marginalization allegedly experienced by white Americans and Britons today.

Paul Joseph Watson is perhaps the most effective of the voices across the five bins in manipulating appeals to rectitude, which contributes to both connective and conjugative flows. Watson's videos deliver mile-a-minute lectures on unfolding events heavily edited with jump-cuts. The videos centre on the ways in which liberals are betraying the 'people' – he never refers specifically to who that 'us' is, but his reference to white majorities is obvious, if implicit, and his popularity across the bins demonstrates how effective he is at laundering white thymos. Watson's most popular tweet (Figure 4) mobilizes moral rectitude to justify hate towards liberals and perpetuate mythologies of non-white criminality and sexual aggression. This is particularly clear upon breaking down the story behind the tweet in Figure 4.

On 5 January 2018, singer and TV presenter Lily Allen tweeted that victims of sexual abuse at the hands of so-called 'Muslim grooming gangs' would have been 'raped anyway' if the 'attackers had not been allowed in to the UK' (Wheatstone 2018). Thetolerantman (in Figure 3 above) trolled Allen about this comment, gaining enough publicity on Twitter to catch the attention of journalists at *The Sun*, *Breitbart News*, *The Mirror*, and *The Daily Mail*. This action becomes a conjugative one, aggregating flows of anger that the

**Paul Joseph Watson** ✓

@PrisonPlanet

Follow

Lily Allen says child victims of Muslim grooming gangs would probably have been raped anyway.

This is beyond mental even for her.



4:37 PM - 5 Jan 2018

Figure 4. Watson's tweet on Lily Allen.

audience feels and turning that outrage toward a liberal representative of this anger. It is connective at the same time, seeking to draw audiences in to share in this thymotic event. The exchange is complete with Watson's tweet that describes her as a 'mental' left-wing voice obsessed with political correctness, positioning himself and those that share his outrage as protectors of the victims of these so-called 'Muslim grooming gangs'. Not only is Watson legitimizing thetolerantman's trolling, he also participates in a central aspect of white supremacist discourse. As Ferber finds in work on race, gender, and class in this discourse, 'the protection of white womanhood ... comes to symbolize the protection of the race' (1999b, p. 77), and it is often in regard to black men that white supremacist discourse positions white women as under threat and in need of protection from white men (Daniels 2016, pp. 63–64, Belew 2018). In the context of the case at hand, it is important to remember that Muslim men – particularly in Europe – have been constructed by this discourse as a threat to white women, often in the context

of grooming gangs in Britain and the rape of white women in Western Europe (Tufail 2015, Mondon and Winter 2017, Ganesh 2018). Watson's retweet of the tolerant man thus reproduces the classic enemies of white identity: the liberals like Allen that support the immigrants constructed as deviant and violent; Muslims, who are constructed as backward and sexually abusive; and the state, which accommodates and covers up the crimes of these 'alleged' deviants. That the protection of white women becomes such a rallying point for white thymos stresses the power that this particular trope has in mobilizing outrage at what is rendered as the obvious victimhood of white people at the hands of liberals, the state, and non-white people.

Donald Trump of course has the most retweets and the most diversity, which should be entirely unsurprising as research demonstrates that much of his language reinforces white identity politics common to the alt-right, albeit in more coded and moderate language (Kelly 2017, Kreis 2017, McGranahan 2019). He frequently reinforces the rectitude of white-thymotic dispositions to demonstrate how his actions and policies address the impulses of his audience. What Wahl-Jorgensen (2018) refers to as Donald Trump's 'angry populism' in media coverage of his inauguration can also be observed in how it becomes a pole around which flows of white thymos congeal. This 'angry populism' signals a 'shift in emotional regimes' that the 'performance' of anger 'is essential to the brand of populism represented by Trump' (Wahl-Jorgensen 2018, p. 776).

