

1-3-2024

## **A Constellation Approach to Understanding Extremist White Supremacy**

Kathleen Blee

Robert Futrell

Pete Simi

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/sociology\\_articles](https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/sociology_articles)



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), and the [Sociology of Culture Commons](#)

---

---

## A Constellation Approach to Understanding Extremist White Supremacy

### Comments

This article was originally published in *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, volume 28, issue 4, in 2024. <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671X-28-4-435>

### Copyright

The authors

## A CONSTELLATION APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING EXTREMIST WHITE SUPREMACY\*

Kathleen Blee, Robert Futrell, and Pete Simi†

*Reflecting on long-term intensive ethnographic fieldwork, we sketch a “constellation” framework for understanding U.S. extremist white supremacy. Rather than tracing fluctuating people and organizations to explain the persistence of white supremacist extremism, we suggest that focusing on a core set of practices, ideas, and emotions offers a more complex, nuanced, and useful interpretation. We contrast our constellation framework with more typical “bucket” approaches that tend to compartmentalize a complex reality into categories that do not sufficiently match extremism’s dynamism.*

The accelerating visibility of U.S. extremist white supremacy in the twenty-first century has left many grappling with how to interpret its alarming trajectory. The white supremacist resurgence is starkly evident in the Republican Party’s deep connection to racial extremism, reminiscent of the affiliations between the Ku Klux Klan and the 1948 “Dixiecrat” Democratic Party. Overtly racist ideas and symbols have increasingly seeped into digital media, political discourse, and even physical spaces as scrawled messages of hate. The spread of conspiratorial beliefs, rising episodes of right-wing domestic terrorism, the assault on democratic principles through racially motivated voter suppression efforts, and the embrace of violence as a political strategy further underscore the gravity of the situation.

Extremist white supremacy looks quite different today than the old stereotypes that many observers still hold. With a few exceptions, extremist white supremacy eschews formal membership organizations for more loosely organized networks that facilitate varying levels of participation for individuals aligned with white supremacist ideas and goals. Extremist white supremacist networks are activated through offline, personal connections, but also increasingly through web-based platforms that circulate propaganda, draw in recruits, and form virtual communities of the like-minded, providing focal points to organize offline collective efforts such as protests. Some extremist white supremacists have strategically sanitized their most shocking rhetoric by reframing racial hatred in public as “Eurocentric pride,” “white heritage preservation” and “white nationalism,” obfuscating terms designed to appeal to a mainstream White population and confer a measure of legitimacy (Berbrier 2000, 1999, 1998; Cooter 2006). These decades-long strategies have proven successful, especially in recent years (Miller-Idriss 2020).

As their ideologies infiltrate politics and culture and their extremist networks spread, it is apparent that the analytic frameworks generally used to study extremist white supremacy are limited in their ability to understand these processes fully. In this essay, we offer preliminary ideas for a new approach to understanding extremist white supremacy, what we term a “constellation” framework, that builds on our analysis of the recent trajectory of U.S. extremist white supremacy (Blee, Futrell, and Simi 2024).

---

\*. Thanks to *Mobilization*’s special issue editors Hank Johnston, Rory McVeigh, and Ziad Munson for supporting our work and to participants in the following conferences for their insights on earlier versions of this work: *Mobilization* conference 2023; American Sociological Association meetings 2023 and 2022; University of Central Florida and National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center’s Seminar Series 2021.

† Kathleen M. Blee is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at University of Pittsburgh, Robert Futrell is Professor of Sociology at University of Nevada Las Vegas, and Pete Simi is Professor of Sociology at Chapman University. All authors are equal contributors. Please cc the correspondence to [simi@chapman.edu](mailto:simi@chapman.edu), [robert.futrell@unlv.edu](mailto:robert.futrell@unlv.edu), and [kblee@pitt.edu](mailto:kblee@pitt.edu).

## EXTREMIST WHITE SUPREMACY

Our constellation framework defines extremist white supremacy by a core of reinforcing practices, ideas, and emotions grounded in a vision of white, male, and Western cultural, political, and economic domination. As the exclusionary logic that underpins extremist white supremacy presupposes male and heterosexual supremacy, the constellation extends to misogyny and anti-LGBTQ+ hatred, as well as racial domination. A constellation approach is sensitive to intersecting aspects of extremism, thus bridging what have been largely parallel scholarships on right-wing extremism as it operates with respect to gender, sexuality, and race/ethnicity (Blee 2020; Ferber 1998; Scrinzi 2024).

