
Podcast Patriots: How Far-Right Women Podcasters Shaped the Narrative Around the January 6 Insurrection¹

Catherine Girard^{a2}

^aPhD Student in Political Science, Security and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Czech Republic

Abstract

Women play a crucial role in softening and mainstreaming the far right's appearance to the general population despite being less visible on the frontlines of radical or extremist events. This phenomenon has become increasingly apparent through audio-based content. With low barriers to entry and ease of creation, far-right women have increasingly relied on podcasts to mainstream their ideologies. However, this method of dissemination remains understudied in comparison to its reach. Accordingly, this research analyzes the ways four women-hosted far-right podcasts in the United States used their platform to speak about the January 6, 2021, Capitol Hill insurrection. Through the use of frame theory, this research demonstrates that the podcasters fail to acknowledge the insurrection as a significant issue, instead opting to deflect the greater blame onto left-leaning social movements, the government, and the mainstream media. Furthermore, this research shows that the podcasters use strong fear-mongering tactics and provide calls to action to remedy a perceived left stronghold. Throughout, the podcasters invoke patriotic sentiments, setting a narrative of allegiance and responsibility that mobilizes their listeners to act against a perceived enemy. This research contributes to the discourse on far-right social media influencers, suggesting the need for a distinct classification for far-right influencers who disseminate content with an explicit, far-right extremist political angle, as it can avoid the oversimplification of gender roles with these movements, as well as the misconception that women within these groups share uniform beliefs and behaviours. Finally, this research proposes the development of targeted prevention and counter-measures using inoculation theory and frame theory, emphasizing the essential integration of gender dynamics within P/CVE efforts.

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Introduction

Attention on the far right and its members has long focused on men, but the ever-creeping rise of far-right women influencers has made it impossible to ignore the role women play within

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² Corresponding Author Contact: Catherine Girard, Email: catherine.girard@mail.muni.cz; Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Joštova 10, Brno, Czech Republic. Twitter: @catherine_gir

this community. While women might not have been on the frontline of the insurrection, representing only 13% of the 776 federal cases related to the insurrection (Matfess & Margolin, 2022), far-right women exert a different type of influence. In particular, far-right women influencers play a pivotal role in making their movements' appearance more palatable to mainstream audiences.

Although attention on women in the far right has grown in recent years, as evidenced by works such as those by Darby (2020) and Leidig (2023), their participation in far-right movements still remains understudied (Alexander, 2019). Throughout history, gender biases, such as the portrayal of women as victims coerced into far-right movements, as well as the stereotype of women as nurturers and inherently non-violent mothers, have limited the understanding of women's roles in extremist movements (NATO, 2023). Much of the academic discourse on the far right has prioritized combatants and violent actors, thereby overshadowing the non-violent yet sinister roles played by women (Alexander, 2019). Overall, this has led to a significant gap in the literature on how women participate in far-right movements, particularly in recruitment and propaganda.

In parallel, far-right extremists have increased their reliance on audio content to propagate their hateful ideologies. Podcasts are inexpensive to create and distribute, and there are few federal regulations compared to broadcast radio, lowering the barrier to entry (Squire & Gais, 2021). Far-right podcasts have achieved notable success for various reasons, with one significant factor being the sheer volume at which they publish new episodes, oftentimes every weekday and even on the weekend. Consequently, they flood and dominate the charts on platforms where their podcasts are available. As of 2021, 41% of Americans had listened to a podcast in the last month, up from 37% in 2020 and 9% in 2008, continuously growing the market of potential listeners (*Audio and Podcasting Fact Sheet*, 2023; Newman et al., n.d.). Furthermore, almost one in four Americans turn to podcasts for their news (Wirtschafter, 2023).

As podcasts continue to grow in popularity and become a trusted tool for influencers to expand their reach, this study combines these topics by analyzing the episodes of four far-right women-hosted podcasts published within five days of the January 6 insurrection and asks:

- (i) How do far-right women podcasters shape the narrative around the January 6 insurrection?
- (ii) How does their framing of the January 6 insurrection help in the development of targeted P/CVE efforts?

In what follows, this research addresses women's role in far-right movements and uses discourse analysis within frame theory to analyze the podcasts' diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. After providing an analysis of the podcasts, this research argues for a distinct classification for far-right influencers who disseminate content with an explicit, far-right extremist political angle. Finally, the research outlines implications and potential pathways for deradicalization efforts targeting listeners of these podcasts, with a focus on counter-narratives.

Women in Far-Right Movements

“Women have been in backrooms and classrooms, chat rooms and newsrooms, boardrooms and bedrooms [...], they are a sustaining feature” of the far right (Darby, 2020, p. 17). While women have held a variety of roles in far-right movements, they are often perceived as supporting roles to their male counterparts. For the most part, women in far-right movements are expected to conform to traditional gender roles, which, according to the far right, are threatened by multiculturalism and feminism. Through the embracement of masculinity for men and femininity for women, the latter have adopted values and responsibilities associated with traditional womanhood, supported by the far right's emphasis on biological differences between genders (Skjelsbæk et al., 2020). To return to *simpler times* with predefined gender roles, women are expected to fulfill their natural roles as mothers, child bearers, and caretakers, evoking notions of motherhood-wisdom, wholesomeness, and warmth (Heinemann & Stern, 2022; Samuels & Shajkovci, 2022).

Although far-right movements strongly oppose gender equality and have weaponized the concept of feminism to recruit both men and women, the belief among scholars who study gender and the far right is that women hold significant importance despite prevailing

misogyny. In their 2019 work, Ebner and Davey emphasize the importance of women members as recruiters and propagandists for the far right (2019). Attempting to rebrand itself away from the traditional neo-Nazi movement and closer to patriotism and Identitarian rebels, women have become strong amplifiers of far-right rhetoric. Indeed, far-right groups strategically use women members to soften their image and make their extremist ideology seem attractive (Mattheis, 2018). Furthermore, Leidig states that “women in far-right extremism serve to legitimize and normalize the movement by presenting it through subtle framing and through content that is assumed to be non-political,” an ominous element useful in radicalization (Leidig, 2021b). Women in the far right aid in projecting an image of families and communities that are proud of their heritage – something that does not seem so different from the average family (Bowman & Stewart, 2017). As such, while fulfilling their roles as propagandists, women in the far right also provide an air of normalcy to onlookers.