In the Mainstream MAGA user bin, Trump's most popular tweet was simply 'MAGA!', which seems innocuous enough, but it reminds us how even these affirmative statements repeated a white-thymotic impulse to 'take the country back'. In the Open to the Alt-Right through to the Extreme Alt-Right user bins, more specific threats to white culture posed by non-whites and political correctness become more popular. For the top five tweets in each bin ($n = 25$), 19 were authored by Trump. It is only in the Committed and Extreme Alt-Right bins that tweets from other accounts make it in to the top five. Across the entire audience, the tweet that was retweeted most was Donald Trump's response to a spokesperson for then UK Prime Minister Theresa May who stated that it was wrong for him to retweet Jayda Fransen, a leader of the far-right organization Britain First. Trump wrote back to May: 'don't focus on me, focus on the destructive Radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom. We are doing just fine!' Of the 32 times it was retweeted (by the sampled audience members), 13 (40.6 percent) retweets were from the Extreme Alt-Right bin. This tweet draws on two aspects of white thymos: first, it conjugates the backlash towards purportedly outrageous forms of censorship that 'liberals' and the 'establishment' engage in, legitimizing Jayda Fransen as a voice that is being unfairly prosecuted (at the time of Trump's tweet, Fransen was charged with religiously aggravated harassment). Second, the tweet is a

prideful and aggressive rebuke of May, a leader that is considered (by this group) as a representative of the 'establishment' whose appeasement of minorities enables 'Radical Islamic Terrorism'. Just as Coulter and Collett presented white women as victims of political correctness and multiculturalism, Trump extends the accusation that May has sold out the British public for the same reasons. In another context, amongst the Moderate Alt-Right bin, Trump's top-5 tweet claiming that he 'led the charge against the assault' on 'Merry Christmas', which he refers to as 'our beautiful phrase', Trump's belligerent response renders those who would say 'happy holidays' as assailants on Christian-American identity. Trump's tweet is a coded reference to the alleged degradation of Western culture at the hands of the 'political establishment'. Trump's frequent references – usually coded – to the paranoia of whites under siege connects with white-thymotic dispositions (as we may glean from the user self-descriptions above), synthesizing and dramatizing purported attacks on white identity. These theatrics conjugate and weaponize the audience's disposition to advance his personal brand and political power.

Conclusion

This analysis stresses that the alt-right's visibility online involves a participatory culture comprised of users and influencers who produce white thymos through the deployment of narratives that amplify and spread white supremacist discourse by appealing to and reproducing anxieties about the loss of status. As examples of the conjugative flows above show, this production of white thymos is weaponized by pundits, self-fashioned online celebrities, and populist radical right politics. By focusing both on the audience's self-descriptions, and visual and textual content that resonates the most with them, the centrality of white thymos becomes clearly evident. These dispositions are weaponized primarily through three flows: the affirmation of white victimization, processes of legitimization, and the reinforcement of rectitude. All of these are primarily rhetorical and play on the emotive dispositions of the audience. These flows become crucial to the connectivity between alt-right networks on Twitter that produce and circulate the sense of whiteness under attack and are a connection point between the alt-right and the more mainstream rhetoric of the populist radical right.

This analysis reveals that while trolling culture has played a significant role in the development of the alt-right, memes and trolling are not the most resonant forms of content. Resonant content confirms the *feeling* and *dispositions* of the audience. It involves processes that legitimize particular dispositions (in the case of Coulter and Collett) or specific actors (in the case of Jayda Fransen being retweeted by Donald Trump) and synthesize the righteousness of white-thymotic expression, drawing on love oriented towards the protection of white culture and specifically, white women from migrants and non-white

people that (these narratives allege) 'liberals' and the 'establishment' accommodate and support. Between these intersecting connective and conjugative flows, the politics – particularly the nativism and anti-elitism – of the populist radical right are presented as the noble defence of white pride. This work suggests that any cultural turn in the study of radical right populism must bring the construction of whiteness and the role of racially-bound pride, rage, and indignation into sharp focus. Thus, these findings suggest that future consideration of a cultural turn in the study of the populist radical right in Europe and North America should start with the rhetoric, aesthetics, and participatory cultures that produce and circulate white thymos. Such a focus would enhance our tools in understanding the cultural tools and dispositions that radical right populists seek to mobilize.