Our framework analogizes extremist white supremacy as a dynamic constellation. We draw from the astronomical meaning of a constellation as a set of stars with a recognizable pattern associated with images, animals, objects, or ideas. In short, the extremist white supremacist constellation is a large and spiraling network configuration that facilitates the circulation of key practices, ideas, and emotions. Within this constellation, an array of people, groups, and organizations are connected by a fairly persistent presence of practices, ideas, and emotions that operate toward the goal of white, Western male domination. Like astronomical constellations, the constellation of extremist white supremacy changes over time as people and groups come and go while others appear. We find this constellation imagery offers a more complex, nuanced, and useful way to interpret white supremacist extremism than more typical approaches that largely depict it as a collection of fragmented and sporadically organized people, groups, networks, and organizations.

Emphasizing extremist white supremacy's core practices, ideas, and emotions—rather than a fluctuating set of people and organizational forms—highlights a unity of purpose that has characterized the movement in the U.S. since at least the birth of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War (Trelease 1971; Cunningham 2012; McVeigh 2009). This unity stretches from the ardent nationalism of neo-Confederates to the global aspirations of neo-Nazis, from loosely organized white power skinheads to highly coordinated militias, and from online communities spouting memes of white racial domination to small in-person groups intent on launching a violent race war. Many of extremist white supremacy's core characteristics—a general opposition towards racial, gender, and sexual equality, political expressions of fear and anger, and antidemocratic practices—are shared with adjacent and overlapping movements, including Christian Nationalism, the conspiratorial online world of QAnon, and anti-abortion and anti-transgender extremism (Gorski and Perry 2022; Argentino 2022; Mason 2002). Thinking of extremist white supremacy as a constellation also offers us a way to explain how it subtly—and often covertly—burrows into spaces of public and private life, including political parties, media ecosystems, music scenes, online communities, and families (Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk 2006; Daniels 2018, 2009; Miller-Idriss 2020).

While some argue that the term “white supremacy” is overused and ill-defined, we balance the danger of describing it too broadly with recognizing that tepid characterizations often divert attention from its insidious and widespread effects. Our definition stretches across political movements and ideologies that label themselves as alt-right, white nationalist, white pride, patriot, and identitarian to obscure their core focus on maintaining and deepening white power, as well as across what scholars term the far-right, right-wing extremism, and right-wing populism (Mudde 2007). This conception of extremist white supremacism highlights its centrality to the myriad of ideologies that roll across extremism on the right and its expansive, encompassing character, making delineating its precise boundaries challenging.

The constellation of extremist white supremacism further operates in the context of what we term “ordinary white supremacy”—the racial privilege and domination that is normalized, subtle, covert, and embedded in institutions and practices (Blee, Futrell, and Simi 2024). It is ordinary in the sense that it is part of the “everyday racism” (Essed 1991) of unacknowledged racial assumptions, conventions, figures of speech, and ways of acting that make whiteness the standard. Extremist and ordinary white supremacy are too often treated as distinct and even

unrelated. Such distinctions ignore the highly integrated and reinforcing nature of extremist and ordinary white supremacy, in which common expressions of racism offer a grounding for more extreme forms that then work to normalize their practices, ideas, and emotions. In Cynthia Miller-Idriss's words, white supremacists want to see the "extreme gone mainstream," permeating and defining the broadest contours in political, economic, and cultural life (Miller-Idriss 2018).

### WHY A CONSTELLATION APPROACH?

The constellation imagery draws from classic sociological work on networks such as Georg Simmel's (1955) "web of group affiliations" but also more recently from highly influential articles like Mustafa Emirbayer's (1997) focus on a "relational" framework and Andrew Abbott's (1997) "contextualist paradigm." Emirbayer and Abbott offered extensive treatises that elaborated on long-standing sociological and philosophical traditions emphasizing the importance of dynamism over static interpretations of social life. Yet, almost by default, empirical and theoretical work often reverts to less nuanced models and interpretations including what we describe below as "bucket thinking" or "bucket approaches."

