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2020

Fortifying Hate: How Social Media Acts as a Tool for White Supremacist Groups

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

FORTIFYING HATE: HOW SOCIAL
MEDIA ACTS AS A TOOL FOR WHITE
SUPREMACIST GROUPS

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Department of
Political Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with
Honors in the Major

Degree Awarded:
Spring, 2021

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Abstract

In this paper, I seek to gain a better understanding of the alt right presence on YouTube. This research focuses on two particular YouTube channels hosted by the alt-right figures, Stefan Molyneux and Hunter Avallone. Videos published during the 2019 calendar year from both channels are analyzed for content and videos are placed into categories. From there, the categories are subdivided into ‘institutional political’ and ‘social issue’ based on content. T-tests for both channels examine the significance of engagement with each category of content. Engagement in this research is based on exact numerical value of views, likes, and comments received on each YouTube video.

The alt-right is not only a growing movement, but it is also crossing over into more mainstream media. With this, tolerance for alt-right rhetoric expands and fringe groups can follow their lead. The 2016 election was a pivotal moment for the alt-right in American politics. Since then, the alt-right has been working towards securing their movement and beliefs as a legitimate political stance. Mainstream attention for the alt-right has allowed the group to expand and recruit. The most prominent way this is carried out is through social media.

The consideration must be made that, although referred to as the “alt-right”, the movement is a loose collection of smaller groups with no formal organization nor leadership. The alt-right is not a political party, there is no centralized power, nor is there an established, shared platform.

Overall, the results show that the alt-right YouTube channels which were studied produce a wide variety of content which includes humor, self-help, and slighter levels of political commentary. YouTube viewers did not seem consistently more or less drawn to content focusing on institutional political topics than content focusing on other social issues. However, the variety of content offered is itself a takeaway of just how diverse and compelling the alt-right can be in its social media platforms.

Key Words: Alt-right, domestic terrorism, far-right, social media, content analysis

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my incredible committee for their support, advice, and encouragement throughout the process of this work:

Dr. Deana Rohlinger – Thank you for not only guiding my work academically, but also for providing me with new viewpoints on political issues. Your studies are so interesting and so important considering political attitudes in America. It has been a privilege to not only hear about the work you do, but to also be a part in it.

Dr. Matthew Pietryka – Thank you for stepping up to be my thesis chair when I suddenly decided to switch majors a year before graduation. The advice you gave me on data analysis for this thesis was incredibly useful.

Dr. Amanda Driscoll – Thank you for always answering my many questions and for helping me guide this honors in the major thesis.

I am so grateful to have worked with such knowledgeable academics as yourselves in such an early chapter of my own academic career. More importantly, I am thankful to have gotten to meet with all of you and come to know you as kind, passionate individuals who truly put all of their effort into their work with the goal of improving the world through politics.

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Introduction

The alt-right, or the alternative right, is a right-wing ideology and corresponding decentralized movement in the United States. The ideology fits very closely with white nationalist and white supremacist positions and the resurgence of such beliefs in the alt-right is a “repackaging” of old ideas with the aim to mainstream them into American politics (Alt Right: A Primer on the New White Supremacy). The term came about in 2008 when Richard Spencer, a notable white supremacist, used it in an article in a far-right publication, Taki’s Magazine (Alt Right: A Primer on the New White Supremacy). “Alt-right” serves as an umbrella term under which a wide array of beliefs are held, shared, and intermingled. The rhetoric of the alt-right often, but not always, is pro-male, anti-immigration, and anti-establishment. Because of the nature of the movement, alt-right communication lives mostly online and ideas are shared in online spaces and on social media platforms.

The alt-right, its ideology, and methods of recruitment have become a global movement, but I will be discussing the alt-right predominantly as it pertains to U.S. politics. When analyzing the movement, it is vital to understand the fragmentation of the group. It is not organized in the sense of having a singular, defined leader nor is there an established platform of the alt-right. Within the alt-right, there are subsets with varying levels of extremism and aim: the alt-lite, far right, populist, neo-Nazi, neo-fascist, White Power Movements and their connections to the alt-right will be discussed in the body of this thesis (Alt Right: A Primer on the New White Supremacy).

Aims of Study

In studying the alt-right, the goal of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of how the alt-right engages a following through social media. The questions set out to determine engagement are as follows:

RQ1. What kinds of topics do alt-right YouTube channels cover in their videos?

RQ2. Which categories of videos, either institutional political or social issues, are more watched and liked by viewers?

RQ3. Which categories of videos, either institutional political or social issues, receive the most comments from viewers?

Significance of this Study

More research of the alt-right is needed because their presence continues to rise. Alt-right uses rebellious rhetoric and has been tied to violent incidents within recent years (Alt Right: A Primer on the New White Supremacy). As the alt-right grows and integrates into mainstream media awareness, fringe groups such as QAnon follow and take advantage of the growing tolerance.

Since the 2016 election, the American electorate has increasingly expressed support for extreme views. In a 2017 study, 9 percent of Americans considered holding alt-right or Neo-Nazi views to be acceptable (Bryant, 2020, p. 89). Although 9 percent is not an overwhelming proportion of U.S. voters, social media presence and impassioned expressions of belief embolden the movement and make it seem as though the alt-right is larger with more commonly held beliefs than it really has. Similarly, in Canada anti-immigrant rallies which mirror the 2017 Charlottesville, Virginia rally have been held and reflect the surging white nationalist xenophobia in the country (Rutherford, 2020, 60-61). A self-reported 6 percent of Americans identify as part of the alt-right (Forscher & Kteily, 2019, p. 90). More specifically, 10 percent of Americans who voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election identify as part of the alt-right (Forscher & Kteily, p. 90). Forscher and Kteily's (2019) study concluded that the higher levels of support within Trump voters is tied to a shared emphasis on media trust, economic attitudes, race-based collective action, and similar perception of importance of a list of 12 political topics (p.99). Forscher and Kteily's (2019) study found significant results that both

2016 Trump voters and alt-right supporters were more likely to be from the Midwest and less likely than non-Trump voters to have a college education or beyond (p. 101-103).

