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Far-Right Monologues and Extreme Identity

Benjamin Alexander Thigpen
Portland State University

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by

Benjamin Alexander Thigpen

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Thesis Committee:
Nathan Gies, Chair
David Kinsella
Richard Clucas

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Abstract

My thesis is focused on the American far-right, by way of two sperate case studies, one centered on a contemporary movement (the manosphere) and one that has fallen from prominence (racist skinheads). Grounded in primary source analysis, my thesis builds off of the work of social movement theorists such as Sidney Tarrow, scholars of American politics like Richard Hofstadter, and emergent theories of social identity as laid out by Judith Butler and others. Through my analysis, I develop two theoretical arguments: first, that there are two distinct categories amongst far-right narratives (which I term offensive and defensive); and second, that radicalization, and in turn deradicalization, derives from the gain of a new identity rather than the loss of a non-radical identity. I support these claims by way of textual analysis of documents written by extremists themselves. My novel framework, incorporating the work of several different schools of social theory and drawing heavily from Butler's notion of the Other in relation to oneself, allows for an understanding of the interplay between extreme identity and the outside world. As such, my theory extends current scholarship on both members of the far right and how to bring them back into the fold of mainstream society.

Dedicated to the Memory of L.C.S.
“Surprise, but I knew my dreams coming true”

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Introduction

At either end of the political spectrum therein lies scores of ideologues who express a set of views so far removed from those held by the mainstream population that their visions of reality become beyond distorted. Even those possessing a cursory understanding of political thought are capable of naming at least one or two figures, movements, or events driven by extremism. The prevalence of radical views within the world we live in today speaks to their endurance despite mounting pressure from state-agencies and anti-hate organizations. As I write this introduction, someone is reading the *Turner Diaries*, some are organizing on social media websites, and somewhere close to home there are in-person assemblies gathered based on sharing views that have been repugnant since long before I was born. All of this led me to a series of questions that largely fell into two camps: those of categorization and those of prevention. Categorization pertains to how exactly outside observers might recognize and categorize extreme movements and prevention deals with the continued conundrum of why radical groups persevere despite a concerted effort on the part of the state to encourage their dissolution and curtail further radicalization. Focusing especially on right wing-extremism in the contemporary United States, I aim to offer a well-reasoned explanation to both of these questions, drawing from political theory in addition to my own original research grounded in analyzing primary source material. My ultimate goal of this work is to offer not only a novel contribution to political science as an academic discipline, but also an addition to tools held by those wishing to combat hate-in all of its forms.

I begin this opening section of my thesis by laying out the overarching foundations of my theory, in connection with an explanation for why I believe that this all relates to political science, and the significance of my work in the 'real world', particularly in terms how to approach efforts to deradicalize those who have fallen into a far-right group. At the core of my theory is the idea that within each and every political ideology, you are able to locate some form of narrative, which generally detail a particular group's role within broader society. Often times, these narrative present adherents to the ideology as acting against the pressure of the outside world. Under these circumstances, being able to craft some form of 'group mythos' is particularly important to radical political groups as they must actively counter narratives being presented by mainstream society. Consider the difficulties faced by members of a group proclaiming to 'protect' those who already operate in a state, society, or micro-culture that places them onto a pedestal above those of differing identities. For example, self-described male involuntary celibates or INCELS craft a narrative to explain that although they identify as members of a group of social privilege, they are, in their own minds, being actively oppressed due to their inability to engage in sexual activity. By the same token, in the United States and much of the world white nationalists must reconcile the reality that they reside in a state largely defined by a legacy of racism and discrimination targeted against people of color with their view that they, as white people, are being faced with extermination on the basis of their own racial identity.

After considering the importance of narratives within these and other extreme ideologies I recognized that in order to craft this contradictory set of beliefs those in support of radical ideologies must construct unique victim narratives which provide an overarching explanation for their current circumstances, while also providing a means by which to actively counter the realities of the world around them. As the term suggests a victim narrative details how the given group is actively being oppressed or held back by society at large in addition to particular groups maligned by extremists. Through specific narratives of victimization believers are able to maintain their ideologies in the face of pressure.

I suggest that extreme groups' victim narrative can be divided into two different sub-narrative categories. On one hand, there are 'offensive narratives' which detail a worldview wherein those who are members of the 'in group' must act aggressively, if not preemptively, in their own best interests. The adherents of an extreme ideology falling within this category believe that their circumstances are so dire that change must be brought about by any means necessary- a mind frame that is exemplified by radical anti-abortion groups such as the Army of God who wholeheartedly believe that abortion is a direct and deliberate attack on the lives of unborn children, making it a moral imperative to immediately strike against those providing reproductive healthcare. On the other hand, defensive narratives differ largely in terms of how pressing they believe ongoing victimization is. I initially assumed that this sort of narrative would lend itself to more subtle, less aggressive actions because perceived attacks on the given 'in group' are not

considered immediately threatening in the same way. However, the analysis below will complicate this assumption, showing how even or especially a defensive narrative can seem to justify direct physical violence.

Along with these two areas of division, offensive and defensive ideologies are identifiable in terms of how they position society itself. If society is considered to have been lost, then the group may possibly identify with a series of offensive narratives based on the logic that things have surpassed the point of being in the hands of the extreme group and therefore there is nothing left to defend. By contrast, those within a defensively defined group are likely to believe that their position is being threatened, and by that line of reasoning must be protected from pressures to shift power dynamic within society.

Narrative Frames in Contentious Politics

I approach extremist groups as an example of what Sidney Tarrow calls contentious politics in his book *Power in Movement*, which frames "contentious politics" as "what happens when collective actors join forces in confrontation with elites […] and opponents around their claims or the claims of those they claim to represent"[1]. Following Tarrow, I aim to "develop a relational approach to contentious politics, which focuses more on the interactions among divergent actors than on the classical subject of social movements."[2] As Tarrow explains this approach grows out of a handful of prominent social movement theorists—Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, and Tilly—each of these whom

[1] Tarrow, 4
[2] Tarrow, 4

offered a unique set contributions to the field. “Marx focused on the cleavages of capitalist society”[3] as it relates to the working class, Lenin expanded upon this by building off of Marx’s class consciousness by adding layers focusing on mobilization [4].“Gramsci centered on the need to build consensus”[5] but lacked specificity as to what political conditions may induce action, and “early [works of] Tilly focused on those political conditions but in a largely static way”[6]. A key topic discussed amongst each of these theorists is the means by which collective grievance and/or contention may influence the behavior of a group of political and/or non-political actors. Most interesting to me amongst these possible influences is how “movement leadership has a creative function in selecting forms of collective action.”[7] “For people whose lives are mired in drudgery […] the offer of an exciting […] possibly beneficial campaign may be an incentive”[8] to act in a manner that they may not otherwise, entering the fray of political action and contentious politics.

An interesting section of the text is a brief discussion of the American Tea Party movement during the early years of Obama’s first term, laying of a timeline of how the sudden uptick in political activity began “on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange”[9], and was subsequently amplified by conservative pundit Glenn Beck

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[3] Tarrow, 20
[4] Tarrow, 20
[5] Tarrow, 21
[6] Tarrow, 21
[7] Tarrow, 29
[8] Tarrow, 29
[9] Tarrow, 96

culminating in a mass assembly of "more than 300,00 protesters"[10] in Washington DC and the election of politicians such as Scott Brown. In retrospect, Tarrow argues that the rise of the Tea Party connects closely to Tilly's concept of "Performances and Repertories"[11], as "The repertoire of contention offers movements three broad types of collective action-disruption, violence, and contained behavior"[12]. In relation to my theory, I found this brief aside about the Tea Party to be interesting due to the means by which mobilization was achieved and the right-wing nature of the Tea Party movement. While nowhere near as extreme as those discussed in my case studies, those in the Tea Party were led to action by overwhelming feelings of discontent, rallying around a pundit, and organizing independently from the mainline GOP apparatus.

Tarrow speaks of the role that collective and/or social identities play in contentious politics-often acting as a means to "frame specific grievances"[13] that are shared within a movement or collection of people. Amongst these 'frames' there is "Injustice Framing"[14] which helps create a collective identity amongst those with a political movement as "proposing solutions to it [an injustice] is a central activity of social movements"[15]. This, in addition to other framing devices makes it such that "identity construction"[16] is vital in order to properly establish and sustain a social

[10] Tarrow, 96
[11] Tarrow, 98
[12] Tarrow, 99
[13] Tarrow, 144
[14] Tarrow, 145
[15] Tarrow, 145
[16] Tarrow, 152

movement of any kind. Senses of being wronged, and constructing an identity based off of said emotion will prove to be a running theme across my case studies and the radical right in general, leading to Tarrow's explicit mentioning to be important as it provides backing for my claims-acting as a key foundation for my ideas and connections to other scholars. Tarrow has helped establish the importance of forming a collective identity centered on a sense of injustice, that is then used as a means of "identity construction"[17] for many political actors. Tarrow's explanation for the need to create this is similar to Marcks and Pawelz's concept of "narratives of imperilment"[18] being recurrent across far-right movements such in the example put forth by Oaten, wherein a far-right political leader's public speeches leveraged a carefully constructed discourse "of persecution […] [and] victimization"[19]. In particular, in order for extreme political groups to build a solid base of support they must manage to find a way to create a narrative frame for ongoing events that places those within the movement squarely as a target for maleficence by those perceived to be in 'actual' positions of power.

On a larger scale, it is also important to note similarities between Tarrow's presentation of ideas such as "identity construction"[20] as a driver for those engaging in contentious political activities and the work of social theorists such as Richard S. Brooks, who have focused on the importance of one's sense of self and personal identification. In

[17] Tarrow, 152
[18] Marcks & Pawlez, 10
[19] Oaten, 13
[20] Tarrow, 152

terms of political activity being "directed toward changing or preventing change in the social system"[21] using how "An individual's perception of his political role"[22] as shaped by "all the norms attached his view of himself in the status of [a] political actor"[23]. To that end, Brooks found that upon conducting a survey, there was a conflation of someone's sense of self with political values and party membership[24], in other words identity becomes with ideology. As drawn heavily on one's own self-perceived statues, or the "way others behave toward him and the way he interprets that behavior"[25], leading to those who are active politically operating off a perception of themselves and their values, and how they and their ideas are viewed by others.

In more recent years, scholars such as Veronica Barassi and Lorenzo Zamponi have begun to investigate "the relationship between biography, contention, and time […] by looking at *identity narratives*"[26]. For Barassi and Zamponi "social movement actors construct biographical narratives of their political engagement, which often integrates […] events"[27] in the outside world to craft an ongoing 'story' of what is happening in the world and how one should respond to the perceived series of events. Barassi and Zamponi claim that this makes it such that, "activists' identity narratives are a chaotic

[21] Brooks, 23
[22] Brooks, 23
[23] Brooks, 23
[24] Brooks, 29
[25] Brooks, 31
[26] Barassi & Zamponi, 593
[27] Barassi & Zamponi, 593

series […] [from which they] find a narrative coherence, [and] interpret it as a path that led them were they are"[28] in the present day.

(Paranoid) Narratives of Imperilment

The pursuit of studying far-right conspiratorial thinking has been a long-standing undertaking. In line with the pendulous state of public opinion each sway is met with appraisal on the behalf of academics, who attempt to ascertain why exactly views that were once considered to be downright bizarre by most Americans have begun to rear their heads into mainstream political discourse. Someone's political generation can be roughly tabulated by way of considering what style of 'paranoia' was in vogue during their heyday. Tall tales of nationwide sleeper cells of communists poisoning the local watershed via cyanide stashed in a decrepit quarry immediately harkens to the height of the John Birch Society. Conspiracies built off of 'trusting the plan' of an unknown forum poster's free-association word salad found on an anonymous image board places one squarely in the United States Capitol on January 6th, 2021. Amongst each of these movements therein lies at least some modicum of paranoia, irrespective of the given movement's grievance, and who is considered to be at fault.

In 1964 Richard Hofstadter detailed the persistence of a "Paranoid Style in American Politics"[29] arguing that the "style is an old and recurrent phenomenon […] linked with movements of suspicious discontent"[30] Hofstadter asserts that "earlier

[28] Barassi & Zamponi, 597
[29] Hofstadter, 1
[30] Hofstadter, 1

movements [e.g., masonic conspiracy theorists] felt they stood for causes […] that were still in possession […] that they were fending off threats to a still established way of life"[31]. By contrast, he suggests "the modern right wing […] [which] feels dispossessed"[32] that is to say that, "America has been largely taken away from them and their kind"[33] making it such that while "Their predecessors had discovered conspiracies; the modern radical right finds conspiracy to be [from] betrayal"[34]. Which, according to Hofstadter, created a clear delineation between the two, as the former acted as an outgrowth of a desire to defend, or maintain, a way of life and the latter drew from an effort to reclaim what once was. There are clear parallels between the analyses offered by Hofstadter in the 1960s and radical ideologies seen today.