We came to our constellation approach for understanding white supremacy after struggling for years to explain to scholars, journalists, and authorities how deep-seated and persistent extremist white supremacy remained in the U.S., even as its public visibility had declined in the early twenty-first century. Critics argued with us that extremist white supremacy is so rife with organizational fractures and incompetent leaders that it is relatively powerless, innocuous, and nothing much to worry about. Those arguments started to subside around 2015 when extremist ideas emerged more publicly in the run-up to the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. They stopped completely with peoples' shock and surprise at the deadly 2017 Unite the Right (UTR) rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. After more than 500 white supremacists descended on the small college town carrying torches, shouting the Nazi nationalist slogan "Blood and Soil!" and the antisemitic rant "Jews Will Not Replace Us!," and violently attacking counter-protesters, few would deny that extremist white supremacists were out of hiding, coordinating terror, and striving for power. When Donald Trump explained away the racist violence by suggesting there were "fine people on both sides," white supremacists felt that they had an ally in the Oval Office, a significant step toward their goal of political legitimacy.

How did extremist white supremacy recede from public view and then, as most experienced it, unexpectedly burst back on the scene in Charlottesville? To those few who were tracking white supremacist extremists, nothing was surprising about this resurgence because white supremacists had not vanished. Rather, beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century and continuing in the first decade of the twenty-first century, they gradually withdrew from some of their public activism and forged more secretive networks while avoiding formal membership groups that authorities could surveil and harass. They nourished their racial hatred and violent fantasies in families and friendship networks, bars and music shows, racist communities, and myriad online spaces. They transmitted and sustained extremist white supremacy practices, ideas, and emotions through narratives, bonding rituals, images, and messages they invested with vitriolic racism. They sought to blend in with mainstream culture, distancing themselves from deeply stigmatized belligerent, combative, deviant, in-your-face styles in favor of more respectable presentations in public while retaining extremism inside their networks. In short, they were active, but not in ways most understood as a threat. When opportunities to come out of hiding emerged around 2015, they were primed to act on them.

We have previously analyzed this process of withdrawal and resurgence as an "active abeyance" (Simi and Futrell 2020) that allows extremist white supremacism to persist as committed activists turn efforts inward to maintain the continuity of activist networks, sustain an ensemble of goals and strategies, and "promot[e] a collective identity that offers participants a sense of mission and moral purpose" (Taylor 1989: 762). Extremist white supremacists' active

abeyance is not a product of movement contraction and member disengagement but rather a strategic choice to de-emphasize public forms of action in favor of more covert, private activities. Such efforts not only sustain the movement but also increase participation and create new network connections that leaders can engage when they perceive opportunities to go public.

The widespread surprise and confusion about Charlottesville highlight another critical but often overlooked principle about how social movements form and reform over time. Movements typically enter popular consciousness through public demonstrations, so observers tend to look for identifiable groups and leaders to assess the strength of a movement. However, highly public actions typically come quite late in movement formation. Focusing on extremist white supremacy movements only when their groups operate in public misses the critical cultural and networked processes involved as people identify their commonalities and who they oppose, form a shared sense of purpose and belonging, and translate their cohesiveness into action (Melucci 2009; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Flesher Fominaya 2010; Blee 2013). Rather than a movement's starting point, public protest actions are a vapor trail flowing from longer, prior efforts to build and integrate individuals and networks into a relatively cohesive block and to coordinate their willingness to act.

The collective surprise about UTR was also rooted in confusion about whether its participants were racial extremists and exactly who was "directing" this seemingly cohesive and coordinated terror. There is a longstanding tendency to associate extremist white supremacy exclusively with specific groups like the KKK, with their white robes and hoods, belligerent skinheads tattooed with Nazi symbols or prominent white supremacist leaders like David Duke or Tom Metzger. When such markers are absent, extremist white supremacy seems to be absent. But in Charlottesville, while some participants marched with identifiable symbols of white supremacy, such as Nazi swastikas and Confederate flags, many did not. That many of the extremists at UTR looked like "clean-cut" young men in khakis and polo did not align with the commonly held images of extremism. Neither did its decentralized efforts and the absence of well-known movement leaders. A constellation framework, with its focus on the culture of practices, ideas, and emotions that circulated in the virtual communities in which the attack on Charlottesville was organized, helps to reveal that extremist white supremacy was its core agenda and that the efforts of the attackers were coordinated through the cultural expectations of these virtual communities that "reinforce[d] norms of violence and more general codes of conduct among its participants" (Blee and Simi 2020: 9).