There are a few limitations to these findings. First, the analysis does not consider the intersections of white thymos and gender. Given the rendering of white women as objects to be protected and the particularly *masculine* forms of anger referenced in the conceptualization of white thymos, it is important that future research explore formations of masculinity alongside formations of white identity. Second, the sample is from Twitter and does not look across other platforms. Consequently, the data may be skewed towards conjugative rather than connective flows. This is not surprising as it has been shown that Twitter acts as a 'mainstream disseminator' for the alt-right. This is valuable for the question of *weaponization* that Karpf (2017) raises in reflections on digital media and Trump; a tentative answer suggests that connective flows expand the field of individuals for whom white thymos resonates by producing and circulating its apprehension, and is weaponized through conjugative flows that channel white thymos behind particular representatives of white thymos that are often pundits, online celebrities, and right-wing populists that seek to advance their personal brands and obtain political power. While more connective flows (such as trolling and shitposting) are likely to be more common on other platforms, they are less likely to become directly weaponized by the populist radical right as Twitter is a place where they can drive a connected network of feeling behind a political agenda. Third, the sample is focused on an Anglophone context and these findings do not necessarily apply to other language communities. However given similar frames of nativism and anti-liberalism in global far right communication, white thymos can be expected to be observed in other contexts, though its relative salience and specific flows are likely to be different (see Caiani and Kröll 2015, Moffitt 2017, Froio 2018, Froio and Ganesh 2019, Klein and Muis 2019).

What makes white thymos particular is how it cloaks a *megalothymic* ambition in the veneer of an *isothymic* discourse. White thymos is consistent in its *isothymic* façade; its exchange invents a crisis of white culture by repeating digital ephemera to justify its apprehension. By weaponizing white thymos,

the alt-right inoculates its audience from the anxiety or fear of expressing a *megalothymic* desire for ethnocentric dominance, whose time has lapsed at the 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1993). The weaponization of white thymos plays on personal and collective structures of rage, anger, and indignation to reinscribe audiences as participants in a righteous cultural war to return 'Western civilization' to its mythical dominance.

Notes

1. Affect is a complex issue and a full theorization is outside the scope of this article. In terms of the weaponization of affect on social media, the paper is interested in how texts, images, and other digital materials (which we might consider as certain types of 'traces', see [Crosset et al. 2019]) have the *potential* to inspire identity-based emotional responses that are connected to thymos: rage, anger, and indignation. Thus, the article's approach centres on the ways in which thymotic flows use affect to draw on the dispositions of networked social media users. In taking this perspective, I am drawing a distinction between affect, as the potential of one component on another in a technocultural assemblage, and emotion, which might be considered as the bodily experience of an affect circulated by a tweet, meme, or post. This account of affect (as potential) is particularly close to that given by Massumi (2002). The former was particularly relevant to Papacharissi's (2015) theorization of 'networked structures of feeling'. It is particularly advantageous for the present argument which explores white thymos as a disposition of audiences that can be connected and mobilized for different purposes through digital communication.
2. Sloterdijk focuses almost exclusively on communism and post-communism in his analysis of modern rage. It is illuminating, but it is a choice that prevents Sloterdijk from applying the useful vocabulary he develops in *Rage and Time* to understand fascism. He treats fascism sporadically and quickly, but his comments are insightful. He differentiates communist rage banks which collect capital through a thymos of the proletariat from fascist rage banks that collect capital through the thymos of the volk. Communist and fascist movements are 'peoples' banks of rage': fascism operates by 'the melting of the population into one thymotically mobilized pack, which takes itself to be unified in its claim to the greatness of the national collective' (2012, p. 152). Consequently, Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) reading of microfascism is useful because it can account for this 'thymotically mobilized pack' through the concept of the 'molecular mass' of 'microfascism'. While focus on communism might work better for his arguments against the economization of rage in late liberalism, it causes Sloterdijk to gloss over the political potential of right-wing thymos. He does seem to fleetingly anticipate this in his section on the *banlieue* riots in Paris in 2005 (see his reference to President Sarkozy, in 2012, p. 206), but ultimately misses an opportunity to look at another market of thymotic exchange in global society. This leads him to determine political Islam to be the most threatening rage bank without sufficient attention to rage in Islamic cultures and the incredibly wide spectrum that 'political Islam' references.
3. This mobilization has been demonstrated elsewhere. Studies of hate speech on Twitter show that incidences increase in response to attacks and reports of

sexual violence by migrants. Studying the alt-right, Zannettou. et al (2017) shows how activists coordinate 'raids' on websites to boost specific kinds of content. Similarly, Massanari finds that during the #Gamergate episode exponents of geek masculinity on Reddit could game the algorithms that manage content on Reddit to make their insults at female game developers seem more popular (Massanari 2017, p. 338).