Literature Review

The alt-right we know today has significant differences from what has been seen in the past as far as mainstream relevance, but it is really just a repackaging of ideas that have been around for a long time. Although we now know the alt-right to be highly vocal and visible, the modern-day alt-right has been formed by the decades in which it operated as a relegated fringe group. Despite their forthright, central claim to power and authority, White Power Movements (WPMs) largely existed as a marginalized group who could not openly communicate their ideologies without fervent backlash. Like any highly marginalized group, WPMs needed what Dr. Simi and Futrell (2006) call “free spaces”, a physical or virtual place to “meet, articulate, and support their views” (p. 117). Traditionally, these safe spaces were in-person events: day-to-day interactions in the household, in-home parties, conferences and congresses, as well as music festivals and concerts.

When Dr. Simi and Futrell wrote their 2006 analysis, they argued that web presence alone is not enough to initiate and maintain a movement, but it is closely intertwined with the real-world expansion of the movement. Since the year of that paper’s publication, social media has expanded exponentially in the existence of daily life. To understand their stance, the traditional methods of in-person organization must be explained and assessed.

According to Dr. Simi and Futrell (2006), based on what they learned from an ethnography of WPM members, the most powerful weapon wielded by WPMs is the indoctrination of younger generations. Rites of passage, such as birthdays and hunting trips, are typical means of far-right parents introducing their children to their ideologies (p.123). Whole families participate in racist Bible study groups and “Aryan-themed parties” (p.123). These

small-scale events among local families provide a “free space” wherein members can share ideas while forging relationships. To move from being a local ideology to a globalized movement, those on the far-right must gather in a large space to share positions and form bonds. So, on a larger scale, conferences, congresses, and concerts are a way of connecting a broader web of activists and are invaluable for connecting generations (p.124).

These in-person events serve as the basis of how WPM communities emerged and expanded. However, the online sphere is arguably just as powerful and must be studied at a greater extent to gain an understanding of the risks it may present.

Changes to Alt-right Structure and Current Strategies

The major turning point for the Alt-right is largely agreed upon to be the events and attitudes surrounding the 2016 U.S. Presidential election (Schwarzenegger & Wagner, 2018, p. 483). The election and its media coverage coincided with the rise of the Alt-right, though the term and those subgroups which fall under it were around prior to 2016. In many ways, the election broke the conventional U.S. election and campaigning norms. The Trump campaign abandoned “political norms forbidding offensive speech targeting minorities” (Forscher & Kteily, 2019, p. 90). In providing a more welcoming attitude towards what was previously intolerant speech, with or without the direct intent, allowed for the Alt-right to become more visible and recognizable to mainstream media.

The Alt-right as we know it now is a highly decentralized movement in its structure, the only traces of formal organization exist online (Forscher & Kteily, 2019, p. 90). There is no formal leadership, only a collection of figureheads; some of these figures, such as Stephen Bannon have ties to the White House which has furthered the recognition of both the Alt-right name and ideologies (Forscher & Kteily, 2019, p. 90-91). Being a highly decentralized organization, there is no formal platform of the Alt-right either. Rather, the Alt-right fluctuates in its goals with some followers of the movement emphasizing elements of antiestablishment and

anti-globalism while others focus on reinvigorating the status and power of U.S.-born Whites (Forscher & Kteily, 2019, p. 91). Because there is no strict platform or position taken by the alt-right but instead support for a wide range of nationalist beliefs, it has broad appeal to many Americans.

The central channel of expressing and discussing Alt-right ideology has become the internet: accessible as well as deep web chat rooms, Reddit and other online forums, Twitter, YouTube, and any other place on the internet where communication occurs. The use of the internet and, more specifically, social media by white power and alt-right groups is nothing new. In their 2006 analysis, Simi and Futrell explained how white power activists use the internet to form and maintain connections that translate to off-line spaces (p. 116). The question at-hand, both in 2006 and now, is: are the virtual and real-world spaces utilized by these movements connected or separate entities? Just how effective are online attempts at spreading extremist ideology?

The main benefit of online WPM interactions is the potential to form a much larger community than could ever gather in the real-world. W. Lance Bennett (2012) makes the connection that the more individual and personalized social media becomes, the greater the potential for “ordinary people” to be empowered by what they see online (p.21). The ever-globalizing nature of the internet allows for the flow of white power ideology to span borders, being consumed by both those already associated with groups as well as with unassociated individuals. Alt-right groups are no longer laying low and meeting only occasionally in person. Their online presence not only connects current members of the organization but “[expands] their spheres of influence” by making alt-right adjacent content easily accessible to new demographics (Adams & Roscigno, 2005, p. 759).

The burgeoning literature on the topic of the alt-right and related technologies includes particular language and terminology specific to the movement. To encourage a better

understanding of the review of literature, some of these terms will be explained prior to the body of the review. In this section, the idea of the “Red Pill” will be explained in order to shape an understanding of the radicalization process. For further comprehension of radicalization as it pertains to the alt-right, neural networks used in programming will be explained. Neural networks are a key piece of YouTube’s algorithms for video recommendations and play a crucial role in circulating alt-right content on the platform. Both the Red Pill and neural network programs are essential concepts to be clarified as they have allowed for the exceptional growth of the alt-right on online social media channels.

YouTube Recommendation Algorithms

The claim that YouTube and its many methods of encouraging content play a role in alt-right engagement and radicalization must be considered in the context of decreasing reliance on mainstream media and increasing influence of social media sites (Ribeiro et. al, 2019, p.1). In recent years, individuals have lost trust in traditional news media and have turned to social media to consume “news and opinion content” (Ribeiro et. al, 2019, p.1). YouTube is one site particularly popular with children and teens especially (Ribeiro et. al, 2019, p.1). While confidence in mainstream news dwindles, 77% of all internet users use YouTube (Khan, 2017, p. 236). The trend is pointing towards YouTube and similar social networks taking over as the dominant source of content.

The principle goal of YouTube or any other social media platform (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) is to have users consume as much content as possible. As ingrained as they are in daily life, they are – at their most basic level – private companies with the goal of making money which is directly connected to how much content users engage with. YouTube’s “main source of revenue is through their advertisers”, giving them a strong incentive to encourage user views and clicks on advertisements (Bryant, 2020, p. 87). For YouTube specifically, “the algorithm

improves through machine learning which means every time it has a successful interaction, and a user allows one of the suggested videos to be played, the algorithm learns that there is a relationship between the video watched and the video suggested” (pg. 86). The concern with this is that the next video starts playing without explicit user consent. This has many possible outcomes which will be discussed in the following section in connection to the alt-right.

