MA Student **Tiana Gaudette**, *Simon Fraser University*

Dr. **Garth Davies**, *Simon Fraser University*

Dr. **Ryan Scrivens**, *Concordia University*

UPVOTING EXTREMISM: AN ASSESSMENT OF EXTREME RIGHT DISCOURSE ON REDDIT
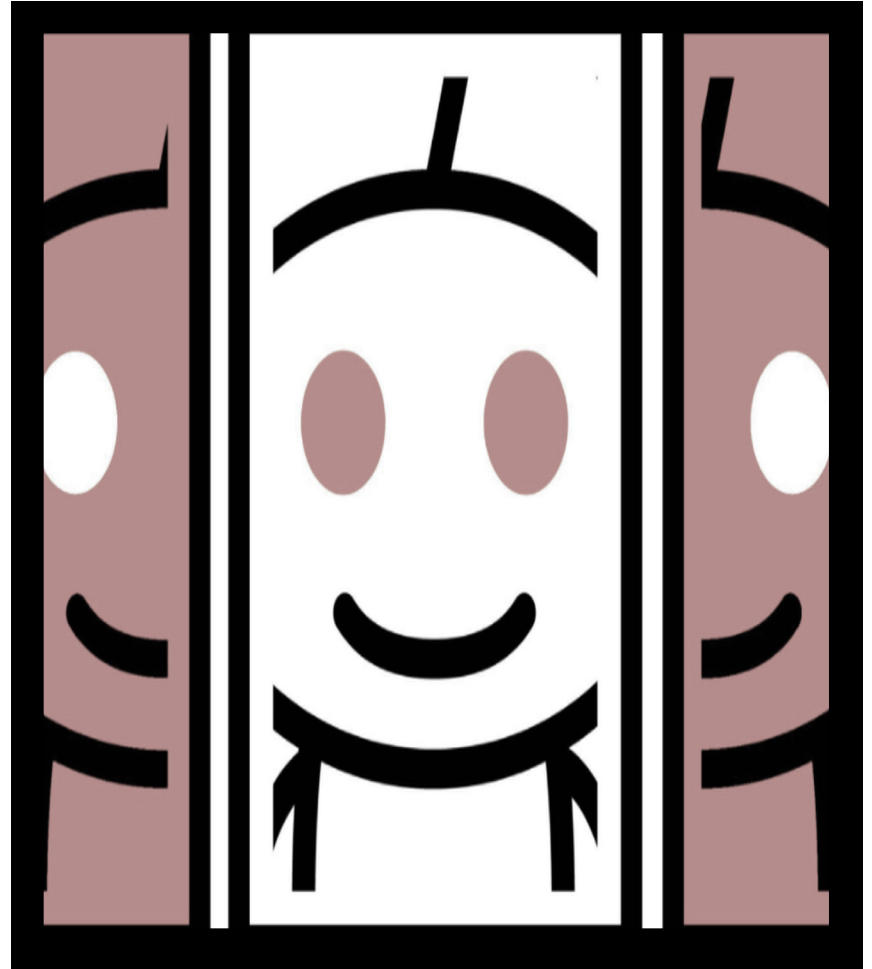
BACKGROUND

EXTREME RIGHT ONLINE:

- Right-wing extremists (RWE) have exploited the Internet's resources to connect, recruit, and spread their ideology in 'virtual communities'

PREVIOUS RESEARCH:

- Shift from traditional hate sites (e.g., *Stormfront*) to mainstream social media platforms (e.g., *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*)

- Increasingly popular 'social news aggregation' sites, like *Reddit*, have been overlooked

REDDIT

- Created in 2005

- Users retrieve and vote on linked content from across the web

- Fosters tight-knit communities dedicated to specific topics

- Racism and hate speech is allowed

the_donald

Twitter

Facebook

IRC Chat

Discord

HOT   NEW   RISING   TOP   WIKI

Welcome to Reddit.

Come for the cats, stay for the empathy.