### THE "BUCKETS PROBLEM"

Extremist white supremacy is typically conceptualized by researchers, policymakers, and law enforcement in terms of "buckets," that is, categories containing sets of distinctive groups, persons, and networks. More specifically, extremist white supremacy has traditionally been categorized as a subtype of right-wing extremism. The broader umbrella of right-wing extremism typically includes antigovernment militias and single-issue extremists like anti-abortion extremists as additional subtypes along with white supremacists (Smith 1994; for insight into becoming an anti-abortion activist, see Munson 2010). At the same time, white supremacists have typically been characterized as having four major branches: Ku Klux Klan, Christian Identity, neo-Nazi, and racist skinheads (Burris, Smith, and Strahm 2000; Futrell and Simi 2004) or similar subtypes (Berlet and Vystosky 2006).

The right-wing extremist categories and the white supremacist subtypes provide useful heuristics to help organize an otherwise unruly set of actors and organizations. The buckets approach has also yielded valuable insights into recruitment strategies, tactical decisions, and collective identity processes. Yet these buckets betray certain blind spots that are important to address. First, the three right-wing extremist subtypes imply more distinctiveness than what exists on the ground. Militias, for example, have long historical points of overlap in terms of ideology, organizational ties, and participants with extremist white supremacists (Simi and

Futrell 2015; Belew 2018). Similarly, the branches metaphor overemphasizes distinctiveness since a substantial portion of extremist white supremacists can be more accurately described as hybrids representing an amalgam of the four branches. Even more complicated, other segments of extremist white supremacists do not fit on any of the four branches.

Buckets tend to compartmentalize a complex reality into categories that do not match extremism's dynamism. This problem has become more apparent in recent years with the increased ideological intermingling, fluidity of participants, and multi-issue protests across varying "buckets" of extremism (Hoffman and Ware 2020; Knops and Petit 2022; Graham 2016). Our critique comes as insiders who have embraced a buckets approach ourselves and found groups, networks, and organizations to be important focal points for understanding extremist white supremacy. But we also see problems parsing very complicated social movements like extremist white supremacism into distinct "buckets," thereby creating mutually exclusive categories for a reality that is anything but mutually exclusive.

What we identify as the "bucket problem" is a separation and distinction issue that leads to overspecification in studies and commentary on extremist white supremacy. Buckets fix social attributes that are fundamentally continuous and gradated into categories with an inferred underlying essence (Monk 2022; Roth, van Stee, and Regla-Vargas 2023). In the case of extremist white supremacism, such categorizing overlooks the complications and diversity of styles, ideologies, and affiliations in the movement.

Moreover, categorization implies categories with substantial internal consistency. This attribute does not align with findings of close-up empirical studies of extremist white supremacism through ethnographic observation and in-depth interviewing. On the contrary, studies that employ "internalist" methods (Goodwin 2006) have found considerable variation and ambiguity in, among other things, participants' knowledge and embrace of their group's ideology, willingness to engage in violent tactics, and commitment to the movement — aspects of extremist white supremacism that, in an externalist methodological study, can appear quite uniform (for examples of internalist approaches see Simi and Futrell 2015; Latif et al. 2020; Pilkington and Omel'chenko 2010; Fangen 1999; Busher 2015; Blee 2002; Simi et al. 2017). Extremist white supremacy—not only in its current period of considerable fluidity but also in the past—is constituted by people who hold contradictory ideas, who both embrace and disavow their affiliation, and whose behavior or appearance can seem at odds with their commitment to white racial domination (Simi and Futrell 2009). This latter phenomenon is evident in figures like Nick Fuentes, who traffics in racism and antisemitism despite his Latino background, or Proud Boys leader Enrico Tarrio, who pushes white supremacist ideas while highlighting his Cuban heritage.

