



Literature Review on Islamophobia and Nationalism in the USA

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This literature review seeks to provide an overview of significant developments related to populism, nativism, Islamophobia, and white nationalism in the US context. Starting with the early 2000's era, particularly 9/11 and its aftermath, it follows major trends in these issues up until the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

Historical background

As of the most recent United States Census conducted in 2010, the racial/ethnic breakdown of the US population is as follows: 76.5% White, 13.4% Black, 18.3% Hispanic or Latino, 5.6% Asian, as well as other smaller categories including those of mixed race descent. With a large range of races, ethnicities, and religions represented within the United States population, issues of racism and nativism have always held a prominent place within the United States political imaginary.

Rise of Islamophobia in the US, context before and after 9/11

Though much of the post-9/11 era has been labelled as the dawn of a new age of Islamophobia and discrimination towards Muslims in the West, many scholars have pointed to the roots of Islamophobia in America as stretching back even further into the 20th century. Love (2009) explains that Islamophobia in the United States has its roots in the political and media climate of the 1970s, where images of Middle Eastern “oil sheikhs” or Iranian terrorists were prevalent. Such stereotypes and attitudes were frequently referenced in discussions of foreign policy developments involving the United States and Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

It was this historical context and political climate that led to the development of the racialization of Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11. The attacks of September 11th, 2001 triggered a new wave of discrimination, hatred, and violence towards Muslims and Middle Eastern Americans in the United States. In addition to changing cultural dynamics surrounding Muslims and Muslim identities in the US, there were more instances of hate crimes, often in the form of physical violence or verbal abuse. In light of the drastic increase in hate crimes targeting Arabs and Muslims after 9/11, studies show that terrorist attacks can indeed incite retaliation against marginalized populations and can leave them more susceptible to discriminatory and violent behavior (Disha et al., 2011).

The post-9/11 era also left American Muslims susceptible to increased surveillance and suspicion at the hands of law enforcement officials. There was the passing of legislation such

as the USA PATRIOT Act², commonly referred to as the Patriot Act, which was an anti-terrorism measure that allowed a significant increase in the government surveillance of citizens, disproportionately affecting Muslims or individuals of Middle Eastern descent. This was a major component of President George W. Bush's 'War on Terror,' which sought to seek out existing terror threats and to prevent future terror attacks or the development of terrorist groups. The War on Terror also brought along with it an increasingly charged political atmosphere, with President George W. Bush coining terms such as the "axis of evil" in reference to the threat of Islamic terror (Merskin, 2004). The term was first used in President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address, where he named a list of foreign states that he believed were a part of this phenomenon, including Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. Merskin (2004) writes that

By the time of this important address, the enemy was fully constructed, infused by more than 20 years of media and popular culture images equating Muslims and Arabs as terrorists. The United States was firmly positioned, at least in the minds of the Bush Administration, as a global caretaker supported by faith in God. (Merskin, 2004, p. 171).

These nations would later become incorporated into President Donald Trump's 2016 executive order, which proclaimed a 'travel ban' on foreign nationals from these countries, and more, citing similar security concerns. (Soussi, 2017).

Experiences of Muslims and Muslim Youth in the Post-9/11 Era

Along with the War on Terror and its legislative policies came the "securitization" of Muslim American issues in both the American political and cultural mainstream. Muslim Americans increasingly came to be associated with issues of terrorism and national security, along with "the idea of Islam as a threat to American security, to American national interest, and its way of life" (Saghaye-Biria, 2012, p. 510). This discourse manifested itself in the perpetuation of the idea that everyday Americans must be protected from the threat of terrorism both from abroad but also domestically from potentially 'radicalized' Muslim Americans. (Saghaye-Biria, 2012). The ramifications of such surveillance policies and security discourses were at the time, and continue to be, significant for Muslims in the United States. With Muslim Americans being pitted as a potential threat to American security, they experienced increased scrutiny from law enforcement as well as racial profiling. Maira (2004) points out how

After the terrorist attacks, popular feeling was that 'somebody had to pay' domestically, as well as internationally, to restore the illusion of national security for Americans. The groups whose civil rights were considered expendable were two populations who historically have had little power to combat infringement on their civil rights: immigrants and Arab Americans. (Maira, 2004, p. 219).