BECOME A REDDITOR   and start exploring.   ✕

search 🔍

★ **T.R.U.M.P. (The_donald's Really UUUUUUGE Meme Photoshop) Contest** "Happy 72nd Birthday Mr. President" Edition
★   MAGAThread (self.The_Donald)
submitted 20 minutes ago * by DrWeeGee   MAGA [M] - stickied
7 comments share save hide deport

★ Tom Fitton: OIG Report Will Reveal Clinton Email Investigation Was Mishandled ★   RARE FITTON VID LIN (youtube.com)
submitted 11 minutes ago by TFittonJW   VERIFIED - Tom Fitton, Judicial Watch president - stickied
19 comments share save hide deport

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOUR FAVORITE PRESIDENT!! GOD-EMPEROR (i.redd.it)
submitted 2 hours ago by OfficerNasty   РЕДКИЕ
3308
63 comments share save hide deport

It's GETOUS Birthday. Praise Kek, How will you celebrate this holiday. I plan to have the Standard Trump McDonald's order then Two Scoops of Ice Cream and a Diet Coke while reading the IG report GOD-EMPEROR (i.redd.it)
submitted 5 hours ago by wwihh   KEK
6723
205 comments share save hide deport

Greet Wilders Announces 'Draw Muhammad' Contest Just Before Ramadan Ends (i.redd.it)
submitted 4 hours ago by mikek814   USMC
4263
177 comments share save hide deport

username   password

☐ remember me   reset password   login

🔗 SUBMIT A LINK

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Facebook

IRC Chat

Discord

the_donald

OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE NEWS

★ The 1600 - Latest News, Events & Updates
★ White House Briefing Room Blog
★ Check out our sister subreddit /r/The_Congress!

HOT   NEW   RISING   TOP   WIKI

Want to join? Log in or sign up in seconds. **English**

r/THE_DONALD:

- Created June 2015 as an online community for Trump supporters

    - Discuss Trump's presidency, including his political platform, press briefings, and larger political events

- r/The_Donald's rules ban racist and anti-Semitic content, but allow critical discussions of Islam and anti-Muslim content

RESEARCH GAPS:

- Extremist content on Reddit is largely understudied

- Research largely focused on 'memes'

THE STUDY

DATA:

- **r/The_Donald**: 10 'Trump Tweet' posts, over ~3 years, 4,916 comments

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What is the nature of the online discussions surrounding 'Trump Tweets' on r/The_Donald?

- How does Reddit's structure implicitly facilitate far-right extremism on r/The_Donald?

METHODS:

- Qualitative thematic analysis

FINDINGS

OVERVIEW:

- Redditors discuss how their physical safety and 'Western' culture are being threatened

    - Two sources of threat, each desiring to **weaken America**:

        1. The 'External': Islam
        2. The 'Internal': left-leaning news media **and** 'politically correct' culture
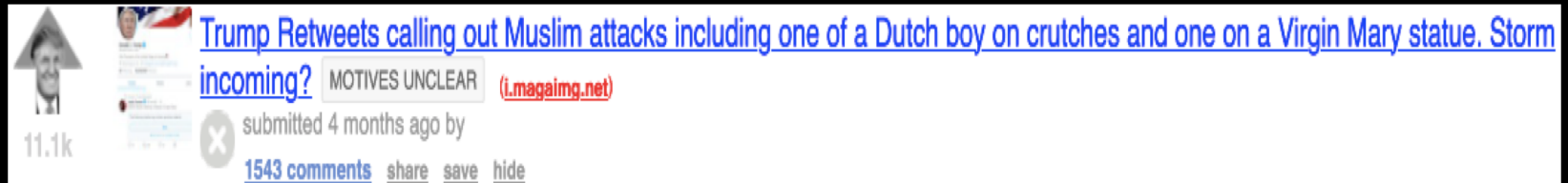
FINDINGS

THE EXTERNAL THREAT:

- Islam is destructive:
    - Increasing terror threat
    - Eroding Western values

- Islam's followers are dangerous
    - Practice a "violent" and "barbaric" religion

FINDINGS

Donald J. Trump on Twitter: Just out report: "United Kingdom crime rises 13% annually amid spread of Radical Islamic terror." Not good, we must keep America safe! Trump Tweet (twitter.com)
7083
submitted 5 months ago by
309 comments share save hide

[It's] Part and parcel of...living with people who want to blow you into parts with a bomb in a parcel. (M56, +185)

Trump Retweets calling out Muslim attacks including one of a Dutch boy on crutches and one on a Virgin Mary statue. Storm incoming? MOTIVES UNCLEAR (i.magaimg.net)
11.1k
submitted 4 months ago by
1543 comments share save hide