The mutual exclusivity among categories implied in a bucket approach also assumes the existence of distinctions—between groups, between members/affiliates and nonmembers/nonaffiliates, between racist and antigovernment movements—that should instead be starting points for empirical investigation. It risks sidelining what doesn't fit, thus tending to underestimate extremist white supremacism's breadth, adaptability, and persistence over time. Perhaps most troubling is that categorical approaches make it difficult to ascertain the varying degree of overlap between extremist and ordinary white supremacy or between extremist white supremacy and central institutions of mainstream cultural, social, and political life such as the Republican Party.

### THE CONSTELLATION "FIX"

We propose an approach that examines extremist white supremacism through a constellation of the core practices, ideas, and emotions that have given common purpose to its various manifestations in the U.S. over the past century and a half.

The core practices of extremist white supremacism are those strategically directed to further white male domination. Acts of violence, intimidation, force, and terrorism against

perceived enemies and attacks on processes of democratic governance that do not overtly privilege White men are central practices that, if sporadically employed, are generally regarded as an option in extremist white supremacism. Other practices vary by context. In some cases, extremist white supremacists work to cultivate large numbers of supporters to establish broad legitimacy. In other cases, they do little outreach, relying on hard-core followers to usher in a race war.

The core ideas of extremist white supremacism consistently center on the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of persons defined as “nonwhite,” a fluctuating category that, in the U.S., includes persons with presumed ancestry from the continents of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, as well as Jews, Muslims, and others. Those suspected of being allied with persons deemed “nonwhite” are cast into the broad net of enemies of the White race known as “race traitors,” a group that encompasses the federal government, feminists, an ill-defined set of persons regarded as “commies” or “antifa,” and LGBTQ+ persons.

Extreme white supremacy operates through a core set of emotions that include the oft-noted emotions of rage, fear, frustration, anger, resentment, hatred, and indignation, as well as emotions that are often overlooked, such as sadness, pride, and a sense of self-satisfaction about having special insight and the courage to combat an existential threat to the White race (Latif et al. 2018; Fine and Corte 2021). Extremist white supremacist emotions are often displayed through expressions of hypermasculinity that make aggressive action, even violence, appear to be a necessary response to perceived threats.

Constellational thinking highlights how such core practices, ideas, and emotions flow into different expressions among the constantly morphing groups, networks, and affiliates of extremist white supremacism in its diffuse settings. Here are some thought experiments on constellational thinking:

Imagine if, instead of trying to categorize right-wing extremists according to group-based buckets by asking, “Are the Proud Boys white supremacists or not?” . . . and then thinking, “Well, their leader self-identifies as Afro-Cuban so they can’t be white supremacists” or “The Proud Boys don’t look like white supremacists” or “Proud Boys say they aren’t white supremacists and claim they want to promote and protect the positive aspects of Western culture,” we start with the practices, ideas, and emotions the Proud Boys traffic in? We’d see a deeply misogynist network of self-identified “Western chauvinists” who display a threatening emotional repertoire in their confrontational, often violent clashes with their opponents. We’d note that they say they welcome members of all races, sexual identities, and religions but that, in reality, most members are White, and the Western civilization they are dedicated to defending is decidedly rooted in white culture. Moreover, members routinely engage in anti-gay and anti-Muslim rhetoric and practices (Campbell 2022).

Or consider the Patriot Front, which might sound like a veteran’s group or an innocuous band of U.S. loyalists who talk about reclaiming America but which draws from the former Vanguard America network central to the UTR attack on Charlottesville. In addition to its organizational history, we’d note that the Patriot Front spreads the vilest ideas of racism and antisemitism, manipulates fear in their intimidating flash protests against African American churches, LGBTQ centers, and BLM protests, and threatens pro-immigration protesters at border detention centers.

Christian Nationalists can appear to some as a purely religious effort to move Christianity closer to the core of US culture and politics. But a closer look through a constellation lens would show that Christian Nationalists routinely fuse Christianity with racist practices, ideas, and emotions, as in the fiction that White Christians are the most persecuted group in the U.S and face genocide and extinction (the once but no longer, fringe idea known as the Great Replacement).