4. Crosset, Tanner, & Campana (2019) refer to the problem of the fluidity of who might belong to a network. Following their focus on images, user self description, and image content (use of memes, for example), I have taken a similar approach to identifying who was included in the seed. Further, I study traces (user description, retweets, images) below to understand the various strata of the sampled users, described in Table 1.
5. The accounts in the seed were selected based on published information on key alt-right influencers from civil society and anti-hate organizations in the US and UK (Anti-Defamation League 2019, Hope Not Hate 2019, Southern Poverty Law Center 2019). These accounts are available in the Appendix Table. A larger set of accounts identified from these sources were observed for four months before the accounts in the seed were selected. Some of those in the seed were not included in the lists published by these three organizations and were included based on the author's own observations. Further, the data collection was completed just prior to a large crackdown on Twitter accounts in December 2018, consequently, many of the users in the seed can no longer be found on Twitter.
6. A few words of this self-description have been amended from the original to prevent deanonymization of the user through search.
7. The Simpson Diversity Index, used commonly in ecology, was applied here.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jonathan Bright, Kathryn Eccles, Gina Neff, Ralph Schroeder, and Bertie Vidgen at the Oxford Internet Institute for their support and feedback on drafts of this article. I would also like to thank Zizi Papacharissi and two anonymous peer reviewers for their thoughtful feedback that significantly improved this article. I am grateful for an invitation by Sahana Udupa and Matti Pohjonen to present an early draft of this article at the Digital Media Cultures and Extreme Speech Workshop and Akin Unver for the invitation to present a version of this article at the International Studies Association Conference in Toronto. Finally, I would like to thank Maura Conway and the VOX-Pol Project at Dublin City University and Phil Howard and the COMPROP Project that supported this research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by FP7 Security [grant number 312827]; H2020 European Research Council [grant number 648311].

Notes on contributor

Bharath Ganesh is an Assistant Professor of Media Studies in the Centre for Media and Journalism Studies at the University of Groningen. His research focuses on racism and hate, disinformation, and far right digital cultures in North America and Western Europe.

ORCID

Bharath Ganesh  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6544-5727>

References

- Anderson, C., 2016. *White rage: the unspoken truth of our racial Divide*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Anti-Defamation League. 2019. From alt right to alt lite: naming the hate [online]. *Anti-Defamation League*. Available from: <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/from-alt-right-to-alt-lite-naming-the-hate> [Accessed 10 January 2019].
- Atkinson, D.C., 2018. Charlottesville and the alt-right: a turning point? *Politics, groups, and identities*, 6 (2), 309–315.
- Back, L., 2002. Aryans reading Adorno: cyber-culture and twenty-firstcentury racism. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 25 (4), 628–651.
- Baker, P., 2006. *Using corpora in discourse analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Belew, K., 2018. *Bring the war home: the white power movement and paramilitary America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bennett, W.L., and Segerberg, A., 2012. The logic of connective action. *Information, communication & society*, 15 (5), 739–768.
- Bhambra, G.K., 2017. Brexit, Trump, and ‘methodological whiteness’: on the misrecognition of race and class. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68 (S1), S214–S232.
- Bjork-James, S., and Maskovsky, J., 2017. When white nationalism became popular. *Anthropology news*, 58 (3), e86–e91.
- Bonikowski, B., 2017. Ethno-nationalist populism and the mobilization of collective resentment. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68 (S1), S181–S213.
- Bonilla-Silva, E., 2017. *Racism without racists: color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bonta, M., and Protevi, J., 2004. *Deleuze and geophilosophy: a guide and glossary*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Boutet, A., Kim, H., and Yoneki, E., 2013. What’s in Twitter, I know what parties are popular and who you are supporting now!. *Social network analysis and Mining*, 3 (4), 1379–1391.
- Bowman-Grieve, L., 2009. Exploring “stormfront”: a virtual community of the radical right. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32 (11), 989–1007.
- Bratich, J.Z., 2005. Amassing the multitude: revisiting early audience studies. *Communication theory*, 15 (3), 242–265.
- Bratten, L.C., 2005. Online zealotry: la France du peuple virtuel. *New media & society*, 7 (4), 517–532.
- Brown, W., 2017. Apocalyptic populism. *Eurozine* [online]. Available from: <http://www.eurozine.com/apocalyptic-populism/> [Accessed 19 January 2020].

