

The Psychology of Extremism

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ISBN 978-3-030-59697-2 ISBN 978-3-030-59698-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59698-9>

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This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword

On a sweltering July day in 2015, I found myself in a bar on the outskirts of Knoxville, Tennessee. The bar was of the divey sort, located next to a freeway with a body shop and a strip club as its closest neighbors. It was early in the day, so the two pool tables in the back of the bar were unused and the jukebox in the corner was quiet. Surrounding me around the shaded tables on the bar's front porch was a menagerie of Nazis, klansmen, Southern secessionists, and garden-variety racist, almost all of them in some way draped in a Confederate flag.

Only a few weeks earlier, the white supremacist Dylann Roof had attacked the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine people as they worshipped, because, according to Roof, "black people raped white women daily" (Chicago Tribune News Sources, 2016). Radicalized in the online cesspool of white supremacy, the same ecosystem that had already produced Anders Behring Breivik in Norway and would go on to motivate Brenton Tarrant's Christchurch massacre, Robert Bowers' attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and many others, Roof came armed with 8 ammunition clips, each capable of carrying 13 rounds. Roof however had loaded them with only 11 rounds because he wanted to fire 88 shots, no more no less. In the numerology obsessed world of white supremacists, eight represents the eighth letter in the alphabet. 88 = HH. "Heil Hitler."

The racists in the bar in Knoxville were there as a response to Roof, or rather as a response to the response. The massacre in Charleston had set off a much needed discussion in America about the widespread use and profoundly racist meaning of the Confederate flag. This in turn had led to talk of tearing down Confederate monuments and the removal of the flag from federal buildings. It was a conversation that was deeply painful for many and cathartic for some. It forced a reckoning of sorts, and although grievously overdue and profoundly lacking in scope, it was a reckoning that compelled American society to explore its racist past and present, as complex, ugly, confusing, and heartrending as it was and still is. To everyone except the crowd in the bar, that is.

"They want to take our heritage," a skinhead with a face full of tattoos said in a measured manner that completely contradicted the message sent by the "Racial

Holy War” tattoo that was adorning his skull. “It’s a genocide of white people and white culture.” The group had just driven through downtown Knoxville, waving their flags and shouting slogans like “heritage not hate” and “southern pride.” According to the main speaker of the rally, national-socialist Matthew Heimbach, the Left and the Social Justice Warriors of the world smeared the Confederate flag with their accusations of racism and bigotry. Slavery had nothing to do with it, according to them. Nor did systemic racism, the specter of Jim Crow and the groundswell of white nativist sentiment that at that moment was about to manifest into the alt-right. In their eyes it was all a ruse, designed to malign them and their ancestors by their enemies. Thus, the past had been sanitized and bleached. Scrubbed of nuance and uncomfortable notions of guilt and enduring culpability. It was easy, neat, and required no painful introspection and evaluation, not on a personal and a societal level. It was a frame of mind that had echoed through history, an ideological bait-and-switch that had informed Jim Crow laws, the rise of the KKK, Richard Nixon’s Southern Strategy, and all the way to today’s maligning of the Black Lives Matter movement. It was, in a word, simplicity. Blissful and comforting simplicity.

Throughout my near decade-long foray into the world of white supremacy in America, where I embedded myself as a journalist (I should point out that I never concealed my identity, my profession, and my admittedly left-leaning politics) within some of the most racist and extreme groups in the country, I encountered this yearning for simplicity in almost everyone I met. I still see it in the racist and conspiratorial subcultures that I’m currently researching. Although there are myriad ways to be radicalized, a common factor seems to be the yearning for simplicity and reason in a capricious and befuddling world. A white supremacist’s certainty that Jews are secretly controlling the world and working tirelessly toward the eradication of the white race is not so different from a QAnoner’s assertion that a Satanic core of Democrats are working to destroy a Messianic Donald Trump. Both these views create significance from happenstance and order from chaos. To put it simply: extremism is a way to make the confusing understandable. At its core, radicalization and the embracing of extremist ideas are a way to carve out a place for the self within a turbulent and complex world. This is of course not unique to extremists. The feeling of helplessness that often comes with living in the modern world can be deeply painful. The knowledge that we live in a society to which we as individuals are, statistically speaking, immaterial, marooned on a world which will spin just as reliably with or without us through a universe that is utterly oblivious and unmoved by our presence, is enough to cast even the strongest of us into bouts of existential malaise. However, the process of radicalization aims to divide a confusing world into easily digestible narratives of victims and oppressors, of struggle and valiant battle.

The allure of the extremist mindset is that it lifts you out of the passive and into the active. You are no longer a hapless bystander as the world takes place around you. You are a player. One of the most infamous and influential slogans of the white supremacist movement is “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Conceived in prison by convicted white supremacist David Lane, these 14 words have become a mantra among a vast swath of white racists

throughout the world, so ubiquitous that it has been reduced to the shorthand “14 words” or simply “14.” These words serve as a useful reminder of the key selling point of extremism: it provides the individual with agency and offers the person a place of power and significance within a greater struggle. This call to action and the promise of a seat at the table are vital, and remarkably similar across disparate extremist movements. Just as ISIS offer its fighters an opportunity to step out of their humdrum existence in a secular society and bring about the prophesized Caliphate (McCants, 2014), white supremacists see themselves as part of a bloodline that reaches back through history and that is locked in an epic struggle for its very survival. Banking on a feeling of dispossession, these movements provide their recruits a new identity and a sense of manifest destiny. Who among us wouldn’t want that?

On a muggy evening in Georgia in 2016, I stood among the hulking skinheads of the Confederate Hammerskins, a notoriously violent white supremacist group, and listened to their then leader, Chester Doles, lay out this idea plainly. Holding a hollowed-out horn harvested from some unknown bovine creature and filled with tepid Miller Lite, a particularly American spin on a homage to the Norse Vikings, Doles cast each and every person on that field—they were overwhelmingly male—as players in an epic struggle. “We are modern day Vikings,” he explained to the heavily tattooed, extensively armed, and precariously drunk crowd. “We are the alpha males of today. We are men with courage and have great pride in our European heritage. We are husbands and fathers. We are protectors and providers of our families. We are proud, white men.” He then explained how the Vikings would tie a lock of their wives’ or daughters’ hair around their weapons before going into battle and that they should do the same, although he advised that they use AR-15s rather than swords and axes.

Looking around I could tell how his words resonated with what appeared to be a crowd of low education and income. He was offering them a choice. When they looked in the mirror they could choose to see a helpless cog in a vast machine, lost to the whims of a capricious system, or they could see a warrior; the culmination of their bloodline and a shaper of their own future. All of them had chosen the latter.

Interestingly, this is a more positive approach to radicalization than what others have pointed to as common methods of individual radicalization. For instance, the National Institute of Justice at the US Justice Department claims that “the radicalization process often involves embracing a terrorist belief system or narrative that identifies particular others or groups as ‘enemies’ and justifies engaging in violence against them” (Smith, 2018). While this is no doubt a vital part of the radicalization process, my experience often suggested that it was not the initial step. Rather than creating enemies, the white supremacists I spent time with seemed to base not only their radicalization efforts, but also the continuing maintenance of their networks, on building a positive sense of community. The groups I researched tended to define themselves by who they were, not who they were against. The Hammerskins considered themselves a tribe. The KKK often saw themselves as family and kin. The neo-fascist group Proud Boys call themselves a fraternity. These groups differ vastly

in ideology and methods, but they all emphasize forging of internal bonds before fighting an enemy.

Providing new members with a sense of belonging, an ideological family, is imperative in the radicalization process, and both my experiences taking part in the lives of white supremacists and the research bear this out. In fact, a study by the Kanishka Project in Canada, the Arc of Terrorism and Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism research programs in the United Kingdom, and the Department of Homeland Security from 2015 cite feelings of lack of meaning, wanting status, and wanting to belong as key risk factors for radicalizing to violent extremism (National Institute of Justice, 2015). An “us versus them” worldview and the feeling of being under threat are also cited, but it is clear that extremist groups prey on feelings of isolation and lack of self-worth. You don’t just go up to someone and start blaming the Jews for the ills of the world. First you make the person feel heard, respected, and valued.

In his book about growing up in rural Appalachia, *Hillbilly Elegy*, the author J.D. Vance writes “There is a lack of agency here—a feeling that you have little control over your life and a willingness to blame everyone but yourself.” While this is both a facile and unfair description of the inhabitants of Appalachia, it does point to the sense of impotency and anger that fuels the wave of right-wing populism that has bedeviled democracies all over the world of late. In America in particular, a confounding rise in the mortality rates of white, middle-aged men raises many red flags. A study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* attributed the trend to what they called “despair deaths,” which are suicides, drug overdoses, and alcohol-related diseases (Bernstein & Achenbach, 2015). In a report for the *Commonwealth Fund* David Squires and David Blumenthal write “On a range of social and economic indicators, middle-aged whites have been falling behind in the 21st century. They have lower incomes, fewer are employed, and fewer are married” (Khazan, 2016). In her book *The Politics of Resentment*, political scientist Kathy Cramer explains how rural Americans often feel disrespected and tread on by elites who do not understand or care about them. Taken together these paint a picture of an electorate ripe for radicalization, and millions of column inches have been written to explain how this resentment and desperation gave rise to Donald Trump. While it is an unfair oversimplification to blame the presidency of Donald Trump on angry Appalachians, the frustration and anger felt in many parts of America due to deindustrialization, opioid addiction, lack of education, and employment opportunities have provided fertile ground for far-right extremist recruiters. However, it is far from the whole story.