Are the array of misogynist internet forums and blogs, commonly known as the manosphere, “just” misogyny, or something more, especially considering the recent support on these forums for creating a “white sharia,” a fascist-patriarchal state? A constellation approach would reveal that the concept of “white sharia” links seemingly unconnected extremist white supremacist ideas, practices, and emotions—from an attachment to whiteness to the advocacy of male



violence against women, Islamophobic ideology, and the belief that white women are supposed to bear many children to prevent the specter of white racial genocide.

Finally, step back in time and compare a David Duke political rally from the late 1980s during his bid to be the Governor of Louisiana to one of Donald Trump's speeches during his 2015 Presidential campaign. The practices, ideas, and emotions they express are virtually indistinguishable. Duke's prominent connections to the Ku Klux Klan identified him as an extreme white supremacist at the time. Trump's less obvious extremist connections did not stigmatize him in the same way, even though he often advocated violence toward racial others, sometimes with more inflammatory language than Duke's.

When focusing on extremist white supremacy's core practices, ideas, and emotions, we find its imprint in a wide array of groups, networks, and settings. To take a recent example, the absence of overt symbols of extremist white supremacy, such as Nazi swastikas, at the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the nation's capital—especially in contrast to their appearance in the UTR violence in Charlottesville—might be taken to indicate that white supremacist extremism was not an animating factor in the event. But if we focus on the practices, ideas, and emotions that circulated on January 6—voter suppression, conspiracy theories about urban centers with large Black populations as the epicenter of the “stolen election,” rage, resentment, racial slurs directed at African American police officers, and nooses—the centrality of extremist white supremacism in that event is more evident.

A constellation approach illuminates similarities rather than differences in the expression of extremist white supremacy, such as how the movement draws from a common well of practices, ideas, and emotions while adapting them to particular purposes. Attention to its dynamic, processual, and contextual nature (Bosi and Maalhaner 2022) provides a way of understanding how extremist white supremacism grabs onto new issues, such as opposition to masking and other restrictions during the COVID epidemic, exhibiting what George Mosse (2020) termed the “scavenger” nature of the far right. The constellation's focus on change over time is useful for understanding the importance of timing in the trajectory of extremist white supremacism—how, for example, the practices, ideas, and emotions that propelled the rise of politically influential “antigender” misogynist movements across Europe also created new openings for a racial far-right (Kováts 2017).

The concept of a constellation of practices, ideas, and emotions offers a certain parsimony that helps observers avoid “distinctions without a difference” because of confusion over appearances and the often deceptive or manipulative way that extremist white supremacists present themselves. It is an antidote to the tendency to emphasize “newness” when old practices, ideas, and emotions recirculate or are borrowed, modified, and deployed in new situations. Thus, it provides an underlying consistency to the movement despite its constant churn of people and groups. For example, an image of the United States being “invaded” on the southern border that just decades ago was generated and associated with neo-Nazi organizations like the National Alliance was refashioned and reposted under the banner “Women for Trump” by millions of social media users who likely knew nothing of its origin but were attracted to the emotions the image invoked. The constellation concept can also address unexpected movement developments. Despite white supremacists' low tolerance for ambiguity and certain rigid features of their worldviews, the movement is a dynamic social system with great possibility for adaptability. For example, the recent moral panic involving Drag Queens has provided extremist white supremacists substantial opportunities to mingle as part of broader networks of Christian Nationalists, QAnon, and assorted individuals and groups opposed to the perceived corrupting influences on children.

Finally, a constellation approach to extremist white supremacism better aligns research in this area to insights and directions in social movement studies that emphasize the dynamic processes and emergent qualities of frames of interpretation, emotional and affective repertoires, and the practices of collective action (Blee 2012; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2012; Snow et al. 2014; Jasper 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The constellation framework brings several advantages for the next stage of research on extremist white supremacist movements. It highlights the interconnectedness of extremist ideologies and the adaptive nature of extremist white supremacy, allowing researchers to anticipate shifts, perceive underlying similarities, and overcome the limitations of traditional categorization. Focusing on core practices, ideas, and emotions across time and space, deemphasizes specific individuals and groups in favor of underlying uniformities that drive the persistence of extremist white supremacy. Its cultural foundation helps explain how extremist white supremacy integrates individuals and coordinates their actions.