Given their public nature, far-right women influencers have been the subject of more studies compared to non-public far-right women. Those in the public eye act as broadcasters of far-right narratives (Ebner & Davey, 2019). In an attempt to mainstream their fringe ideologies to the general public, far-right influencers share content on mainstream platforms rather than the dark web and fringe platforms (Leidig, 2021a). This content is disseminated through the merging of their personal lives with their political identity. These influencers combine the allure of celebrities with the intimacy and friendship of influencers. Through content that portrays them as relatable, accessible, and authentic, they broadcast traditional gender norms and brand their radical political beliefs as aspirational (Leidig, 2022).

Far-right women influencers mostly target other women (Leidig, 2022). They share their sisterly bonds with other influencers and cover a host of topics related to motherhood, marriage, and parenting. At face value, such content can be regarded as apolitical (Leidig, 2022). However, it is ominous and reinforces traditional gender and racial roles (Lewis, 2018). Far-right women influencers also cater to men by heavily relying on gendered narratives of (hyper)masculinity, in which they claim society is anti-men and prohibits them from asserting their *natural* masculine traits, such as aggression, dominance, and leadership. They imply that if men join their far-right community, they will be able to demonstrate their masculine traits that are frowned upon in mainstream society (Leidig, 2021a, 2022; Maly,

2020). Overall, these women of the far right have the power to spin the image of the far right into a softer, welcoming, and normal community, ideal for propaganda and radicalizing followers.

Podcasts and the Far Right

Podcasts offer a profitable channel through which false and misleading claims, which consequently shape public opinion and public behaviour, can be disseminated (Wirtschafter, 2023). In her analysis of over 8 000 episodes of popular political podcasts, Wirtschafter discovered that approximately one in ten shared potentially false information (Wirtschafter, 2021). Moreover, Wirtschafter found that after the election day of November 3, 2020, claims of election fraud rose by almost 600% in over 28% of all political podcasts that aired between then and January 6, 2021. The majority of these claims came from conservative series (Wirtschafter, 2023). Finally, another analysis of over 36 000 episodes found that: “even after accounting for the potential partisan skew of fact-checkers, conservative podcasters were 11 times more likely than liberal podcasters to share claims fact-checked as false or unsubstantiated” (Thompson, 2023; Wirtschafter, 2023).

Despite this, podcasts have been largely overlooked in research. The audio-based nature of podcasts makes it challenging to monitor and analyze. Large quantities of audio-based content are (i) an ideal tool to incorporate misleading information that will go undetected and (ii) long and expensive to transcribe and, therefore, analyze. Wirtschafter also notes that there is a misconception that podcast content does not travel as quickly across information ecosystems as it does on other social media platforms (Wirtschafter, 2021). However, this perception fails to consider podcasts’ large audiences and the close relationship between a podcast host and their audience, which leads the latter to accept information at face value (Berry, 2016; Funk et al., 2023).

Due to their unique distribution model, addressing false information from podcasts requires a distinct approach compared to other tech industry sectors. While podcast platforms, like Spotify and Apple Podcasts, share similarities with other social media platforms, the relationship between the publisher and their audience is more similar to traditional media,

such as television and radio, as there is no immediate chance to have a public debate about the content. Additionally, Apple's guidelines on inaccurate and misleading content relate mostly to metadata and copyright issues, and Spotify only provides a vague framework on prohibited content, as well as no simple way for listeners to report content (Wirtschafter, 2021). Overall, podcasts have largely avoided scrutiny on content moderation and regulatory debates in comparison to other social media companies (Hsu & Tracy, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

To conduct the data analysis, this research uses frame theory as it allows for the interpretation of social movements' ideas and meanings within the culture in which they operate (Goffman, 1974; Snow et al., 2018). According to Benford and Snow, frame theory provides the opportunity to understand "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activists and campaign of a social movement organization" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). Frames are tools that assign meaning to and interpret events in ways that encourage mobilization, garner support, and destabilize opponents (Snow & Benford, 1988). Frames act as brackets that tell one where to focus, bring coherence to a variety of events, and create links between events and actors (Snow et al., 2018). Indeed, the act of framing involves the selection "of some aspects of a perceived reality and [making] them more salient [...] in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

While frame theory has been used extensively in attempts to understand social movements, its application is less frequent in the study of right-wing movements, creating a gap in the literature on the framing of claims made by far-right movements (Caiani, 2023). However, it is important to recognize that far-right social movements also utilize these framing techniques to shape public discourse, mobilize support, and advance their agendas. Consequently, a deeper understanding of their meaning-making processes could allow for more effective development of P/CVE strategies.

Benford and Snow lay out three core framing tasks that are constructed by a movement to create a shared understanding of a problematic matter or situation in which it

finds itself. First, diagnostic framing is two-prong. It identifies a problem and explains its characteristics and attributes blame or responsibility for the identified problem (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2018). It also aims to transform the matter into a social issue (Caiani, 2023). Second, prognostic framing offers solutions to the identified problem(s), with solutions proposed by opponents being dismissed (Snow et al., 2018). Finally, motivational framing provides a rationale for engaging in the presented collective action, highlighting the urgency to solve the matter (Benford & Snow, 2000). These three core framing tasks act as the cornerstone concepts of this research's theoretical framework.