When Caleb Cain dropped out of college after three semesters and moved back to his small Appalachian hometown, he struggled with bouts of depression and loneliness (Roose, 2019). Many of his friends had left town and Cain felt disconnected, both from the friends he had left in college and from the community he had returned to. Seeking a way out of his depression he began watching self-help videos on YouTube. Initially his viewing habits were mostly benign, videos with tips on how to cope with loneliness, but he soon found himself drawn to YouTubers whose ideas on mental health and happiness had a more sinister tone. He discovered Stefan

Molyneux, the self-professed philosopher and at the time hugely popular YouTube personality. Molyneux spent a lot of time talking about masculinity and what it meant to be a man. He danced up to the line of acceptability, but Cain liked that about him. Raised in the era of online gaming, Cain had an affinity for those who pushed boundaries simply for the joy of pushing. Molyneux talked extensively about feminism. He was a men's right advocate and claimed that feminism was socialism and that modern gender roles had been forced onto society by the Left and that it was holding young men back. The more Cain watched the more he agreed with what he saw and the more he agreed the happier the YouTube algorithms were to feed him ever more content. Via Molyneux, Cain was introduced to a host of right-wing influencers, all thriving within the permissive ecosystem of YouTube. He discovered Paul Joseph Watson, a conspiracy monger and alt-right pundit who would later be banned from Facebook for being a "dangerous individual," Lauren Southern, a white nationalist with a huge audience, and Jordan Peterson, a Canadian men's rights activist. None of these were the rabid, foaming-at-the-mouth blowhards one might associate with white supremacists, rather they presented themselves as rational, tongue-in-cheek iconoclasts who weren't afraid of speaking truth to power. Caleb was enthralled. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Caleb explained that "When I found this stuff, I felt like I was chasing uncomfortable truths. I felt like it was giving me power and respect and authority" (Roose, 2019).

When I first met Caleb a couple of years ago, he explained to me the heady feeling of having your world explained to you, to watch the pieces fall into place and to see, finally, what your role in that world is. In a real sense, his world had been made simple for him. He was not to blame for his troubles; feminists were, socialism and the Left were. I met Caleb when he had made his way out of the morass he had sunk into, and since then he had achieved a clarity that he wanted to share with others. He recognized the factors that had pushed him into his online radicalization. He was honest about having had troubling and deeply offensive beliefs, and assigns blame to both himself and the online snake oil salesmen that litter the internet, waiting to pounce on kids like himself. However, he was most disturbed about the ease with which YouTube had facilitated his descent into political extremism. While the algorithms that decide what video you watch next are vastly complex and ever changing, the programming that governed the site at the time of Caleb's radicalization was primed to encourage users to delve deeper into whatever rabbit hole they currently found themselves. Also, as Becca Lewis at Data & Society revealed in her report *Alternative Influence: Broadcasting the Reactionary Right on YouTube*, political influencers on YouTube had created an "Alternative Influence Network (AIN)," an alternative media system that adopts the techniques of brand influencers to build audiences and "sell" them political ideology (Lewis, 2018). In her report, Lewis claimed that YouTube had become "the single most important hub by which an extensive network of far-right influencers profit from broadcasting propaganda to young viewers." She also concluded that "YouTube monetizes influence for everyone, regardless of how harmful their belief systems are. The platform, and its parent company, have allowed racist, misogynist, and harassing content to remain online—and in many cases, to generate advertising revenue—as long as it does not explicitly

include slurs.” Of course, at the time, Caleb and the thousands of other young men, just like him who were tuning into increasingly extreme content provided to them by the world’s largest video sharing website, had no idea that their radicalization was incentivized and monetized. They just felt seen and understood for the first time. They had gone through the looking glass. In the parlance of online extremism, Caleb had been redpilled.

In the 1999 movie *The Matrix* the main character Neo is offered a chance to see the world as it really is. A mysterious stranger that seems to understand him in a way nobody else does offers him a choice of two pills: “You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes.” Since then “taking the red pill” or “being redpilled” has become shorthand for a political awakening. In the world of modern extremism, radicalization itself has become a meme.

The dawn of online culture has caused a seismic shift in not only the way extremist groups organize and recruit. While historically only a small part of the right-wing extremist movement has belonged to organized groups, the movement itself was dominated by influential individuals and groups. Organizations like Aryan Nations, The Hammerskin Nation, and National Alliance were powerful entities that to a large degree dictated the tone and tenor of the right-wing movement. By contrast, the alt-right was conceived by a fractious coalition of online trolls and racist contrarians and never coalesced into a cohesive movement in anything but the loosest sense of the word. While the extremists of old were forced into making some kind of personalized buy-in—a real mailing address for newsletters or actually showing up to group meetings—the alt-right required no such thing and encouraged a wholly nihilistic way of political engagement. Their vocabulary and frames of reference were heavily influenced by online and gaming culture, and the movement found a vast cache of adherents in the legion of disaffected young men spending their days engaging with the world through the flickering light of a computer screen. Borrowing heavily from popular culture and gaming, the movement developed a nomenclature not just tailor-made to entice the disaffected men who came to it, but also to push them further. Those who had been redpilled often found themselves “blackpilled” meaning that they had moved beyond political awakening and discovered that the world is irredeemably broken. In the world of right-wing extremism, the black pill means realizing that the system will always be rigged against white men. The black pill then becomes a gateway to mass murderers like Anders Breivik, Dylann Roof, Brenton Tarrant, and Robert Bowers. In the bleak and dystopic world of incels, the black pill is the realization that the world has no use for men like them, and that there is no remedy except death, their own or that of others.

The key here is the ease with which a shorthand for radicalization has developed. A new online ecosystem has emerged where for the most part unaffiliated extremists share memes, conspiracy theories, and methods designed to fast-track the radicalization process and facilitate the dehumanization of everyone who does not belong to the movement. It is from this subculture that has risen not only the infamous mass murderers mentioned above but also a new generation of extremists,

determined to accelerate the race war that they pine for. However, I would argue that as different the modern right-wing extremist movement is from earlier incarnations, it is still driven by the same fundamental impulses that drove others before it and that drives other violent extremist ideologies: belonging.

In March 2019, before he massacred 50 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, the white supremacist Brenton Tarrant posted his rambling manifesto to the message board site 8chan. The same site was used by Patrick Crucius before he killed 22 people at an El Paso Walmart and so did John Earnest before opening fire inside a synagogue in Poway, California. 8chan had become a breeding ground for violent extremists and a cesspool of murderous fantasies. The website's tagline was "Embrace Infamy," and that was exactly the goal of the men posting their manifestos there. As much as their predecessors and their cohorts in other violent extremist movements, this new generation of white supremacists yearn for meaning and belonging. This iteration of the movement provides a way for them to transcend the fleeting meaninglessness of their lives and step into a pantheon of warriors and martyrs, aided by a steady numbing to the realities of mass violence and the dehumanization of their alleged enemies. As such, this version of the right-wing extremist movement shares many key aspects of Islamic extremism as espoused by ISIS. Much like Chester Doles in George implored his Hammerskin members to take part in a generational struggle, the modern right-wing mass murderers yearn to place themselves within a larger battle. The language and methods are different, but the need to belong and to matter is the same.

There are of course many roads that lead to Rome and people come to violent extremism in a myriad of ways and for different reasons. Some, like many of the KKK members I met, are born into the movement, raised in a generational hatred that can be difficult to get out of. I once attended a KKK funeral with a man who, after having threatened to kill me at least twice, explained to me how he was introduced to the Klan by his father when he was nine back in the 1970s and made to do terrible acts that he didn't want to talk about. "Nobody should make a child do what I had to do," he sobbed loudly while a cross burned behind him. Others seek it out as an escape from loneliness, or as a lark that over time can become deadly serious. Plenty of alt-right extremists have claimed that they joined the movement "for the lulz," internet speak for "as a joke," drawn to the offensive, boundary pushing mayhem of internet message boards. Yet others drop into the rabbit hole out of curiosity, falling for the enticing distortions of YouTube charlatans or bigoted pseudo-scholars, and antisemitic revisionists and eugenicists who preach racism and hatred concealed in garbage science. Then there are those who are filled with violent fantasies, those who care less for politics than for the prospect of mayhem, murder, and power through terror. Although they are relatively few compared to the others, these are the ones who end up in the news: the Tarrants, Breiviks, and Roofs of the world.

Yet as different as their motivations are, there is one factor that is reliably the same with only a few exceptions. The trolls of the alt-right, the mass shooters, the incels, the ISIS warriors, the neo-Nazis, and anti-government militia members are almost always men. It is impossible to underestimate the gender gap in violent extremism. Although there are exceptions to the rule, violent extremist spaces are

overwhelmingly masculine. When the FBI compiled a list of active shooters in America between 2010 and 2018 it revealed that only 9 out of 250 shooters were women (FBI, 2019). Islamic extremism is almost exclusively governed by men and although there are many examples of women undertaking operational roles in jihadi organizations—ISIS, Jaish al-Fatah, and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham are all known to use female fighters—it has been reported that these women lack agency within the larger organization (Women in International Security, 2017). The far right, certainly in America, is utterly dominated by men. Women play a key role although they are more often than not reduced to archetypes rather than human beings with interests of their own. There are women in the movement, some of them even have prominent roles and, in the influencer-driven ecosystem of modern online culture, they command large followings. Female superstars of the alt-right like Faith Goldy, Lauren Southern, and Brittany Pettibone have all been vastly influential. Likewise the anti-Islam bigots Pamela Geller and Laura Loomer have both built influential personal brands. However, their impact on the movement has rarely been to empower women, rather to perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes that reduce women and equate progress with decline, or as in the cases of Geller and Loomer, use the term feminism as a cudgel to attack Islam through distortions and generalizations. In an interview on the alt-right podcast *Hanging Chads*, Faith Goldy explained that “there has been in the past 50, 60 years, an organized campaign to tear down the institutions that provide order outside of government. And that is mainly the family.” This campaign’s goal, Goldy asserted, is to “deconstruct man and woman as they are intended to be” (Eyes on the Right, 2017, para. 3). Lauren Southern, an alt-right darling and white nationalist, has equated feminism with female supremacy and claimed that it makes victims of men (Southern, 2015). Brittany Sellner (2019), a far-right men’s rights activist who is married to white nationalist Martin Sellner, has described feminism as a “war on men,” and said that “It comes as no surprise to me at this point that movements such as the men’s rights have gained such popularity. Men are tired of being shamed for their inherent qualities such as masculinity and pigeonholed as the perpetrators of all the world’s problems.” One might argue that at least part of the reason why these women have gained popularity in such a masculine space is because they espouse a particularly reactionary view of gender that resonates with those who feel threatened or disturbed by progressive values and equal rights. These women serve a role as radicalizers because they not only confirm the prejudices about society in general and feminism in particular that the young men who fall into these rabbit holes often hold, but by nature of being women who preach anti-feminism, they give them legitimacy. In a sense, these women only remain influential so long as they are oppressing themselves.