In the wake of a deluge of tragedies targeting immigrants within Western States scholars have begun to consider the role of narratives within the radical right particularly those that have managed to subtly infiltrate mainstream political discourse. At the core of many of these attacks is an "assumption of an existential threat"[35] used as a means of "Justifying illiberal politics and the violent measures necessary to enforce them"[36], with concurrent, but somewhat contradictory, "myths of victimhood […] [and] slogans of cultural superiority"[37]. In a recent article published in the *Journal of Terrorism and*

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[31] Hofstadter, 4
[32] Hofstadter, 4
[33] Hofstadter, 4
[34] Hofstadter, 4
[35] Marcks & Pawelz, 3
[36] Marcks & Pawlez, 3
[37] Marcks & Pawlez, 3

Political Violence, authors Holger Marcks and Janina Pawelz noted that upon examining online discourse amongst members of the German far-right there appeared to be "two different narratives of imperilment"[38], with one detailing the death of the nation, as it becomes further removed from the ideal state as perceived by those within the radical group [39] as "its [the given nation's] self-determination will be abolished and its culture replaced"[40] and the other detailing feelings of being threatened physically[41] by way of "a causal relationship between migration and [physical] insecurity, underpinned by reports of criminality […] by foreigners in general and refugees in particular"[42]. Marcks and Pawlez also note that in addition to broad thematic similarities, both narratives are unified by "notions of betrayal"[43] through "narratives that diagnose a political conspiracy […] [with claims of] politicians and opposing movements pursuing the marginalization of their own community's culture or of being responsible for violent acts"[44], creating a view of reality that includes both fear, and a need to act against said fear(s) in the interest of 'saving' one's country, culture, or identity[45].

There are several areas in which one can easily see instances where these "narratives of imperilment"[46] hinge on a certain amount of paranoia and a need to defend

[38] Marcks & Pawlez, 10
[39] Marcks & Pawlez, 10
[40] Markcs & Pawlez, 10
[41] Marcks & Pawlez, 11
[42] Marcks & Pawlez, 11
[43] Marcks & Pawlez, 12
[44] Marcks & Pawlez, 12
[45] Marcks & Pawlez, 13
[46] Marcks & Pawlez, 10

one's own culture in the face of its dispersal on the part of some shadowy group of politicians within the deep state, or internationally bankrolled pro-immigration political organizations. Rephrased slightly, it appears that narratives of fear, paranoia, and claims of betrayal are foundational to those ascribing to far-right views, in a manner that was first described by Hofstadter's essay. Chetan Bhatt argues that although there is a wide array of sub-cultural symbols within the far-right "The 'fear of white extinction' unites virtually all [ideologies within the] European and North American far-right"[47], connecting said 'fear' to a number of important narrative themes within the radical far right groups[48], that "are linked in fascist thinking and their logical progression is towards cleansing violence."[49]. Amongst these themes is that of a fear of white people being driven out and ultimately replaced by non-white immigrants, migrants and refugees[50]. Bhatt also concentrates on understanding the extent to which modern members of the far-right draw from historically significant fascist texts and authors, noting that "A key aim of far-right intellectual endeavors is to redeem from an earlier period […] and cultivate alternative cosmogonies in which racism and the violent 'struggle against 'white extinction' become necessary conclusions"[51]. Creating a system of belief grounded in fear, and efforts to use that fear in concert with quasi-intellectual historical documents to justify both fear

[47] Bhatt, 2
[48] Bhatt, 2
[49] Bhatt, 2
[50] Bhatt, 6
[51] Bhatt, 7

amongst members of a far-right group and to create an ethical framework to explain the necessity of actively attempting to fight against supposed white extinction.

Overarching above all of these narratives is the self-identification of group members being victims. Irrespective of the specifics of each narrative-such as who is at fault, or who happens to be doing the targeting, in each there is a broad sense that those following the movement(s) are actively being victimized. As explained by Alexander Oaten "for a victim to exist, there must be a perpetrator"[52], making victim narratives "a zero-sum game: if *we* are victims then we need *others* to be the perpetrators"[53]. Oaten studied a speech given by Tommy Robinson, a leader of a prominent far-right political organization. Oaten notes that "The discourse here was one of persecution, one of victimization […] the purpose of this speech is quite clearly to construct Robinson [the speaker] as a victim"[54]. A rhetorical tactic that is compelling to those who may be interested in joining a radical movement, because by constructing discourse in this manner Robinson is able lay out claims that allow him and his supporters to claim that they are being victimized-while at the same time arguing that they are still powerful and deserving of a position of hegemony. A tactic that will be seen in both of my case studies, with both groups making similar arguments that they are simultaneously oppressed and in a position of power.

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[52] Oaten, 10
[53] Oaten, 10
[54] Oaten, 13

Professing victimhood is most effective when applied in a collective sense. In other words, it appears to be rarely applied on a singular specific individual instead, the label is spread across those that radical groups claim to represent. For example, when considering the notion of their being a 'Great Replacement' that victimizes White Europeans the stress is not placed on the speaker's immediate network such as their family or close friends being 'replaced'. Rather, the implicit assertion that *all* white people will be replaced, rendering the victims to be a collective. Oaten asserts that "collective victimhood is empowering […] it galvanizes the movement and identifies clear antagonistic Others to fight against"[55].

There is a recognizable similarity to Hofstadter's two forms of "the paranoid style"[56] with the differing paranoias of America needing to maintain its 'possession' of its own government, culture, and demographics versus the need to actively confront a current state of 'dispossession'. These both are seen in the aforementioned modern critique of far-right "narratives of imperilment"[57] with those detailing threats of 'extinction' and removal of one's autotomy reflecting a similar attitude to those decades ago who feared that they would no longer 'possess' America. Conversely, narratives that center on one's own immediate physical and/or spatial insecurity rest on the assumption that the given movement exists in a constant state of dispossession, because the 'Other' has successfully infiltrated society at the expense of members of the group.

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[55] Oaten, 14
[56] Hofstadter, 4
[57] Marcks & Pawlez, 10

Symbols & Systems of Meaning

To highlight underlying themes in this literature, it is helpful to turn beyond political science to closely related fields such as sociology, especially to the tradition of social theory most often referred to as symbolic interactionism. Together, these frameworks highlight the importance of self-perception and individual construction of reality, in lieu of emphasis on 'hard' factors, such as the 'actualities' of an individual's reality or social standing. The purpose of this subsection is to first lay out a brief working definition of what symbolic interactionism means in the context of my own work, in order to develop a theory which, I will test and refine through the two case studies which comprise the body of this thesis.

Symbolic interactionism theory claims that "social actors interact through meanings, thus establishing a cognitive frame of reality that is constantly redefined and transformed as a result of chains of interaction"[58] making it such "self-interaction is a communicative process that helps individuals give social reality a meaning and act accordingly"[59]. Those within "social movements are in constant interaction with both other participants and themselves"[60] in a means that is "at the same time factual and symbolic"[61]. Factuality arises from how actors "take part in social relations with other

[58] Passy & Giugni, 123
[59] Passy & Giugni, 123
[60] Passy & Giugni, 124
[61] Passy & Giugni, 124

groups and individuals"[62] and symbolism can be seen in "the extent that activists engage in social relations with a sense of the meaning of those relationships have in their life"[63].

Brooks discusses how in relation to a person's political ideology and participation, "an individual's statuses are his own view of his locations in various social systems"[64]. Similarly, this perspective can be applied to political actors, activists, etc. consistent need to find "narrative coherence"[65] in relation to their ideology and overall world view as this evokes "symbolic"[66] aspect of political ideology within symbolic interactionism with the claim that people need to make and/or construct a "sense of the meaning those relations have in their life"[67] being quite similar to how some argue that "*identity narratives*"[68] require creating a 'story' detailing some form of "path that led them were they are"[69] at any given point of time, creating a story involves considering how other people perceive you and in turn how you perceive others in relation to yourself-making it such that those within any ideology are engaged in a constant process of taking note of their surroundings while also considering how they are viewed by their peers.

Victimhood comes into play when far-right actors actively believe that they are being targeted by some form of a dreaded 'other'. Irrespective of who exactly the 'other'

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[62] Passy & Giugni, 124
[63] Passy & Giungi, 124
[64] Brooks, 31
[65] Barassi & Zamponi, 597
[66] Passy & Giugni, 124
[67] Passy & Giungi, 124
[68] Barassi & Zamponi, 593
[69] Barassi & Zamponi, 597

may be, this entails creating a narrative that details how those within a group are not only exceptional when viewed from the perspective of those within the far-right group, but also constantly derided by those outside of the movement. All political actors factor in both how they view others, as well as how others view them.

Based on discussions detailing the 'Paranoid Style' and other ideas expressed by those studying far right political groups that have made claims such, "for a victim to exist, there must be a perpetrator […] Hence a collective victimhood requires an antagonistic collective Other"[70]. A framework of symbolic interactionism further suggests that those within the group are concerned with their own identities in concert with how they believe that said identities have become a target of some 'other'. Thus, there is a multifaceted relationship between how members of a far-right group frame their own identities, narratives, and sense(s) of victimhood in addition to how they feel they are actively being framed by groups in positions of power. That makes these narratives particularly pernicious because, in order to dislodge them, one must be able to not only be able to disrupt how a group frames themselves, but also how they frame the world around them.

Dependency on an Other

The act of creating a 'other' serves as an integral facet in the formation of someone's view(s) on reality, political or otherwise, this is particularly true in the case of far-right extremism because in most cases constructing a strong justification for one's

[70] Oaten, 340

own extremity necessitates consistent crafting of an 'other' whom is targeting the respective 'in group'. In rough terms, it can be said that every narrative needs some form of a protagonist and, in turn, requires an antagonist in order to properly function as a means to explain reality. Judith Butler's essay "Giving an Account of Oneself" illuminates the extent to which otherizing narratives can be used to justify different forms of behavior.

Across "Giving an Account of Oneself" Butler wrangles with questioning the role that the concept of an 'other' plays within interpersonal relationships, perception of ones' own life, and ultimately how someone interacts with the world itself. Butler stresses that they aim to unpack—at least—two main ideas: first, that "we cannot exist without addressing the Other and without being addressed by the Other"[71], and second, that "No matter how much we each desire recognition and require it, we are not therefore precisely the same as the Other, and not everything counts as recognition in the same way"[72]. In other words, when interaction takes place, unique features of each person are underscored; "this does not mean we are the same, but only we are bound to one another by what differentiates us, namely, our singularity"[73]. Butler uses these claims to put forth the idea that "In a sense, my account of myself is never fully mine"[74], because, "If I try to give an account of myself […] then I might begin with a narrative account of my life, but

[71] Butler, 25
[72] Butler, 25
[73] Butler, 25
[74] Butler, 26

this narrative will be disoriented by what is not mine"[75]. You "can try to give narrative form to certain conditions of my emergence"[76] but at some point, your narrative becomes "partial, haunted by that for which I have no definitive story"[77] because "I cannot explain exactly why I have emerged in this way"[78]. In instances "when it is the judgment of persons that is at issue"[79] there is an establishment of a "moral distance between the one who judges and the one who is judged"[80], and in a manner that is similar to this "condemnation is very often an act that not only 'gives up' on the one condemned, but [also] seeks to inflict a violence upon the condemned"[81] out of a perceived need to maintain an ethical framework established, in part, through the judgement of others.

All of these thoughts culminate with Butler asserting that "the structure of address is not precisely a feature of narrative […] but an interruption of narrative itself"[82] once "The moment the story is addressed, it assumes a rhetorical dimension that is not reducible to a narrative function"[83] but still acts as a means of narrative support. In instances of violence towards the Other, "violence is the act by which a subject seeks to reinstall its mastery and unity"[84] often couched in and justified by claims of defense out

[75] Butler, 26
[76] Butler, 27
[77] Butler, 27
[78] Butler, 27
[79] Butler, 30
[80] Butler, 30
[81] Butler, 31
[82] Butler, 34
[83] Butler, 34
[84] Butler, 35

of an effort to avert "the absence of narrative [that] will spell a certain threat"[85], for the Other and/or those in someone's narrative who are characterized negatively. Allowing for claims of self-defense to act as "a permeant ethical justification for retaliation […] an infinite way to rename its aggression as suffering, and so provides an infinite justification for its aggression"[86]. A harrowing state of being, because all input for the Other are immediately discarded and instead contextualized in the context of an internal narrative that allows for regular acts of aggression, violence, or retaliation towards specific groups.