Conceptual Background

On January 6, 2021, a joint session in Congress was set to take place in the American Capitol to certify Biden's electoral vote win. Simultaneously, thousands of Trump supporters gathered near the White House to hear him give a speech in which he called for them never to concede and for then-Vice President Pence to reject Biden's win. Urging his supporters to go to the Capitol, a heavily armed mob, including members of right-wing extremist organizations such as the Proud Boys and QAnon conspiracy theorists, made their way over, eventually breaking into the building. As Trump continued to tweet about the so-called fraudulent 2020 elections from a distance, the mob aimed to enter the Senate Chamber with violent intentions concerning politicians who stood in the way of them reclaiming their country after election fraud. Certain politicians, such as Pence and Pelosi, were evacuated, while other politicians and staff members hid from the rioters who beat police and security officers, broke windows, and vandalized offices. The mob severely outnumbered the 1 400 Capitol Police officers, and the National Guard did not arrive for hours after the insurrection had begun. Hours into the insurrection, Trump finally released a video message telling the mob to go home while reiterating that the elections were stolen and calling the rioters *great patriots*. Two hours after a curfew was set in Washington D.C. by the city's mayor and seven hours after the start of this event, the U.S. Capitol Police announced that the Capitol building was secure, and the House reconvened to certify Biden's win, rejecting the Republican party's objection that the elections were fraudulent and stolen ("Capitol Riots Timeline," 2023; *The January 6 Attack*

on the U.S. Capitol, n.d.; Cohen & Lotz, 2022; Duignan, 2021; Lonsdorf & Dorning, 2022). Unfortunately, the January 6 attack resulted in the death of at least ten individuals, including mob members, as well as police officers who sustained serious injuries from the mob's attacks, and two who later died of suicide (Cameron, 2022).

Methodology

The far right is characterized by illiberal opposition to equality (Mudde, 2019). For this research, the far right is recognized as an ideology that combines three broad concepts: (i) authoritarianism, defined as limited political pluralism and the desire to protect traditional values; (ii) anti-democracy, or the opposition, rejection, or undermining of democratic values, procedures, and institutions, and (iii) radical exclusionary nationalism, or the rejection of pluralism, diversity, and equality to save a perceived endangered homogenous nation (Carter, 2018; Jupskås & Segers, 2020).

This research employs a qualitative interpretive method. To study the meaning-making and framing processes of far-right women-hosted podcasts regarding the January 6 insurrection, this research uses discourse analysis. This research adheres to Bondarouk and Ruel's concept that discourse analysis should concentrate on a collection of texts rather than an individual one in order to examine the interplay between the discourse and context (Bondarouk & Ruel, 2004). Discourse analysis emphasizes the examination of context and meaning and closely studies a text, in this case, the discursive unit of podcast audio. Caiani underlines that its analysis "must not depart too far from [the words being analyzed]" (Caiani, 2023, p. 196). Furthermore, this research interprets the discursive units without a numeric coding scheme and provides evidence for its arguments through quotations from the discursive units (Caiani, 2023).

As podcast platforms do not have a recommended playlist of far-right podcasts to browse, this research began with the optimistic search engine inquiry of "best far-right podcasts." The results proposed various web aggregators that contained curated lists of popular podcasts within the "conservative" genre. Women-hosted podcasts were scarce in

comparison to male-hosted podcasts, but the research succeeded in finding four that meet the following criteria:

- (i) Be hosted by one or more women.
 - Podcasts with one or more male co-hosts were omitted to focus on the gender-specific aspect.
- (ii) Be available on both Spotify and Apple Podcasts.
 - This allows for the analysis of podcasts that (i) have a wider reach, (ii) are available on mainstream platforms, and (iii) mainstream their content to the general population.
- (iii) Have existed during the January 6 insurrection.
 - Many podcasts that ranked higher in the popularity ratings at the time of this research began after January 6, 2021.

If a podcast met the first three criteria, three episodes were randomly selected and listened to in order to determine if they met the fourth criteria:

- (iv) Disseminate far-right ideology and narratives.
 - To determine if podcasts from the “conservative” genre list were conservative or far right, each podcast had to exhibit at least three instances of each concept that comprises the far right: authoritarianism, anti-democracy, and radical exclusionary nationalism, as defined above.

If the podcast also met the four criteria, the podcast was selected for this research. As such, the research analyzes the ten following podcast episodes published five days after the January 6 insurrection, therefore between January 7, 2021, and January 11, 2021, inclusively:

- (i) *Podcast 1*, published every weekday, with a rating of 4.7 stars out of 5 from 52 reviewers on Apple Podcasts and 4.9 stars from 14 reviewers on Spotify; 3 episodes.

- (ii) *Podcast 2*, published about four times per week, with a rating of 4.8 stars out of 5 from 15 700 reviewers on Apple Podcasts and 4.8 stars from 5 000 reviewers on Spotify; 2 episodes.
- (iii) *Podcast 3*, published four times per week from Monday to Thursday, with a rating of 4.8 stars out of 5 from 56 reviewers on Apple Podcasts and 4.3 stars from 8 reviewers on Spotify; 2 episodes.
- (iv) *Podcast 4*, posted four to five times per week with occasional weekend episodes, with a rating of 4.8 stars out of 5 from 1500 reviewers on Apple Podcasts and 4.8 stars from 159 reviewers on Spotify; 3 episodes.³

While the four podcasts are hosted by women, some also conducted guest interviews with men. As this research is centred on women's impact on the discourse around the insurrection, contributions from interviewed men are omitted to focus on such. The analysis of the selected podcasts was guided by a predefined coding framework based on the three core framing tasks. First, I listened to each episode to familiarize myself with the content and to gain an in-depth understanding of the narratives being shared and how they relate to one another. Then, I manually transcribed the audio content with time stamps. The text was segmented into individual units, ranging from one sentence to a paragraph of maximally four sentences. This was done to ensure a thorough examination of the content, facilitate a focused analysis of the content in each segment, and allow for a systematic method of extracting discursive units that could be categorized into one of the three core framing tasks of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. Once the discursive units were categorized, I conducted a thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns within each frame. Throughout the analysis, I also employed iterative analysis, revisiting the data to connect it with emerging insights and leading to a refined understanding (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009).