In general, women are ciphers within a far-right movement that is often incredibly hostile to them. The problem of domestic violence in extremist circles could fill many books, and many of the women who have left the movement leave with stories of violence and abuse. This is no doubt the result of a movement that is incredibly violent, rife with alcohol and substance abuse, and overwhelmingly masculine. In terms of the radicalization process however, women serve different purposes to different groups. In the hypermasculine fraternity that is the neo-fascist group Proud Boys, women are banned because they are a distraction to the valuable bonding

between men who worship “western culture.” To them feminism has softened the Western Man and made him weak. As a tonic, the Proud Boys promise their recruits male companionship. The absence of women is a major selling point.

The incel movement is fueled exclusively by hatred toward women and feminism, no doubt concealing a much greater self-loathing by its members. To them women are evil and calculating, winners of a genetic lottery that has made perennial losers out of them. Far from all incels harbor violent fantasies toward women and only a minuscule fraction act on those fantasies, but incels are behind several brutal mass killings. In their world, failure with women and morbid self-loathing are badges of honor, worn with pride. Their redpilling moment is when they realize that they will never be loved. Their blackpilling moment is when they see that they never stood a chance in the first place.

To white supremacists, women fill several roles. They are a weaker sex that needs to be protected by the barbarian hordes, they are walking wombs to perpetuate the white race, and they are enemies whose fight for equality will no doubt mean the demise of said race. Anti-feminism, the desire for reactionary gender roles, is a powerful recruitment tool to a generation of men that often struggles with figuring out what it means to be a man. This is a moment when the fight for equal rights for women, people of color, and the LGBTQ community has gained acceptance throughout large parts of society. It has exposed deep structural and cultural inequalities and shown us how behavior once accepted and even encouraged is harmful and damaging. Much like how recent events have given us an opportunity to face this country’s racist past, we are also grappling with society’s misogynistic past and present. Like the former, the latter also provides fertile ground for extremist recruitment. There is significant overlap between the manosphere, the incel movement, and the white supremacist movement. All of them share a profound feeling of victimization and of living in a world they no longer recognize and are no longer welcome in. It is this sense of aggrievement that often leads young men to groups and ideologies where they feel heard and where their anger is validated, a movement that will allow them to look in the mirror without a confused face staring back at them.

At their most basic level, extremist groups offer their members a world that is tidy and neat. They abhor progress as weakness because it creates confusion, and confusion is the antithesis of the extremist ideal: simplicity. The modern world, with its equality and progressive norms, is antithetical to the simpler times for which extremists pine. It is the same yearning found in Donald Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again.” While utterly unspecific, as most slogans are, it implies that there was once a better time and that something nefarious and pernicious has eroded our society and taken it away from those better times when things were great. It is pointless, as I have learned through years of painful effort, to point out that this ideal time never existed. There was never a time when women were universally happy in their subservience nor is it true that, as a participant at a Richard Spencer rally in Alabama once told me, “blacks were happy during Jim Crow because they knew where they stood.” Yet this hardly matters. Extremism is never about altruism or the greater good. It is not about making society better for everyone so much as it is to make it bearable for yourself. It is an eminently egoistic frame of mind, however

much the zealots try to convince us otherwise. The world of the extremist is a zero sum game where the progress of some comes at a cost for others. It is a world where if black lives matter, then white lives matter slightly less, where if women gain rights men lose theirs. It can be an enticingly simple world to live in.

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Preface

Extremist ideologies and violence wax and wane over time. Between 2015 and 2019, the Institute for Economics and Peace has noted a 320% increase in far-right terrorism in Western Europe, North America, and Oceania (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Although terrorism and extremism can be an extension of any ideology, the rise in far-right extremism in the U.S. is especially concerning. The U.S. covers a broad geographical area populated by people from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, and it is estimated that Whites will be a minority of the U.S. population by 2045 (Fey, 2018). Far-right extremism can be associated with broad ideologies rooted in the ongoing politics of a given geographical area. However, the common thread throughout most far-right extremism is nationalism, authoritarianism, nativism, and racism (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). The recent rise in far-right extremism, especially in the U.S., may have far reaching consequences not only to the growing diverse population of those within the U.S., but to those in other democratic nations.

This book was initially written and compiled before the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Since that time, much has occurred. This preface both acknowledges the rapidly changing events happening in the U.S. and provides readers with a guide to the chapters in this book and their respective application to these events. One particular event occurred on January, 6, 2021. Hours after President Donald Trump told his supporters that "...if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore," the U.S. Capitol with senators, representatives, and the vice president in it was attacked (Savage, 2021). Afterwards, some characterized this attack as a protest (Brown, 2021). However, the brandishing of weapons, breaking of windows, violence, placing of pipe bombs, and subsequent deaths suggest that the term "protest" may not be the most accurate or appropriate description of events. Although the investigation of the attack on the U.S. Capitol is ongoing, this event seems to have had some coordinated planning by far-right extremist groups such as the Proud Boys (Feuer, 2021). U.S. senators, representatives, and the vice president had to be evacuated to safe hiding places to protect them against threats to their lives. While

this all happened, the president of the U.S. watched the chaos unfold at the U.S. Capitol from the White House free of fear from harm or danger (Parker, Darsey, & Rucker, 2021). It is unclear what he was thinking while news of violence from his supporters crept his way. His Tweets at the time suggest that maybe he didn't want the police to be harmed; however he expressed no concern for the senators, representatives, or the vice president (Sherman, 2021). The mayhem that ensued left 5 dead, many wounded (at least 140 police officers), and many in the nation shocked and disgusted (Healy, 2021; Jackman, 2021). Investigators are still discovering what happened that day. Among the hoard of insurgents that descended upon the U.S. Capitol were members of far-right extremist groups who brandished White supremacy logos and insignias while taking selfies during the attack and posting them on social media (Neilson & McFall-Johnsen, 2021). By their side were a number of current and former members of the military, CEOs of companies, business owners, bartenders, construction workers, advertising consultants, and even a gold medal Olympian (Hanna, Polantz, & Cohen, 2021; Valentino-DeVries et al., 2021). This seeming diversity among Trump's supporters only calls more attention to their averageness. These attackers came from various strata in society and were pulled together by a shared belief that they were supporting the work of their president and a shared desire to be part of his significance (Barry, McIntire, & Rosenberg, 2021).

Research suggests that the desire to achieve significance is one of the key factors leading to extremism (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2014). In Chaps. 3 (by Seyle and Besaw) and 4 (by Aumer and Erickson) of this book, the complex relationship between seeking significance, identity, and emotions in extremism is discussed. Many seek significance among their peers and recognition by their societies as worthy heroes. The rhetoric and myth of victimization becomes a part of politics and fuels the absurdity in the arguments. However, in the moment of any drama, whether it be called a protest, fight, battle, or attack, the absurdity of the situation is not recognized as such, but instead takes on the guise of righteous indignation. The battle needs enemies, an "other," a target. People's ability to become divided over both significant and insignificant differences can stem from genuine issues and injustice. Nevertheless, some of this division also stems from a more superficial root of group identification. Identity becomes an anchor for values, emotions, and actions. Identification with a group can have an overwhelming grip on perceptions and feelings (Silverstein & Flamenbaum, 1989). While playing out one's identity, one's role in a group, a benign action by a fellow group member may be seen in a very different light that evokes much more dangerous emotions if done by someone perceived to be an enemy. These emotions, both positive and negative, can lead to quixotic paths. Love, which can be so unifying, may divide when it is invested in nationalistic and conspiratorial theories. Hate, which can be so damaging, may create bonds between those who find themselves targeting the same foe. There is no doubt that many of those in the U.S. Capitol attack on January 6, 2021, were attempting to play out their roles—a natural extension of their identity—with the calamity and error of their behavior obfuscated by their loyalty to a party and a president.

Only a small minority of the 74 million people who voted for U.S. President Donald Trump in 2020 sought to attend the U.S. Capitol attack. But some supporters of Trump who did not attend and judged it to be a terrible event responded by blaming Antifa for it (Herndon, 2021). Antifa is an anti-fascist movement composed of highly decentralized autonomous groups of people that aims to end right-wing extremism through either nonviolent or violent means (LaFree, 2018). Although investigations are ongoing, many sources have indicated that the photos of the event used by some to claim Antifa participation are not supported (Staff, 2021). Others sought to excuse the attack by comparing it with violence seen at retail stores during protests over the police killing of George Floyd. This false equivalence between the nation's capital and its retail stores brings to light how Trump's supporters may equate their government and democracy as places of merchandise. Accordingly, many who have since been charged with crimes for their roles in the attack have attempted, as if at a retail store, to purchase clemency and pardons from Trump (Schmidt & Vogel, 2021). The inability to see the extreme nature of the U.S. Capitol attack, to see its perniciousness and severe consequences for democracy, speaks to the viewpoint that many far-right-wing extremists have asserted about the U.S. for decades: The U.S. is theirs, and as the owners, they can define and defend it as they see fit. Historically, unity in the U.S. has not come by dismantling White supremacy but by fortifying, ignoring, or rebranding it (Chait, 2021).