² For the full text of the USA PATRIOT ACT, see here <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-107hr3162enr/pdf/BILLS-107hr3162enr.pdf>

Thus, consequent examinations of the experiences of American Muslims in the wake of such increased surveillance after 9/11 found significant changes in their social behaviors and emotional responses (O'Connor and Jahan, 2014). Muslim American respondents in a study reported feeling increased anxiety and being more likely to modify their social behaviors. As well as finding that respondents reported feeling anxious at displaying their Muslim identity in public, many also reported anger at having to feel at risk when displaying their Muslim identities. (O'Connor and Jahan, 2014)

Islamophobic and discriminatory depictions of Muslims carried on well into the post-9/11 era, as “radical Islamic terrorism” became an increasingly visible and feared phenomenon in mainstream media. News coverage of terrorist attacks that took place in the years after 9/11 frequently referenced Muslims and Islam (Powell, 2011). Depictions of Muslims as being a threat, being implicated in high-profile terrorist attacks, or organizing into “terror cells” were common. Additionally, these depictions of Muslims were often pitted against an image of a White Christian America under threat by the presence of Muslims. (Powell, 2011) In general, US media outlets were often, and continue to be, perpetrators of Islamophobic rhetoric and were influential in promoting stereotypes or embracing negative generalizations (Barkdull et al., 2011). With an increasingly hostile cultural environment, as well as the prevalence of discriminatory policy and legislation in the mainstream American public, “Islam has become synonymous with terrorism, patriarchy, misogyny, and anti-American sentiment” (Selod, 2015, p. 77). Additionally, interviews with Muslim Americans found that they were faced with increased scrutiny, seen as a security threat, or often labelled as being “unAmerican.” The author concludes that “the ‘de-Americanisation’ of Muslims because of their religious signifiers constitutes a form of racialisation involving maintaining racial and ethnic boundaries of social citizenship” (Selod, 2015, p. 88).

These ideological shifts in the meaning of American identity, and its subsequent clash with Muslim identities, resulted in a radical shift in the daily experience of Muslim Americans and Muslim youth. Maira (2004) looks at understandings of citizenship of South Asian Muslim immigrant youth, considering how they “grapple with the scapegoating of Muslims, the demonization of Islam, and the fear of surveillance and deportation” (Maira, 2004, p. 221).

After September 11, some of the South Asian immigrant youth, particularly the Muslim boys, felt targeted by other high school youth. Accusations of ‘You’re a terrorist’ or ‘You’re a bin Laden’ enter into what might otherwise be just an outbreak of youthful aggression among boys, but which is now a part of a national discourse about Islam in the U.S. The South Asian Muslim boys, and girls, feel this acutely: does this mean they are the enemy, and how can they live as such? (Maira, 2004, p. 224)

Maira also explores strategies and understandings employed by the interviewed Muslim youth, including seeing themselves as sharing an experience of marginalization along with groups such as African Americans, or choosing to participate in community events and demonstrations in order to express their viewpoints; after an anti-Muslim discrimination incident at a local public high school, Muslim students took the stage at a school event to condemn racism, as

well as to condemn the War on Terrorism. The author cites this as an interesting example of how “Muslim immigrant youth are being visibly drawn into race politics and civil rights debates in the local community” (Maira, 2004, p. 226).

Immigration and debates over citizenship in the post-9/11 era

Along with the racialization of and increased discrimination towards Muslims in the post-9/11 era, there have been marked discussions regarding the intersections of race, religion, and belonging or ‘Americanness.’ Johnson and Frombgen (2009) underline how the American nation has always been one based on ethnicity or race, a definition which was challenged by immigration and changing demographics, both throughout US history and in the present day. The authors point to the widespread discrimination towards and racialisation of Arabs and Muslims in the post-9/11 sphere as “reproducing political contestation over race in a new and combustible way” and as intensifying the disenfranchisement of groups of color from the notion of American acceptance and inclusivity (Johnson and Frombgen, 2009, p. 650). Other scholars have similarly noted how “the struggle for citizenship in America has, therefore, been overwhelmingly a demand for inclusion in the polity, an effort to break down excluding barriers to recognition, rather than an aspiration to civic participation as a deeply involving activity” (Shlkar, 1995, p. 3). American citizenship has a history of “exclusions and inclusions, in which xenophobia, racism, religious bigotry, and fear of alien conspiracies have played their part” (Shlkar, 1995, p. 4). Bloemraad (2000) echoes this notion by exploring how immigration challenges traditional notions of citizenship. The very definition of an immigrant is linked to the concept of citizenship, as someone from elsewhere who moves to a new place and becomes an outsider. Immigrant denotes outsider status, while today, citizenship is linked to membership in the nation-state. With this comes the conflation of nationality and citizenship, which has meant that large-scale migrations have created challenges to citizenship in nation-states with relatively homogenous populations. In addition to legal questions, immigration raises existential questions about American citizenship and identity. Some view immigration as a threat to the collective culture of a nation-state or national community, which has meant that in the United States, the debate around citizenship and immigration is “subsumed within the field of minority politics” (Bloemraad, 2000, p. 27).