Understanding far-right narratives and the methods through which they are mainstreamed is crucial to identifying the necessary elements for effective deradicalization.

³ To prevent the mainstreaming and promotion of far-right platforms, all podcast titles and host names have been pseudonymized. This approach ensures that the focus remains on the analysis of the content rather than providing far-right individuals publicity.

These findings enable policymakers, authorities, and P/CVE practitioners to develop tailored preventative interventions and counter-measures.

Analysis of Framing Processes

The four podcasts disseminate similar narratives, although presented differently. Podcast 2 relies solely on monologues from the host, while Podcasts 1 and 3 contain both monologues and interviews with guest speakers. As two friends host Podcast 4, it creates an atmosphere akin to being with friends, enabling their listeners to feel personally connected to the hosts and fostering a sense of camaraderie (Leidig, 2022). This environment can result in their listeners unquestioningly accepting the hosts' narratives, as an individual is less inclined to critically assess the information being delivered to them by someone they feel close to (Kruglanski et al., 2019). While the frames are separated for clarity through this research, they are largely intertwined with one another in the podcasts.

Diagnostic Frame: Placing the Blame Elsewhere

The discourse analysis of the podcast episodes finds that the hosts minimize the insurrection, partially by comparing it to the gravity of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that ensued after George Floyd's murder in May 2020. They assign fault to ANTIFA and left-wing groups for infiltrating the masses and causing violence on January 6 and defend Trump against claims that he incited it. The podcasters also disseminate strong anti-government and anti-media sentiments as they perceive these institutions as part of the problem.

Save for the host of Podcast 3, the podcasters publicly condemn the insurrection. However, it is critical to note that the condemnation is short and swiftly shifted towards extensive criticism of the BLM protests. For example, Podcaster 2, whose sentiment is echoed by the other podcasters, states:

Everyone should have been condemning the violence that has gone on in this country since May. [...] Let me be clear: the people who are condemning and calling out the people storming the Capitol this week, which is right for them to call that out, but they

had nothing to say when Black Lives Matter and ANTIFA were burning down cities, or looting innocent people's business, making economic recovery in already-poor communities impossible in a pandemic, assaulting people, murdering people including Black adults and children, [...] have no right to talk now (Podcast 2, 2021a, 17:20).

This excerpt also highlights Podcaster 2's use of positive self-presentation, with the goal of positioning her ideas as in the best interest of marginalized communities. She frames her criticism of the BLM protests as not a result of racism but a desire to protect disadvantaged communities.

Traditionally, the first prong of diagnostic frames focuses on identifying a problem. However, the podcasters instead pinpoint a problem that, in their view, merits much less concern than it is currently receiving. In an attempt to soften the appearance of those who participated in the insurrection, the podcasters refer to them as "so-called rioters" (Podcast 1, 2021a, 35:30) and "peaceful Trump supporters" (Podcast 3, 2021a, 1:50). To humanize the participants and create a sense of empathy or understanding among their listeners, the hosts of Podcasts 3 and 4 also share stories of their friends who were present, unaware that violence would occur (Podcast 4, 2021a, 1:35; Podcast 3, 2021a, 6:45). In her first episode after the insurrection, Podcaster 2 offers her listeners perceived reasonable reasons for which insurrectionists might have stormed the Capitol, such as a bad economy and unemployment, and thinking that Trump is their only hope (Podcast 2, 2021a, 13:36). The host of Podcast 3 also states that the rioters simply wanted to peacefully enter the Capitol to speak to their elected representatives, hoping to have reasonable conversations with them about the electoral fraud that had occurred (Podcast 3, 2021a, 22:40). The insurrection is referred to by the hosts of Podcast 4 as a "love-fest of really wonderful people" (Podcast 4, 2021a, 1:35). By personalizing the narrative and casting doubt on the characterization of the participants as violent, the hosts downplay the severity of the event and normalize participation within it, shift the narrative away from acknowledging the true nature of the insurrection, and alter listeners' perception of the event.

In minimizing the events of January 6, the podcasters underline how the BLM protests were significantly graver and more violent: "As bad as the scene was yesterday, we need to

have perspective. This wasn't an armed takeover the likes of which we've seen from the left in cities like Portland and Seattle," claims the host of Podcast 1 (Podcast 1, 2021a, 3:26, see also Podcast 1, 2021c, 3:30). Podcaster 2 makes similar claims about BLM setting cities on fire and creating zones that allow for violence, murder, and sexual assault (Podcast 2, 2021a, 18:21). This comparison downplays the violence that unfolded on January 6, serves as a tool to shift the focus onto the actions of the left, and diverts attention from the actions of those involved in storming the Capitol. This framing serves to mitigate their audiences' condemnation of the insurrectionists by casting doubt on the uniqueness and significance of their actions, ultimately attempting to justify their behaviour.

The second prong of diagnostic framing assigns fault to the problem. None of the podcasters disagree about the fact that the insurrection took place. However, most claim that the reason for the violence is the infiltration of identified members of ANTIFA and other left-wing groups in the crowd, who disguised themselves as Trump supporters and "agitated" the others (Podcast 3, 2021a, 8:20, 2021b, 42:06; Podcast 1, 2021a, 5:13). Podcaster 1 also adds that the infiltrators had been booed by real patriots during the insurrections when they were trying to break windows and commit crimes (Podcast 1, 2021b, 6:30). In this case, Podcaster 2 stands apart from the consensus, stating that, while it could be possible, she believes there was no ANTIFA infiltration (Podcast 2, 2021b, 11:40). Framing the violence as a consequence of outside agitation allows the podcasters to deflect responsibility from those directly involved in the insurrection. Again, the hosts of Podcast 4 shared a personal testament from a friend who was at the insurrection and witnessed ANTIFA members pretending to be "MAGA people" (Podcast 4, 2021a, 1:35). Such use of a personal story makes it more challenging for their listeners to disagree, as how could they disagree with an on-the-field testimony?