Recently, elements of the White supremacist movement have adopted the QAnon conspiracy theory. The QAnon conspiracy theory holds that many Democrats and Hollywood stars are secretly a cabal of Satan worshipers who are leading an underground child sex trafficking ring (Roose, 2021). As ridiculous as the QAnon conspiracy sounds, it is not an unfamiliar political strategy. Historically, dehumanization and fantasy have been employed to annihilate targets who were seen as threats to power (Parramore, 2021). Women were accused of being servants of the Devil during the Salem Witch Trials. Blacks and the mentally ill were judged to be inferior and even subhuman by eugenicists during the European and U.S. eugenics movement. Jews were depicted as aliens in Nazi school curriculum. The evocation of fantasy and the use of dehumanization to target, attack, and expel enemies are not unusual in human history (Romano, 2020). The use of reframing and the setting of extremist psychology within the narratives that extremists use are examined in Chap. 2 of this book by Roseman, Rudolph, Steele, and Katz. The QAnon conspiracy, the conservative rhetoric, and the fight to maintain White supremacy are likely to be an ongoing battle in the U.S., and understanding the narratives and psychology that help maintain their hold will become more important in determining how to overcome its spiral toward increasing violence and chaos.

When conflict is witnessed, it can be convenient to step away and distance oneself from the impending damage and strife. However, for many in the U.S., the attack on the U.S. Capitol has extended into their personal relationships. Families and marriages have fallen apart because of these extreme ideological shifts in society. After the attack, some who saw their mothers, fathers, friends, or significant others posting selfies on social media that were taken while attacking the U.S. Capitol

found themselves reporting their loved ones to authorities (Paul, 2021). These battles of extremism are not just being played out on a global stage, but also within private spheres. In Chap. 5, Hatfield and Rapson discuss useful ways to handle confrontations, ranging from the benign to the more disquieting, which can happen when discussing politics with family members. These kinds of conversations and subsequent relational upheavals due to differences in political beliefs and ideologies have long been a part of the history in the U.S., as is the idea that the racism professed by many far-right extremists is merely an alternative viewpoint and that anger expressed over racial injustice is an overreaction. Much of the rhetoric and ideology espoused in the relational spheres stems from a larger structural group. Whether individuals experience or witness extremism in their personal relationships, it is important to identify and investigate the systematic support and proliferation of these ideologies to make informed policies to prevent and de-radicalize. Conor Seyle and Clayton Besaw (in Chap. 3) provide insights and evidence-based procedures that can help individuals, organizations, and governmental institutions de-radicalize by considering the psychological group needs of individuals who seek membership in extremist groups, including White power extremists.

White supremacy and White privilege are sometimes challenged by conservatives because they threaten the conveniences and privileges of being White. The changing racial and ethnic landscape of the U.S., and its impact on the identity and feelings of those who are White and of far-right extremists, is discussed in Chap. 4 by Aumer and Erickson. Fieder, Schahbasi, and Huber touch upon the origins of these tribalistic attitudes in Chap. 6. All of the chapters in this volume provide insight into how any of us can be vulnerable to the appeal of extremism. Self-reflection and empathy can help us avoid being drawn in by nationalistic and polarizing rhetoric. Contact with communities that bolster division has become easier with the internet and availability of social media. This book provides a foundation upon which more research regarding the powerful influences of emotions, identity, and relationships can grow and help prevent further damage. The storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, will not be the last attack on democracy or on the growing diversity of the U.S. The U.S. Capitol attack exemplifies the power of populism coupled with the ease of mass gatherings facilitated by the use of social media. Counterterrorism experts have warned that violent extremism has become “part of the cultural mainstream” and could pose a threat for “10–20 years” (Johnson, 2021). While some may have seen the U.S. Capitol attack as a protest, still others characterize it as a failed coup (Graham, 2021). Experts acknowledge that coup events have declined over the past several decades. However the coup events and attempts that are occurring seem to be increasingly targeting democratic states (Besaw et al., 2019). For many, the U.S. Capitol attack is a reminder of the fragility and vulnerability of democratic processes, everywhere. Extremism and violence are likely to remain a part of our human history, but with continued dedication to understanding the psychology of extremism, we may find better ways to avoid future harm and our own self-destruction.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Katherine V. Aumer	
A Tale of Two Outcomes: Understanding and Countering Extremist Narratives	5
Ira J. Roseman, Ben Rudolph, Amanda K. Steele, and Steven Katz	
Identity, Extremism, and (De) Radicalization	47
Conor Seyle and Clayton Besaw	
The Use of Love and Hate in Extremist Groups	83
Katherine V. Aumer and Michael A. Erickson	
Political Identities, Emotions, and Relationships	103
Elaine Hatfield and Richard Rapson	
Homogamy and Tribalism: How Finding a Match Can Lead to Social Disruption	113
Martin Fieder, Alexander Schahbasi, and Susanne Huber	
Index	121

Introduction



Katherine V. Aumer

Currently, the U.S. is faced with extremism almost everywhere. The death of George Floyd by police chokehold has given rise to protests nationwide that have formed fault lines within communities and even divided families. The COVID-19 pandemic, a health crisis that can impact and harm anyone, has nevertheless become political and divisive. The racism in the US is bold and shocking. The conspiracy theories about and moral indignation against COVID-19 is fervent and unrelenting. Racism and conspiracy theories are now well documented on various social media platforms and news outlets. Throughout the discord, the term “extremism” has been bandied by both the right and left wing parties. The psychology of this extremism is the focus of this book. Although we do not assume or assert that extremism is impossible for people with left-leaning ideologies, most of the evidence and research concerning extremism that is used in this book stems from right-leaning ideologies. Extremism is not ideologically specific and although the current crises in the U.S. may seem abrupt, societal extremism has been a part of all cultures throughout history. This book is interdisciplinary, with researchers from a variety of disciplines reviewing the motivations of those who exhibit extremist behavior and the social and emotional contributions that enable and foster extremist groups.

Extremism has been discussed and defined in a variety of ways. Most groups including the FBI (2020) and the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE, 2020) focus on violent extremism and terrorism. The Southern Poverty Law (SPLC, 2020) Anti-Defamation League (ADL, 2020) monitors over 1600 extremist and hate groups. For a variety of organizations, including the ones above, the discussion of extremism is often discussed in tandem with hate, terrorism, and violence. In the following chapters, we do not specify any one extremist organization or group nor do we examine any one specific ideology. Instead, the chapters in this book examine the universal aspects of extremism: elicitors, support-

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ing mechanisms, and methods to abate extremism. Although many researchers and organizations may define extremism differently, in this book all the authors have written their chapters with the definition that extremism is a psychological state, where a person aligns their identity with a group that is absolute in their moral agenda. Many examples of certain extremist groups and specific ideologies will be used to help illustrate points made in these chapters, but these examples should not be considered exhaustive.

This book can be used as a supplement for any upper-division undergraduate or graduate course with either the whole book being assigned or specific chapters being used weekly. The purpose of this book is to provide a variety of frameworks for which extremism can be investigated while also considering the assortment of situations in which one can encounter extremism.

A foreword by Vegas Tenold, an award-winning journalist and author of *Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America* who works with the Anti-Defamation League, provides context for the following chapters. His first-hand experience interviewing people who belong to extremist groups and who has covered various extremist rallies and events provides a backdrop for the psychological theories and studies presented in these chapters. This foreword presents an image of extremism as providing a kind of comforting and simple narrative that many men in the U.S. currently crave.

“A Tale of Two Outcomes: Understanding and Countering Extremist Narratives” by Roseman, Rudolph, Steele, and Katz provides readers with a very narrative theory on the development of extremism. They identify five components: identificational, behavioral, normative, explanatory, and evaluative that are often embedded in narratives by those espousing extremist ideology. Although this chapter covers a variety of examples of extremism, Roseman and colleagues specifically utilize examples of rhetoric, policy, and behavior of Donald Trump to help exemplify the five components and their consequences. Their theory helps provide a concrete framework in which future research can be used to study and predict outcomes of extremism.

Seyle and Besaw’s chapter: “Identity, Extremism, and (De)radicalization” focuses specifically on the social psychology of extremism emphasizing the role of identity-based mechanisms that contribute to the recruitment into and formulation of extremist groups. Seyle and Besaw provide a thorough background and application of their theory which is strongly rooted in research on identity. They conclude their chapter with evidence-based recommendations on how extremist groups can be weakened and members can be (de)radicalized.

Aumer and Erickson in their chapter “The Use of Love and Hate in Extremist Groups” utilize both social psychology and findings in emotions science to better understand the role of love and hate in extremist groups. Beginning with a discussion of the latest findings of love and hate they conclude with a theory on how both emotions (love and hate) can be utilized to help recruit, maintain, and justify identification with extremist groups. This chapter provides insights into how love and hate can be used to help those who feel disenfranchised with their circumstances, find solace and friendship in extremist groups.

Hatfield and Rapson’s chapter: “Political Identities, Emotions, and Relationships,” focuses specifically on the extremism commonly encountered with family members and friends. They review literature from both social and clinical psychology to provide ways in which family members can confront, discuss, and examine one’s encounters with family members who may have extremist ideologies. This chapter is useful for both academics and laypersons who want to better understand how to navigate the more common day-to-day encounters one may have with ideologically mismatched relationships.

“Homogamy and Tribalism: How Finding a Match can Lead to Social Disruption,” by Fieder, Schahbasi, and Huber approaches the origins of extremism from an evolutionary psychology framework. The argument that educational homogamy can lead to extremist out-group behavior provides a foundation for future research and exploration. Unlike the other chapters, much of the research in this chapter draws upon evolutionary psychology and how tribalism and homogamy can lead to more extremist behaviors.

Together these chapters provide insight into the psychological characteristics of extremist behaviors from a variety of disciplines. After reading this book, laypersons, students, researchers, and practitioners will have a better understanding of the motivation and emotion of individuals who exhibit extremist behaviors as well as the situational variables that contribute to recruitment and maintenance of extremism. All of these chapters provide evidence and advance theory concerning the reduction of extremism, both at the individual and social level. We specifically avoid moral judgment concerning extremism. However we do recognize in both the foreword and these chapters that extremism is and can be powerful and dangerous. Extremism, especially violent extremism, is something that societies throughout history have had to endure and manage. The research reported in this volume clarifies the meaning of extremism and helps to advance the understanding of extremism and methods to reduce its negative costs and violent consequences.