Studies have tried to account for the increasing xenophobic and white-centric rhetoric prevalent in the American political climate. These debates over identity haven taken place in regards to the issue of immigration, often times centered around Latin Americans, into the United States. Hajnal and Rivera (2014) try to understand if and how immigration and increasing racial diversity are shaping the partisan politics of individual white Americans. They find that whites’ views on immigration and Latinos are related to their core political identities and vote choices, and that whites with more negative views towards immigration and Latinos are also less likely to favor the Democratic Party. Importantly, they find that immigration, Latinos and party, in this case the Democratic Party, are linked in the minds of voters which is a useful tool for understanding the ways in which questions of race, ethnicity, and citizenship have been inextricably linked within policy debates in the American political sphere. This

sentiment was echoed earlier in a study (Ayers et al., 2009) which asks “is immigration a racial issue?” and finds that aversion to Latinos is related to having more restrictionist attitudes about legal and Mexican immigration. Thus, attitudes about immigration may be more motivated by racial resentments or beliefs than by any other considerations. In addition to immigration debates being tied to questions of race, Kilty and Haymes (2000) delve further into the discriminatory and misrepresentative nature of the rhetoric surrounding immigration policy. The authors point out how discussions of immigration are often riddled with misconceptions about the number of immigrants who come to the US illegally, the public benefit or welfare programs available to immigrants, and the ways in which the social welfare system benefits immigrants. Thus, there is a general misunderstanding regarding the public-sector impact of immigrants which results from

understating tax collection from immigrants, overstating service costs of immigrants, ignoring the economic benefits of immigrant consumer spending and immigrant-owned businesses, overstating job displacement costs ... overstating the size of the immigrant population, particularly the undocumented immigrant population (Kilty and Haymes, 2000, p. 15).

The issue of immigration policy has continued to be a battleground upon which questions of race, ethnicity and American citizenship have been raised. Similar to the highly politicized issue of Latin American migrants, the topic of Middle Eastern refugees from predominantly Muslim countries such as Syria has also become the topic of heated debates. Nagel (2016) explores the discussions and debates surrounding refugee population resettlement in a small town in the American South. He demonstrates how the question of refugees has become highly politicized and how discussion of the issue frequently delves into Islamophobic rhetoric. Additionally, he argues that the refugee question becomes a matter of “who are we” or “us vs. them”, raising fundamental questions of who can be defined as an American and who is worthy of receiving United States citizenship. The author also underlines that refugee resettlement programs in the past were considered to be a low-profile issue but have now become high-profile, in light of an increasingly Islamophobic and xenophobic American political climate.

The links between Islamophobia against American Muslims, discrimination towards Middle Eastern Americans, and racially-charged discussions about immigration have also been explored by scholars. Rivera (2014) investigates how widespread representations of Islamophobia in the United States has also led to the racial profiling and targeting of Latinos in the US. The authors consider the prevalence and significance of a Brown Threat which “suggests that after 11 September 2001, a new dimension of ethnic and racial profiling was added to the concept of US American otherness” and wherein non-white and non-black bodies, in this case Latino and Middle Eastern individuals, are both seen as foreign threats to the United States (Rivera, 2014, p. 47). The author discusses how this dimension of otherness manifests itself in security policy, specifically in interactions near and along the US border. It is within these immigration contexts and environments wherein racial profiling is prevalent; “the Brown Threat suggests that if the bodies of the aliens were obviously white or black they would be