In explaining the YouTube algorithm for recommending videos and structure of the platform, there will be reference to machine learning, neural networks expressly. The system YouTube uses for recommending videos to users is goal-based, meaning the system’s foremost function is to persuade the user to watch as many videos as possible by finding the most correct algorithms to achieve that goal. The term “neural network” refers to the complexity of the programming and the program which mimics a human brain (Bryant, 2020, p. 87). The algorithms used by YouTube are two sided: one part is fixed, representing the design by engineers with the intent of encouraging video views, the other part is the unknown factor that is determined by machine learning (Bryant, 2020, p. 87). Machine learning as it is used for YouTube “is distinct from a programmed response in that it is a behavior that the computer has improved upon on its own, often using pattern recognition to determine a better or faster way to attain the original directive which has been set by a human engineer” (Bryant, 2020, pg. 87). The complexity and multi-faceted mechanism which YouTube employs creates a platform designed to push out as much content as possible to each user.

A question that has arisen in the past several years is determining the roles of platforms like YouTube and Facebook in politics. Any private company will always promote their best interest, but at what cost can or should the government limit that? The algorithms of Twitter and Facebook have been especially controversial. A component central to the goal of YouTube as a private company is to make the site appealing Content is driven to be unique to the user and is done so through complex algorithms which effectively learn who a user is and what they watch

(Khan, 2017, p. 236). YouTube is not alone in this style of algorithm. Facebook is also structured with personalized content amidst the tools for social interaction (Khan, 2017, p. 237). When content is tailored to the individual, it may indirectly encourage closed-mindedness and could open up the possibility of radicalization. As more content on one side of an issue is suggested to the viewer, opposing positions become less frequently recommended.

Radicalization Aided by YouTube Recommendation Algorithms

Radicalization often a process, explained by many in terms as an eye-opening experience of taking the red pill (Munn, 2019, p. 4). If a viewer is initially exposed to extreme content of any kind, the typical reaction would be one of disgust and rejection. However, if a viewer is exposed to content that is humorous and less severe in its ideology, the viewer may agree with some aspects. If the viewer continues to watch related content, they continue to agree more and more as the ideas presented become increasingly extreme.

The process of radicalization is best understood from personal journeys and an analysis of the structure of the platforms themselves. In theory, there are millions of videos on YouTube that a user can choose from. In practice, “users are steered towards a very small set of related videos” (Munn, 2019, p. 6). This is true because of the nature of machine learning used by YouTube, a “neural network learning algorithm that perpetuates content to users” (Bryant, 2020, p. 87). Referring back to YouTube’s mission as a company, it is in the platform’s economic interest for users to continue watching as many videos as possible while on the site. Typically, this would be relatively harm-free, but can lead to radicalization if certain content is part of a successful path of machine learning.

As humans, we foster a natural desire to learn more and dig deeper; this trait is exploited by the system of recommendations of YouTube videos, which offers gradually more and more intense content (Munn, 2019, p. 6-7).

Radicalization becomes a possibility when users acclimate to milder content through psychological habituation (Munn, 2019, p. 10). To a new user dipping their toes into the world of alt-right online content, slurs and extremist ideas typically elicit an initial shock and/or feeling of disgust. Once a user is accustomed to hearing such terms, phrases, and jokes, they become less repulsive, then anticipated, until eventually the user agrees with the ideologies of the videos (Munn, 2019, p. 10).

The process of radicalization is described by those within the alt-right as “taking the red pill”. Originating from the film *The Matrix*, the protagonist is offered two pills, one red and one blue, and told “You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill and you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes” (Munn, 2019, p. 4). From this scene, the alt right has developed their terminology of the “red pill” to mean opening one’s eyes to the truths of the world; that may take the form of: condemning mainstream media as propaganda, understanding and denouncing the leftist agenda that SJW’s (Social Justice Warriors) seek to execute, or believing and furthering more harmful conspiracies such as the JQ (Jewish Question) or various deep state theories (Munn, 2019, p. 4). The term red pill or the process of red pilling proves the point that radicalization is typically a progression. It also can be used to explain how the overarching alt-right community plays a role since typically the red pill is offered by an influencing, established member. “The Red Pill” sometimes refers to a pro-male sub-Reddit which has further evolved the term from its original meaning.

As a process, radicalization typically begins with less intense content and works its way towards more extreme ideas. An example of this was studied from a 2019 YouTube video wherein a user explained his personal journey of radicalization through the movement. The user, called FaradaySpeaks, began on YouTube watching self-help videos when a video of Stefan Molyneux’s was recommended to him by the platform (Munn, 2019, p. 5). FaradaySpeaks

admitted this was in 2014 when Molyneux's videos were "much milder" than they had become, mainly tied to self-help and minor anti-SJW ideology (Munn, 2019, p. 5). From those videos, FaradaySpeaks went on to discover Steven Crowder and Ben Shapiro where he got accustomed to basic conservative principles: "small government, banning abortion and same-sex marriage, tighter immigration policies, and so on" (Munn, 2019, p.5). What had begun with self-help videos moved to anti-SJW, then conservative ideology and broad humor of Crowder and Shapiro, until eventually FaradaySpeaks encountered overt "white-rights advocates like Lauren Southern, and then to openly white supremacist figures such as Jared Taylor" (Munn, 2019, p. 5). The incrementalism in the content displayed to a user such as FaradaySpeaks can provide some insight into how individuals enter onto YouTube looking for one thing and can be led down the path of radicalization. By no means has YouTube designed their algorithms with such intention, but the step-by-step process has certainly become a clear side effect of YouTube's recommendation system.

Another way to illustrate the existence of this radicalization pathway is by tracking comments. In a study of YouTube comments, content was organized into levels of alt-lite, alt-right, Intellectual Dark Web (I.D.W), and popular media (Ribeiro et al., 2019, p. 4). The study found that a growing percentage of users consume more extreme alt-right YouTube content while simultaneously consuming milder content from Alt-lite and/or I.D.W. (Intellectual Dark Web) channels (Ribeiro et al., 2019, p. 7). It was also determined that "systematically, users who commented only on I.D.W. or Alt-lite content go on to comment on Alt-right channels" (Ribeiro et al., 2019, p. 8). This does not necessarily mean that one leads to another. Users could consume the content of all levels at once or just leave entirely. But when the algorithm is factored in and the means by which videos and channels are recommended on YouTube, the theory that milder content leads users to eventually more extreme content seems far more plausible. In studying the

effects of YouTube's algorithm for recommendations, it was found that YouTube "frequently [suggests] Alt-lite and I.D.W. content" and that from the alt-lite and I.D.W. level, "it is possible to find Alt-right content from recommended channels, but not from recommended videos" (Ribeiro et al., 2019, p. 10). Although there is no perfect way to understand how every individual encounters the radicalization process via YouTube, it seems there is reason to believe the ability to ease into new, more extreme ideas due to the recommendation system has led to some instances of radicalization.