A Note on Deradicalization

My overall framing of 'offensive' and 'defensive' schools of extremism aims to help determine what methods of deradicalization may work best. While there is a bevy of research as to what may draw someone into a radical group, there is far less information as to what may coax someone out.

Although very similar at first glance, it is important to draw a distinction between "disengagement"[87] and "deradicalization"[88]. The former refers to "behavioral modification"[89] in the absence of a change of one's beliefs (e.g. leaving behind violent sub-groups, but still supporting and/or agreeing with their ideas), while conversely the latter "relates to attitudinal change, implying a process of ideological transformation"[90]

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[85] Butler, 35
[86] Butler, 39
[87] Da Silva, et al. 446
[88] Da Silva, et al. 446
[89] Da Silva, et al. 446
[90] Da Silva, et al. 446

and thus not only leaving an ideology, movement, etc. behind spatially but also leaving the group's ideas behind. Within the context of my work this is a crucial consideration, because many of the movements within my research area do not, or have yet to, manifest in major acts of physical assembly or violence. Instead, these movements exist largely in diffused online spaces such as social media platforms making it even more important to be able to tell between when someone simply distances themselves from an extreme group, and when someone truly walks away.

As of late, there has been a reappraisal of what may be the best practices for those wishing to prevent radicalization, in addition to those wishing to deradicalize those who have fallen into extreme groups. Many of these reconsiderations begin by looking at what may lead someone down a radical path, eschewing traditional perspectives on radicalization that have focused almost entirely on a single actor and evets that may be affecting their own lives, like mental health conditions or other 'risk factors'. While these well-established factors cannot be thrown out entirely, it is also important to view radicalization in a manner that considers actors "in light of contextual factors, which impact individuals' perceptions of external reality and their subsequent responses"[91] as "the involvement with a political violent organization is a personal choice, influence by the perceived contextual circumstances"[92]. This choice is often shaped via "affective and cognitive closure."[93] Affective closure arises from "the deep and intense relationships that

[91] Da Silva, et al. 445
[92] Da Silva, et al. 445
[93] Da Silva, et al. 445

occur among members"[94] of the group, and cognitive closure derives from "the militants' need to make sense of their behavior"[95].

Placement of increased emphasis on the 'context' surrounding someone's radicalization, in lieu of focusing primarily on risk factors, may reshape how deradicalization is practiced. In part because it reshapes how the radical-may-be viewed by those attempting to deradicalize an individual, this arises how radicalization is recontextualized in more recent, identity focused, theories which focuses on the surrounding context that contributed to someone falling into an extreme group, rather than categorizing actors based on a series of risk factors.

Scholarly works such as "Disengagement from Political Violence and Deradicalization" exemplify this reshaped view on the role that personal and interpersonal narratives play within the radicalization process. The key shift is viewing the process with a dialogical lens. In short, "Dialogical perspectives […] argue that we do not have a singled-sided self"[96], rather "the self is like a society in the mind […] a consequence of the social and dialogical nature of the meaning making process"[97]. Ultimately as experiences, interactions, and various other inputs are internalized the individual begins to construct their own system(s) of meaning from which one's perspective is formed. In the view of Raquel da Silva and their coauthors within

[94] Da Silva, et al. 445
[95] Da Silva, et al. 445
[96] Da Silva, et al. 447
[97] Da Silva, et al. 447

dialogical theory "radicalization can be approached as a form of monologue, in which challenging and diverse voices are silenced"[98].

The dialogical approach to understanding radicalization, like the approaches to narrative and political identity discussed earlier in this thesis, highlights the idea of continuously interpreting and constructing systems of meaning and/or belief. In my subsection detailing the importance of identity, I noted researchers have posited that even members of a dispersed, internet based, radical group "have a psychological […] connection with others who share their experiences and understanding of the world"[99]. In addition, other scholars have posited a need for all persons to find some degree of "narrative coherence"[100] within their own experiences and how they may have culminated with someone's worldview. Connecting with those who have claimed that through consistent interaction with radical ideologues identity can be reshaped to the point that "the personal becomes political"[101], resulting in radicalization not being comprised of someone being stripped of their previous, non-extreme, views but rather by way of being granted a new personal narrative that reshapes their identity.

A dialogical approach, when taken into consideration alongside Butler's discussions of the role of the Other, supports my claim that radicalization is not a 'loss' of an identity, but instead the gain of a new internal narrative spurred a reshaping of

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[98] Da Silva, et al. 449
[99] Smith, et al. 328
[100] Barassi & Zamponi, 597
[101] Smith, et al. 335

someone's perception. Dialogical theory specifically suggests that non-radicals operate with an internal dialogue, where there is an engagement with external inputs, conversely "radicalization can be approached as a form of monologue"[102]. To that end, Butler points out "that one way we become responsible and self-knowing is precisely by deferring judgements"[103], and to therefore a failure to defer judgement "becomes the way in which we establish the Other as nonrecognizable"[104] removing agency from the Other's input onto the subject's sense of being and internal narrative. A claim that echoes the dialogical approach because it is at the point that you are unable to even view the Other with anything other than contempt that you become enclosed into your own self, being locked in a 'monologue'.

Building on the dialogical approach, I suggest that deradicalization operates essentially as an inversion of radicalization, where instead of trying to dislodge and remove radical views from someone, you must instead attempt to have them (re)gain a new identity that diverts away from their radical views. Strategically speaking, this entails an entirely different process from other approaches, one that is more tailored to the specific narratives within a movement, or the radical themselves.

Synthesis

[102] Da Silva, 449
[103] Butler, 30
[104] Butler, 30

Considering my earlier discussion(s) of "the fear of white extinction"[105], "discourse […] of persecution"[106], and Hofstadter's concept of paranoia amongst members of the American far-right in concert with Tarrow's views on the importance of "identity construction"[107], the process of "Injustice Framing"[108], the importance of one's self-ascribed "political role"[109] and construction of "*identity narratives,*"[110] it becomes clear that narratives drive political behavior and/or affiliation. Narratives vary greatly across different ideologies; however, at the very least, every group has a grievance and a story to tell. In particular, narratives influence the behavior of members of the far-right, especially their overall willingness to engage in contentious politics.

My work makes two distinct contributions to those who have come before me, on the grounds of my efforts to build a comprehensive understanding of the role of identity within radical politics that draws from a variety of different theoretical perspectives that, by in large, have up to this point been sequestered into separate camps. As exemplified by my connections between major works within the canon of American political science, and well-established theories of identity's relationship with self-perception and the projection of perception onto other beings. Via these connections, I have also been able to situate rising theories of deradicalization—such of the dialogical approach—dovetailing the

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[105] Bhatt, 2
[106] Oaten, 13
[107] Tarrow, 152
[108] Tarrow, 145
[109] Brooks, 23
[110] Barassi & Zamponi, 593

concept of personal narrative and identity into broader discussions within the policy arena.

The framing devices, of offensive and defensive narratives operate in a similar manner. While grounded in Hofstader's identification of the schism within the American far-right during the 1960s, my theory offers more than just an 'update' to his analysis, through the focus on the exchange between the individual and the Other as a driving force of political extremity. In comparison to existing approaches, I put unique emphasis on the role of internal narrative and self-perception, which informs my view of radicalization as the gain of a new identity, instead of the loss of one. When all these separations form other scholars are taken into consideration my theory emerges as an effort to push our understanding of radical politics further, extending the purview of social theories so that it is possible to gain a grasp on what divides and what drives extreme political activity.

In light of the information laid out in this introduction, following the opening section wherein I briefly laid out my theory, that included the categories of offensive and defensive extremism and the role of identity and engagement with Butler's concept of the Other. I arrived at the categories-and importance-of offensive and defensive narratives through my analysis of well-respected research across political science-all of which, at some point, pointing to the importance of both narrative and identity within all political actors. From this foundation, I then zeroed in on both discussions of the relationship of said ideas both inside and outside the realm of radical politics. In concert with categories

of the American far-right established by Hofstadter. By way of working in this manner I then noticed a key area of contribution; a set of categories that deal with the importance of self-reflection and perception of other forces within the far-right. A concept that coalesces how one perceives the Other's role, and the individual's role, alongside what behaviors may spring from these views-and, in turn, may pull someone away from them.

From this point forward I will start by performing two case studies, grounded in primary source documents in the form of writings published by extremists themselves. A unique and novel form of analysis, due to there being a limited number of academic writings focusing on similar direct textual analysis. From these case studies I will then draw parallels between the two movements, which will then be synthesized into a set of well-reasoned conclusions, which cement the validity of my offensive and defensive categories. In addition to how they inform a more nuanced approach to understanding radicalization, and how to best practice deradicalization.

Case Study #1 Daryush "Roosh" Valizadeh's Neomasculinity

Although misogyny has long been endemic within the United States, in recent years there has been a new rallying of men under the banner of "the so-called 'manosphere' [which] is a loosely defined catch-all term"[111] covering an array of different sub-groups, ideologies, and schools of thought gathered around the common touchpoint of Men's Rights Activism (MRA). Major figures within the manosphere have penned edicts such as to *Why Women Deserve Less* or attempts to explain *The Myth of Male Power*. Over the past few years there has been a major 'spike' in the amount of academic inquiry into radical misogyny-particularly in terms of extreme INCELs, and other more virulent manifestations of the manosphere. Scholars such as Jessica O'Donell argue that "Much of the MRA movement can be characterized by the assertion that women hold systemic and social advantages"[112] not shared by their male counterparts such as the legal system and child custody cases being titled towards women, and the presence of affirmation action policies coming at the expense of men[113] in addition to claims made by the manosphere that "the concept that women accrue social capital based on their sexual desirability […] and that women and feminists accrue sympathy through the proliferation of 'false rape claims' or 'playing the victim'"[114] leveraging social structures to their advantage, decidedly at the expense of men. Common complaints

[111] O'Donell, 655
[112] O'Donell, 655
[113] O'Donell, 655
[114] O'Donell, 655

originating from the manosphere pertaining to ‘sexual capital’ include that online dating has led to women having an outsized advantage, due to the higher likelihood of ‘matching’ when compared to some men-leading to arguments that women are given an undue advantage in the ‘sexual marketplace’ that deviates from the supposed natural order of society.

While there are a bevy of interesting examples that I have come across during my research, in the interest of academic integrity, I have chosen to select from the Southern Poverty Law Center’s list of notable figures within “Male Supremacy”[115]: Mike Cernovich, Daryush "Roosh" Valizadeh, and Paul Elam. From these three, I randomly chose “Valizadeh” by way of a random number generator found on random.org.[116] A preponderance of what is currently being published on MRA is comprised of either studies focusing on online chatter within red-pill communities, or interviews with people within the space. By grounding my claims in explicit written statements made by prominent figures within the manosphere, through a focus on Valizadeh’s writings and his concept of Neomasculinity, I highlight the narratives espoused by those leading the movement, rather than responses amongst those of lesser influence. In this chapter, I will delve into a case study of Valizadeh’s work, first providing a brief biographical sketch, then reviewing some of the existing literature on the MRA movement within which Valizadeh is prominent, and finally engaging in an analysis of his writings. In terms of

[115] “Male Supremacy.”
[116] A screen capture recording of the use of the generator is on file with the author.

my own theoretical framework, as an example of a "offensive" narrative, manifested by an overwhelming sense on the part of Valizadeh that society has been lost to the hands of those who wish to harm men. An interesting finding, because at first glance it would seem that the manosphere would fall into my defensive category.

In Pursuit of a 'Pickup'

In his biography, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) states Daryush Valizadeh (aka Roosh) is a prominent figure within the 'manosphere', falling under the purview of being a pickup artist (PUA). Through his online presence, writings, and hosting of a self-titled PUA forum Valizadeh repeatedly "pushes the idea that women are intellectually inferior to men, worth only the sexual pleasure and fertility they can provide"[117]. Valizadeh claims that he came across the PUA community on the internet after years of failing to garner the attention of those he wished to seduce.[118] Aside from his proclamations as to his own prowess as a PUA, Valizadeh is also notable for creating the Pozan Institute, with the goal "to further his 'developing ideology' of neomasculinity"[119]. Although Valizadeh's concept of masculinity includes a "narrative of male victimhood [that] is seemingly identical to the men's rights activists"[120] his arguments differ on the basis of strategy as "For Roosh, men are not fully victims, since through 'game' (seduction methods) they can reclaim the circumstances of their life"[121].

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[117] "Daryush 'Roosh' Valizadeh."
[118] "Daryush 'Roosh' Valizadeh."
[119] "Daryush 'Roosh' Valizadeh."
[120] "Daryush 'Roosh' Valizadeh."
[121] "Daryush 'Roosh' Valizadeh."