- Burris, V., Smith, E., and Strahm, A., 2000. White supremacist networks on the internet. *Sociological focus*, 33 (2), 215–235.
- Caiani, M., and Kröll, P., 2015. The transnationalization of the extreme right and the use of the Internet. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied criminal justice*, 39 (4), 331–351.
- Cramer, K.J., 2016. *The politics of resentment: rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Crosset, V., Tanner, S., and Campana, A., 2019. Researching far right groups on Twitter: methodological challenges 2.0. *New media & society*, 21 (4), 939–961.
- Daniels, J., 2009. *Cyber racism: white supremacy online and the new attack on civil rights*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Daniels, J., 2016. *White Lies: race, class, gender and sexuality in white supremacist discourse*. New York: Routledge.
- Daniels, J., 2018. The algorithmic rise of the “alt-right”. *Contexts*, 17 (1), 60–65.
- Davey, J., and Ebner, J., 2017. *The fringe insurgency*. London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue.
- Dean, J., 2010. Affective networks. *Mediatropes*, 2 (2), 19–44.
- Deem, A., 2019. The digital traces of #whitegenocide and alt-right affective economies of transgression. *International Journal of communication*, 13, 20.
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F., 2005. *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dennison, J., and Geddes, A., 2019. A rising tide? The salience of immigration and the rise of anti-immigration political parties in Western Europe. *The political Quarterly*, 90 (1), 107–116.
- Doerr, N., 2017. Bridging language barriers, bonding against immigrants: A visual case study of transnational network publics created by far-right activists in Europe. *Discourse & society*, 28 (1), 3–23.
- Eckhouse, L., 2018. White riot: race, institutions, and the 2016 U.S. election. *Politics, groups, and identities*, 1–12. doi:10.1080/21565503.2018.1442725.
- Evans, B., 2013. Fascism and the bio-political. In: B. Evans, and J. Reid, eds. *Deleuze & fascism: security: war: aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 42–63.
- Evolvi, G., 2019. #Islamexit: inter-group antagonism on Twitter. *Information, communication & society*, 22 (3), 386–401.
- Farkas, J., Schou, J., and Neumayer, C., 2018. Platformed antagonism: racist discourses on fake Muslim Facebook pages. *Critical discourse studies*, 15 (5), 463–480.
- Ferber, A.L., 1998. Constructing whiteness: the intersections of race and gender in US white supremacist discourse. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 21 (1), 48–63.
- Ferber, A.L., 1999a. *White Man falling: race, gender, and white supremacy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Ferber, A.L., 1999b. The construction of race, gender, and class in white supremacist discourse. *Race, gender & class*, 6 (3), 67–89.
- Froio, C., 2018. Race, religion, or culture? Framing Islam between racism and Neo-racism in the online network of the French Far right. *Perspectives on politics*, 16 (3), 696–709.
- Froio, C., and Ganesh, B., 2019. The transnationalisation of far right discourse on Twitter. *European societies*, 21 (4), 513–539.
- Fukuyama, F., 1993. *The end of history and the last Man*. New York: Penguin UK.
- Fukuyama, F. 2018. *Identity: the demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Ganesh, B., 2018. The ungovernability of digital hate culture. *Journal of International Affairs*, 71 (2), 30–49.