Humor as a Mainstreaming Tool

When browsing through YouTube, it can be observed that much of the content exhibits shocking titles or humor. For the alt-right content, humor is present as a fundamental technique for outreach and growth. Monetary incentives lead content creators to include humor and shock as techniques to attract a wider audience. The inclusion of humor has a number of benefits to both the channel and the platform itself.

Humor, satire in particular, is a crucial tool used in normalizing extreme political ideas (Wagner & Schwarzenegger, 2020, p. 322). Introducing an idea as radical as the "Jewish Question", for instance, is too forthright if done immediately without proper priming. Ideas of extremism must be "repackaged" to elicit humor and make the viewer more comfortable, so the terms and phrases are not so repulsive (Wagner & Schwarzenegger, 2020, p. 322).

The complex process of desensitizing an audience via humor has become commonplace as it is a known way to achieve a goal of the alt right. As with many social and political movements, the goal of far-right groups is to have their shared extremist ideas become more widely accepted and acceptable to be discussed in places of mainstream political discourse (Schwarzenegger & Wagner, 2018, p. 476). There are no guarantees that more recognition will earn the groups more sympathizers but entering into mainstream media and discourse will embolden the movement. Increased use of online platforms in the past several years has made

this easier to achieve. In the past, far right ideology only made contact with those who found their way to it, whereas today extreme right ideas may find you first.

When mainstreamed, more extreme positions might resonate with a broader audience than they previously would have in confined circles of “a knowing few”, typically men who had a friend or family connection to an established member of the alt-right community (Schwarzenegger & Wagner, 2018, p. 476). The idea is that continuous exposure to ideas that are extreme, taboo, or a mixture of both can lead to an eliminated shock factor and a strengthened comfort with such ideas to the extent of even beginning to agree with some pieces or all of the rhetoric. Continued exposure in mainstream political arenas also legitimize alt-right positions. Especially ideas such as “national identity, ethnicity, cultural homogeneity or immigration” are taken from the dark depths of the web or small fringe communities and moved to the front and center of American political discourse (Schwarzenegger & Wagner, 2018, p. 477). This is typically not an instant change, but events surrounding the 2016 U.S. presidential election seem to have poured gasoline on the already scorching fire.

The awareness of what categories of content appear on alt-right YouTube channels allows for continued assessment of which varieties of content draw viewers into the channels. What this study will attempt to answer is whether or not viewers enter into YouTube with preconceived beliefs or if political attitudes are developed through a process which begins with non-alt-right ideology then gradually introduces the more extreme views. YouTube users have access to a variety of millions of videos on the platform. What draws users to alt-right content and what keeps them interested?

With this study, I hope to further the knowledge we have on where white supremacist ideology fits in among other content on the internet. Clearly there is a large amount of alt-right content on the internet. What particular topic categories are most engaging and why might they be that way?

This literature review has shown that there is significant research already into alt-right media and radicalization. The research which follows adds a new perspective with detailed categorization of the videos from two prominent YouTube channels. By categorizing videos and analyzing their subsequent engagement, we can draw new, improved conclusions about how the alt-right expands via social media and how users are subjected to the radicalization process.

Methodology

This honors thesis will address the aforementioned research questions:

RQ1. What kinds of topics do alt-right YouTube channels cover in their videos?

RQ2. Which categories of videos, either institutional political or social issues, are more watched and liked by viewers?

RQ3. Which categories of videos, either institutional political or social issues, receive the most comments from viewers?

Source Selection

Data to answer the stated research questions were collected from two YouTube channels. The channels chosen for comparison are run by individuals Stefan Molyneux and Hunter Avallone. Several channels were considered based on a list which compiles all medium-large YouTube channels fitting into the alt-right genre (YouTube Alt Right List, 2018). The two selected channels have similar levels of engagement based on an initial skim of their published content. However, the channels have obvious differences in the types of videos posted, making it beneficial to this research to understand which categories of content perform better on the platform. All research selected and used as data for this analysis was published between January 1 and December 31 of 2019. Videos from 2019 include some content regarding the 2020 election but not to an overwhelming extent where institutional political content would be abnormally prevalent, and results would be thrown off. Both channels fit into the category of “alt-lite”, including content which may be preliminary to one’s discovery of more extreme content. The

channels produce elements of humor and self-help in their videos, both common and easily accessible in online videos, so it would not be unlikely that a viewer new to the alt-right would be finding these videos as an introduction to the world of online alt-right content.

Stefan Molyneux describes himself in his YouTube biography as “the founder and host of Freedomain, the largest and most popular philosophy show in the world”. On his channel’s about page, he defines his goal as “[spreading] the cause of liberty and philosophy to millions of listeners around the world”. Most of Molyneux’s videos are presented in a talk show format with questions and answers wherein, according to Molyneux, a listener calls in to submit a question or situation to the YouTuber. Posting videos on his channel has amassed Molyneux 923,000 subscribers since its 2006 commencement. A few months after all data had been collected from both YouTube channels, the platform banned Stefan Molyneux’s channel. He now posts YouTube videos on a new channel called Molyneux Resurrected as well as content on other platforms.

Hunter Avallone’s channel is slightly less popular than Molyneux’s but is still one of the most prevalent of its sort, boasting 657,000 subscribers despite only starting the channel in 2014. Avallone gives himself only a brief description in his YouTube biography, “the guy you love to hate”. This portrayal lends to Avallone’s social media persona: a humorous social and political commentator who appeals to a more youthful audience.

These particular channels were selected from a 2018 list of alt-right YouTube channels, the most recent available (YouTube List, 2018). Despite some minor differences in content produced, both Stefan Molyneux and Hunter Avallone have between 650,000 and one million subscribers as of January 2020 as well as chiefly Americentric political commentary. The high number of viewers and avid interaction in their respective comment sections make these channels relevant for study. Any differences in published content between the two channels will be useful to determine if one particular category of videos is more popular across channels.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected from a content analysis which coded for a number of attributes of the 366 videos: title, date published, date accessed, exact number of views, likes, and comments, topic category, and three variations of humor (irony, exaggeration, mocking) as well as which group the humor was directed towards (in group or out group). Columns laid out the publisher of the video, either Molyneux or Avallone, the date of publication, date accessed for analysis, the title of the video, and the category in which the video best fits the description. Also recorded were the number of views, likes, and comments received for each video. An analysis of humor was conducted in the form of coding videos including irony, exaggeration, and/or mocking and if that humor was directed towards the in-group or out-group. A separate column recorded if the title of the video matched the actual content when watched. Additionally, notes were taken of the specific content of each video. Any nominal dichotomous yes/no coding was completed with a 1 or 0 marking yes or no, respectively, so that more than one type of humor could be captured if multiple were present in a video.