Moreover, in assigning – or, in this case, deflecting – blame, half of the podcasters defended Trump's behaviour against the accusations that he was at fault for the insurrection. Podcaster 1 states that no part of Trump's January 6 speech could be misconstrued as a call to violence (Podcast 1, 2021b, 3:57). More overtly, Podcaster 3 uses a populist approach to defending Trump's behaviour as she attempts to portray him as an ordinary citizen concerned about politicians and the elite. She claims: "Trump is not part of *the club*. Trump doesn't

understand how the ruling class is supposed to work. Trump is telling people that they actually have rights as citizens and should expect their government to listen to them” (Podcast 3, 2021a, 56:26). According to her, the left hates Trump because he “reinspired, or what Trump reengaged the American people in doing was love America, love of freedom, love of free markets, love of a strong military, love a strong country [sic]” (Podcast 3, 2021a, 52:40). Such assertions aim to absolve Trump of responsibility and reshape the narrative surrounding his involvement. Alternatively, the hosts of Podcast 4, as well as the host of Podcast 2, state that Trump did play a part in the insurrection, although he was not the only one, and that he “egged [the mob] on” (Podcast 4, 2021a, 14:10; Podcast 2, 2021b, 2:34).

Finally, the podcasters identify two broader issues within society that relate to the events of January 6: the government and the media. First, the podcasters negatively frame both the Democratic and Republican parties. The podcasters use strong language to speak about the Democratic party, calling Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat representative for New York’s 14th district, and the rest of her “squad” jackoffs (Podcast 4, 2021a, 30:20). They also state that “Democrats are drunk on power” and that they must battle against the Marxist, socialist, and communist movements that have infiltrated and now control the Democrats (Podcast 3, 2021a, 13:30.; Podcast 1, 2021a, 38:00). The use of words with a strong negative connotation, such as drunk, battle, infiltrated, and control, can evoke an emotional response of anger or fear and activate cognitive biases that will influence how the listeners interpret subsequent information. Regarding the Republican party, all the podcasters feel betrayed by them, as they appease the Democrats too much (Podcast 4, 2021b, 30:35). As the most vulgar of the four podcasts, the hosts of Podcast 4 tell the Republicans who quit after the insurrection to “go eff themselves,” “eat a [redacted] bag of dicks,” and “suck a bull,” calling them “ass hats” (Podcast 4, 2021b, 29:10). The host of Podcast 2 also states that Republicans just want to silence their voters who attended the insurrection (Podcast 2, 2021a, 13:14). Through these segments, the hosts demonstrate their lack of respect for the parties, contribute to polarization, and undermine the possibility for constructive dialogue and respect between varying political groups. Beyond the two-party divide, the podcasters disseminate broader anti-government sentiment. In one of her episodes, the host of Podcast 1 tells her guest, “As you and I both know, everyone in D.C. has something to hide” (Podcast 1, 2021a, 13:00). Starting the

statement with “as you and I both know,” Podcaster 1 seeks to establish a shared assumption. Indeed, she attempts to create a common understanding or knowledge of a fact, even if it is incorrect, making it more difficult for the listener to contradict it. Furthermore, beyond Podcaster 3’s claim that “Washington has become, for the most part, a large uni-party swamp,” she employed a hushed tone in comparison to the rest of the episode, as to seemingly convey a sense of importance about the information being shared and a sense of intimacy with the listeners (Podcast 3, 2021a, 54:08). Finally, the hosts of Podcast 4 speak directly to their listeners and ask “I don’t have a lot of faith in our system, do you?” (Podcast 4, 2021a, 7:00). The use of a tag question creates a sense of connection between the hosts and the listeners, yet it is deceptive as the shortened yes-or-no question creates pressure for the listener to agree with the statement. Overall, the four podcasts espouse strong contempt for their country’s politics and attempt to convince their listeners that they should as well.

Second, the podcasters propagate a sentiment of distrust toward mainstream media. They assert that major tech companies deleted videos of Trump in which he asked rioters to respect the police officers and go home (Podcast 1, 2021b, 4:05). Moreover, they contend that the media and Hollywood are working to silence Trump supporters (Podcast 2, 2021a, 13:12). They also criticize social media platforms for what they perceive as a crackdown, blocking individuals from Twitter, removing their followers, and removing the conservative social media app Parler (Podcast 3, 2021b, 6:20). Portraying the untrustworthiness of the mainstream media as a significant problem fosters a climate of skepticism, sowing seeds of doubt and division, and making it increasingly challenging for their listeners to discern fact from fiction outside of their podcast.

Prognostic Frame: Standing Up to Oppression

In the context of the prognostic frame, the podcasters directly address their audiences, urging them to stand up for themselves against what they perceive as the liberal drift of their country, a trajectory they believe has culminated in the events of January 6. The message is one of proactive engagement and collective action, urging their listeners to reclaim influence in crucial societal spheres:

We need to take back our education; we need to take back our media. We have to do that. And if you're a, you know, parent of a young person or even if you're a young person in here: get into those fields, you know, get into them, infiltrate them, do what they did. See what I'm saying? Get on school boards, you know. If you're a conservative, get on school boards, become a teacher, get in the media, start making films. Do all the things that liberals have done over the past 20-30 years to infiltrate and to influence. Do it. [...] So all the things that they did. We have got to start fighting these people at their own game. We have to do it. And we have to do it at such a cellular level, exactly what they did. Because they beat us at pop culture – they already beat us. But I swear, we can fight back (Podcast 4, 2021a, 38:45).