Within the context of my work, I believe that it is important to consider pickup artistry as more than just a ploy to sell courses to impressionable young men. It is, rather, a form of identity and a form of misogyny, with those following the narrative set by Valizadeh and other figures within the broader manosphere believing that the solution to their victimization is to become adept at seducing women. Or to borrow a phrase from earlier on into my writings, it appears that in order to rid themselves of their current state of being 'dispossessed' of a sexual partner, they must acquire the skills necessary in order to gain sexual pleasure whenever they please. Valizadeh's veneration of 'game' as the means by which to rid oneself of their current state creates a clear narrative wherein there is a means by which to end victimhood.

Gamed by the System

In recent years, out of an effort to understand groups that operate largely online via social media platforms and forums such as Reddit, researchers have begun to conduct their work by way of examining what is posted to said websites. This work often uses data analysis to rapidly sift through hundreds of thousands of different posts, enabling a grasp on what is being said within online communities that is usually impossible for those wishing to study movements that are localized offline. Sean Eddington and his coauthors Caitlyn Jarvis and Patrice Buzzanell engaged in these methods in an effort to study users on a subreddit found within the realm of the manosphere, centering on encouraging men to 'take the red pill,' a popular turn of phrase that references *The Matrix* and the films portrayal of ingesting a red pill leading to a sudden awakening as to the true nature of

reality. Eddington and coauthors employ "an organizational (and organizing) approach"[122] hoping to "shift focus to the emergent process through which organizations come into existence"[123], claiming that their work "offers a glimpse into how the forms of language shared in (and throughout) the broader manosphere activate fear, anger, and resentment towards minoritized groups […] to mobilize masculinities and men toward hegemonic and anti-social actions and beliefs"[124]. In addition, they argue that by studying and unpacking online MRA groups it is possible to understand how those within the broader manosphere "constitute a social identity through affective and gendered contradictions"[125], "giving men the language and worldview through which to understand and make sense of their own anger and vitriol"[126]. This is a system of identity construction and collective anger that will be visible in the documents written by members of the manosphere, who regularly use inflammatory language as a means to reflect both their ideology, and their identity.

Some posts found on a subreddit titled 'The Red Pill', or 'TRP' "define feminism as a sexual strategy employed by women for their [own] happiness"[127], making the taking the red pill a necessity as "the establishment of TRP serves as the counterpart to feminism"[128] verbiage that resonates with those laid out by O'Donnell's article in this

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[122] Eddington, et al. 117
[123] Eddington, et al. 117
[124] Eddington, et al. 117
[125] Eddington, et al. 118
[126] Eddington, et al. 118
[127] Eddington, et al. 122
[128] Eddington, et al. 123

case studies introduction. Beyond this "TRP members often define themselves through contradictory assertions […] and positionings of themselves and others"[129], as, "In other words, they [TRP users] despised the victimhood narrative employed by progressives"[130] while also managing to craft a unique lexicon that evokes a shared common experience[131] detailing inequities within society. According to many users on the subreddit, men are frequently victimized on the behalf of societal structures such as the structure of divorce courts, to the point that, "To them, the legal system privileges women at almost every turn and serves to disenfranchise men"[132]. Additionally, TRP users "argue that feminist systems are rooted in maintaining [female] power within society, rather than seeking equity"[133]. All claims that create an overwhelming sense of entitlement and victimhood.

Through this complex web of perceived victimization and persecution at the hands of a society that—in their view—has been titled to favor women, members of TRP have managed to create a narrative that is embedded with a deep set of contradictions. Despite the TRP of female tyranny, those within TRP do not argue that they must "reject and ignore them altogether"[134], instead they continue to proclaim "their *need* for women"[135] as a means to derive sexual pleasure. Thus, TRP members "identity was constructed vis-à-vis affective contradictions centered around the dualisms of fake and

[129] Eddington, et al. 124
[130] Eddington, et al. 125
[131] Eddington, et al. 125
[132] Eddington, et al. 127
[133] Eddington, et al. 128
[134] Eddington, et al. 131
[135] Eddington, et al. 131

real victimhood"[136] between men as being the true victims, who despite their 'victimhood' are in fact more powerful than women. Not only creating a system of meaning, but also, engaging in an "assemblage of identity and self that is unfolding, shifting, and relationally constructed with others in TRP"[137]. Ultimately, "they attempt to demonstrate authenticity [of victimhood] through affect by making it rational"[138], via creating a complex narrative structure that can explain inherent contradictions within their ideology. Particularly in terms of the tension between claims of victimhood, that are concurrent with claims of power.

After 'taking the red pill' and entering online spheres, users begin to "communicatively constitute a social identity"[139] with their expressions of perceived victim status being "affirmed and supported"[140] by others within the online community, which overtime grants "men the language and worldview through which to understand and make sense of their anger and vitriol"[141], constructing a unique narrative that explains their own victimization, while also maintaining claims that they still possess an intrinsic set of traits that place themselves above their peers of differing gender identities. TRP's construction of a victim narrative that allows members to "define themselves through contradictory assertions"[142] parallels the far-right English Defense League's narrative, as

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[136] Eddington, et al. 131
[137] Eddington, et al. 131
[138] Eddington, et al. 133
[139] Eddington, et al. 118
[140] Eddington, et al. 118
[141] Eddington, et al. 118
[142] Eddington et al. 124

expressed, in a speech by Tommy Robinson that was subsequently analyzed by Alexander Oaten. Who found that within said speech Robinson actively used verbiage that acted to craft a narrative of victimization while also eschewing self-construction "as [being] the vulnerable and helpless"[143]. Expanding on this slightly, both members of TRP and the EDL exist in a constant state of justification, having to bridge the gap between explaining why they are being actively targeted by the given perpetrator(s), while also-somehow-being the more powerful gender or ethnic group.

As discussed earlier during the opening subsections of my thesis, participants in all groups are constantly processing the input of the outside world as it relates to their own sense of self and how they are perceived by others. In the context of political actors, processing of this nature is often used to create a vision of a "path that led them were they are"[144] at any given point of time. In the case of users of TRP, it appears that-in their minds-the path to male disenfranchisement was sowed by feminists who then were able to twist the legal system and-to an extent-the dating market in a manner that led them to their current state of existence. As "For TRP members, each time they share members' subjective experiences […] they become increasingly angry"[145] at women and society at large. With there being multiple instances of mentions of "Sexless marriages and men's general unhappiness […] as one avenue that brought men into the TRP subreddit"[146]

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[143] Oaten, 343
[144] Barassi & Zamponi, 597
[145] Eddington, et al. 132
[146] Eddington, et al. 126

often finding solace in the subreddit after the dissolution of said relationships, making it such that TRP served as "a space to make sense of their experiences"[147].

In my view, this creates a clear example of how upon entering a community, through interaction, users slowly begin to cobble together a narrative that acts both as a galvanizing force and as a means of explanation. Within the case of TRP users it appears that, for some, the groups narrative allows for them to create some sense of coherence. They can retain a sense of power in concert with one of persecution. A 'path' appears through a set of shared sensibilities center on a sense that whatever may have pushed them into spaces such as TRP was not a result of a failing on their own behalf-but rather as an outgrowth of a society that is targeting men, cementing the narrative where it was necessary to 'take the red pill'. A perception that is entrenched through said narrative being shared by many other users within the community.

Classifying the Manosphere

To an extent you can readily classifying TRP and affiliated groups using Hofstadter's established framework, which breaks down ideologies based on possession and dispossession. In his own words those rallying around the latter believe that what was once there's "has been largely taken away"[148] leading to an overwhelming sense of being betrayed at the hands at whomever controls society. In this view, feminism and efforts to increase gender equity are "rooted in maintaining power"[149] that was seized from men

[147] Eddington, et al. 126
[148] Hofstadter, 4
[149] Eddington, et al. 128

following the 1960s. Those active within 'Gamergate', a progenitor to the modern MRA movement acted under the assumption that "games companies had begun 'pandering' to minority groups […] rather than focusing on their 'core' demographic of heterosexual white men"[150]. That sentiment is echoed in the case of users of TRP who, "lament the breakdown traditional gender roles"[151] placing the blame on feminists who "are viewed as a significant source of men's displacement and disenfranchisement in society"[152] as "TRP [members] argue that feminist systems are rooted in maintaining power […] rather than seeking equity"[153]. In my terms, these are narratives that position members on the offensive. A category that derives from a group rallying around a set of narratives that lend towards an overwhelming sense that their rightful position has been lost, justifying 'going on the offensive. By using Hofstadter's framework, we can see that the perceived issues discussed within these narratives go back decades, an acknowledgment that provides greater insight than solely focusing on the manosphere as some sudden phenomena.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that those within the broader manosphere operate off of the belief that they have been cheated out a social and/or societal structure that is rightly theirs. It appears that, to many within these groups, society functions best when patriarchal, and efforts to dislodge patriarchy—whether it be in entertainment or the

[150] O'Donell, 655
[151] Eddington, et al. 126
[152] Eddington, et al. 128
[153] Eddington, et al. 128

legal system—have served to rip away what belongs to them. In other words, those who have taken the red pill believe that they should run the world.

Entering the Manosphere

Although Valizadeh shuttered his Return of Kings website a few years ago, a comprehensive archive spanning nearly 6000 posts is readily accessible. Not only is the archive complete in its coverage of the blog, but it is also curated by members of the 'Red Pill Community' themselves under the banner of theredarchive.com and therefore is presented without any critical commentary by those opposed to the movement and its ideologies. I turn to this archive to directly tackle Valizadeh's writings with my own original analysis. In addition to these unfiltered writings, the theredarchive has also conveniently pre-categorized all the republished articles complete with sub-headings such as masculinity, wisdom, and women. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, theredarchive's records also include direct links Valizadeh's website, with many of the links still cached by the Internet Archive's 'Way Back Machine', granting me near-full access to a bevy of information that Valizadeh himself took off of the internet. Ironically, efforts by those within the manosphere to index information that could serve to draw people into taking the red pill can also be used by scholars such as myself, who wish to ascertain potential means of deradicalization.

Although Valizadeh began his platform writing treatises focusing directly on the 'art of seduction' and other topics more in line with the broader PUA community, at a certain point he attempted to create a unified philosophy to act "as an antidote for

males"[154], in the form of "Neomasculinity [which] combines traditional beliefs, masculinity, and animal biology into one ideological system"[155]. In an article published to his website outlining the core principles of this 'antidote' Valizadeh touches on a number of tropes within the broader manosphere, such as the importance of dating as a sexual marketplace in addition to arguments claiming the need to maintain patriarchal power structures within society. Tropes aside, within this article there are a few claims that give the reader a clear perspective into how neomasculinity acts as a novel framing for claims of male victimization at the hands of women, the legal system, and feminism.

In a twist of irony in the section detailing the "true nature of women"[156] Valizadeh claims that in the present day "culture has undertaken huge steps to portray women simultaneously as victims […] *and* [as] empowered superheroes"[157]. This sentiment echoes the tension seen in many red pill spaces, which claim that men possess intrinsic traits that make them the dominant sex/gender while conversely being stripped of said power by modern culture. Potential projections aside, I believe that this is an important statement to keep in mind, because it carries the implication that women have been elevated by society at the expense at men. In the view of Valizadeh, such an elevation of women's status is contrary to how things should operate in a state of nature, in which patriarchy was "a superior system that catered to the innate abilities of the sexes."[158] For

[154] "What is neomasculinity", 1
[155] "What is neomasculinity", 1
[156] "What is neomasculinity", 3
[157] "What is neomasculinity", 3
[158] "What is neomasculinity", 4

Valizadeh, “Patriarchal systems must therefore be regained as the primary organizing structure of modern societies.”[159] Valizadeh’s interpretation of masculinity is also based on the claim that, despite claims of subjugation at the hands of the social and legal system, “Men are not victims”[160], even if they “have been placed on Earth during a unique time in humanity that can be institutionally oppressive.”[161] “The limitations stopping us [men] exist partly in our minds […] blame for our failures in life must be put squarely on our own shoulders”[162]. This writing also creates a clear dichotomy between those who have ‘taken the red pill’ and those who have failed to do so, and therefore are still ‘blue pilled’. As explained by Valizadeh, “The opposite of red pill truth is ‘blue pill’ ignorance, whereby people maintain large blind spots in their thinking or observations to shield themselves from the undeniable facts”[163] as believed by those within the red pill sphere.