Definitions used for humor coding (Young, 2014):

Irony – uses language that typically signifies the opposite meaning in order to expose a gap in what is and what should be; used for an emphatic and comedic effect.

Exaggeration – represents the topic as better or worse than it actually is to the extent that it is comical.

Mocking – insulting a person or concept which the commentator disapproves of by presenting unflattering characteristics that produce humor; may be in the form of parody or impression.

Coding

The preliminary stages of this study began with a brief intercoder reliability check. With a sample of 30 videos (15 from each channel) which we both coded for, a basic reliability analysis was conducted with co-director, Dr. Deana Rohlinger, to test the operational definitions

of each category. Due to unfamiliarity of the inter-coder reliability process at the start of this study, the check was not measured quantitatively. Instead, we looked at our results together and compared coding. The operational definitions for categorization were deemed appropriate and coding carried on from there. With more knowledge of inter-coder reliability now, this same process could have been improved by calculating the results with a numeric value such as Krippendorff's alpha or Cronbach's alpha.

Research Question 1- What kinds of topics do alt-right YouTube channels cover in their videos?

Before collecting data, categories were chosen initially based on grounded theory through videos and determining which types of videos were repeated. In practice, this time used for categorization was more realistically five to ten minutes for each video as well as skipping through long videos to assure the topic of focus remained the same throughout the entirety of the video. Once videos were coded by topic, these categories could be further used to determine if certain topics are more popular (by tracking likes) or controversial (by tracking comments).

To place each published video within a category, grounded theory was used to generate ten initial topic categories including 'other'. The 'other' category then generated four more categories which allowed for more thorough content analysis. Each video was watched for the first five to ten minutes to determine which category it fit into best based on the predominant theme. Notes were taken on the specific topic and discussion of each video for later analysis and defense of categorization. The method of coding video categories considered that if a topic was repeated several times but did not fit into one of the originally defined ten categories, a new category may be created to better group the data. This occurred a number of times throughout the coding process. While watching the 366 selected videos, categories that were created include: Philosophy, Constitutional rights, Family and relationship, and General call-in. Most of these new categories were necessary due to the nature of Stefan Molyneux's videos of which many lean heavily towards self-help content.

An example of the content analysis process is shown below in Figure 1. The Hunter Avallone video titled “Liberals Ruined 2019” was published to his YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/hunteravallone/featured>) on December 30, 2019. Coding, as described above, entails recording several attributes from the video. In this specific example, the content of the video was pointing out "a stupid thing liberals did every month of the year". Although the video had brief mentions of gender, sexuality, and other social issues within the U.S., the recurring theme of the video was anti-liberal relating to the political systems of the United States. The video also contained all three forms of humor (irony, exaggeration, and mocking).

Content which falls under the category of ‘institutional political’ is explicitly about politics, the political system, and/or political actors. On the other hand, content in the ‘social issues’ category focuses on social issues which may have political ties but do not have an explicit reference to the political system.

The criteria for the four new categories as well as all original categories can be found in the below categorization table:

Video Category	Includes discussions of:
Institutional Political Categories (1-4)	
1. U.S. Politics	2020 Presidential race and/or candidates “Conservatives” and/or “liberals” U.S. news outlets (i.e. CNN, Fox) Hot topic debates within the U.S. (i.e. abortion) Ex. Donald Trump, Nancy Pelosi, Elizabeth Warren Political figures (Senators or Representatives)

2. Global Politics	Global protests, movements, and conflicts Elections outside of the U.S. Wars outside of the U.S.
3. U.S. Immigration	U.S. – Mexican border Border wall
4. Constitutional Rights	Free speech Gun rights Free press Other constitutional arguments
Social Issue Categories (5-14)	
5. Religion	Christianity Anti-Islamic Focus on other religion
6. Philosophy	Nature of knowledge Academic arguments Theoretical arguments Apolitical Self-help
7. Race and Ethnicity	White Supremacy Hispanic or black Arguments based on race/ethnicity
8. Gender	Feminist/Feminism Anti-women Slut shaming

9. Sexuality	LGBTQ+ Drag queen Pride
10. Entertainment and Celebrity	Apolitical movies/TV shows Apolitical gaming Apolitical celebrities YouTube drama
11. Conspiracy	Apolitical speculation (i.e. Jeffrey Epstein) Reference to QAnon or other conspiracy
12. Family/Relationship	Viewer call-in or general sit-down format Focus on family relations/issues Dating/marriage/marital issues
13. Call In	General viewer call-in shows No focus on politics/family/relationships/etc.
14. Other	Does not fit into another category (i.e. veganism, weight)

Each video may only fall into one category. However, not all components of the definition must be met in order for a video to be assigned to a category. If a video had elements aligning with multiple categories, it was assigned to the category with which it has the most commonalities. In this case, the length of time used to discuss each topic would be considered and whichever topic was given the most attention in terms of minutes in the video would be used to assign the topic category.

Once videos were categorized, a series of t-tests were used to assess the significance of differences in engagement of videos in terms of the topics they cover.

Research Question 2 - Which categories of videos, either institutional political or social issues, are more watched and liked by viewers?

Views were recorded by exact value at the time of accessing the video. Hunter Avallone's videos receive a range of views between approximately 50,000 – 300,000. Stefan Molyneux's videos receive a range of views between approximately 15,000 – 200,000, with only a few outliers on both the bottom and top end. The same sample size of 366 videos will be used to answer this question. T-tests were used to assess the significance of views and likes received for videos, either institutional political or social issues.

Research Question 3 - Which categories of videos, either institutional political or social issues, receive the most comments from viewers?