The hosts of Podcast 4's prognostic frame is intertwined with a conversation about how they believe there is still hope. In combining these elements, the podcasters portray their goal of eliminating their opposition as almost achieved. Timing also plays a crucial role as the episode ends with these calls to action. By doing so, the co-hosts leave their listeners with the call to action as what they will most remember from the episode. Similarly, in offering solutions to beat the left, Podcaster 3 states:

If you are a patriot who loves their country [...], do not underestimate the willingness of the left to commit acts like infiltrate the Trump rally [...], do not underestimate the willingness, determination, relentlessness of the left of cooking up a plan to cause that rally more harm to Trump, to make the American people think that the violence should be blamed on Trump and his supporters (Podcast 3, 2021a, 37:30)

Furthermore, Podcaster 2, who often references God and Christianity in her episodes, also uses assertive language, encouraging listeners to “start standing up where you see progressiveness taking root in your own life around you” and “speak up to your school's boards,” before telling her listeners to “obey the lord and take back the conversation and speak up” (Podcast 2, 2021a, 16:30). Through the use of religious references, the host of Podcast 2 imbues the discourse with a sense of moral imperative, compelling her listeners to

align with the guidance. Overall, these excerpts strongly underline the need for vigilance in the face of left opposition and mobilize their audience to take decisive action to protect their values and interests. Through their calls to action, the podcasters aim to inspire their audience and mobilize them to engage in this resistance.

Motivational Frame: Being a Patriot

The motivational frames provide a rationale for engaging in the collection action presented in the prognostic frame. In their podcasts, the hosts present two main reasons to engage: to prevent their audience from losing fundamental freedoms to the left and to be American patriots. First, fear-mongering plays a significant role in the podcaster's motivational framing. Effective in influencing attitudes, intentions, and behaviours, the hosts use fear-mongering to mobilize their audiences to follow their solutions offered in the prognostic frames (Tannenbaum et al., 2015). While their fear-mongering spreads disinformation and creates a sense of panic, it also motivates listeners to tune in more frequently. The hosts use fear-mongering tactics regarding a leftist takeover that aims to censor Trump supporters. Podcaster 1 tells her listeners:

What I fear is that the events of Wednesday [...] will now be used and weaponized by a Biden administration to go after all Trump supporters to say *if you stand with the President after January 20th and if you believe that there was election fraud and irregularities, you can be deemed to be a domestic terrorist threat and you can be accused of almost trying to bring back insurrection to the Capitol* (Podcast 1, 2021c, 3:20).

This sentiment is strongly echoed by Podcaster 2, who claims that a Democrat-controlled Congress and White House would result in a crackdown on the First Amendment in the name of public safety and that Democrats, growing increasingly radical, would work tirelessly to strip away civil liberties and disregard opposition, leading to tyranny (Podcast 2, 2021a, 13:15; 2021b, 45:37). It is also supported by the hosts of Podcast 3, who state: "They've suppressed conservatives, they'll suppress our expression of thought, they'll

suppress our First Amendment right” (Podcast 4, 2021a, 13:38). They also add that, through the Democrat’s communist ideology, “it’s unbelievable what they are planning to do [in the three branches of government]” (Podcast 4, 2021c, 15:35). This discourse evokes a sense of urgency in the listeners, tapping into a deep-seated fear of encroachment on their liberties, particularly freedom of speech. Far-right movements have weaponized the debate surrounding free speech as a means to advance their agenda and rally support for collective action in defence of their ideological position. The concept of freedom of speech is often employed as a shield to protect and promote their extremist viewpoints (Malik, 2019). It can be argued that the hosts are aware of the themes and rhetoric that resonate most with their audience. As such, this motivational frame is incorporated with the goal of mobilizing their listeners.

Second, the hosts often invoke patriotic sentiments, setting a narrative of allegiance and responsibility to resist what they perceived as the left’s control. In Podcaster 3’s previous quote above, she combines prognostic and motivational frames, telling them what they should do if they identify as patriots. Moreover, the hosts’ characterization of the January 6 insurrectionists as patriots further reinforces this motivational framing (Podcast 4, 2021a, 1:35; Podcast 3, 2021a, 14:35; Podcast 1, 2021b, 6:30). This framing imbues their actions with a sense of purpose and, more broadly, tells their listeners that they can also be active participants in this struggle to defend their nation’s values and freedoms. By labelling their acts as patriotic, the hosts encourage their audience to view themselves as part of righteous movements fighting against perceived injustices. Tapping into the emotional resonance of American patriotism, the podcasters inspire a sense of duty and commitment among their listeners. This fosters a collective sense of purpose and unity in the pursuit of their shared goals.

Far-right women podcasters as far-right women influencers

Many of the studies on far-right women influencers have justly centred around those who project a gentle image, focusing on themes such as family and the household while also addressing the extremist political views hidden behind this image (see Leidig, 2023; Stern, 2022; Zahay, 2022). By not explicitly expressing radical ideology, instead focusing on topics

traditionally associated with women, these far-right women influencers can appeal to mainstream audiences and intertwine with the ever-growing mainstream influencer culture. For instance, TradWives, short for traditional wives, have become increasingly popular, particularly on TikTok and Instagram. Glorifying America in the 1950s as an era of ideal patriarchal traditional values, TradWives combine *mommy blogging* and extremist ideologies – usually white supremacy – to unsuspecting audiences (Kelly, 2018; Mattheis, 2018).

Understanding the covert far-right narratives being shared by these influencers and their disguised methods of dissemination is important to P/CVE efforts because it allows for the recognition and addressing of underlying extremist narratives that may not be immediately apparent to general audiences. It also allows for the development of targeted intervention strategies. However, as P/CVE strategies rightfully evolve to incorporate gender-specific approaches, it is essential to avoid the misconception that all far-right influencers conform to this soft and nurturing portrayal.