The ‘Return of Patriarchy’

A few months after the initial publication, and introduction to the world, of his theory of neomasculinity, Valizadeh posted a blog onto his website detailing the means by which he believed that he and his allies would be able to ensure a return to traditional values and the preservation of male power. Appropriately titled “How Patriarchy Will Return”, said article lays out “the five stages that offer a possible path to the return of

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[159] “What is neomasculinity”, 5
[160] “What is neomasculinity”, 7
[161] “What is neomasculinity”, 7
[162] “What is neomasculinity”, 7
[163] “What is neomasculinity”, 10

patriarchy"[164], opening with the first, already completed, stage of the creation of a series of "antifragile networks that share common ideological beliefs"[165] relating to those shared amongst the broader manosphere. Following this, there is the "Seed Resistance"[166] stage, wherein those who have taken the red pill will engage in a variety of tactics including "producing attack pieces against far-left narrative bots"[167]. In line with this from 2015 to 2025 Valizadeh hypothesizes that "The neomasculine sphere will be but one regiment in a large army to defeat the enemy"[168] via an all-out media and/or cultural blitz that aims to "damage their way of life, happiness, and disposable income."[169] Valizadeh points towards the beginning of this 'culture war' as "the introduction of Gamergate"[170]. Finally, the fourth and fifth stages detail what to do after resoundingly 'winning the culture war', culminating with the claims of neomasculinity being entrenched into society, "roll[ing] back what has been added since the sexual revolution of the 1960's"[171].

As lofty as this road map is, it is important to consider these hypothetical strategies in addition to the documents outlining the overarching philosophy behind neomasculinity, because it lays out both the goals of the movement in addition to the methods that are endorsed by those leading the charge. Overall, Valizadeh has no qualms

[164] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 1
[165] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 2
[166] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 2
[167] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 2
[168] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 3
[169] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 3
[170] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 4
[171] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 6

about ‘life ruination’ tactics, as seen in his claim that at some point it will be appropriate to attack people’s happiness and ability to make a living, implicitly endorsing his followers to actively spread disinformation and digitally harass their foes, as it is simply part of the ensuing culture war.

Analysis

To further unpack Valizadeh’s ‘framing document’ for neomasculinity, I first analyze said writing via broader lenses established earlier on into this thesis, then positioning neomasculinity into specific conversations that are currently occurring within academia, finally drawing my own connections between the two ‘frames’.

For MRA’s and/or PUA’s at a broader level, it appears that these beliefs allow people to create “a social identity through affective and gendered contradictions”[172]: in online spaces, people are able to find a narrative or a series of statements that “make[s] sense of their [own] anger and vitriol,”[173] and they become increasingly enraged as they continue to share their grievances with other members of the movement.

Adherents of beliefs found within the manosphere also engage in a pattern of reasoning that echoes those seen within other radical groups. MRA’s construct a clear “antagonistic collective Other”[174] in the form of the “displacement and disenfranchisement”[175] of men at the hands of feminists and society at large creating a

[172] Eddington, et al. 118
[173] Eddington, et al. 118
[174] Oaten, 340
[175] Eddington, et al. 128

clear delineation between valiant victimized men and nefarious progressives. In short, MRA's see themselves in a power struggle that is only to be rectified via 'taking the red pill' and subsequently rejecting society at large.

The verbiage surrounding 'taking the red pill' suggests that radicalization into these groups can be readily understood via the dialogical approach. Firstly, members of groups such as the TRP cite experiences such as "Sexless marriages and men's general unhappiness"[176] as factors that pushed them towards the forum and the ideas expressed amongst its users. This can be understood as an example of how making "connection[s] with others who share their experiences and understanding of the world"[177] in concert with of "the social and dialogical nature of the meaning making process"[178], and goal to create "narrative coherence"[179] within their lives leads to "affective and cognitive closure"[180] resulting in the silencing of countervailing opinions that previously would have made them adverse to the ideology. All of which suggests that, as outlined earlier, those who become radicalized into the manosphere are not shredding, or losing, their previous political identity. Rather, by taking the red pill they are gaining a new identity that closes off those within the manosphere from the outside world.

Although there are several prominent forums, websites, and online spaces putting forth radical MRA, PUA, and general red pill ideologies, there is also a series of

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[176] Eddington, et al. 126
[177] Smith, et al. 328
[178] Da Silva, et al. 447
[179] Barassi & Zamponi, 597
[180] Da Silva, et al. 445

emergent subreddits wherein former members of the manosphere discuss what lead them away from the ideology and back into non-red pill society. Users of these forums often cited the need to "comprehend and respond to romantic rejection"[181], or "Low self-esteem"[182] arising from their inability to perform masculinity in a means that evokes the archetype of the 'alpha male'. Thorburn's "digital ethnography suggest[s] that a relatively common radicalization pathway stems from men and boys seeking advice"[183] as to how to improve their social standing and/or romantic endeavors. The ethnography also found that "For many users, the process of radicalization […] stemmed from a recognition that the ideologies they had subscribed to were either hurting themselves or others"[184], or alternatively, "when they noticed some flaws in the logics of these belief-systems"[185] often brought about through positive interactions with women, or other demonized groups. Thus, it appears that in the deradicalization testimonies discussed a common trend of subtly being pulled away from extreme views by way of slowly having their ideas challenged via exposure to positive social interactions and other real-life situations that cement the harm that they may be doing to others, or ultimately themselves.

In many ways, Valizadeh and his peers speak for those who have fallen deep into the manosphere, representing the logical extremes of the ideology-rendering their statements, writings, and ideas to be of particular use for those wishing to understand

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[181] Thorburn, 8
[182] Thorburn, 8
[183] Thorburn, 11
[184] Thorburn, 16
[185] Thorburn, 17

how to produce a productive counter to their line of reasoning. Central to his philosophy is the idea that most, if not all, facets of life can be divided into truth (the red pill) versus "ignorance, whereby people maintain large blind spots in their thinking."[186] I understand this as an a effort to maintain near total 'cognitive closure', ensuring a feedback loop wherein those outside the manosphere are readily discounted due to them being blue-pilled and existing in a state of ignorance, if not delusion. The result is a narrative wherein there are clear protagonists and antagonists.

The narrative within these groups is, using my framing, offensive: Valizadeh's writing detailing the coming culture war centers on how patriarchy must be reinstated, and how men must "roll back what has been added [to society] since the sexual revolution of the 1960s"[187]. In his view, men must reclaim what rightfully belongs to them, which suggests that it is not a 'defensive' narrative. In other words, his writings do not speak of a near future wherein men will lose their foothold in society, rather, they detail how this foothold has been lost, leading to an aggressive line of reasoning that permits the production of smear pieces against the blue pilled enemy. Much of this aggression may arise from claims of desperation: according to those within the red pill space, society is well on the way towards disaster, making it all the more important to protect masculinity by any means necessary.

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[186] What is neomasculinity, 10
[187] "How Patriarchy Will Return", 6

My addition of a framing device that extends beyond Hofstadter's came into play within this case study because if I were to have only operated from a framework of possession vs. dispossession, I would have been unable to recognize some of the subtilties that make MRA's unique: while they may speak in words that evoke dispossession, when unpacked further they operate off a narrative grounded in a need to go on the offensive. This finding cements the novelty of my own theory, because it offers a tool of classification that is not developed under Hofstadter. Additionally, as will be discussed later additional nuance provided by my work allows for a better understanding of deradicalization

Case Study #2: Tom Metzger's WAR

To many, the term far-right extremist evokes the image of shaved head, swastika tattoos, and unabashed hatred—or, in other words, a skinhead. Although once a prominent fixture of the American far-right, even entering popular culture via their inclusion in films such as *American History X*, "the racist skinhead movement's prominence within this country's white power movement has been diminishing steadily"[188] over the past few decades. In fact, according to the SPLC "No [skinhead] group is recruiting in significant numbers"[189], "largely due to their failure to attract younger recruits"[190] and inability to leverage social media platforms as a recruitment tool. However, despite their overall decline in relevance as of late, skinheads still loom across the American far-right, and anti-hate organizations, due, in no small part, to the 1988 murder of Mulugeta Seraw at the hands of members of a skinhead organization in Portland, Oregon. Although the exact details of the court case, and Seraw's murder, are outside of the purview of my thesis, I think it is important to pause briefly to remember both his legacy, and his importance to both legal precedent, Portland, and as an example of how extreme ideas can lead to tragedy.

Concurrent with the declining relevancy and number of skinheads within the American far-right the group has become less of a hot topic within academia and anti-hate advocacy; the passage of time allows for the hindsight provided by working

[188] SPLC Skinhead Article, 1
[189] SPLC Skinhead Article, 1
[190] SPLC Skinhead Article, 2

retrospectively, allowing me to situate skinheads inside of a broader discussion of narratives amongst the far-right. In reflection of the decline in the sheer number of active skinhead organizations, particularly in the last decade-or-so I believe that it is prudent to ground this case study by examining the ideas espoused by Tom Metzger. The Seraw case culminated in a high-profile trial wherein the SPLC leveraged the legal system to "hold Metzger and [his publication] WAR liable for the wrongful death of Mulugeta, winning a $12.5 million verdict"[191] that for all intents and purposes bankrupted both Metzger and the various organizations that he helmed. However, at one time, he operated a what was tantamount a media-machine, with several publications expressing ideas that continue to influence the radical right today. Prior to delving into the publications themselves, I lay out a brief overview of the American skinhead movement and its foundational ideologies during the height of its powers, followed by connections to Metzger's espoused philosophy, and ultimately to my own framing devices and overarching theory. My goal will be to explain and defend the classification of this narrative as a *defensive* one, as well as some initial implications that follow from such a classification.

Origins of Skinheads

In the present day, the term 'skinhead' generally refers to members of an overtly racist sub-culture immediately identifiable by a unique attire, tattoos, and closely cropped hair. The origins of the movement can be traced to small groups of British youths in the

[191] Bennet

late 1960s[192], slowly "spread[ing] geographically across most of Britain"[193] during the 1970s. However, it was during "a further skinhead revival in the early 1980s […] in which the cropped, or 'number 1' haircut, was replaced by a shaved head"[194]. This change in appearance coincided with "the emergence of the Oi! Music scene"[195], which while not inherently racist in its origin or musical composition was, in some circles, helmed by the band Skrewdriver whom became "the vector for the projection of neo-Nazi ideas"[196], further drawing skinheads into the realm of racism and neo-Nazism.

Key tenants of the 'skinhead way of life' include "strong notions of 'normality' and 'naturalness'"[197] viewing "many aspects of the permissive society or sexual revolution as 'perversions'"[198], in addition to "A paranoid preoccupation with the numerical decline of the white race"[199] and "extreme example[s] of the cult of heterosexual hyper-masculinity"[200]. To skinheads, their mythos also includes "the skinhead as [a] *warrior* or street fighter"[201], acting as "an ideological rationale for the skinhead propensity to violence"[202], often excusing acts of violence "on purely defensive

[192] Pollard, 399
[193] Pollard, 400
[194] Pollard, 401
[195] Pollard, 401
[196] Pollard, 401
[197] Pollard, 407
[198] Pollard, 406
[199] Pollard, 407
[200] Pollard, 407
[201] Pollard, 408
[202] Pollard, 408

grounds"[203]. Additionally, "the skinhead frequently presents himself of a victim"[204], targeted by a myriad of anti-white forces such as the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG), or demographic replacement. They often distill their philosophy into David Lane's 14 words that "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children"[205].

In the context of the United States, "Skinhead belief is based on the traditional cultural superiority of heterosexual, White men; [and] therefore anything that could undermine that group's dominance represents a threat"[206], "coming to the 'rescue' of White youth"[207] who may be feeling disaffected in light of efforts to enhance multiculturism, and challenge their status in society-crafting a narrative wherein skinheads act as a means to protect white men both physically, and culturally. Their 'pitches' to prospective recruits reflect this self-assigned rescuer role, seizing underling discontent amongst young white men, approaching them "as 'big brothers' or 'friends in need,'"[208] and actively attempting to align themselves with those who are considering joining by presenting joining a skinhead organization as an easy way to form solidarity on the basis of their identity, against progressive forces within society.

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[203] Pollard, 408
[204] Pollard, 411
[205] SPLC skinhead article.
[206] Blazak, 6
[207] Blazak, 9
[208] Blazak, 10

While racism and antisemitism perhaps the most readily apparent facets of skinhead ideology, heteronormativity and the policing of strict boundaries of masculinity are also integral to the 'skin head' way of life. Grounded largely in how those within the movement frame their "experiences through a set of binary oppositions"[209] structuring reality via a series of conflicts best described as 'us' vs 'them'. These boundaries are enhanced via a framework "of essentialism [that] holds that there are irreducible differences between the binaries"[210] and are therefore forever static. Masculinity comes into play when considering that many scholars have concluded that amongst those following 'white power' beliefs, "The central problem for white men is one of masculinity threatened by a modernized and extremely complex culture where traditional gender roles no longer function in the fashion white men in formerly hegemonic positions expect"[211] and therefore "Black men, immigrants, Jews, homosexuals, feminists, and wimpy white men are framed as scapegoats"[212] for the perceived negative trajectory of society.