- Gardell, M., 2015. What's love got to do with it?: Ultranationalism, Islamophobia, and hate crime in Sweden. *Journal of religion and violence*, 3 (1), 91–115.
- Garner, S., 2017. Surfing the third wave of whiteness studies: reflections on Twine and Gallagher. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 40 (9), 1582–1597.
- Gervais, B.T., 2015. Incivility online: affective and behavioral reactions to uncivil political posts in a web-based experiment. *Journal of Information technology & politics*, 12 (2), 167–185.
- Giroux, H.A., 2018. Trump and the legacy of a menacing past. *Cultural studies*, 33 (4), 711–739.
- Gorski, P., 2017. Why evangelicals voted for Trump: A critical cultural sociology. *American Journal of cultural Sociology*, 5 (3), 338–354.
- Greene, V.S., 2019. “Deplorable” Satire: alt-right memes, white genocide tweets, and Redpilling Normies. *Studies in American Humor*, 5 (1), 31–69.
- Halley, J.O., Eshleman, A., and Vijaya, R.M., 2011. *Seeing white: an introduction to white privilege and race*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Han, B.-C., 2017. *In the swarm: digital Prospects*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hanusch, F., and Bruns, A., 2017. Journalistic branding on Twitter. *Digital Journalism*, 5 (1), 26–43.
- Hartzell, S., 2018. Alt-white: conceptualizing the “alt-right” as a rhetorical bridge between white nationalism and mainstream public discourse. *Journal of contemporary rhetoric*, 8 (1/2), 6–25.
- Hawley, G., 2017. *Making sense of the Alt-right*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hewitt, R., 2005. *White backlash and the politics of multiculturalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hochschild, A.R., 2018. *Strangers in their own land: anger and mourning on the American right*. New York: The New Press.
- Hope Not Hate. 2019. The international alternative right [online]. *The International Alternative Right*. Available from: <https://alternativeright.hopenothate.com/> [Accessed 10 January 2019].
- Hughey, M.W., 2014. White backlash in the ‘post-racial’ United States. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 37 (5), 721–730.
- Hughey, M. and Parks, G.S., 2014. *The wrongs of the right: language, race, and the republican party in the age of Obama*. New York: NYU Press.
- Ignazi, P. 1992. The silent counter-revolution [online]. *European Journal of Political Research*. Available from: <https://ejpr-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1992.tb00303.x> [Accessed 15 August 2019].
- Jenkins, H., Ito, M., and boyd, d., 2015. *Participatory culture in a networked Era: a conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics*. Cambridge: John Wiley & Sons.
- Jordan, W.D., 2013. *White over black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. Williamsburg: UNC Press Books.
- Jost, J.T., et al., 2018. How social media facilitates political Protest: information, motivation, and social networks. *Political Psychology*, 39 (S1), 85–118.
- Jutel, O., 2018. American populism, Glenn Beck and affective media production. *International Journal of cultural studies*, 21 (4), 375–392.
- Karpf, D., 2017. Digital politics after Trump. *Annals of the International communication Association*, 41 (2), 198–207.
- Kelly, A., 2017. The alt-right: reactionary rehabilitation for white masculinity. *Soundings*, 66 (66), 68–78.
- Klein, O., and Muis, J., 2019. Online discontent: comparing Western European far-right groups on Facebook. *European societies*, 21 (4), 540–562.

- Kreis, R., 2017. The “tweet politics” of President Trump. *Journal of language and politics*, 16 (4), 607–618.
- Longazel, J.G., 2013. Moral panic as racial degradation ceremony: racial stratification and the local-level backlash against Latino/a immigrants. *Punishment & society*, 15 (1), 96–119.
- Ludemann, D., 2018. /Pol/emics: ambiguity, scales, and digital discourse on 4chan. *Discourse, context & media*, 24, 92–98.
- Marwick, A., and Lewis, R., 2017. *Media manipulation and disinformation online*. New York: Data & Society.
- Massanari, A., 2017. #Gamergate and the fapping: how Reddit’s algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures. *New media & society*, 19 (3), 329–346.
- Massumi, B., 2002. *Parables for the virtual*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Matamoros-Fernández, A., 2017. Platformed racism: the mediation and circulation of an Australian race-based controversy on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. *Information, communication & society*, 20 (6), 930–946.
- May, R., and Feldman, M., 2018. Understanding the alt-right. Ideologues, ‘lulz’ and hiding in plain sight. In: M. Fielitz, and N. Thurston, eds. *Post-digital cultures of the far right*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 25–36.
- McGranahan, C., 2019. A presidential archive of lies: racism, Twitter, and a history of the present. *International Journal of communication*, 13, 3164–3182.
- McVeigh, R. and Estep, K., 2019. *The politics of losing: Trump, the Klan, and the mainstreaming of resentment*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Minkenberg, M., 2000. The renewal of the radical right: between modernity and anti-modernity. *Government and Opposition*, 35 (2), 170–188.
- Moffitt, B., 2017. Liberal illiberalism? The reshaping of the contemporary populist radical right in Northern Europe. *Politics and Governance*, 5 (4), 112–122.
- Mondon, A., and Winter, A., 2017. Articulations of Islamophobia: from the extreme to the mainstream? *Ethnic and racial studies*, 40 (13), 2151–2179.
- Mondon, A., and Winter, A., 2019. Whiteness, populism and the racialisation of the working class in the United Kingdom and the United States. *Identities*, 26 (5), 510–528.
- Morrison, T. 2016. Mourning for whiteness. *The New Yorker* [online], 21 November. Available from: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/21/aftermath-sixteen-writers-on-trumps-america#anchor-morrison> [Accessed 19 January 2020].
- Mudde, C., 2007. *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mulholland, J., 2018. Gendering the ‘white backlash’: Islam, Patriarchal ‘unfairness’, and the defense of women’s rights among women supporters of the British National Party. In: J. Mulholland, N. Montagna, and E. Sanders-McDonagh, eds. *Gendering nationalism: intersections of nation, gender and sexuality*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 165–185.
- Murthy, D., 2013. *Twitter: social communication in the Twitter age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- O’Callaghan, D., et al., 2015. Down the (white) Rabbit Hole: the extreme right and online recommender systems. *Social Science Computer Review*, 33 (4), 459–478.
- Omi, M. and Winant, H., 2014. *Racial formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge.
- Önnerfors, A., 2017. Between Breivik and PEGIDA: the absence of ideologues and leaders on the contemporary European far right. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 51 (2), 159–175.
- Paasonen, S., 2015. A Midsummer’s Bonfire: affective intensities of online debate. In: K. Hillis, S. Paasonen, and M. Petit, eds. *Networked affect*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 27–42.

