CASE SELECTION

Urban flight has left dwindling populations in rural America to handle the massive economic downturns their communities have experienced over the past 20 years. The multitude of white nationalist and separatist parties emerging out of this context suggests that a large response to the symptoms of trial in the region is not only the racialized separation of populations, but a total return to a time in America’s history. A time that these populations perceive to have been just and fair to their community: when their population benefitted from governmental services and economic systems which now allegedly marginalize and work against their existence.

PULLING: RETURN TO APPALACHIAN MAN

TWP uses mainstream caricatures of men, deeply embedded in Appalachian culture, to create the idea that membership is a means to social achievement.

TRADES CULTURE

Apprenticeships in TWP create the perception that members are reconnecting with their rural blue-collar roots. Through tradeswork, men feel that they can live outside of the normative system that oppresses their population.

FIGHTING FOR THE WHITE RACE

Through group action, young men perceive themselves to be the caretakers and protectors of the white community. Thus, through membership, the lost boys suddenly become heroes.

PUSHING: RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

The Appalachians and the Midwest experience some of the highest rates of poverty in the non-urban US. Informants express deprivation of government resources and feel that they have few to no employment opportunities.

GOVERNMENTAL DEPRIVATION

The lack of access to affordable healthcare and crumbling infrastructure build a sense that these men and their communities are underserved by the government.

EMPLOYMENT

Before joining the group, men typically held low-wage jobs that they found to be demeaning and below their level.

CONCLUSIONS

By demonstrating that white nationalists may be motivated by a desire to fulfill societal expectations around masculinity, and that these men often attach themselves to the groups because of the personal achievement the group provides, the research offers insights for theorists seeking to better understand the process through which individuals adopt extremist views and actions. The findings are simultaneously relevant for policy, as they suggest that to successfully prevent radicalization and counter extremism, policy initiatives must address these individuals’ desire to be seen, and see themselves, as masculine.

IMPLICATIONS

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