Masculinity is enforced at a variety of different levels, including in the attire worn by skinheads. A skinhead's identity is rooted heavily in protecting the boundaries established via the essentialist binary. Analysis of an online skinhead forum revealed that both online and in the real world "skinheads […] associate hippies and men with long

[209] Ahahita, 145
[210] Ahahita, 145
[211] Ahahita, 147
[212] Ahahita, 147

hair with effeminacy"[213] creating a strict appearance-based division between those inside and outside the movement. Online discussions pertaining to homosexuality also carried the same logic, with discussions centering on the idea that a skinhead's view(s) on "sexuality is a heteronormative one, and heteronormativity marks the borders of the movement"[214], borders that will be readily enforced via a "willingness in violent acts to defend the border"[215].

The Skinhead Collective

Formation of an oppositional, caustic identity is aided by a perception of reality that hinges on the aforementioned binary. Between those who are positioned 'with' you—and by extension those with a shared identity—and those who are considered to 'against' you. In the case of skinheads, a tension emerges within themselves through an identity "as plain boys from the working-class who enjoy drinking beer together, and the fantasy world of men of honour at war"[216] making the need for group identification all the more important, creating a system of internal status derived from their ability to conform to a "the realization of the collective rather than the realization of the self"[217]. By falling within the 'skinhead collective' via maintenance of a strict dress code, system of belief, and attitude towards the Other(s), within this shared identity "Both anti-racists and immigrants serve to define the negations of the right-wing skinhead: they are the anti-

[213] Ahahita, 152
[214] Ahahita, 157
[215] Ahahita, 157
[216] Fangen, 35
[217] Fangen, 36

poles of what right-wing skinheads want to be"[218]. Creating a world that is unfriendly to outsiders, as any proximity to the antithesis of the skinhead identity is met with derision- or sometimes violent repercussions.

In many ways, a binary framing is an effective way to ensure that there is a great distance between those within a movement, and the Other(s) who are outside of it. Contextualizing the point in the terminology of Judith Butler, we can say that, like all people, skinheads desire to give a strong "narrative form to certain conditions of my emergence,"[219] with the skinhead narrative being one of white men being targeted culturally via the rise of diversity and being targeted spatially via their territory being encroached on by those differing from their understanding of what is 'natural'. As Butler notes, physical aggression can be a way a "subject seeks to reinstall its mastery and unity"[220], a process enhanced via a narrative of defending oneself, which serves as "an infinite way to rename its aggression as suffering, and so provides an infinite justification for its aggression"[221]. Skinhead violence towards groups considered to positioned against them within their binary framework exemplifies this process.

The appearance and internal culture of skinheads also enhances this distance between those within the movement and those outside of it. Embracing "a sense of exceptionalism"[222], and "revel[ing] in their sense of 'true enlightenment' about the ways

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[218] Fangen, 39
[219] Butler, 27
[220] Butler, 35
[221] Butler, 39
[222] Simi & Futrell, 92

of the world and feelings of moral superiority"[223] placing themselves on a higher plane than non-whites and whites who do not subscribe to their ideology. When engaging with the world outside of their close-knit groups, skinheads must "directly confront a culturally diverse world that is the antithesis of what they desire"[224], making it such that they "experience work and school as the primary institutional settings that perpetuate their categorization as social outcasts"[225], distanced from their peers on the basis of their narrative and identity. Appearance and displays of skinhead membership differ, with some being willing to exude imagery associated with the movement, such as tattoos or patches on clothing, while others being more covert in their expressions. They "perceive the unambiguous expression of racism […] as ideal"[226], but reality sometimes dictates some covert displays due to "situational constraints"[227] such as codes of conducts at work/school, or fear of social reprimand. They thus develop a system of "calculated conformity"[228] with a carefully crafted system of symbols alluding to their group membership that acts as a subtle 'nod' to those who are also engaged in similar 'calculations'.

The focus on a "the realization of the collective rather than the realization of the self"[229] in skinhead narrative also lends itself to acts of violence, as it creates a group

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[223] Simi & Futrell, 93
[224] Simi & Futrell, 100
[225] Simi & Futrell, 103
[226] Simi & Futrell, 105
[227] Simi & Futrell, 105
[228] Simi & Futrell, 106
[229] Fangen, 36

dynamic wherein strict boundaries ensure that members of the subculture are willing to work collaboratively. A focus on a collective also manifests in common recruitment tactics, with common narratives portraying skinheads as "coming to the 'rescue' of White youth"[230], welcoming young white men into the movement on the basis of it providing comradery and security.

Metzger & Skinheads

Based off this brief overview of existing scholarship relating to American skinheads, their primary beliefs, and construction of identity, a few prominent features begin to emerge. As the prevalence of words like "rescue" and "secure" imply, in addition to common tropes along the lines of 'defending the white race,' skinheads do not typically present themselves in a language of dispossession; rather they are, in Hofstadter's terminology, seeking to hold onto what they believe to be their possessive claims to government, culture, and demographics. At least during the height of their relevance, racist skin heads felt "that they were fending off threats to a still established way of life"[231]. These are themes that evoke Hofstadter's framing of dispossession but can be expanded upon further through the use of my framing. As seen in the last case study closer examination may lead to the revelations that are only obtainable through an enhanced focus on the target of a narrative and individual identity.

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[230] Blazak, 9
[231] Hofstadter, 7

Central to these features is their views being built on a foundation of "binary oppositions"[232], exhibited through the presentation of skinheads serving both as victims of some form of grand conspiracy, while also acting as a means through which to protect white Americans-particularly white men. Usually, skinheads view those outside of the binary categories of those whose hegemony is threatened (i.e. white men)—such as people of color, those with queer identities, and those of Jewish faith and/or origin— as diametrically opposed to the skinhead's "notions of 'normality.'"[233] However, perhaps due to widespread fear of demographic replacement, and a desire to "secure the existence"[234] of a white race, it appears that white women are not always placed on the oppositional side of the binary. That is to say, heteronormativity and proclamations of a focus on "a future for white children"[235] necessitates some form of consideration for women within the movement, albeit in a subservient capacity.

During his lifetime, Tom Metzger occupied a unique space within the American far right and racist skinhead subculture. At the height of his relevancy, he hosted a cable-access program that aired in "62 cities in 21 states"[236] across America, concurrently Metzger regularly published newsletters that were "a tool in organizing racist skinheads"[237], complete with "display ads for Skrewdriver"[238]. Additionally, Metzger ran

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[232] Ahahita, 145
[233] Pollard, 407
[234] SPLC skinhead article
[235] SPLC skinhead article
[236] "Tom Metzger"
[237] "Tom Metzger"
[238] "Tom Metzger"

"telephone hotline[s]"[239], and a "electronic bulletin board by which racists skinheads […] could more easily communicate."[240] These efforts in disseminating racist, right wing propaganda culminated in 1988 with Dave Mazzella "a Metzger protégé"[241] traveling to Portland Oregon complete with "an introductory letter from Metzger"[242] with the goal of organizing a skinhead organization. Shortly after Mazzella's arivial in Portland skinheads murdered Mulugeta Seraw, leading to a civil lawsuit that "crippled Metzger's organization"[243], resulting in Metzger owing Seraw's family $5 million dollars.

In the years leading up to the murder of Seraw, Metzger was making a concerted effort to ingratiate himself to racist skinheads, spreading "rhetoric [that] tends to encourage Skinheads to engage in violence under the standard excuse of 'self-defense'"[244], an ADL report released in the late 1980s observed that "*WAR* has devoted increasing attention to Skinheads during the past year and has become a clearinghouse for information"[245] such as the location of active skinhead groups. Metzger's efforts to court skinheads also manifested in his 1988 meeting "with 50 Skinheads from Southern California"[246], in addition to a regular series of telephone bulletins that were "replete with news about Skinhead activities and declarations of solidarity"[247]. In other words, he not

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[239] "Tom Metzger"
[240]"Tom Metzger"
[241] "Tom Metzger"
[242] "Tom Metzger"
[243] "Tom Metzger"
[244] "Young and Violent", 3
[245] "Young and Violent", 3
[246] "Young and Violent", 4
[247] "Young and Violent", 5

only paid lip service in support of racist skinheads, rather over the course of several years Metzger routinely attempted to build notoriety within the community, arguably with the end goal of being able to lead skinheads in any direction he pleased.

In his heyday in the 1980s Metzger was the lead propogandist for the radical far-right. Although many of his WAR newsletters have been lost to time, a few scanned copies still exist on the Internet Archive, in each newsletter's dozen or so pages you see a plethora of different expressions of his ideology, including racist cartoons, articles, and editorials focused on advancing his agenda. My analysis will be focused on said newsletters, as they offer a frank, uncensored view into the movement, with the newsletter making no attempts to masquerade as anything other than an unedited expression of hatred. My analysis will also entail looking at articles written by those other than Metzger himself, however due to the fact that he was the sponsor, publisher, and leader of WAR-I highly doubt that anything found within one of his newsletters would contradict or deviate from what he himself believed, or at the very least what he would have condoned himself. As in the previous chapter, my usage of primary sources is relatively unique: while some existing studies engage with skinhead ideology directly, most rely on participant observation or interviews with former or active members of the far-right. I will focus on issues from 1988, a year in which the ADL determined that there was a "rise in the number of racist Skinheads to about 2,000, located in twenty-one

states"[248], increasing from "1,000 to 1,500 […] in twelve states"[249] as calculated in February of that year. When considering the extremity of the movement, and that this was before the rise of the Internet, an increased membership of anywhere from 500 to 1000 active racist skinheads was certainly nothing to scoff at. It appears that much of this rapid growth was attributed to John Metzger's "efforts to snare young people"[250] into the far-right via "WAR's affiliated Aryan Youth Movement"[251] by way of disseminating information at local high schools-factoring in that the typical age range of skinheads during this time was "from about 13 to 25"[252], these efforts were relatively successful, leading many young people down the path to far-right extremism.

Originally published in 1988, the third issue of the seventh volume of WAR provides a great deal of insight into the state of racist skinheads, in addition to the scope of Metzger's operation at the time. In an article title "What is WAR", the newsletter explains that "Since the super rich have long ago abandoned their less prosperous brothers and sisters, WAR champions the lower middle and poor White workers cause"[253]. In the mind of WAR, this cause entails "complete racial separation"[254], in addition to staunch stances that "opposes White abortion"[255] and that "the courts of our

[248] "Young and Violent", 1
[249] "Young and Violent", 1
[250] "Young and Violent", 4
[251] "Young and Violent", 4
[252] "Young and Violent", 1
[253] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[254] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[255] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7

land are not just, and primarily the rich get off while the poor fill our prisons"[256]. Additionally, the declaration states that WAR "is neither left nor right"[257] and rather that their "main concern is the well-being of our white race"[258], stating that they are not inherently "the enemy of other races unless other races join the plutocrats in a program of oppression against the White working people"[259]. A few pages later, the newsletter includes an article written by Elizabeth Sherry titled "Skin Traitor"[260], in which she lays out a clear frame of whom is and is not a proper skinhead. In her own words, the latter means those who "accept non-Whites as brothers"[261] or "freely accept"[262] people of color or those of Jewish origin.

The next page includes perhaps the most relevant article, simply titled "Aryan Skin Heads"[263] which focuses on author Wyatt Kaldenberg's claim that the growth of racist skinheads is nothing short of a "Miracle"[264] that must be capitalized on before it "slips between our fingers"[265] and falls under the influence of anti-white forces. Kaldenberg claims that a similar opportunity existed in the "Punk Rock Movement"[266], making the dubious (if not entirely false claim) that major Los-Angeles based bands such

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[256] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[257] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[258] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[259] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[260] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[261] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[262] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[263] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[264] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[265] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[266] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7

as Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys regularly played at a club "which was decorated with Nazi flags"[267], using these supposed appearances as an example of how "The punk movement was a White Power movement, until […] we allowed the Jews to steal it"[268]. Supposedly, despite living in San Francisco and writing numerous anti racist and anti-fascist songs, the lead singer of the Dead Kennedys Jello Biafra "was the most outspoken 'Nazi' in the Los Angeles punk music scene"[269] until Jewish records executives bribed him to turn towards 'anti-white' music. Thus, Kaldenberg argues, it is imperative to protect the interests of racist skinhead bands as otherwise "we deserve to lose out war against the Alien Virus."[270]

Metzger's explicit courtship of racist skinheads continues in the fourth issue of the WAR newsletter, with an expanded directory of skinhead organizations across the United States, including POWAR in Portland Oregon[271] in addition to several photos of skinheads clad in full regalia. Interestingly, in the previous issue there is a brief aside soliciting photos of Skinheads, so it is likely that these photos were submitted by skinheads themselves. The fourth issue also carries articles about skinheads in Europe, and an advertisement for a separate newsletter published by "D.A.S.H. for the purpose of unity for the purpose for survival"[272], soliciting "black and white pictures of you all, plus

[267] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[268] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[269] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[270] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[271] WAR, Issue #4 Vol. #7
[272] WAR, Issue #4 Vol. #7

a scene report on your activities of unity and battle"[273]. An unknown skinhead also claims that in lieu of joining the military you should instead "join WAR and serve on the home front and drive the animals out of our land"[274].