- Papacharissi, Z., 2015. *Affective publics: sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Papacharissi, Z., 2016. Affective publics and structures of storytelling: sentiment, events and mediality. *Information, communication & society*, 19 (3), 307–324.
- Patton, P., 2002. *Deleuze and the political*. London: Routledge.
- Perry, B., and Scrivens, R., 2016. White pride Worldwide. In: J. Schweppe, and M.A. Walters, ed. *The Globalization of hate: internationalizing hate crime?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 66–78.
- Phillips, W., 2018. *The oxygen of amplification (part 1)*. New York: Data & Society.
- Plato, 2000. *Plato: The Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pohjonen, M., and Udupa, S., 2017. Extreme speech online: an anthropological critique of hate speech debates. *International Journal of communication*, 11, 1173–1191.
- Pollard, T., 2018. Alt-right transgressions in the age of Trump. *Perspectives on global development and technology*, 17 (1–2), 76–88.
- Rensmann, L., 2017. The noisy counter-revolution: understanding the cultural conditions and dynamics of populist politics in Europe in the digital age. *Politics and Governance*, 5 (4), 123–135.
- Roediger, D.R., 2007. *The wages of whiteness: race and the making of the American working class*. London: Verso.
- Rydgren, J., 2017. Radical right-wing parties in Europe. *Journal of language and politics*, 16 (4), 485–496.
- Salazar, P.-J., 2018. The alt-right as a community of discourse. *Javnost - The public*, 25 (1–2), 135–143.
- Schweppe, J., and Walters, M.A. 2016. *The globalization of hate: internationalizing hate crime?* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scrivens, R., and Perry, B., 2017. Resisting the right: countering right-wing extremism in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and criminal justice*, 59 (4), 534–558.
- Seta, G.D., 2018. Wenming Bu Wenming: the socialization of incivility in postdigital China. *International Journal of communication*, 12, 2010–2030.
- Shaohua, P., 2017. White supremacy and racial conflict in the Trump Era. *International critical Thought*, 7 (4), 592–601.
- Shea, D.M., and Sproveri, A., 2012. The rise and fall of nasty politics in America. *PS: political Science & politics*, 45 (3), 416–421.
- Simi, P. and Futrell, R., 2015. *American Swastika: inside the white power movement's hidden spaces of hate*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sloterdijk, P., 2012. *Rage and time: a psychopolitical investigation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sobieraj, S., Berry, J.M., and Connors, A., 2013. Outrageous political opinion and political anxiety in the US. *Poetics*, 41 (5), 407–432.
- Southern Poverty Law Center. 2019. Extremist files [online]. *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Available from: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual> [Accessed 10 January 2019].
- Terranova, T., 2000. Free labor: producing culture for the digital economy. *Social text*, 18 (2), 33–58.
- Topinka, R.J., 2018. Politically incorrect participatory media: racist nationalism on r/ImGoingToHellForThis. *New media & society*, 20 (5), 2050–2069.
- Törnberg, A., and Törnberg, P., 2016. Muslims in social media discourse: combining topic modeling and critical discourse analysis. *Discourse, context & media*, 13, 132–142.
- Tufail, W., 2015. Rotherham, Rochdale, and the Racialised threat of the 'muslim grooming Gang'. *International Journal for crime, justice and social Democracy*, 4 (3), 30–43.