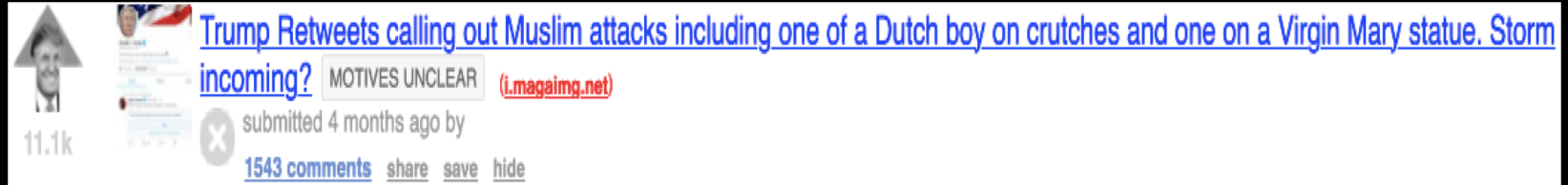*Diversity is our greatest strength. (CRC_1488, +363)*

If they [Muslims] kill us, we win. (robot, +296)
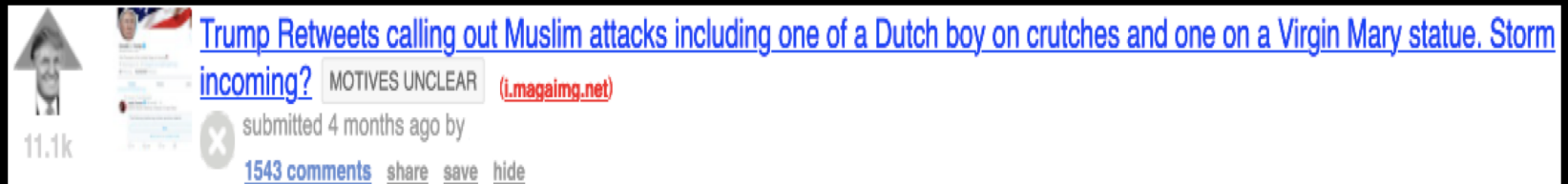
FINDINGS

THE INTERNAL THREAT:

1. American 'Left' seeks to undermine the nation's defenses against Islam

2. 'Mainstream' news media
   - Failure to report the 'true' nature of Islam

3. 'Politically correct' (PC) culture
   - Inability to promote anti-Islam beliefs

FINDINGS

I just check Trump's twitter. It's real. MSM [Mainstream media] going to defend Muslims tossing people over the roof.
(HK_Trump, +156)

[Mainstream media is] already reporting that the tweets are "far right anti Muslim videos" completely ignoring the content of the videos. **(Techgirl, +176)**

FINDINGS

RESPONDING TO "THE THREAT":

- Trump's Tweets bring key issues to light:

    - **External threat:**

        - "Simple" solutions

    - **Internal threat:**

        - Combat 'PC' culture by promoting alternative narratives, on and offline

FINDINGS

We need to be smart, vigilant and tough. We need the courts to give us back our rights. We need the Travel Ban as an extra level of safety! **Trump Tweet** *(twitter.com)*

submitted 10 months ago by

10.0k

If London had our travel ban Manchester would have been stopped!!! (DustinTC, +368)

Keep them out. Fuck Islam. (roza123, +27)

Ban Islam. Problem solved[...] If we don't ban it soon we are dooming our future generations to perpetual terror the likes of which the world has never seen. (Impala, +15)

DISCUSSION

- Comments that claim Islam and 'the Left' as external and internal threats to America, respectively, are highly upvoted

- Reddit's voting system **enables** RWEs to reinforce anti-Muslim sentiment within r/The_Donald:

    1. Members are rewarded for Islamophobic remarks (in the form of karma points)

    2. Practice of upvoting comments promotes anti-Muslim sentiment within the community

- Absence of dissenting views/counternarratives, due to r/The_Donald's rules against anti-Trump content

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Consider other types of topics and posts on r/The_Donald
  - E.g., Anti-Black/Semitic/LGBTQ/immigrant discussions

- Consider extremist content on other RWE subreddits
  - E.g., r/KikeTown and r/metacanada

- Compare RWE discourse on Reddit with discourse on Voat and Gab
  - How does the discourse differ across platforms?

- Big Data/Quantitative analyses
  - Systematically track users' discussions across time

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Tiana Gaudette, MA Student
tgaudett@sfu.ca
Garth Davies, PhD
garthd@sfu.ca
Ryan Scrivens, PhD
ryan.scrivens@concordia.ca

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