How useful a constellation framework will be for other types of social movements is unclear, although we hope it offers helpful insights. Most importantly, we hope that understanding extremist white supremacy as a constellation of practices, ideas, and emotions offers a powerful tool for combating its insidious influence and dismantling its hold on contemporary society.

## REFERENCES

- Abbott, Andrew. 1997. "Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School." *Social Forces* 75(4):1149-1182.
- Argentino, Marc-André. 2022. "QAnon & Hybrid Threats." Presentation at Far-right Extremism and Disinformation Workshop, American University, March 29.
- Belew, Kathleen. 2018. *Bring the War Home*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Berbrier, Mitch. 1998. "Half the Battle": Cultural Resonance, Framing Processes, and Ethnic Affectations in Contemporary White Separatist Rhetoric." *Social Problems* 45(4):431-450.
- . 1999. "Impression Management for the Thinking Racist: A Case Study of Intellectualization as Stigma Transformation in Contemporary White Supremacist Discourse." *Sociological Quarterly* 40(3):411-433.
- . 2000. "The Victim Ideology of White Supremacists and White Separatists in the United States." *Sociological Focus* 33(2):175-191.
- Berlet, Chip and Stanislav Vysotsky. 2006. "Overview of U.S. White Supremacist Groups." *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 34(1):11-48.
- Blee, Kathleen M. 2002. *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- . 2013. "How Options Disappear: Causality and Emergence in Grassroots Activist Groups." *American Journal of Sociology* 119(3): 655-681.
- . 2020. "Where Do We Go From Here? Positioning Gender In Studies of the Far Right." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 21(4):416-431.
- Blee, Kathleen, Robert Futrell, and Pete Simi. 2024. *Out of Hiding: Extremist White Supremacy and How It Can Be Stopped*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Blee, Kathleen M., and Peter Simi. 2020. "Expert Report of Kathleen M. Blee and Peter Simi." Submitted on behalf of the plaintiffs in the U.S. Federal District Court case *Sines v Kessler*. (<https://files.integrityfirstforamerica.org/14228/1614109097-832-2-expert-report-of-k-blee-and-p-simi.pdf>).
- Bosi, Lorenzo and Stefan Maalhaner. 2022. "Gaining Momentum: Processual Perspectives in Research on Collective Action and Political Violence." Unpublished framing statement for October 2022 workshop, Scuola Normale Superiore and Hamburg Institute for Social Research.
- Burris, Val, Emery Smith, and Ann Strahm. 2000. "White Supremacist Networks on the Internet." *Sociological Focus* 33(2):215-235.
- Busher, Joel. 2015. *The Making of Anti-Muslim Protest: Grassroots Activism in the English Defence League*. London: Routledge.
- Campbell, Andy. 2022. *We Are Proud Boys: How a Right-Wing Street Gang Ushered in a New Era of American Extremism*. Hachette.