able to not only pass as US Americans much more easily, but also they could pass through borders without arousing suspicion” (Rivera, 2014, p. 59). The author argues that to be “brown(ed) is also to be connected with the construction of the Middle Eastern Muslim terrorist in the West and historically this means ... this figure is the ultimate threatening, ‘illegal alien’” (Rivera, 2014, p. 61). The conflation of Latinos and Middle Eastern individuals, as well as their mutual association with illegal or dangerous immigration has also been echoed by the Trump administration. In 2018, in response to the ‘migrant caravan’ of Central American migrants approaching the US-Mexico border, Vice President Mike Pence famously warned that “‘it’s inconceivable there are not people of Middle Eastern descent’ making their way to the border (Wise, 2018). This quote echoed President Donald Trump’s warning that there might be “unknown Middle Easterners” traveling in the caravan, attempting to enter the United States (Wise, 2018). Both of these sentiments echo the notion of a Brown Threat which conflates Latino and Middle Eastern individuals, and which treats them as threats to the security of the United States.

Rise of Donald Trump and American populism

The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016 triggered a new rise of populism, white nativism and chauvinism, with many voters being drawn in by racist, xenophobic, and generally discriminatory political rhetoric. However, the prevalence of such nativism in the American political sphere is by no means a novel phenomenon. Gerteis and Goolsby (2005) examine the case of American populism, pointing out how it employs the label of ‘American’ as an identity term which seems on the surface to be a civic identity and thus not racially or ethnically biased, but upon closer look reveals itself to be exclusive to white/Anglo-Saxon citizens. In doing so, they reveal the ethnic or racial exclusions that are apparent in both populist discourse but also within general conceptions of American citizenship and identity. They make note that historically, specifically during the Southern Populist movement of the late nineteenth century, American populism explicitly claimed to include multiple races and groups within a political coalition; it aimed to mobilize an American identity which unified multiple cultures and backgrounds against a common cause of anti-elitism. However, in practice, American populism invoked the exclusion of a racial/ethnic American Other, employing an “us vs. them” mentality through a reliance on xenophobic rhetoric. In the face of increasing immigration to the United States in the late 19th century, the distinctions between the American worker and the ‘foreign other’ become more central. Thus, the scapegoating of foreigners or ethnic Others in populist rhetoric has persisted throughout American political history. It is with this historical context that we can understand Trump as a populist leader. Using content analysis of Trump’s campaign speeches, Oliver and Rahn (2016) find that Trump frequently employs rhetoric that is characteristic of populists; his speeches are simplistic and also contain anti-elitist and collectivist themes. The authors then use this evidence to point out the distinctiveness of populism as a mechanism of political mobilization. Patenaude (2019) continues this discussion of the historical context of populism in America but puts it in tandem with the state of Trumpism in the present day. He argues that the current ‘wave’ of populism is not merely a temporary resurgence of the phenomenon but rather a continuation of populist and anti-elitist sentiment that has been prevalent within the United

States political sphere since the dawn of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s. The author refers to this persistent phenomenon as ‘Modern American Populism’ which pits white, rural, and poor working-class voters as the ‘in-group’ against an ‘out-group’ comprised of elites, immigrants, and members of the political establishment (Oliver and Rahn, 2016).

Just as we can draw parallels between Trump’s populist rhetoric and the historical tradition of populist political sentiment in the United States, the nativist tone of Trump’s rhetoric can be traced back to his past political statements which occurred in the years before his campaign. Trump was a key figure of the Birther Movement which arose in response to the presidency of Barack Obama in 2009 and sought to question the American citizenship of Obama. Hughey (2012) argues that the debate over Barack Obama’s birth certificate, or whether he could be an American, was actually representative of a larger debate over definitions of Americanness or white American citizenship. He argues that the debates reveal “the sustained conflation of citizenship with an ideal or hegemonic form of white racial identity” (Hughey, 2012, p. 163).

Trump and Islam

We can see how debates over race, ethnicity and belonging in the post 9/11 era have carried over and been elaborated upon in the Trump populist era. Trump’s attitudes towards Muslims and Islam has been marked by distrust, discrimination as well as frequent use of Islamophobic rhetoric. Patel and Levinson-Waldman (2017) find that the Trump administration has frequently referenced anti-Muslim rhetoric in its statements, as well as made policy specifically targeting Muslim communities in America. The authors argue that the Trump administration is only building upon the groundwork set by the administration of President George W. Bush, specifically his policies after the 9/11 attacks. Two central tenets of Trump’s time in office have been his reliance on Islamophobic rhetoric and his specifically discriminatory policies against Muslims. His January 2017 executive order,³ also known as the Travel Ban, seeks to ban US entry for foreign nationals from a handful of countries deemed to be uncooperative or unsafe to US interests, claiming that