To measure question three, the number of likes each video within the period of study received will be determined. At a glance, Hunter Avallone's videos receive a range of likes between approximately 3,000 – 20,000 with just a few outliers on the top end. Stefan Molyneux's videos receive a range of likes between approximately 3,000 – 15,000. As with views and likes, the number of comments received on each video was recorded as the exact value at the time of accessing each video. T-tests were used to assess the significance of the number of comments between institutional political and social issue videos for each channel separately.

Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to empirically assess alt-right content on YouTube and its performance by category. Using a sample size of 366 videos ($n = 91$ for Avallone's channel, $n = 275$ for Molyneux's channel), the analysis separates the institutional political and social issue content from two YouTube channels in order to identify the relationship between category of published content and audience engagement. This hypothesis functions based on the specific categories of content analysis presented in the below coding section. The 'institutional political' category is determined to include content explicitly about politics, the political system, and/or

political actors. Social issues are any other topical issues not listed in the ‘institutional political’ category (i.e. gender gap, transgender rights, movie releases).

H₁: There is more institutional political content than social issue content on both Hunter Avallone and Stefan Molyneux’s YouTube channels in videos from the year 2019.

H₂: For content on both Hunter Avallone and Stefan Molyneux’s channels, institutional political and social issue videos will significantly differ in their number or percentage of views, with viewers being more drawn to institutional political content.

H₃: For videos on both Hunter Avallone and Stefan Molyneux’s channels, institutional political content receives a greater percentage of likes than social issue content.

Measuring Results

T-tests

A T-test is a useful calculation when testing a hypothesis. The test is used to determine if there is statistical significance between two sample groups. For this study, a series of six t-tests were applied to determine any statistical significance between institutional political and social issue content on the two selected YouTube channels for 3 variables (views, likes, and comments). For all t-tests carried out for this study, a confidence interval of 95% was used to measure significance. The tests conducted measured if the null hypothesis could be rejected.

Descriptive Statistics

To analyze the 14 specific categories, simple calculations of percentage of engagement were conducted. Once videos had been placed into categories, the number of videos in each category were added up and divided by the total number of videos analyzed. This was done separately to calculate the percentage of engagement (views, likes, and comments) for each category and performed separately for both channels.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variables are the number of views, likes, and comments received by each video on each YouTube channel.

Independent Variable

The independent variables are the categories by which videos are coded according to the categorization table provided. There are 14 categories, 4 of which are marked as ‘institutional political’ and 10 of which are considered ‘social issues’ (see below). This separation allows videos on YouTube to be analyzed for levels of engagement based on whether or not the content is political.

Example of how data is collected from YouTube

Figure 1 – Coding Example



Results and Findings

Frequency

Table 1 displays the distribution of content on both Stefan Molyneux's and Hunter Avallone's channels. As noted in the methodology section and more explicitly in the table of categories for coding, categories 1-4 are marked as 'institutional political' whereas categories 5-14 are marked as 'social issues. In Table 1, the frequency of videos within each category is shown by means of a percentage of total content from the year studied -- 2019. For both channels, social issue videos were published more frequently. In 2019, Stefan Molyneux posted roughly twice as many social issue videos as institutional political. For the same year, Hunter Avallone posted nearly triple the amount of social issue content than institutional political. The number of subcategories within the 'institutional political' and 'social issue' categories must be taken into account when reading through data collection results. There is much more diversity within 'social issue' content so, subsequently, more categories fit under the heading.

Table 1: Frequency of Categories by Channel - Stefan Molyneux

Category	Stefan Molyneux	Category	Hunter Avallone
U.S. Politics	18% n = 49	Gender	21% n = 19
Family/Relationship	17% n = 47	U.S. Politics	20% n = 18
Global Politics	12% n = 34	Entertainment and Celebrity	20% n = 18
Philosophy	10% n = 28	Sexuality	16% n = 15
Entertainment and Celebrity	10% n = 28	Other	11% n = 10
Gender	8% n = 22	Constitutional Rights	4% n = 4
Other	5% n = 15	Race and Ethnicity	3% n = 3
Call In	5% n = 13	Conspiracy	2% n = 2
Constitutional Rights	4% n = 11	Family/Relationship	1% n = 1

Conspiracy	4% n = 11	U.S. Immigration	1% n = 1
U.S. Immigration	3% n = 9	Global Politics	0% n = 0
Race and Ethnicity	3% n = 7	Philosophy	0% n = 0
Religion	0.4% n = 1	Call In	0% n = 0
Sexuality	0% n = 0	Religion	0% n = 0
Total N	275	Total N	91

By analyzing the frequency of videos in terms of their categorization, the topics which each content creator emphasizes becomes visible. Stefan Molyneux's top three most frequently published categories of videos in 2019 were: U.S. politics, family/relationship, and global politics. Hunter Avallone's top three most frequently published categories of videos in 2019 were: gender, U.S. politics, and entertainment. The only overlapping similarity between the most common categories in the two channels is the prominence of U.S. politics as a focus. This is not entirely surprising as both content creators market themselves as being political figures. The analysis of categorical frequency also illustrates that Stefan Molyneux spotlights global politics while Hunter Avallone does not at all. There are several possible explanations for this. For one, Stefan Molyneux is based in Canada which inherently shifts his interests from being solely based on politics within the United States. Stefan Molyneux's emphasis on family and relationship is not entirely predictable considering his reputation as a political commentator. His emphasis on the topic could be due in part to him being a father as well as his tendency to produce self-help-style content which often incorporates family and relationship matters. A key takeaway from the categorical frequency data from Hunter Avallone's channel is that in 2019 he produced more gender-related content than content covering U.S. politics. Another noticeable concentration of his was on entertainment and celebrity content. Again, there could be many reasons for this emphasis, but one may be its ability to draw in viewers. It must also be considered that the content reviewed is specific to 2019 published videos. Although there were certainly political

events occurring, the year was not an election year. Categories of published content may be quite different in other years depending on the scale of existing politics.

Table 2: Average Frequency of Views by Category - Stefan Molyneux

Category	Number of Videos (2019)	Percentage of Total
Stefan Molyneux INSTITUTIONAL POLITICAL (1-4)	103	37.45%
Stefan Molyneux SOCIAL ISSUE (5-14)	172	62.55%
Hunter Avallone INSTITUTIONAL POLITICAL (1-4)	23	25.27%
Hunter Avallone SOCIAL ISSUE (5-14)	68	74.73%

Table 3: Frequency of Use of Humor

Humor Used	Stefan Molyneux	Hunter Avallone
Irony	3%	75%
Exaggeration	0.4%	82%
Mocking	4%	87%
One or more uses	6%	89%
Towards out-group	5%	87%
Towards in-group	0.7%	19%
Total N	275	91

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of humor throughout each channel for their videos published in 2019. Each form of humor is defined in the above section. Stefan Molyneux employs humor in his videos to a dramatically lesser degree than Hunter Avallone does on his own channel. Stefan Molyneux's most commonly used form of humor in his 2019 videos is mocking, which he uses in only 11 of his 275 videos for the year. Only 17 of his videos use humor, some include repeated forms. All but two of these instances are directed at the out-group. On the other hand, 89 percent of Hunter Avallone's videos deliver at least one form of humor.