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The Use of Love and Hate in Extremist Groups



Katherine V. Aumer and Michael A. Erickson

*To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.
— Proverbs 8:13*

Hate and love have often been viewed as polar opposites. Historically, researchers have viewed hate as a destructive and hostile emotion (Royzman, McCauley, & Rozin, 2005). Oatley, Keltner, and Jenkins (2006) even went so far as to posit that hate is “our biggest handicap as a social species” (p. 44). Philosophers and psychologists have continuously debated hate’s categorization and characteristics. Rempel and colleagues have examined people’s explanations for interpersonal scenarios and classified hate as a motivation (e.g., Rempel & Burris, 2005; Rempel, Burris, & Fathi, 2019). Others, using more explicit criteria and prototype analyses, categorized hate as an emotion (Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Sternberg, 2003). Yet hate could also be an attitude (Ekman, 1992) or a syndrome (Shand, 1920). When considering the consequences of hate, Descartes (1694/1989) argued that hate causes a kind of withdrawal, while Aristotle contended that hate initiates attack (Aristotle, trans., 1954). Categorical incongruencies aside, there is a general repugnance for hate shared by both laypersons and scholars. The presumption that hate is bad is not without merit. Sternberg (2003) argued that hate is at the root of war, ethnic cleansing, and evil. Halperin, Russell, Dweck, and Gross (2011) demonstrated that Israelis with high levels of hate and anger are less likely to compromise with Palestinians on upcoming peace negotiations. U.S. Federal law contains a special classification of crime: “hate crimes,” that are considered especially egregious and opprobrious, and that usually result in more severe penalties (Iganski & Lagou, 2015). People tend

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not to have the same disdain, moral repugnance, or severity of sanction for “crimes of passion” or for “white-collar crimes” although both may and can be committed with hate. Even in common discourse, hate is consistently denounced. For example, websites like hateiswrong.org declare that, “Hate in any form is wrong” (Hate is wrong, 2020). Political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama tweet laments about hate’s abhorrent unnatural source with declarations such as, “People must learn to hate...” (Obama, 2017). Regardless of whether hate is an emotion, an attitude, or a motivation, scholars and laypersons seem to agree that it is a bad thing. A rare exception to this can be seen in Proverbs 8:13 (New International Version), where hate is advocated to be a wise response when targeted at certain adverse qualities or behaviors.

In contrast, love is seen much more positively. Although the study of love has not been without controversy (e.g., Hatfield, 2006), love is generally viewed positively by both laypersons and scholars. There are numerous songs, poems, dramas, and stories written and dedicated to love and all its panacea-like qualities. “Make love, not war” a common 1960s civil rights phrase (“Make love, not war,” n.d.), and “All You Need Is Love,” by the Beatles (Lennon-McCartney, 1967) are significant tributes to the belief in the power and goodness of love. The importance and belief in the power of love is not only recognized in popular culture, but is heralded and supported by scholars who argue that it plays a fundamental role in psychological well-being (Erikson, 1963; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961). The idea that hate is bad and love is good seems to have widespread support.

Yet, by applying a moral judgment to an emotion, researchers may lose objectivity in their efforts to study its nature, characteristics, and consequences. By categorizing hate as bad or negative researchers may fall victim to confirmation bias by tending to focus only on information that supports their view of hate as “bad.” Similarly, by categorizing love as good or positive, researchers may only search for evidence of its halo-like qualities, ignoring its negative consequences. To be clear, it is important to recognize the dangers of hate. People should not be hated for the color of their skin, for their gender, or for their religion. Similarly, it is important that people entrust their love to those who support and care for them: their families, friends, and significant others. Nevertheless, there are situations in which people’s love, like their hate, is not beneficial. For example, maintaining one’s love for, and relationships with, abusive spouses, duplicitous friends, or people who are harmful should not be condoned. There are numerous cases of domestic violence, murder of significant others or family members, and acts of betrayal between people who love and care for each other (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2020) that rip apart families and even start wars (Homer trans., 1996). How many of these terrible situations and atrocities could have been prevented if people had ceased loving people they should not have? If there are people in one’s life that one should and should *not* love and there are people in one’s life one should *not* hate, is it possible then, as Proverbs 8:13 suggests, that there are people and things in one’s life that one *should* hate? Might hate have a purpose? Is it possible that hate is not just some flippant four-letter word that should be avoided, but that it helps people navigate their social world not only to help with survival but also in creating prosperous and

productive social environments? This chapter is dedicated to better understanding hate and love and their respective roles in people's lives in the hope of finding ways to better control them. Although we do not disagree that hate has negative consequences and love positive consequences, we undertake this analysis by removing the value-laden judgments that seem to saturate the study of hate and love. By withdrawing from the cultural and social tendency to conceptualize hate as a bad and unnatural influence, and love as a good and organic force, we hope to learn more about controlling and being mindful of these emotions. In this chapter we:

1. Examine how hate is defined and characterized by both laypersons and scholars.
2. Present studies that show how hate and love can bring people together and enhance intimacy.
3. Discuss how both love and hate can be used to help foster extremism.

We conclude with a discussion of the ways in which a more explicit consideration of hate can help people learn and control hate in the future.

1 Conceptualization of Hate

Hate has been primarily studied as an intergroup emotion while love has been studied as an interpersonal emotion. Much of the current research on hate focuses on prejudice and discrimination with the underlying assumption being that hate is primarily felt toward groups of people while love is felt toward individuals. Interestingly, hate is often seen by emotions researchers as the polar opposite of love and that the two cannot co-occur: if one loves someone, one cannot hate them and if one hates someone, one cannot love them. Although some research has addressed the experience of ambivalence: loving and hating someone at the same time, much of this literature is located in the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic literature and has little empirical evidence and is difficult to measure given current attitudinal research standards (Gardner, 1987). Love has been studied continuously in social psychology since the late 1960s (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1969; Sternberg, 1986). The study of hate, however, has been much more recent. In order to better understand how people conceptualize hate, whether hate is really only an intergroup emotion, and whether hate can be experienced with love, we describe a series of studies here.

To better understand the layperson's perspective of hate, Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield (2007) conducted a study that asked people three questions: (1) What does it mean to hate someone? (2) Who do you hate right now? And (3) Why do you hate this person? Over 700 people responded to this questionnaire. Their answers to the first question: "what does it mean to hate someone?" revealed four main themes: (1) extreme dislike, (2) wanting the person to die or be eliminated from their lives, (3) extreme anger, and (4) extreme disgust. These responses revealed that people conceptualize hate as a complex emotion that involves not just one kind of motivation or attitude but a combination of feelings, attitudes, and motivations. Since this study,

more research has found further support for the complexity and uniqueness of hate. Rempel and Burris (2005) have found empirical support in several studies that hate can be conceived of differently from most emotions by its primary goal to eliminate or hurt the target of hate. Sternberg has shown the theoretical importance of anger and disgust as components of hate, and has provided a questionnaire based on his theory, though this work was primarily aimed at hate toward groups of people (Sternberg, 2003). Additionally, Roseman and colleagues have done extensive research to also distinguish hate from other emotions like jealousy, anger, and contempt, and have shown how these emotions can overlap. Additionally, they found key areas in the emotions' expression, motivation, and phenomenology that distinguished them from hate (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Roseman & Steele, 2018). Importantly, what this research has shown is that hate is an emotion with various characteristics: dislike, disgust, anger, and the desire to destroy and hurt someone and that this combination of feelings and motivations is essential to the understanding of hate. For the purpose of our research, we define hate as an emotion in which one sees the target as a threat, consistently thinks negatively of the target, feels repulsed by the target, and wants the target to be gone or have bad things happen to them.

Based on this preliminary understanding of participants' experience of hate, we examined their answers to the question, "Who do you hate now?" We wondered whether their hate would be primarily aimed at groups of people: racial groups, religious groups, or even sports teams. However, what we found did not support the idea that hate is primarily felt toward groups of people. Figure 1 shows that most participants named friends, friends of friends, exes, coworkers, and family members

Commonly Identified Targets of Hate

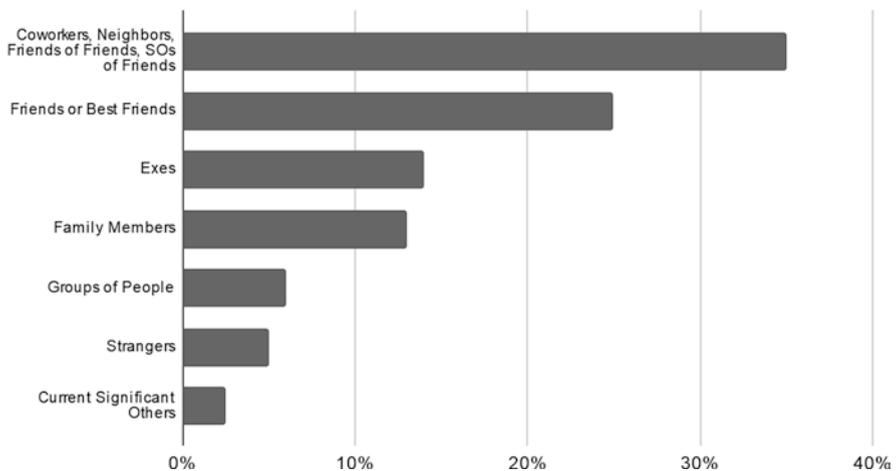


Fig. 1 From Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield (2007), where participants ($n = 433$) identified their targets of hate. Participants were most likely to identify those who they have spent a considerable time with, been close with intimately or emotionally, or knew well

as people they currently hate (Aumer-Ryan & Hatfield, 2007). We have since replicated this finding and have consistently found that these relationships are named (Aumer, 2019; Aumer et al., 2016; Aumer & Bahn, 2016; Aumer & Krebs-Bahn, 2019). What is interesting about these findings is that much research on hate focuses on an intergroup emotional response aimed at large groups of people or possibly aimed at an individual *because* of the social group that this person belongs to or identifies with. However, what we found is that most of the people named as targets of hate were far more intimate to participants than unspecified members of a social group. Friends, friends of friends, exes, coworkers, and family members are people we tend to spend time with, care about, and even love or have loved. These people tend to know us well, or have spent enough time with us to develop an intimate relationship with us. In many ways then, it is not surprising that the people who know us best, may know the best ways to hurt us.