On the one hand, this research argues that the podcasters analyzed are to be categorized as influencers. Similar to far-right content creators on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, these podcasters take to mainstream social media sites, in this case, Spotify and Apple Podcasts, to spread their narratives and “serve as leading online personalities shaping and popularizing ideas within the far-right community” (Leidig, 2023, p. 9). Furthermore, the podcasters also aim to legitimize, normalize, and soften their group’s image, as well as make their content relatable through appeals to conservative and traditional values, as do other far-right women influencers. On the other hand, this research finds that the podcasters differ significantly from many of the other far-right influencers. First, this research’s podcasters do not attempt to merge everyday life content with political messages. Throughout their podcasts, the hosts overtly focus on their country’s political situation and climate. They do not attempt to hide their political and extremist narratives behind mainstream influencer content. For two, they refrain from discussing personal matters. Indeed, the only instances of such discussions were the mention of friends who had attended the January 6 events. Banal conversations are kept to a minimum. Finally, the podcasters do not present their content in an innocuous manner. Rather, they are brash, and all take an explicit political stance.

Therefore, this research argues for the continued delineation and refinement of far-right influencer categories. Like mainstream influencers who are categorized into groups such as fitness, tech, lifestyle, fashion, or beauty influencers, the far-right influencer sphere similarly warrants categorization. While they might belong to similar movements, influencers who mask extremist ideology with family content cannot be countered in the same way as influencers who disseminate content with an explicit, far-right extremist political angle, as their methods of radicalization and audience engagement differ significantly. Understanding specific niches and subgroups within this broader landscape enables P/CVE strategies to have a more comprehensive approach regarding gender and to avoid the oversimplification of gender roles with these movements, as well as the misconception that women within these groups share uniform beliefs and behaviours.

Implications for P/CVE Efforts

The narratives presented by these far-right women podcasters are “a cohesive, casually linked sequence of events that takes place in a dynamic world subject to conflict, transformation, and resolution through non-habitual, purposeful actions performed by characters” (Braddock & Dillard, 2016, p. 447). The narratives disseminated by the podcasters aim “to convey ideology, values, justifications, or core concerns to sympathizers, would-be members, and the greater public” (Braddock & Horgan, 2016, p. 381). Ultimately, these narratives are a part of far-right movements’ larger strategy to create a common understanding of “the past, the present, and the future” (Miskimmon et al., 2014, p. xi).

Narratives play an essential role in both extremist communication and radicalization because they “present an alternate form of rationality” (Corman, 2011, p. 37). Narrative rationality is not necessarily based on facts and logical reasoning. Rather, it hinges on the audience’s ability to perceive favourable outcomes within a story and to resonate with its underlying values (Fisher, 1987). For this reason, narrative rationality can triumph over logical reasoning because it more closely aligns with the audience’s desires and emotions. As they wield considerable influence in extremist communication and radicalization, narratives

can also serve as powerful tools in the prevention and countering of such efforts, as highlighted by Kruglanski et al. (2019) and Schlegel (2021).

Far-right narratives like those shared by the podcasters have resonated with many. According to a Washington Post-University of Maryland poll released in January 2024, one in four Americans believe the conspiracy theory that the FBI organized and encouraged the insurrection (Epstein, 2024). As evidenced by this research, the poll also revealed that the narrative of ANTIFA instigating the events of January 6 is widely embraced (Jackman et al., 2024). The efficient dissemination of far-right narratives prompts the need for preventative- and counter-measures. Consequently, this research proposes a soft two-pronged approach to both preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism.

P/CVE efforts, defined as a non-coercive “spectrum of policies, programmes, and interventions intended to prevent and counter extremism related to terrorist radicalization” (OSCE, 2019, pp. 24), focused on (i) preventing and countering the radicalization process, (ii) addressing grievances that may be conducive to violent extremism, (iii) facilitating the disengagement of radicalized individuals, and (iv) building community resilience to violent extremism (OSCE, 2019, pp. 24-25). Recognizing the agency of women listeners, sympathizers, and members of the far right, P/CVE efforts must ensure that their work resonates with women listeners and addresses their concerns. By embracing a gender-inclusive approach that engages women members of the far right, it can better address the diverse gender dynamics at play in countering extremism.

The first prong is grounded in inoculation theory, and the second in the three core framing tasks of frame theory, both proposed in an attempt to build counter-narratives that “consider the ‘needs’ of individuals who find extremist frame fulfilling” (Carthy & Sarma, 2023, p. 571). This research suggests using podcasts as a means to prebunk and debunk far-right narratives because it (i) capitalizes on the same medium through which extremist narratives are spread, aiming to reach audiences in spaces where they are already consuming content (Allchorn, 2020) and (ii) does not attempt to censor nor impede individuals’ freedom of speech – a value that is firmly entrenched within the far right. Removing their content may be perceived as an overt attempt to undermine them, which would be unproductive (Rees & Montasari, 2023).

Preventative Measures: Inoculation Theory and Gamification

First, inoculation theory is used preventatively, exposing individuals to “a message that initiates the development of defences that prepare the individual for future persuasive attempts to change those positions” (Braddock, 2022). Research has also found that inoculation methods are effective, regardless of whether the refutations are passive, therefore provided by the messenger, or active, therefore provided by the recipient (Banas & Rains, 2010; Compton et al., 2016).

Passive inoculation consists of two elements: (i) a forewarning explaining that the listener’s beliefs will be questioned and (ii) a refutational pre-emption that presents weak versions of counter-arguments against those beliefs that are subsequently refuted (McGuire, 1964). In this context, far-right narratives can be pre-bunked, and individuals can become more resilient to far-right narratives and manipulation techniques that they may face in the future (Saleh et al., 2024). Passive inoculation can, therefore, be used as a method to foster resistance to persuasion, particularly to misinformation, conspiracy theories, and extremist ideologies (Kitsch et al., 2020).

In recent years, there has been growing literature on the effectiveness of the gamification of inoculation against misinformation (see Cook et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2023; Neylan et al., 2023; Roozenbeek & Linden, 2020). This game-based active inoculation is successful as it engages the recipient with multisensory stimuli that improve their comprehension and memory (Petri & Gresse von Wangenheim, 2017). In the context of platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts, inoculation theory and gamification can be applied, similarly to books’ or Netflix’s “choose your own adventure” stories. Podcast episodes could be designed to be interactive and include segments where listeners make choices that impact the narrative and where the host reacts through pre-recorded segments corresponding to the choices that have been selected. Similar to educational games, podcasts could also incorporate gamified elements where listeners are rewarded based on their ability to refute misinformation. However, it is important to balance this gamification with the main reason individuals turn to podcasts: to listen. As such, these elements should be used sparingly to maintain focus on the content being shared.