Avallone's most commonly used form of humor is mocking, although all forms of humor are used between 70 and 90 percent. Hunter Avallone's frequent use of humor may very well be attributed to his younger age and aimed at the audience which he hopes to attract to his channel.

The differences in use of humor between the two channels show just how much variance occurs in alt-right content. Hunter Avallone, the younger of the two YouTube personalities, relies heavily on humor to pass along his beliefs and messages. Meanwhile, Stefan Molyneux is more composed and offers the persona of a wise, knowledgeable lecturer.

Table 4: Frequency of Use of Humor by Category

Category	Hunter Avallone Use of One or More Forms Humor	Category	Stefan Molyneux Use of One or More Forms Humor
U.S. Immigration	100.00% n = 1	Race and Ethnicity	28.57% n = 7
Race and Ethnicity	100.00% n = 3	Other	13.33% n = 15
Gender	100.00% n = 19	U.S. Immigration	11.11% n = 9
Family/Relationship	100.00% n = 1	U.S. Politics	10.20% n = 49
Entertainment and Celebrity	94.44% n = 18	Gender	9.09% n = 22
Other	90.00% n = 10	Call in	7.69% n = 13
Sexuality	86.67% n = 15	Entertainment and Celebrity	7.14% n = 28
U.S. Politics	83.33% n = 18	Philosophy	3.57% n = 28
Constitutional Rights	50.00% n = 4	Family/Relationship	2.13% n = 47
Conspiracy	50.00% n = 2	Global Politics	0.00% n = 34
Global Politics	0.00% n = 0	Constitutional Rights	0.00% n = 11
Religion	0.00% n = 0	Religion	0.00% n = 1
Philosophy	0.00% n = 0	Sexuality	0.00% n = 0
Call in	0.00% n = 0	Conspiracy	0.00% n = 11
Total Use of Humor (at least 1 form)	89.01% N = 91	Total Use of Humor (at least 1 form)	6.18% N = 275

Table 4 organizes instances of humor (including irony, exaggeration, and/or mocking) being employed by each content creator in terms of the video's category. Percentages are calculated by isolating each category and determining how many of the videos within it use one or more forms of humor. For instance, in Stefan Molyneux's 'Race and Ethnicity' category, 2 of the 7 videos in the category include at least one form of humor (irony, exaggeration, and/or mocking). This table further illustrates the distribution of humor throughout the two channels. Stefan Molyneux rarely employs humor and when he does, it is within only 9 of the 14 categories coded. Hunter Avallone does not use humor in every video topic, but in the topic categories in which he does use humor, it is used fairly consistently.

T-Tests

Tables 5 through 10 display results of the six T-tests which were conducted to determine statistical significance of the differences between institutional political and social issue content.

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the content of published videos, categorized as being either institutional political or social issue content, to the views, likes, and comments received on both Stefan Molyneux's and Hunter Avallone's channels.

Stefan Molyneux's institutional political content received significantly more likes ($M= 5292.97$, $SD= 3251.565$) than the social issue content ($M= 3589.56$, $SD= 3447.542$); $t(273) = 4.050$, $p = 0.000$. (see Table 3). Institutional political videos also received more views ($M= 81706.31$, $SD= 49651.991$) than social issue videos ($M= 69457.35$, $SD= 69284.028$), but the relationship was not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level ($t(273) = 1.569$, $p = 0.118$) (see Table 2).

Molyneux's institutional political and social issue content received similar levels of comments.

Table 5: T-test - Views on Stefan Molyneux's Channel

Views – Stefan Molyneux		
	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed

F	1.156	
Sig.	0.283	
t	1.569	1.701
df	273	264.246
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.118	0.090
Mean Difference	12248.962	12248.962
Std. Error Difference	7808.405	7200.259
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
Lower	-3123.381	-1928.219
Upper	27621.304	26426.143

Table 6 T-test - Likes on Stefan Molyneux's Channel

Likes – Stefan Molyneux		
	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
F	0.027	
Sig.	0.870	
t	4.050	4.110
df	273	224.791
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

Mean Difference	1703.407	1703.407
Std. Error Difference	420.573	414.427
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
Lower	875.429	886.749
Upper	2531.385	2520.065

However, the other test results did not show a significant variance. Statistical significance was not found in ‘views’ or ‘comments’ tests for Molyneux videos nor with the data from Hunter Avallone’s YouTube channel; this suggests that if meaningful differences exist between institutional political and social issue views, likes, and comments received on videos (aside from the previously mentioned Stefan Molyneux ‘likes’), the sample size used is too small to detect any.

Table 7: T-test - Comments on Stefan Molyneux’s Channel

Comments – Stefan Molyneux		
	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
F	0.584	
Sig.	0.445	
t	0.915	0.934
df	273	228.916
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.361	0.351
Mean Difference	125.712	125.712

Std. Error Difference	137.457	134.626
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
Lower	-144.899	-139.553
Upper	396.323	390.977

Table 8: T-test - Views on Hunter Avallone's Channel

Views – Hunter Avallone		
	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
F	0.652	
Sig.	0.422	
t	-0.278	-0.209
df	89	26.414
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.782	0.836
Mean Difference	-10359.792	-10359.792
Std. Error Difference	37301.984	49586.152
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
Lower	-84478.040	-112207.839
Upper	63758.456	91488.254

Table 9: T-test - Likes on Hunter Avallone's Channel

Likes – Hunter Avallone		
	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
F	0.060	
Sig.	0.807	
t	-0.913	-0.862
df	89	34.582
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.364	0.395
Mean Difference	-1830.435	-1830.435
Std. Error Difference	2005.452	2124.289
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
Lower	-5815.225	-6144.835
Upper	2154.356	2483.965

Table 10: T-test - Comments on Hunter Avallone's Channel

Comments – Hunter Avallone		
	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
F	3.208	
Sig.	0.077	

t	0.852	0.662
df	89	27.233
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.397	0.513
Mean Difference	683.048	683.048
Std. Error Difference	801.707	1031.671
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
Lower	-909.927	-1432.921
Upper	2276.023	2799.017

Discussion

Results

Levels of engagement on YouTube did not support that YouTube viewers were consistently more or less drawn to content focusing on institutional political topics than content focusing on other social issues and, in all cases but one, did not prove to be statistically significant. A main takeaway from this research is the variety of content provided by such channels. The categories of videos themselves are incredibly diverse and not what one might expect from channels known for political commentary. Because Hunter Avallone and Stefan Molyneux advertise themselves as divisive political figures, it would be reasonable to assume the bulk of their published content is of political matters. This was not the case. This study points out that not only do both creators publish a wide variety of content, but it also performs well across the board. The diversification in content can help explain why the alt-right has been so successful in expanding on social media in recent years.