To better understand why participants hated these people we coded the responses to the questions: “Why do you hate this person?” We found three main themes in the participant’s answers: (1) betrayal/failed expectations, (2) the person had hurt or harmed them, and (3) something inherently wrong with the person’s personality or character. These findings suggest that the hate people feel toward their targets is not arbitrary, but often follows substantial violations of expectations of acceptable behavior. For example, one participant said the following about her ex-boyfriend: “I hated him because he had cheated on me when I was so totally in love with him. I felt like he took my innocence from me” (Aumer-Ryan & Hatfield, 2007). In this example, the young woman’s statement expressed her hate for a man that had violated what she considered to be a basic norm: fidelity. Not only did he violate rules of monogamy, he also took something she valued: her innocence. He betrayed her, violated social norms, and the hurt was significant enough that the desire to avoid future harm would be likely. Whether or not he would or even could harm her again, was not certain. However, as this example demonstrates, hate may be triggered when one has experienced a significant amount of hurt and anticipates a significant threat in the future.

We suggest that the hate people feel may be something that helps them identify threats to themselves and the people they love. A person who demonstrates a pattern of hurting or harming someone or has hurt or harmed someone significantly, has violated important relationship expectations, appears to be inherently evil, or has some deviant character flaw should reasonably be seen as a current and future threat to one’s well-being. In this case, it seems reasonable to conclude that if hate is a kind of emotion that motivates people to hurt or remove someone in our lives and these people they hate are those who know them well and have means to hurt them badly, then hating these people who threaten them may be the most efficient way of dealing with this social problem. Recent research by Roseman and Steele (2018) supports this reasoning. Their research has shown that unlike other emotions such as anger, disgust, contempt, or dislike, the goal of hate is to incapacitate the threat. Incapacitation can be done by avoidance, harming, or in most extreme circum-

stances killing the individual or people who are perceived to be the source of that threat. This has led other researchers to argue that hate is a self-protective emotion that is elicited specifically when someone is seen as a threat (Aumer & Bahn, 2016; Fischer, Halperin, Canetti, & Jasini, 2018; Shapiro, 2016). The threat may be real, perceived, or imagined, however, because the goal of hate is specifically aimed at incapacitating the person who is a threat, hate is a powerful and efficient emotion to address the problem. Although hate may not be socially acceptable (at least in many societies), it may be the best emotional response to help people know that someone could hurt them and should no longer be a part of their lives. If a coworker has sabotaged someone routinely and makes their life at work difficult, then hating that coworker may help them remove themselves from that person's influence and control. The idea that hate may be useful in preventing future strife is not original. In Proverbs, Solomon asks God for wisdom, and the primary theme of this book is how to live an effective life. A personified "Wisdom" speaks to the reader and informs him (the intended reader seems to be specifically male) that there are many temptations and threats to living a good life and in response to those temptations and threats, God hates them (Proverbs 6:16–19 and 8:13). God hates pride, arrogance, evil behavior, perverse speech, haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and many other things that cause one to deviate from the path of righteousness. From Proverbs, it appears that hate is not just a natural emotion, but a wise emotion to feel when trying to lead a just life.

Hate, however, may serve another function besides identification and elimination of the threats. We provide a personal example from Katherine Aumer's childhood here to illustrate.

I grew up in a midwestern town where the residents were primarily White. Being half White and Asian myself, this did not bother me. However, it seemed to bother a lot of White people who felt that my existence was annoying, if not intolerable. Routinely, like any young kid, I was picked on for various reasons: the kind of clothes I wore, the kind of laugh I had, my apparent brown-nosing with my teachers, but I was also picked on for reasons that seemed far less controllable. My squinty eyes were the foundation for a variety of jokes and rhymes that somehow ended in "dirty knees," and these kids found it very easy to tell me often that I needed to: "Go back to where you came from." This confused me as a kid, because they often said this to me at school or near my home—in other words, where I was from. When experiencing these instances of racism, I noticed that the people who picked on me and hated me for being part Asian were all very close to one another. They seemed to get along and their mockery of me seemed to fuel, inspire, and solidify their bonds. Similarly, the people who were my friends, those who did support and defend me, were people who I really liked and who liked me, and having a common enemy helped bring us together.

Of course, many people have similar stories in their lives and such instances can make one wonder if the hate people feel is not just something that can help them identify and eliminate threats in their lives, but hate (both shared and as the target of it) can also help people form coalitions and bond with people who share their hate?

2 Interpersonal Bonding Through Hate and Love

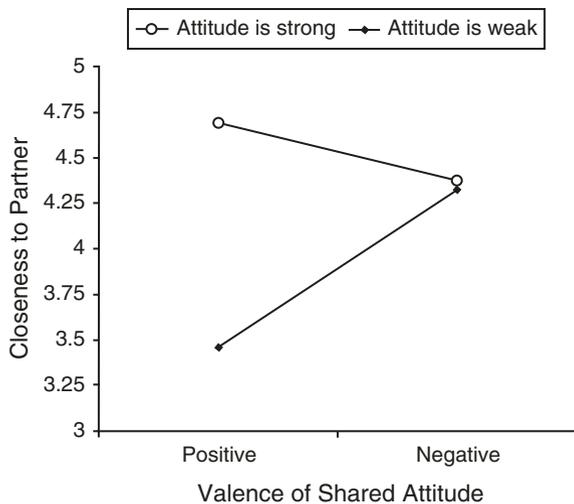
Interpersonal bonds can be initiated and maintained in a variety of ways. Sharing similar qualities with a friend or family member or romantic partner is often cited as a common way in which relationships develop and thrive. Similarity of features like physical attractiveness (Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster, 1971), level of intelligence (Watson et al., 2004), economic status (Byrne, Clore, & Worchel, 1966), and political orientation (Buss & Barnes, 1986) have all been found to be important shared qualities when initiating and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. Similarly, shared attitudes have also been found to be an important part of interpersonal relationships (Byrne, 1971; Miller & Geller, 1972; Jamieson, Lydon, & Zanna, 1987; Lydon, Jamieson, & Zanna, 1988). There are many reasons why similarities are so important in the initiation and maintenance of relationships. Shared physical attractiveness can itself be rewarding and help to maintain the social benefits and accustomed lifestyle that people with similar attractiveness experience (Sigall & Landy, 1973). Similarly, having shared levels of intelligence with a friend, family member, or romantic partner enhances communication and understanding (Watson et al., 2004). In essence, having shared traits with friends, family members, and romantic partners simplifies relationships. It could be very disappointing if every time someone went out with a friend or family member we could not agree upon the kind of food, entertainment, or mode of transportation we preferred.

Attitudes are an especially important part of relationships, because attitudes often reflect people's identity, status, and feelings about themselves. Heider (1946, 1958) showed that participants could often predict the degree to which two people were likely to develop a friendship based on the "balance" of their attitudes. For example, if two people shared either a positive or a negative attitude toward an object, their attitudes would be considered to be "balanced" and therefore much more likely to form a friendship. If you and your friend both like chocolate or both dislike a political candidate, then your attitudes would be considered balanced and you would both be much more likely to form a friendship. However, if such a relationship were to be "unbalanced" (e.g., you like chocolate and your friend dislikes chocolate or you dislike a political candidate and your friend likes the political candidate) then you would be less likely to form or maintain that friendship. The "balance" in people's attitudes that Heider references is important to the development and maintenance of friendships and is rooted in cognitive consistency. Cognitive consistency is the motive and desire to maintain one's values and beliefs over time, and when people either do something or believe in something that is not consistent with their values or behaviors, dissonance is created. Festinger (1957) argued that when this anxiety or dissonance occurs, people try to lessen their anxiety by either changing their beliefs to align with their behavior or their behavior to align with their beliefs. According to Heider, when it comes to relationships, having balanced attitudes with potential friends and partners maintains cognitive consistency and avoids the anxiety and angst people feel with cognitive dissonance.

Several studies have confirmed the importance of similar and balanced attitudes for the formation, maintenance, and satisfaction in relationships (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1969; Byrne, 1971; Byrne, London, & Reeves, 1968).

It may seem intuitive that having shared positive attitudes would be conducive to initiating and maintaining a relationship. After all, positivity in general seems to be more appreciated and valued than negativity (Folkes & Sears, 1977). Expressing positive evaluations or attitudes about a given subject or person may promote perceptions of warmth and sociability which are important in initial impression formation (Asch, 1946; Kelley, 1950). Additionally, when people express and share those positive attitudes balance is created and similarity is established. However, Bosson et al. (2006) proposed that a balance system consisting of negative attitudes would be more effective at creating closeness and familiarity than a balance system consisting of positive attitudes. In one study, participants listened to a taped interaction between two fictitious characters: Brad and a potential date. While listening to the taped conversation, participants generated novel positive and negative attitudes about Brad and rated how strongly they held each attitude. Later, participants learned they would be interacting with a stranger who had also listened to the same conversation and either shared some of their positive or negative attitudes of Brad. Participants got to rate their liking and closeness toward this stranger given their shared positive or negative attitudes. Interestingly, liking and closeness toward the stranger was impacted by both the valence of the attitude (i.e., positive vs. negative) and the strength of the attitude. Specifically, attitude strength moderated the relationship between valence of the attitude and closeness. When participants shared a strong positive or negative attitude with the stranger, participants reported high levels of closeness. However, when the attitude was weak, participants felt closer toward the stranger if that shared weak attitude was negative, rather than positive (see Fig. 2). These findings have two important implications: (1) the increase in

Fig. 2 From Bosson et al. (2006). Participants reported closeness to partners is impacted by both their shared attitude strength and valence. Shared strong positive or negative attitudes result in high closeness scores; however, weak attitude scores result in high closeness scores, only when the attitude is negative



reported closeness to strangers when they shared either strong positive or strong negative attitudes supports Heider’s balance theory and suggests that positivity may not be the only important factor in establishing and maintaining relationships, and (2) sharing negative attitudes with someone, whether those negative attitudes are weakly or strongly held, seems to create a closeness and familiarity with that person that positive attitudes can only do when they are strongly held. To put another way, Mary is likely to feel close to a stranger if they both strongly like the new presidential candidate or both strongly dislike the current president. Similarly, Mary is likely to feel close to a stranger if they both weakly dislike Hitler, but not if they both weakly like Tom Cruise. The findings of Bosson and her colleagues suggest that negative attitudes themselves may be special in the formation of friendships. Could this same relationship be extended if not found with hate? May people, like kids on a playground picking on a half White and Asian girl, find themselves closer to those who also share their hate for her or the people they hate?