In order to protect Americans, the United States must ensure that those admitted to this country do not bear hostile attitudes toward it and its founding principles. The United States cannot, and should not, admit those who do not support the Constitution, or those who would place violent ideologies over American law. In addition, the United States should not admit those who engage in acts of bigotry or hatred (including “honor” killings, other forms of violence against women, or the persecution of those who practice religions different from their own) or those who would oppress Americans of any race, gender, or sexual orientation. (The White House)

³ See here for the full link to the text of the Executive Order <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states/>

While the ban has faced resistance in courts and has seen a number of revisions, the initial iteration of the ban listed seven majority-Muslim countries, including Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

Christian, Evangelicals, and Conservatives under Trump

The Trump era has also ushered in a revitalized notion of white American identity, which is marked by its political conservatism, xenophobic rhetoric, as well as a strong adherence to Christianity. Trump and his specific brand of populism elaborates upon a rigorous and long-standing culture of political conservatism in the United States. According to Blee and Creasap (2010), US conservative movements are typically supportive of anti-collectivist economic policies or so-called free market values, patriotism, traditionalism, and strong religiosity. Conservatives also emphasize the importance of private life, especially in regards to individual freedoms and freedom from state interference. Modern conservatism today can be traced back to the popular “New Right” movement in the 1970s, which emerged at a time “when the right had little electoral or cultural influence” and attracted “fragmented groups of free market enthusiasts, libertarians, anticommunists, and social conservatives” (Blee and Creasap, 2010, p. 272). The New Right movement is important for understanding how conservatism has developed into a cultural phenomenon in the United States, and thus its prominence and authority in American politics today.

Culture was a crucial factor in the New Right’s efforts to mobilize activists and set a conservative agenda. Its music, family events, computer games, and amusement parks reached deep into mainstream America, bringing new social groups into politics. So did its media empire, which began with radio and extended to book publishing houses, bookstores, televangelist superstar preachers, and Internet social networking sites. (Blee and Creasap, 2010, p. 272-273).

American conservatism is similarly composed of political, social, and cultural factors, and its influence extends to many areas of policy, social life, in addition to religious circles. Conservative entities, whether they be religious figures or businesses, promote conservative culture through books, media, televangelist preachers, establishing an online presence and more.

In the realm of conservative politics and policy-making, some point to connections between white racism and conservatism. The conservative movement in the United States has organized its agenda by invoking a conservative culture and mobilizing against enemies. Scholars have pointed to how some conservative politicians can rely on racially coded messages to mobilize voters or to invoke exclusionary images of a white national community (Ansell 2001). They rely on a rhetoric which contains highly visible “enemies,” including immigrants, liberals, welfare recipients, feminists, and Muslim terrorists (Blee and Creasap, 2010). However, it is important to consider that nonwhite voters have also been active and

vocal members of conservative or right-wing movements. In the United States, self-identified evangelical Protestants account for about 26% of the general population. Additionally, about 64% of Evangelical Protestants are white, and among the American public overall, white Evangelical Protestants account for 17% of the population, while Black Evangelicals are 5% and Hispanic Evangelicals are 2%. In recent years, surveys have shown that Evangelicals are experiencing a racial and ethnic shift, as young Evangelical Protestants are more racially diverse than previous, older generations; only half of Evangelicals under 30 are white, while 77% of senior (over the age of 65) Evangelicals are white. Trends point to a declining white Christian identity overall, with white Christians making up less and less of the overall American population. (PRRI, 2017).

Brint and Abrutyn (2010) explore the connections between conservative ideology and Christian Evangelicals. They point to a phenomenon they call moral standards traditionalism, which refers to a cognitive orientation that draws a strong contrast between right and wrong ways of living, is rooted in traditional standards, and can be threatened by social change. The presence of this traditionalism in Evangelical voters was found to be correlated to conservative attitudes regarding issues such as abortion and homosexuality.