The third and final accessible newsletter from 1988 is more or less entirely focused on garnering more favor from skinheads, following WAR's appearance on Geraldo Rivera's daytime T.V. show. Dubbing their appearance a "smash hit"[275], this edition also marks the first archived ad for the "youth section of WHITE ARYAN RESITANCE […] directed by Tom Metzger"[276], urging those who are interested in "fighting for an area which will encompass racially conscious white people, with a racially conscious government"[277] to contact Tom's son John Metzger. Other advertisements include the and add for a taping of a Screwdriver concert, and a video tape library that has appeared in the previous two newsletter. This newsletter includes a new section featuring several comic strips, all pushing messages endorsed by WAR, and is also four pages longer than the other two publications, suggesting that Metzger's operation was rapidly gaining steam, and was able to print more pages than before.

Engaging in WAR

Engaging with WAR's messaging directly sheds light, not only into Metzger's direct connections to the Skinhead movement, but also the ideology held by those within

[273] WAR, Issue #4 Vol. #7
[274] WAR, Issue #4 Vol. #7
[275] WAR, Issue #6 Vol. #7
[276] WAR, Issue #6 Vol. #7
[277] WAR, Issue #6 Vol. #7

the subculture and the broader radical far-right, efforts to categorize the narrative amongst skinheads is possible I believe that the narrative put forth by those attempting to lead others into the skinhead movement is of particular importance. Joining such an extreme subculture exemplifies the theme of radicalization as the gain of a *new* identity, due to the extremity of the ideas expressed by those within skinhead groups, in addition to the extent to which identifying with the subculture permeates into minute details of members everyday lives, such as clothing and other aspects of a person's physical appearance.

Skinheads filter their life "experiences through a set of binary oppositions"[278], drawing strict lines of division between "normality"[279] derived from the "cultural superiority of heterosexual, White men"[280], groups, identities, or organizations that are perceived as threats to this normality are met with violence, justified "on [the] purely defensive grounds"[281] that skinheads are the last line of defense protecting white youths from being corrupted outside forces. In their minds eye "anti-poles"[282] of their identity are inherently positioned against skinheads and are irredeemable as they fall outside the essentialist binary between 'good' and 'bad'. By basing so much of their belief system on sweeping generalizations the skinhead identity is in many ways that "of [a] collective

[278] Ahahita, 145
[279] Pollard, 407
[280] Blazak, 6
[281] Pollard, 408
[282] Fangen, 39

rather than the realization of the self"[283], with narratives focusing of how 'we' must act as a defensive force.

Consistent with Hofstadter's analysis of the paranoid style, skinheads direct their ire towards "vaguely delineated villains,"[284] such as 'multiculturism', rather than specific, visible, entities such as a single government official. My review of WAR suggests the 'villains' for Tom Metzger and others during the time were, in fact, quite vague. Their mission statement doesn't create a clear tale of villainy, or list of goals, rather it is more of a hodge-podge of different complaints. Even out right stating that the organization not necessarily "left nor right"[285], and aside from typical targets such as non-whites and Jews, the statement mostly speaks of their opposition to "white abortion"[286]. Within WAR skinheads are spoken of as a "Miracle"[287], an opportunity to seized before it becomes corrupted by influences outside of far-right organizations and WAR itself. But beyond blind adulation for skinheads as an example of a pro-white "unity and battle"[288] there is little in the form of elaboration in terms of what exactly the 'battle' is for.

To me, when taking academic writings pertaining to skinheads into consideration along with writings originating from skinhead sources it becomes clear that, using my framework, the group was/is a clear example of a defensive narrative, with a particularly

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[283] Fangen, 36
[284] Hofstadter, 8
[285] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[286] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[287] WAR, Issue #3 Vol. #7
[288] WAR, Issue #4 Vol. #7

strong focus on a narrative that sows distance between those who have adopted a skinhead identity and those who have not done so. The creation of such a pronounced 'gap' between the skinhead 'in group' and the rest of society as the Other may explain skinheads' willingness to so regularly engage in acts of savage violence even though they also represent themselves as relatively empowered (i.e. not on the offensive). Even amongst the far-right, skinheads must form a separate identity centered on constant defense, which using Butler's theories provides skinheads "an infinite justification"[289] for acts of violent aggression.

Analysis

Disengagement and deradicalization from an ideology as extreme as far-right white supremacy is a dauting task, ideologies within various white supremacist movements are "typically at the core of one's self-concept and occupies a central position in one's daily life"[290] making it such that "Movement identities that do involve high levels of extreme hatred are thus likely to produce different types of personal consequences"[291], often manifesting in an "identity residual"[292] wherein despite distancing oneself from being actively involved with an extreme movement former extremists still grapple with subtle manifestations of their former ideology. A piece of media, or an interaction, might trigger sudden "flashes"[293] where "previously held beliefs

[289] Butler, 39
[290] Simi, et al. 1174
[291] Simi, et al. 1171
[292] Simi, et al. 1171
[293] Simi, et al. 1177

and feelings [are] resurfaced"[294] or "substantial relapses, where individuals fully embody a return to their previous identity"[295]. Thus, hate is liable to suddenly return to someone's consciousness, overriding successful changes in someone's identity towards a less-radical sense of self.

Former radicals have expressed some success using "self-talk as a strategy to respond to the sudden resurfacing of thoughts […] and unwanted behavior associated with their previous identity […] but they had mixed results"[296], making it appear that returning to a non-radical identity is a daunting task, and more difficult to accomplish for those in the far-extremes of ideology. Interviews with former skinheads has revealed that most often there were spurred to disengage from the movement via "a number of overlapping reasons"[297], such as "birth of a child […] burnout […] [and] disillusionment"[298]. Many former skinheads have spoken of "their disengagement as a process that unfolded over an extensive period of time"[299], aided by "moving […] far away from the rest of the violent extremist group"[300] or via "support from others"[301] outside of the extremist group, generally seeking effective support from those who they "on one hand, the formers [extremists] respected and trusted, and on the other hand, were

[294] Simi, et al. 1177
[295] Simi, et al. 1178
[296] Simi, et al. 1180
[297] Gaudette et al. 1780
[298] Guadette, et al. 1780
[299] Guadette, et al. 1782
[300] Guadette, et al. 1782
[301] Guadette, et al. 1782

those who would not criticize them about their radical views and instead would simply listen to them and communicate"[302]. Other common themes from interviewees included "interacting with coworkers from different races […] away from movement adherents"[303] and building social ties outside of the group.

Therefore, it follows that that intervention is generally most effective when it is not reliant on self-reflection, and is instead paired with building a network outside of an extremist group, making it such that deradicalization strategies must be measured, centering on forming a rapport with someone who is receptive to, if not actively interested in, disengagement and eventually deradicalization. The common theme amongst former skinheads that their deradicalization process was measured and did not happen overnight supports my claim that radicalization is a manifestation of a gain of an extreme identity, rather than the loss of a non-extreme identity. The appeal of the "defensive" aspect of the skinhead narrative suggests that in this case, it may make sense to engage the person's commitment to being a helper and protector, while challenging the otherizing binaries of the narrative. This highlights the distinct positioning of Metzger and racist skinheads within the context of the common theme of narrative amongst political actors.

[302] Guadette, et al. 1782
[303] Guadette, et al. 1784

Points of Similarity & Difference

The two case studies of extremist movements above fell into the categories of offensive and defensive respectively. In the pursuit of strengthening my own analysis, it is critical to now directly compare the men's rights movement and the American skinhead subculture, with an emphasis on each movement's narrative, identity, and approach to engaging with the outside world. From this, I aim to gain a greater understanding of what exactly leads a movement to adopt a specific narrative approach, and the extent to which said approach may require specific deradicalization tactics. The structure of this section will follow a format of introducing where the two case studies converge and/or diverge, followed by an analysis of how this may relate to deradicalization, and concluding with a discussion of broader implications of the two case studies.

At the core of both movements discussed in my case studies is a near constant engagement with a warped perception of the Other, to the point that I would classify the behavior exhibited by extremists as a system of Othering that is grounded what the dialogical approach to deradicalization defines as the shift towards an internal monologue. As explained by Da Silva and others "radicalization can be approached as a form of monologue"[304], contrasting with non-radical actors who are willing to engage in an internal and external practice of engaging with voices that may challenge someone's narrative identity. In such a monologue, input and exchange with other people and their ideas is closed off near entirely, on the grounds that when engaging in such extreme

[304] Da Silva, et al. 449

cognitive closure, the distance between an extremist and the Other grows considerably. To extrapolate on this, I would like to briefly return to Judith Butler and their writings about narrative and identity.

Butler posits that throughout your life you are engaging in a system of interaction, during which there is a constant struggle to recognize yourself and ensure that you are being recognized by other people. Because of this, acting ethically and without impeding on the well-being of the other human beings requires the "conditions of suspended judgement"[305], as "prior to judging an Other, we must be in some relation to him or her, and this relation will ground and inform the ethical judgements"[306]. Therefore, it stands to reason that if the suspension of judgement is inverted, and replaced with the imposition of judgment-such as the ascription of motive-an ethical framework grounded in compassion and recognition of the Other's validity is replaced with a system of ethics is grounded in negativity. The creation of an ethical framework that allows for "an infinite way to rename its aggression as suffering"[307], requires an engagement with the Other that eschews assumptions of benevolence in favor of assumptions of ill-intent on the behalf of the Other. Butler refers to instances of this as "an act that not only 'gives up' on the one condemned, but [also] seeks to inflict a violence upon the condemned in the name of 'ethics'""[308].

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[305] Butler, 30
[306] Butler, 30
[307] Butler, 39
[308] Butler, 31

It appears that this system of othering is enhanced by the creation of social, emotional, or spatial distance between those within an extreme group, and those who are the targets for their hatred. This explains why common sources of deradicalization for those within the MRA space include "a recognition that […] [they] were either hurting themselves or others"[309]: said recognition relies on acknowledging the Other's validity as an entity on equal footing as the individual, shifting internal narrative away from a monologue rooted in judgement of the Other-in favor of a dialogue grounded in the shared recognition of the validity of each other's experience, identity, and ideology.

Areas of Convergence

One key thematic element shared by both the MRA and American Skinhead movements is found within the general rule that once within a social movement, someone enters a state of "constant interaction"[310] amongst others inside of the group, and their own constant need to create sense of how events in their own lives have led them to their present state of being. In the case of the modern MRA movement many of these interactions took place on web forums, wherein the sharing of "subjective experiences"[311] leads to users becoming "increasingly angry"[312] at women, feminists, and 'social justice warriors'. A phenomena occurrent across social movements, wherein "actors construct biographical narratives"[313], commonly hinging on their involvement with the movement

[309] Thorburn, 16
[310] Barassi & Giungi, 124
[311] Eddinton, et al. 132
[312] Eddition, et al. 132
[313] Barassi & Zamponi, 593

acting as natural progression formed by their sense of persecution. Although the peak of American skinheads predated the proliferation and widespread access to the internet, a similar interplay of a shared subjectivity took place. Across the three issues of WAR discussed in my second case study there is a repeated sharing of grievances, in addition for calls for assemblies of those sharing the same beliefs. The narrative of skinheads being "big brothers"[314] coming to the rescue of white youth ties into this, as it creates a broad biographical narrative where forces targeting young white men pushed them towards needing the protection offered by skinhead organizations.

Both groups also share "narratives of imperilment"[315], and general "notions of betrayal"[316] in addition to a general fear of erasure at the hands of an adversarial group. For both groups betrayal is broadly defined as deviations from proper social hierarchies. For radical anti-feminists, this creates a binary between the red pill and "The opposite of red pill truth"[317], i.e. the 'blue pill' which shields those who have not engaged in the shared narrative amongst members of the manosphere from seeing "the undeniable facts"[318] of reality. A similar binary exists for those with the 'white power' space, as those who do not share the identity are established as "negations […] the anti-poles of what

[314] Blazak, 10
[315] Marcks & Pawlez, 10
[316] Marcks & Pawlez, 69
[317] "What is neomasculinity", 10
[318] What is neomasculinity", 10

right-wing skinheads want to be"[319]. In both cases this creates an intense in and out group dynamic, furthering the distance between members, and the generalized Other.