A series of studies was conducted to better understand how hate may play a role in our intimate relationships (Aumer, 2019). In the first study, participants obtained through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk were asked to name someone they hated and then someone they loved. Participants in this study named a variety of targets of hate that supported findings from past studies (Aumer-Ryan & Hatfield, 2007): friends of friends, exes, coworkers, and family members. Additionally, however, they also routinely reported Donald Trump and Satan, as well as a variety of people they loved as well as hated, such as significant others and family members. Participants were then asked to name four separate friends who were not family members: one who shared the hate the participant had for the target of hate, one who did *not* share the hate the participant had for the target of hate, one who shared the love the participant had for the target of love, and one who did *not* share the love the participant had for the target of love. We then asked participants to rate how intimate they felt with each of these friends. As can be seen in Fig. 3, participants tended to feel much

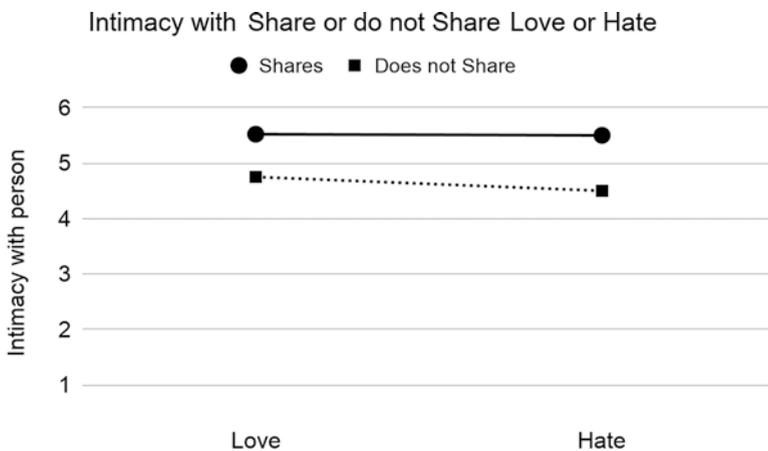


Fig. 3 From Aumer (2019), where participants reported feeling more intimate with those that shared their love and hate for a targeted individual than with those that did not share their love or hate

closer to people who either shared their hate or love for a person than those who did not share their hate or love. We did a series of studies in this paper (Aumer, 2019) that found similar results: people felt more intimate with those that shared their love or hate than did not. In one of these studies we asked half of the participants to identify *groups* of people they love and the other half to name groups of people they hate. Those who were asked to name a group they hated were asked to “name a group that really bothers you and that you wish were eliminated from your life.” Participants named a variety of groups including “rapists,” “child-molesters,” and “drug addicts.” The other half of the participants were asked to name a group of people that they love, who “really makes you happy and you wish were more a part of your life.” Participants named a variety of groups including “philanthropists,” “nerds,” or “grandmas.” We then asked half of the participants, like in our previous studies, to name a friend that shares their hate for that group and another friend who does not share their hate for that group and for the other half of the participants to name a friend who shares their love for that group and a friend who does not share their love for that group. We then asked participants to rate how intimate they felt with each of these friends. In line with the other studies reported by Aumer (2019), we found that participants felt more intimate and close with those that shared their hate and love than those who did not.

Bossons’ (2006) and Aumer’s (2019) studies demonstrate that the effect of similarity on the intimacy of our relationships extends beyond just superficial characteristics like attractiveness and attitudes, but into people’s values and emotions. Hate and love are often emotions people have toward others who have a significant influence and purpose in their lives. People do not just love or hate anyone, but as the previous section demonstrates their love and especially their hate is often aimed at those that know them well and have the means to best help or hurt them. When someone has a vested hatred toward someone else, that person has been identified as someone who can potentially cause harm, and that hate may help the person or their influence be eliminated from one’s life. As these studies show, hate serves not only as a detection system for threat but also as a means to find and feel closer to those that also see one’s targets of hate as threats. Those who share in a person’s feelings that someone is a common enemy becomes that person’s friend and may be able to help them eliminate that threat as well.

3 The Role of Love and Hate in Extremism

Both hate and love can be seen as “extreme” emotions. Extreme can be defined as “exceeding the ordinary, usual, or expected” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1c). From that definition, it seems appropriate to categorize hate as an extreme emotion, because hate is not an ordinary or expected feeling to have for people when we meet them. Most of our research on hate (e.g., Aumer-Ryan & Hatfield, 2007), as well as the research by others (e.g., Rempel & Burris, 2005) has shown that between 20 and 30% of people either do not experience or deny experiencing hate. That

being said, statistical normality does not dictate normalcy and although hate may itself be extreme, it does not mean that anyone who experiences hate would be considered an extremist. The essence of extremism in the field of psychology does not lie in the unusualness or strangeness in one's feelings or desires, but in the extent to which one is willing to sacrifice, fight, and cross social and physical boundaries to achieve an identity and significance within a group.

Kruglanski, Jasko, Chernikova, Dugas, and Webber (2017) have defined extremism in relation to an imbalance of motivational goals and "a willful deviation from the norms of conduct in a given context or situation" (p. 218). Kruglanski and his colleagues argue that most people tend to exhibit moderate behaviors which allows them to achieve their basic psychological and physical needs (e.g., Maslow, 1943). For example, I may have a great need for esteem and to be admired and one of those ways to achieve that need may be to crush my opponents in war or dissolve a corrupt working environment by destroying my boss's career. However, my need for bodily safety and a paying job may attenuate that goal and moderate my behavior so I can survive. An imbalance of motivational goals is likely to occur when the desire to be significant outweighs other, more substantial basic goals. Significance can have all sorts of meanings to an individual, but according to Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, Fishman, Orehek (2009), Kruglanski et al. (2013, 2014), it would be "to matter, to be someone, to merit respect" (Kruglanski et al., 2017, pp. 221–222). The shift from focusing on one's basic or common needs to suppressing them so that one can obtain significance is an important element of extremism. This definition is reflected and bolstered in Seyle and Besaw's chapter in this book, who define extremism as a psychological alignment with a group that is seen as having moral weight, being absolutely correct, and under threat where one is committed to the group's goals (Seyle, 2007). In both definitions (Kruglanski et al., 2017; Seyle, 2007), the needs of the individual become aligned with the group's goals and by helping achieve the goals of the group, one can then merit respect and be significant. The need to belong and the need to feel significant may be the driving force behind joining extremist groups, but as Seyle and Besaw also discuss in their chapter, so is having certain emotions. In contrast to Seyle and Besaw's focus on anger, the rest of this chapter discusses the critical role of hate and love in extremism.

As stated in Seyle's (2007) definition of extremism, members who join extremist groups see their group as actively under threat. Because hate has a self-protective function, people who are part of an extremist group are likely to see themselves and their group as under threat, and should therefore be inclined to feel hate toward those that have threatened them or their group. The threat may be presented explicitly by members of another group, or it could be indirect, even merely suspected, based on the perception of some usurpation of power, control, or dominance from some other group. The threat toward one's group may not even be witnessed firsthand or directed at the individual. The threat could be indirect, something seen online or through other media sources. What is important is that a group member perceives a threat that leads them to feel the need to protect themselves and their group that they now feel is under threat. Once that feeling of threat is perceived, the

group member is likely to start to develop concomitant feelings of hatred toward the threat.

Richeson and Craig (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Richeson & Craig, 2011) provided evidence that the perception of threat can impact attitudes and emotions. In their studies, they examine how people react to a majority–minority shift in the United States (U.S.). The majority–minority shift in the U.S. is a demographic change from a population in which the majority of people identify as White to one in which the majority identifies as People of Color (POC), as forecast by the U.S. Census Bureau (2012). Consideration of a majority–minority shift has different threat implications depending on one’s racial identification. The awareness that White Americans will no longer be represented as a numerical majority in the U.S. has different implications for different racial groups. On the one hand, this shift could be perceived by everyone as a positive outgrowth of the growing diversity of the nation. For minorities, this could have complicated implications depending on one’s racial group membership and status. However, for many White Americans whose status has been typically high and whose numerical majority has been maintained for centuries, this shift could be perceived as a threat. Status change can lead to a host of anxieties and fears, especially if the status change is one from a relatively high status to one that is of an unknown or possibly lower status. Additionally, when many White Americans become aware of the majority–minority shift, they may imagine their status becoming occupied or crowded out by POC. Considering those White Americans who have a strong desire to be significant and who strive to belong and have a strong identity, as described by Kruglanski et al. (2017), this knowledge of a majority–minority shift may be perceived as exceptionally threatening and may implicitly encourage them to find a group in which they can find comfort and safety.