Counter-Measures: Counter-Narratives through Frame Theory

Second, it has been suggested that the potential for counter-narratives to challenge extremist ones is limited when not resorting to similar manipulative techniques (Carthy, 2021). Counter-narratives “follow a narrative structure, but its storylines are constructed with the intention of undermining the *appeal* of dominant narratives” (Carthy & Sarma, 2023, p. 571). They aim to plant a seed of doubt in the hope that a radical(izing) individual listening will question the narratives they believe (Rees & Montasari, 2023). Hence, counter-narratives may adopt a similar structure to radical narratives to enhance their effectiveness.

Effective counter-narratives must be simple, impactful, and emotive, similar to far-right narratives (Radical Right Counter Narratives Expert Workshop Report, 2019). Therefore, this research recommends adhering to frame theory when developing counter-narratives because it provides a clear and structured framework that can follow a similar thought process to extremist narratives. Regarding the diagnostic frame, counter-narratives should identify a genuine problem that is easily understandable to the target audience and that resonates with their concerns and worries, in this case, about the future of their nation and their distrust in governmental institutions. Furthermore, the diagnostic frame should aim to delegitimize the far right’s narratives and interpretations, as well as discredit listeners’ current radical ideology (Koehler, 2014). A straightforward diagnosis of a problem can effectively capture the attention of its audience and lay the groundwork for presenting the prognostic frame. Subsequently, the prognostic frame should offer a solution that the audience can conduct offline (Silverman et al., 2016). While the online sphere enables a counter-narrative campaign to obtain a broader reach, the offline sphere allows individuals to create strong, positive, personal relationships between them and community members that replace or prevail over radical offline social networks (Bilazarian, 2020; Radical Right Counter Narratives Expert Workshop Report, 2019). Finally, this research argues that counter-narratives can use the same motivational frame as far-right narratives to motivate audiences to participate in their calls to participate in collective offline action. On the basis of patriotism, counter-narratives can encourage individuals to take tangible steps toward building a more resilient nation. By framing participation in offline activities as a means of contributing to their

society, counter-narratives can tap into individuals' sense of pride in their nation and reject the victim and underdog mindset that is present in far-right narratives.

To reach the target audience for both preventative- and counter-measures, this research leans on Jigsaw and Moonshot's Redirect Method. Conducted in partnership with tech companies, the Redirect Method can place ads or recommendations "in the search results and social media feeds of users who are searching for pre-identified terms that [...] have [been] associated with a particular online harm" (The Redirect Method, n.d.). In this context, Spotify and Apple Podcasts could recommend podcasts that pre-bunk or debunk far-right narratives to users who are searching for pre-identified keywords and terms associated with far-right content, depending on their previous content consumption.

Implications for P/CVE Efforts

This research analyzed how far-right women podcasters produce, shape, and mainstream narratives around the January 6 insurrection as well as broader conspiratorial thinking. By defending the actions of the insurrectionists and shifting the focus to BLM protests, the far-right women podcasters soften the image of the far right. They also sow distrust in the government and the mainstream media, fostering a fertile ground for the recruitment and radicalization of their listeners. Through their calls to resist the left's perceived increasing control of society, the podcasters invoke patriotic sentiments, setting a narrative of allegiance and responsibility. The underdog and victimhood narratives presented help mobilize their listeners and create a sense of urgency among them to act against their perceived enemy, further deepening the idea that violence is necessary for the defence of their beliefs and allowing them to deflect accusations of racism, hate speech, and extremism.

The findings challenge some of the existing perceptions of women in far-right movements, which paint them as passive members and add to the growing literature that counters biases and stereotypes about women in far-right movements (see Sciarone, 2024 and Veilleux-Lepage et al., 2022). While they have certain similarities to other far-right influencers, such as softening the image of far-right movements, disseminating far-right narratives, and mainstreaming them in an effort to engage unsuspecting audiences, they do not

act in the same manner as the most studied far-right women influencers. As such, while this research argues that these podcasters merit the title of influencer due to their serving as online personalities representing their community and their normalization and mainstreaming of their group's image, it also highlights the need for the further categorization of far-right influencers, as is done with mainstream influencers. This categorization holds significance for P/CVE strategies because different influencers, and therefore far-right recruiters, necessitate different counter-measures. Moreover, it can avoid the oversimplification of gender roles within these movements, as well as the misconception that women in these groups share uniform beliefs and behaviours.

As podcasts have largely avoided scrutiny on content moderation and regulatory debates in comparison to other social media companies, this research also adds to the growing literature demonstrating how far-right movements have taken advantage of this context. To counter far-right narratives disseminated through podcasts, this research proposes the development of both preventative podcasts based on inoculation theory as well as podcasts using frame theory to structure counter-narratives that have a similar thought process to extremist narratives. In conclusion, this research underscores the urgency of addressing the normalization and mainstreaming of extremist narratives by far-right women.

This thorough analysis of far-right narratives disseminated by women presented in this research allows for a focused exploration of women's roles within far-right movements, particularly as social media influencers and recruiters, and of women far-right sympathizers who consume their content. Nonetheless, a limitation of this research relates to the honesty and authenticity of influencers, much like any other influencer within and beyond the far-right sphere. While this research sheds light on critical aspects of women's mainstreaming of far-right narratives, it warrants further research, such as longitudinal research tracking the evolution of mainstreamed far-right narratives and comparative analyses across various types of far-right influencers, including both men and women. This would allow for a better understanding of the trajectory of extremist ideologies and a deeper exploration of the nuanced interplay of gender dynamics in shaping extremist narratives.

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