Actively created firm lines of division between both those inside, and those outside of, the respective movement allows for further judgement, villainization, and a negative perception of society at large, allowing for the narrative framing of those within the movement being actively victimized. As the divide furthers, it becomes all the more important to become detached from broader society.

Areas of Extension

The two case studies are also comparable in terms of their narrative structures, in particular their vision of the Other being an antagonist towards those within the movement, and each offers an example of a form of narrative. All of these connections can be leveraged for deradicalization efforts. Throughout the course of these analysis, I will also reintroduce concepts discussed in the opening portion of my thesis, using said well-established concepts to further frame my own argument(s).

Valizadeh's views on the Other are that of a subversive force that has upended the ideal structure of society, within his mindset the Other is positioned as the antithesis of the Red Pill. Therefore, the adversary is not only feminists, or women in general, but also those who are still 'blue pilled' and are therefore resistant to efforts to reinstate the patriarchy. For Valizadeh engaging with the Other is comprised of creating a 'culture war' as sowed by Gamergate. A layer of further tension emerges when you consider that

[319] Fangen, 39

Valizadeh builds a majority of his rhetoric around the reclamation of natural order, and—in his own words—the 'Return of Kings', creating a narrative structure that readily taps into dissatisfaction amongst men, amplifying their complaints of disenfranchisement, and in the process further distancing them from mainstream discourse.

Transaction arises, in part, due to Valizadeh and other MRA's roots within the pickup artist subculture. While these writings display a clear distaste, if not outright disgust, towards women, there is still a desire to engage with members of the opposite sex, albeit in the pursuit of physical gratification, making it such that, to some extent, interacting with the Other is a necessity in so far as it falls under the strict parameters of exchange. Conversely, aggressively engaging with the Other comes about when attempting to work towards the 'greater goal' of neomasculinity. In these instances (such as the culture war) the Other is not to be met with anything short of derision. Perhaps to explain these two seemingly distinct forms of interaction, women may be categorized into the separate camps, potentially on the basis of their physical appearance, or the extent to which they openly espouse views contrary to the red pill.

On the other hand, for Metzger and skinheads the engagement with the Other lacks the same duality, in order for there to be such potent rhetoric that paints skinheads and those affiliated with WAR as 'warriors' there must also be an pressing threat, to the point that physical acts of violence are justifiable. Thus, the narrative Other exists purely as an antagonist and all engagement with said being(s) operates within a narrow arena of acceptable behavior. Creating such an extreme distance that it is possible to create a

comprehensive internal monologue without the contradictions that come to light via interacting with those of differing identities and ideologies.

Importance & Illustration

The importance, and overall narrative surrounding the Other also informs the shape of the narrative and therefore the category in which it falls under. From Hofstadter's perspective, if those outside the confines of the movement are portrayed as actively work to gain control of a society then the narrative is one of possession, as the society has yet to be 'lost'; if the narrative details a need to retake society from the hands of an opposing group, then it is one of dispossession. My narrative categories add an enhanced focus on the line of reasoning that is justifiable via the narratives structure, and placement of those within the movement as they relate to broader society and victimization. The first case study determined that for those within the manosphere the coupling of a general sense of dispossession with rhetoric of aggressively reclaiming a position of power placed the movement into the category of being an offensive narrative. While the second case study revealed that skinhead's sense that they were acting out of a need to protect the white race and defend the 'natural order' of society rendered the group to fall under the category of being a defensive narrative.

Offensive and defensive narratives separate themselves partially on the grounds established by Hofstadter, but also on the supposed nature of the Other as it relates to internal identity and the search for coherence within relationships between the self and the world at large. My case studies indicated that this was readily ascertainable when

considering rhetoric of a given radical group. However, these indicators can be unpacked further when considering the differing nature of interaction that follows each line of reasoning and the micro-culture that springs from how interactions are contextualized. As outlined earlier, both groups discussed within my case studies operate under differing 'rules of engagement' when dealing with those outside of their niche, and these tensions that arise from engaging in those interactions.

Butler argues that "the absence of narrative"[320] is often " a loss of what one never had"[321]: the effort to find "some lost link"[322] throughout a person's life trajectory as it relates to an internal narrative often leads to a subject which "cannot give an account of its inability to narrate […] unknowing about who it is"[323], and thus to different means to "cover over the breakage […] that is constitutive of the 'I' through a narrative means that quite forcefully binds the elements together […] as if the break could be mended"[324].

Butler's analysis can be broken down and applied to my case studies in a number of different ways, first and foremost what may draw someone into an extreme movement-and by extension-what may draw someone out. A narrative thread "fall[ing] apart"[325] could be traced to traditional the "affiliative […] risk factors […] economic factors […] social factors […] and psychological factors"[326] that are generally included under the

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[320] Butler, 35
[321] Butler, 35
[322] Butler, 35
[323] Butler, 35
[324] Butler, 36
[325] Butler, 35
[326] Da Silva, 445

purview of happenings that may push someone into an extreme ideology. Someone's internal narrative and engagement with the Other may be made discordant by the presence of these external factors; this explains how these factors can create opening for radicalization, as a means to "cover over the breakage," without directly explaining radicalization. Similarly, testimonies of former extremists testimonies of former members of radical groups within the manosphere spoke on internal fractures within their own narratives, such as being drawn into the space via struggles to appropriately process and "respond to romantic rejection"[327], and generally wishing to perform masculinity in a manner that is in line with the archetypical 'alpha male', spurring a process that leads to a desire to seek spaces where they would be affirmed in their disaffection while also being offered a solution to their own struggles. When a sense of life narrative is disrupted, one may seek, to paraphrase Butler, to reconcile the reality that their desired 'I' did not resemble how they operated in practice, especially when engaging with the 'other side' of the narrative.

Once one is able to understand the impact of a constant exchange between narrative, interaction, and ideology that takes place during the radicalization process allows for further clarification of the nature of an extreme school of thought. While the designations of 'possession' and 'dispossession' are useful when considering movements at the broadest level, they are limited in their lack of specificity of how a radical narrative interacts with an extremist's sense of self and interpretation of the outside world. My

[327] Thorburn, 8

categorizations expand on these ideas via the addition of further nuance, and further focus on the individual. My addition of nuance comes about on several fronts, centering on the contribution of a framing device for the appeal of radical movements that extends beyond the traditional 'risk factors' often used by those working in counter-radical spaces. Through this it is possible to create an approach to deradicalization that can be tailored to specific movements and people within them. In addition, my 'offensive' and 'defensive' categories find novelty because of their integration of social theory that expands beyond current academic literature. Via a theory that incorporates a variety of different scholar's ideas, many of whom who have yet to be applied within the parameters of discussions of radical politics, radicalization, and deradicalization.

Closing

For me to further illustrate this, I would like to briefly return to the second case study's discussions of the allure of joining a skinhead organization, and what spurs someone towards leaving such a rightly knit community of extremists. Metzger and others attempting to bring young people into the fold was inextricably intertwined with identity, hinging on the creation of a perception of the world that would filter all external input into two simple categories; those wishing to protect, and those wishing to harm. He offered a powerful but simple narrative that held cache due to how it repositioned shifts within the broader culture, reframing potential disruptions to many people's internal dialogue as direct threats. For example, multiculturism's introduction to the K-12 education systems was central to the 'pitch' given to skinheads, who were comprised

primarily of those whose narrative and interaction with the world were subject to the most amount of change. WAR and its affiliates offered of an alternative narrative where you could join other "plain boys from the working-class who enjoy drinking beer"[328] unified by the nature of a shared narrative and engagement with the Other. For skinheads the exact physical manifestation of the Other was irrelevant as long as they were positioned as the antithesis their own identity. Metzger and WAR's diatribes against a slate ranging from the societal elites, to abortion, and to people of color and Jewish people was appealing because it further affirmed the original narrative held by members before entering the fray.

My two case studies, and their revelations as to the roles of internal narrative and exchange with the Other allow for a contribution to the study and implementation of deradicalization through their connections to the emerging dialogical approach, supporting said school's focus on each radical's shifts in internal dialogue. My offensive and defensive sub-narrative categories have proven to be novel because of how they offer a view into what may appeal to someone falling into an extreme group, how interactions within the group are shaped by internal narrative and identity, and the extent to which-positive-interactions with those vilified by the given group's narrative and the 'outside world' may serve as a potent tool to draw people out of a world of extremity.

Based off of my own work, and information gathered within my case studies, it is reasonable to surmise that the nature of a narrative and the category that it falls in to is

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[328] Fangen, 35

determined by the extent to which the perception of an offensive or defensive narrative hinges on the creation of mental or spatial distance from the Other. Categorization becomes relevant on these grounds, in addition to how the narrative portrays those within the extreme movement in relation to their role and what is justifiable from their positioning. My first case study positioned an oppositional relationship between the 'in group' of the manosphere, and the generalized Other of the 'blue pill', particularly women. Advocacy within the realm of offensive tactics arose from a narrative detailing how the West had been lost and therefore must be reclaimed. On the other hand, my case study focusing on American skinheads revealed that their narrative was derived from an overwhelming sense that their position was being threatened by shifts in society, leading to a defensive narrative-as they operated off an understanding that they currently were still in a position of power that needed to be protected by any means necessary.

An approach primarily grounded in dialogical and identity-based concepts allows not only for a better understanding of what is alluring about the groups discussed in my case studies, but also what may be the most effective strategy to draw an extremist out of one of the groups discussed up to this point of my thesis, illustrated by common themes across former radicals. First, beginning with testimonies made by former members of the manosphere, the pull away from the radical ideology was spurred by recognizing the harm their ideas can cause others, concurrent with becoming aware of "some flaws in the logics of these belief-systems"[329]. In my mind, becoming aware of the 'flaws' within a

[329] Thorburn, 17

red-pill ideology may be enhanced by interacting with those who are demonized by the ideology, because, in order to feel any remorse about hurting "themselves or others"[330] someone has to recognize the validity of the Other themselves. Within a radical red-pill framework, the Other is viewed as an adversary and therefore if the harm of an Other is justifiable-if not morally righteous. An opening and shift towards back in the direction of a dialogue that the input of the views and concept of those outside of oneself an of internal narrative is required for recognition to take place. Those who were once members of a skinhead group also similarly mentioned that "interacting with coworkers from different races"[331] was an important part of their deradicalization, further suggesting that the recognition of the Other's validity is a key step in ending cognitive closure and building a new non-radical identity.

Where these case studies diverged was the efficacy and ease of methods such as self-reflection and direct challenges to an active extremist's identity. While understandings an ideology's lack of logic in practice was reported on those who managed to turn away from the manosphere, those wishing to leave skinhead groups reported "self-talk"[332] and introspection as having "mixed results"[333]. This could be due to the sheer virulence of skinhead ideas, as mentioned in the second case study those who had been previously involved with groups that "involve[d] high levels of extreme

[330] Thorburn, 16
[331] Guadette, et al. 1784
[332] Simi, et al. 1180
[333] Simi, et al. 1180

hatred"[334] are far more likely to deal with "relapses, where individuals fully embody a return to their previous identity"[335], making self-talk far less effective because a skinheads sense of self becomes more deeply intertwined with radicalism than those believing in less extreme views. When factoring in a dialogical approach, this means that it more difficult to end a state of cognitive closure, as closure is an explicit component of a radical's identity. Therefore, it follows that deradicalization is far more challenging when directed at those within the fringe of offensive or defensive ideas.

Internal resistance to shifting narratives and building a new non-extreme dialogue makes it such that attempts to remove someone from an extreme group requires a narrative based strategy. In lieu of a one-size fits all approach based of addressing risk factors, those wishing to combat extreme movements must instead work to address the narrative held within the group. A failure to do so may lead to less effective results because it does not address the distortion that is taking place inside of someone's own identity. Former skinheads have reported that while "support from others"[336] is effective, the outsider providing support must be trustworthy, but also capable of communication that "would not criticize them about their radical views"[337] and instead establish a line of communication was not based on judgement-but rather grounded in building a rapport; this is consistent with what the label "defensive" tells us, namely that a desire to protect

[334] Simi, et al. 1171
[335] Simi, et al. 1178
[336] Guadette et al. 1782
[337] Guadette, et al. 1782

and be protected is part of what leads people into the movement in the first place. It appears that in order to disrupt an internal monologue you must first engage in an external dialogue, slowly exposing a radical who wishes to leave a group to differing narratives without directing challenging or criticizing their own identity-as caustic as the identity may be.

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