- Tuters, M., Jokubauskaitė, E., and Bach, D., 2018. Post-truth protest: how 4chan cooked up the Pizzagate Bullshit. *M/C Journal*, 21 (3). Available from: <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1422>.
- Venturini, T., and Latour, B., 2010. The social fabric: digital traces and quali-quantitative methods. *Proceedings of future En Seine*, 8, 87–101.
- Wahl-Jorgensen, K., 2018. Media coverage of shifting emotional regimes: Donald Trump's angry populism. *Media, culture & society*, 40 (5), 766–778.
- Wheatstone, R. 2018. Lily Allen says Rochdale abuse victims 'would have been raped by someone else' [online]. *The Sun*. Available from: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5294970/lily-allen-slammed-after-claiming-rochdale-abuse-victims-would-have-been-raped-or-abused-by-somebody-else-even-if-sex-gang-didnt-exist/> [Accessed 19 April 2018].
- Whitehead, A.L., Perry, S.L., and Baker, J.O., 2018. Make America Christian again: Christian nationalism and voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election. *Sociology of religion*, 79 (2), 147–171.
- Winter, A., 2019. Online hate: from the far-right to the 'alt-right' and from the margins to the mainstream. In: K. Lumsden, and E. Harmer, ed. *Online othering: exploring digital violence and discrimination on the Web*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 39–63.
- Wirz, D.S., et al., 2018. The effects of right-wing populist communication on emotions and cognitions toward immigrants. *The International Journal of Press/politics*, 23 (4), 496–516.
- Zannettou, S., et al., 2017. The web centipede: understanding how web communities influence each other through the lens of mainstream and alternative news sources. In: *Proceedings of the 2017 internet measurement conference*. New York, NY, USA: ACM, 405–417.
- Zickmund, S., 2002. Approaching the radical other: the discursive culture of cyberhate. In: S. Jones, ed. *Virtual culture: identity and communication in cybersociety*. London: SAGE, 185–206.
- Zúquete, J.P., 2018. *The identitarians: the movement against globalism and Islam in Europe*. ct: University of Notre Dame Press.

Appendix

Table A1. List of Accounts Used for Seed.

Twitter handle	Name	Relevant organizations
AMDWaters	Anne Marie Waters	For Britain, UKIP, Sharia Watch
BasedStickman_	Kyle Chapman	Proud Boys, Fraternal Order of The Alt Knights
BrittPettibone	Brittany Pettibone	YouTube host, associated with pan-European identitarian street movement
CarolynEmerick	Carolyn Emerick	EuropaSun magazine
Daniel_Friberg	Daniel Friberg	Arktos Media
GenIdentEngland	Generation Identity England	UK chapter of pan-European identitarian street movement
GoldingBF	Paul Golding	Leader of Britain First, counter-jihad street movement
IdentityEvropa	Identity Evropa	US-based identitarian street movement
jackbuckby	Jack Buckby	UKIP, LibertyGB, National Culturists
jmcfeels	McFeels	Hosts radio show at Fashthenation.com
KyleBristow	Kyle Bristow	Head of activist group, Foundation for the Marketplace of Ideas
LanaLokteff	Lana Lokteff	Host on RedIce TV
LeeMares	Lee	UK-based alt-right digital activist, account recently suspended
MarkACollett	Mark Collett	Former BNP activist
MillennialWoes	Colin Robertson	Scottish alt-right YouTube personality
NathanDamigo	Nathan Damigo	Leader in Identity Evropa
realJamesAllsup	James Allsup	Nationalist Review
RichardBSpencer	Richard Spencer	National Policy Institute, altright.com
TaraMcCarthy444	Tara McCarthy	Host of YouTube show, The Last Call
TradBritGroup	Traditional Britain Group	British activist group