Although the null hypothesis was only rejected in one of the six instances tested by T-tests, these results are still exceptionally useful. The lack of significance in the T-tests lends to

the conclusion that levels of engagement among videos on both channels are not affected by the category of content. Both institutional political and social issue content received similar levels of views, likes, and comments meaning viewers come to both YouTube channels for the entire variety of content offered, not exclusively one or the other. The failure to reject the null hypothesis in all but one instance also leads to the takeaway that viewers of the two channels react the same to all categories of content. Viewers, using their tools of engagement, did not express significantly more interest in institutional political videos than social issue videos. This could suggest that instead of being popular for only their political commentary, viewers of Hunter Avallone and Stefan Molyneux like the content creators for all forms of content.

In an article explaining social media specific to YouTube, views of a video are considered to be consumption but not participation (Khan, 2017, p. 237). Users might be passive, watching part of or all of a video, reading through comments, but not actually participating in any of it by posting a comment or liking/disliking (Khan, 2017, p. 237). This imbalance is visible in the above research as every video examined had far more views than likes or comments. YouTube is perhaps most unique because of its comment section on videos. It provides the traditional platform mirroring television, film, and music but with the added benefit to users of participating with that content which is a newer development (Khan, 2017, p. 238). It can be reasonably concluded that an active comment section is the result of more controversial content in a video. For the sake of time, individual comments were not analyzed as part of this research. Future studies could benefit from coding comments on alt-right videos to gauge user's reactions to the different types of content.

The analysis of humor usage points to a tool of the alt-right increasing in regularity. Especially on YouTube, a platform commonly visited by young internet users, humor is a desirable trait in videos. The gap in humor employment between the two channels studied in this analysis also embodies the variety of content within the alt-right. The humor analysis consisted

of only frequency results due to the unbalanced numbers of videos in the dichotomous categories. Stefan Molyneux's videos which employed humor were few and far between while Hunter Avallone's videos rarely went without the use of humor. Because of the nature of T-tests, testing two means against each other, the sample sizes would be far too skewed without adjustment.

Both Stefan Molyneux and Hunter Avallone produce successful content on YouTube. Although they fall into the same category of content, the approaches they take to disseminate their ideas vary greatly. The channels have clear differences. Hunter Avallone is in his early 20s and rather new at being a political figure and content creator while Stefan Molyneux has been producing content for well over a decade. Hunter Avallone engages viewers with frequent use of humor in his videos while Stefan Molyneux refrains from using humor often and instead implements a self-help style on his channel. Despite these glaring differences in stylistic choices, the channels are quite similar in engagement and variety. This leads to the conclusion that regardless of what technique is being used to engage viewers on alt-right YouTube channels, there is a common thread of extensive variety and a relatively even distribution of engagement among that varied content.

Limitations

Because the alt-right is so decentralized and nonuniform, analyzing just a few channels or platforms cannot be representative of the entire alt-right. For that reason, any research cannot fully incorporate the scope of the alt-right. Still, it is important that more research, even if it focuses on small segments of the movement, be conducted so a more complete picture of the alt-right may be realized.

Conclusion

Future Studies

Continued analysis of the alt-right is absolutely necessary. Not only is the group an increasing threat in America, but it is constantly evolving and incorporating new beliefs. In recent years, the alt-right has served as a base from which more fringe ideologies expand. If there is a solid understanding of the foundational alt-right and its methods of communication, we can use that insight to track further developments of extremist groups and ideologies such as QAnon. For example, newer ideological groups may take advantage of the same channels used by the alt-right. The same techniques of humor or self-help may be applied to garner support within new areas of extremism. If the overlap between the alt-right and emerging groups can be defined, dangerous new ideologies can be caught early on and managed accordingly.

Direction of the Alt-right

When the alt-right came to be over a decade ago, it was a relatively unheard-of sect of the far right. By 2020, the alt-right is much more widely discussed and some of their ideas have been adopted by mainstream voices. At the very least, in the year 2020, the name of the movement is far more recognizable, and the beliefs are more circulated, if not tolerated. Media sources, politicians, and academics have begun to pay closer attention to the movement which has, in many ways, validated their presence in American politics. As previously stated, Stefan Molyneux's channel has been deactivated by YouTube which is a sign of increasing accountability for such social media sites. Similarly, Facebook has taken steps to remove QAnon conspiracy groups from the site. Although these steps are in the direction of limiting hate and misinformation, the alt-right and associated groups evolve. Immediately following the erasure of Molyneux's YouTube channel, he began a new one. Those perpetuating such beliefs know how to use online channels to their benefit, so simply banning them from a couple sites is inadequate.

The content produced by Stefan Molyneux and Hunter Avallone fits into what is considered as 'alt-lite'. Again, the alt-right exists to varying breadths of extremism and beliefs. Both YouTube content creators publish what many consider hateful content, but rarely do their videos call for violence or incivility. The class of content similar to Stefan Molyneux and Hunter Avallone is not uncommon to come across on YouTube and can often lead audiences to, through methods discussed previously such as recommendation algorithms, more severe subject matter.

A major point of debate when it comes to the alt-right or any new, controversial movement is how to keep tabs without limiting liberties. Social media sites such as YouTube on which the alt-right operates are privately-owned companies with the goal of generating revenue. Should social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube be held accountable for limiting hate speech, extremism, and incivility as it occurs on their platforms? This is a question which has been asked frequently in the past few years and somewhat addressed by Twitter specifically. A consideration to be made in the future is if legislation is needed to monitor social media channels and if so, how will individual rights be upheld.

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