- Cooter, Amy Beth. 2006. "Neo-Nazi Normalization: The Skinhead Movement and Integration into Normative Structures." *Sociological Inquiry* 76(2):145-165.
- Cunningham, David. 2012. *Klansville, U.S.A. The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Daniels, Jessie. 2009. *Cyber Racism: White Supremacy Online And The New Attack On Civil Rights*. Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2018. "The Algorithmic Rise Of The "Alt-Right." *Contexts* 17(1):60-65.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1997. "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 103(2):281-317.
- Essed, Philomena. 1991. *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Eyerman, Ron, and Andrew Jamison. 1991. *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. State College, PA: Penn State Press.
- Fangen, Katrine. 1999. "On The Margins of Life: Life Stories of Radical Nationalists." *Acta Sociologica* 42(4):357-373.
- Ferber, Abby L. 1998. "Constructing Whiteness: The Intersections of Race and Gender in U.S. White Supremacist Discourse." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21(1):48-63.
- Fine, Gary Alan and Ugo Corte. 2021. "Dark Fun: The Cruelties of Hedonic Communities." *Sociological Forum* 37(1):70-90.
- Flesher Fominaya, Christina. 2010. "Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central Concepts and Debates." *Sociology Compass* 4(6):393404.
- Futrell, Robert and Pete Simi. 2004. "Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism." *Social Problems* 51(1):16-42.
- Futrell, Robert, Pete Simi, and Simon Gottschalk. 2006. "Understanding Music in Movements: The White Power Music Scene." *The Sociological Quarterly* 47(2):275-304.
- Goodwin, M. J., 2006. "The Rise and Faults of the Internalist Perspective in Extreme Right Studies." *Representation* 42(4):347-364.
- Gorski, Philip S., and Samuel L. Perry. 2022. *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Graham, Roderick. 2016. "Inter-ideological Mingling: White Extremist Ideology Entering the Mainstream on Twitter." *Sociological Spectrum* 36(1):24-36.
- Hoffman, Bruce, and Jacob Ware. 2020. "The Terrorist Threat from the Fractured Far Right." *Lawfare*, [www.lawfareblog.com/terrorist-threat-fractured-far-right](http://www.lawfareblog.com/terrorist-threat-fractured-far-right)
- Jasper, James M., 2011. "Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:285-303.
- Knops, Louise, and Guillaume Petit. 2022. "Indignation as Affective Transformation: An Affect-Theoretical Approach to the Belgian Yellow Vest Movement." *Mobilization* 27(2):169-192.
- Kováts, Eszter. 2017. "The Emergence of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy." Pp. 175-189 in *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by Michaela Köttig, Renate Bitzan, and Andrea Pető. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Latif, Mehr, Kathleen Blee, Matthew DeMichele, Pete Simi, and Shayna Alexander. 2020. "Why White Supremacist Women Become Disillusioned, And Why They Leave." *Sociological Quarterly* 61(3): 367-388.
- Latif, Mehr, Kathleen Blee, Matthew DeMichele, and Pete Simi. 2018. "How Emotional Dynamics Maintain and Destroy White Supremacist Groups." *Humanity & Society* 42(4):480-501.
- Mason, Carol. 2002. *Killing for Life: The Apocalyptic Narrative of Pro-Life Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2012. *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McVeigh, Rory. 2009. *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Melucci, Alberto. 2009. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. 2018. *The Extreme Gone Mainstream: Commercialization and Far Right Youth Culture in Germany*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2020. *Hate In The Homeland: The New Global Far Right*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Monk, Ellis P., Jr. 2022. "Inequality Without Groups: Contemporary Theories of Categories, Intersectional Typicality, and the Disaggregation of Difference." *Sociological Theory* 40(1): 3-27.

- Mosse, George L. 2020. *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Mudde, Cas. 2007. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Munson, Ziad W. 2010. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pilkington, Hilary, and Elena Omel'chenko. 2010. *Russia's Skinheads: Exploring And Rethinking Subcultural Lives*. London: Routledge.
- Roth, Wendy D., Elena G. van Stee, and Alejandra Regla-Vargas. 2023. "Conceptualizations of Race: Essentialism and Constructivism." *Annual Review of Sociology* 49:39-58.
- Scrinzi, Francesca. 2024. *The Racialization of Sexism: Men, Women and Gender in the Populist Radical Right*. London: Routledge.
- Simi, Pete, Kathleen Blee, Matthew DeMichele, and Steven Windisch. 2017. "Addicted to Hate: Identity Residual Among Former White Supremacists." *American Sociological Review* 82(6):1167-1187.
- Simi, Pete and Robert Futrell. 2009. "Negotiating White Power Activist Stigma." *Social Problems* 56(1): 89-110.
- . 2015. *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate*, 2nd edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2020. "Active Abeyance, Political Opportunity, and the 'New' White Supremacy." Pp. 112–139 in *Racialized Protest and the State: Resistance and Repression in a Divided America*, edited by Hank Johnston and Pam Oliver. New York: Routledge.
- Simmel, Georg. 1955. *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*. New York: Free Press.
- Smith, Brent L. 1994. *Terrorism in America: Pipe Bombs and Pipe Dreams*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Snow, David, Robert Benford, Holly McCammon, Lyndi Hewitt, and Scott Fitzgerald. 2014. "The Emergence, Development, and Future of the Framing Perspective: 25+ Years Since Frame Alignment," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 19(1): 23-46.
- Taylor, Verta. 1989. "Social Movement Continuity." *American Sociological Review* 54(5):761–775.
- Trelease, Allen. W. 1971. *White Terror. The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. New York: Harper & Row.