Extremist groups may be able to provide this comfort and safety to those who find themselves lost, without identity, and without significance. Extremist groups provide followers with information that can be biased or false. This, however, can help a person feel special, connected, and part of an exclusive and possibly secretive group. Extremist groups can be formed around a person and/or ideology, but an important element of recruiting for an extremist group is that it helps fill that need for identification and achievement. We note that there can be many different pathways to joining extremist groups and what we propose does not encompass everyone’s situation, but this theory is drawn from a variety of research and sources that have found similar themes. We propose that love and hate are used by many extremist groups in three steps:

1. Establishing love for values and for certain people.
2. The recognition that these values and people are under threat.
3. The encouragement to use hate to help eliminate these threats.

By using and exploiting love and hate in these three steps, extremist groups help members fulfill their need to find recognition, identification, and importance.

3.1 Establishing Love

The love for certain values, people, and history is the foundation for many extremist groups. The “Birth of a Nation” (Griffith, 1915) helped the second Klan (which spanned from 1915–1944) form a stronghold in the midwestern and western states by espousing values that concerned the protection of White womanhood, family values, and the “purity” of Americanism. Without a love for these values and people, it would be difficult for a member to identify with the Klan. By loving these values, a person finds a beginning to their identity and a possible membership. The Ku Klux Klan is just one extremist group, but many extremist groups use similar values to help current and future members find something to love and devote themselves to: Christian values (Aryan Nations), brotherhood (Aryan Brotherhood), protection of children (American College of Pediatricians), traditional moral values (American Family Association and Family Research Council), and Black and heterosexual justice (Nation of Islam) (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). All these values sound positive and many people would probably endorse at least some of them and even stand up for them. Some may argue that these values are just obfuscating these groups’ real agendas. Nevertheless, these groups have used their values to brand their identity, and whether or not that branding actually reflects the true goals of the group, it does not mean that the love these members have for these values is not real.

In addition to using one’s love for certain espoused values or goals to attract members to an extremist group, many recruiters may also use a person’s love for their family members and friends to help attract members. Many recruits for extremist or terrorist groups are attracted shortly after they have lost a loved one or when a loved one has been or is perceived to have been harmed or hurt. McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) describe how people can become radicalized after having lost a loved one through the exploitation of their pain. An extremist organization may take advantage of the situation to help people who have suffered a loss find retribution and justice. Additionally, recruits for extremist groups may come out of loyalty for someone who they loved. If a loved one joins an extremist group and one wants to be part of that person’s life, it may seem practical and even essential to uphold that social bond by joining the extremist group to show support for the loved one (Borum, 2011; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). Love, for the group’s values or for the members involved, helps extremist groups find loyal and active members.

3.2 The Recognition of a Threat

Historically, extremist groups have had a variety of reasons for their formation. The Aryan Brotherhood formed along with other race-based prison gangs in the San Quentin State Prison when the prison system became desegregated (Southern

Poverty Law Center, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). The Aryan Brotherhood saw themselves and their “White brothers” as victims of their White identification in a prison system. The American College of Pediatricians started when the American Academy of Pediatricians allowed for and endorsed same-sex adoption, threatening conservative family values (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). A small faction of the conservative pediatricians split from the American Academy of Pediatricians to start their own group that they believed upheld their conservative values. These examples seem to justify at least the *feelings* of threat these members may have had. Whether or not White men and conservative family values were actually under threat by any outside observer is difficult to discern. Nevertheless, it is understandable how one could see these policy changes as threatening to the beliefs and values these people cherished and loved. The threat they perceive need not be real or even clear, but the idea of a threat needs to become marketed and publicized.

At the time of writing this chapter, we are currently at home undergoing “stay-at-home” measures by the governor of Hawaii and the mayor of Honolulu to help avoid the spread of COVID-19. The virus appears to be a very legitimate concern, and most people in Hawaii have complied as rates in Hawaii are one of the lowest in any state (Hawaii Free Press, 2020). However, there have been social media posts from a certain group of people called: “Reopen Hawaii” that are trying to spotlight the idea of a more sinister threat: a threat to personal and state’s rights. On these social media posts, people are told that these “stay-at-home” measures are ways in which the government is trying to eliminate freedoms and liberty, that people need to get “our freedom back” (see Fig. 4). These posts propose that if one loves or values freedom then one will want to reopen Hawaii during this pandemic. This argument seems to have failed for many, as Hawaii’s compliance with the stay-at-home order has been one of the best in the country (Caring.com, 2020). What remains evident is that the idea of the threat is real, and for those willing to entertain the idea, they could find themselves engaged in protests and finding themselves driven by a purpose to help save cherished freedom and liberty. “Reopen Hawaii’s” idea that the “real” threat is not the virus, but the government, can be a very charming proposition to groups that prioritize personal liberty and values. We are not saying “Reopen Hawaii” is an actual extremist group or even a group based in Hawaii. (Many writers have questioned the authenticity of these groups, including Ambinder, 2020.) However, like many extremist groups, this group is trying to spread the idea of a threat, and this idea can be attractive to those who want to find evidence to support the threats they may already imagine or fear to be there. Once one is willing to believe in the idea of the threat, then the group can help direct behavior on how to handle the threat and save what is loved.



Fig. 4 From the “Re-Open Hawaii” Facebook post on April 27th, 2020

3.3 Encouraging the Use of Hate

The final step in helping to recruit and maintain members in an extremist group is to help them see that the way to resolve the threat against the things they love is through hate. Hate may not always be explicitly mentioned or identified, because it can be politically or socially inappropriate. However, hate, as defined earlier in this chapter, is an emotion in which one consistently thinks of a person negatively, feels repulsed by them, and wants them to be gone or have bad things happen to them. This definition can be extended to groups. The Southern Poverty Law Center defines hate groups and extremist groups as having “beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics”

(Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). Whoever the target may be, extremist groups help their members by identifying them as the source of the threat and enlisting the members with the promise of a mission that will help them feel important and significant. The mission may be something as simple as creating online movements, staging and organizing protests, or helping with the group's next meeting. The mission may also be more violent or disturbing like intimidating, hurting, or murdering out-group members who are thought to be a threat. Whatever the mission, it is through the use of hate that helps the person feel their membership and identification with the group. Hating politicians or minority groups can be conceived as a good thing, because these people are threatening the good: the values, the people that the group member loves. For group members, thinking bad things about these people, feeling repulsed by them, and wanting bad things to happen to them becomes an honorable duty.

Moreover, because shared hate can help people feel closer (Aumer, 2019), the bond one develops with others in an extremist group can help members find not just duty or a mission, but a family. Because hate is viewed negatively and is somewhat taboo, it may feel invigorating for a person to feel like they are breaking social norms with another person by declaring their hatred explicitly without being shunned by those around them. Finding a group whose members share attitudes as well as hatred for a target can help the members feel less alone and more connected. It may be tangential to a member that they have joined a group that is viewed as an extremist group, or a hate group, or even a terrorist organization, because now the person can feel more comfortable or vulnerable with those who understand them and their situation. Hate becomes a very realistic and provocative answer to someone who desires to have purpose, importance, and significance in this world, because it does not just supply them with a resolution to a threat, but also protection and social connection.

4 Conclusion

The conceptualization of hate, regardless of whether it is thought of as an emotion, attitude, or motivation, is typically negative (Oatley et al., 2006; Royzman et al., 2005). Love on the other hand, has been viewed as positive (Erikson, 1963; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961). Although we agree with scholars and laypersons that love is a positive and hate a destructive emotion, that does not mean that hate should be avoided as a topic of study or be conceived of as something without purpose or function. Like love, hate should be studied and examined to better understand how it functions in people's lives and to identify ways to help control its exploitation and impact. This chapter has three main goals:

1. Examine how hate is defined and characterized by both laypersons and scholars.
2. Present studies that show how hate and love can bring people together and enhance intimacy.

3. Discuss how both love and hate can be used to help foster extremism.

As previously defined, hate is an emotion in which one consistently thinks negatively of a person, feels repulsed by the individual, and wants the person to be gone or have bad things happen to them. Hate is elicited by a perceived threat in one's life and helps them focus on eliminating that threat in their lives. The threat does not have to be explicit or direct, but importantly the threat is perceived by the person to be real. Additionally, hate can also help form coalitions and help unite people to help eliminate that threat. With the use of both love and hate extremist groups can recruit and maintain members in a three step process:

1. Establishing love for values and certain people.
2. The recognition that these values and people are under threat.
3. The encouragement to use hate to help eliminate these threats.

Extremist groups help people seeking identity and significance who want to find purpose and meaning in their lives (Kruglanski et al., 2009, 2013, 2014; Seyle, 2007). Extremism is not just an extreme experience of emotion or behavior, but it involves a complexity of identification, feelings of importance, and the use of emotion. By studying hate, we can learn more about its purpose, function, and how it can be used to manipulate people. We do not encourage the use of hate. However, denying that it occurs, avoiding the use of the word, or pretending to ignore it will not end the hate that people experience. By acknowledging that hate is a normal part of the human experience and by devoting time and energy into its examination, we can learn more how hate shapes life. In this chapter, we have described how hate is often instigated when a person feels a threat toward something they love or cherish. People obviously cannot eliminate all possible threats, but maybe there are ways to help alleviate threats by changing perception, creating distance, or providing non-threatening experiences with targets of hate. Additionally, we demonstrated that shared hate can bring people together as well as helping to form social bonds. Can we find ways to examine those bonds? For example, does it create and bolster bias amongst group members, and can those bonds be used to help eliminate hate when one member has a change of heart? Finally, we discussed how both love and hate can be used to pull people into extremist organizations. This information can be used to help empower people and prevent them from succumbing too easily to this attraction. By being aware of how powerful both love and hate can be and how susceptible people can be to the biases they create, people may be able to redirect life choices.

As Proverbs 8:13 (New International Version) suggests, hate may be used to help us overcome what we see as evil, but it can also be used by any group or organization as a way to create identification and camaraderie. Hate and love may not necessarily be polar opposites, but they seem to work together in directing how people behave and think about the people and things they value. Going forward, acknowledging hate's presence and influence in our lives, studying it without the bias of its reputation, may help us be more mindful of its presence and enable us to better control hate when it does occur.

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