As well as finding social and moral explanations to the correlations between Evangelicals and conservatism, scholars have examined the influence of Evangelical Protestantism on support for specific conservative political issues such as foreign policy. Durham (2004) considers the connection between Evangelicals and US foreign policy including Evangelicals' attitudes to Islam, and the Evangelical stance on the 2003 Iraq War. The author observes that many Evangelicals saw President Bush's War on Terror as being a war against Islam, and while not all of them expressed negative views towards Islam, many still saw themselves and the United States as being at war with or fundamentally opposed to Islam. Consequently, many individuals in the Evangelical community were vocal in their support for the Bush administration's Iraq War. (Durham 2004) Furthermore, we can see the continuation of the connection between Christian voters and conservatives in the 2016 election of Donald Trump in particular. Whitehead et al. (2018) discuss how Christian nationalist ideology was a predictor of voting for Trump in 2016 and find that this ideology has its own power and influence upon voters independent of their other opinions regarding class, sex, or race. Central to Christian nationalist ideology is also the fear of Islam as a religion culture and Islamic terrorism, as well as a general fear of immigrants who do not fit the white Christian mold. Thus, they find that Trump's campaign rhetoric also made frequent references to a need to bring back Christianity, and made allusions to Christianity having lost its legitimacy or power. They conclude that "Christian nationalism is focused on preserving a perceived Christian identity for America irrespective of the means by which such a project would be achieved" (Whitehead et al., 2018, p. 165).

Trump and the white working class

Many have also noted the popularity of Trump and his populist, nativist beliefs amongst white working-class voters. A prevalent media narrative in the wake of the 2016 presidential election was that white working-class voters, who may have been economically

disenfranchised due to years of globalization and neoliberal policies, supported Trump because of the appeal of his anti-establishment views, protectionist economic policies, and his scapegoating of immigrants and people of color. (Cohn, 2016) Lamont et al. (2017) analyze the content Trump's campaign speeches for evidence of this narrative. They find that the messages in the speeches appealed to the white working classes in a matter of ways, specifically by "emphatically describing them as hard-working Americans who are victims of globalization, voicing their concerns about 'people above'" (Lamont et al., 2017, p. 153). The campaign speeches were also found to frequently draw strong moral boundaries toward undocumented immigrants, refugees and Muslims, including the stressing of border policy and the need to build physical barriers to keep out those who are a threat to Americans.

White nationalism and nativism in the United States:

On the more extreme end of the spectrum of white disenfranchisement are white supremacist ideologies, particularly significant because they are also used for recruitment, rely on a threat or victim narrative. (Berbrier, 2000) White supremacists adopt a victim ideology based on 5 themes or victim claims: discrimination, rights abrogations, stigmatization and the denial of pride, loss of self-esteem, and racial elimination. A victim in this particular context is one who experiences harm and does not hold responsibility for said harm, as they have been made the target of something. Such phenomena might include groups which organize on behalf of people of color, such as the NAACP or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples, or policies such as affirmative action (also known as positive discrimination), which "has long been a favorite culprit for Whites claiming 'reverse discrimination'" (Berbrier, 2000, p. 179). Furthermore, these victim narratives can appeal to vulnerable populations, particularly youth, who may be experiencing isolation, disenfranchisement, or identity threat from society around them (Blazak, 2001). For example, skinhead belief is based on a belief in the traditional cultural superiority of heterosexual, white men, and thus it can be assumed that a certain segment of heterosexual white men will feel a great deal of strain as their traditional picture of the world is threatened. Such factors, which leave vulnerable white Americans susceptible to isolation and threat, are used by skinheads to target recruits. Threats exist in four categories: threats to ethnic or racial status, threats to gender status, threats to heterosexual status, and threats to economic status. Older men serve as mentor or "big brother" figures who can then recruit younger, disenfranchised youth who are experiencing some form of social threat. (Blazak, 2001) Additionally, recruitment is a crucial factor for extremist, far-right, and white supremacist groups, who are increasingly turning to the Internet, including websites and social media, to gain attention, and potentially, new members. A content analysis of extremist online materials (Gerstenfeld et al., 2003) found that websites serve as a powerful tool for extremists as a means of reaching an international audience, particularly by creating networks between individuals with similar extremist mindsets, regardless of geography or their physical location. White supremacist websites also connect to other extremist networks by linking to other pages with extremist materials or ideologies on their websites. Multimedia content, merchandise, as well as resources for families or children are also among other things which can be used by extremist groups to appeal to a broader audience and to make membership more enticing. (Gerstenfeld et al., 2003).

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