UNCERTAINTY, POPULIST DEPRIVATION RHETORIC, AND EXTREMISM

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A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of California State Polytechnic University Humboldt

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Psychology: Academic Research

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May 2022

Abstract

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The present study investigates the influence of leadership messages on support for extremism using a social identity framework. Specifically, the study highlights the potential role of populist deprivation rhetoric and self-uncertainty in generating support for leaders and extremism. The study seeks to fill a gap in the existing research to understand the use of deprivation rhetoric as a direct process of populist leadership. Political extremism can serve to reduce feelings of uncertainty. Group relative deprivation results from a social comparison in which a person believes another individual or group is denying them something to which they feel entitled. Leaders can embed messages which highlight that their group is deprived in comparison to other groups. Manifesting follower's feelings of group relative deprivation in conditions of uncertainty is likely to fuel strong identification with the ingroup and thus increase support for extremism towards the outgroup. Stoking intergroup fires increases ingroup identity salience and can create support for the leader. We predicted that a leader's message that includes populist deprivation rhetoric would be associated with more extreme support from followers when compared to a message without populist deprivation rhetoric, and that this impact would be enhanced in conditions of uncertainty. To assess this prediction, we recruited an online sample of Democrat and Republican (N = 302) Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers through Amazon Cloud Research. We

manipulated leadership rhetoric through a fabricated Twitter post accredited to a leader from the participants' favored political party, and subsequently measured participants' responses to a battery of survey items. Our primary hypothesis was significant. The results of this study suggest that populist deprivation rhetoric may influence support for extremism. Participants exposed to an in-party message that used populist deprivation rhetoric were significantly more likely to support extremism through violence and self-sacrifice when compared to participants from the non-deprivation rhetoric condition. The findings of the study, collectively, have implications for understanding growing political polarization and extremism, as well as potential room for more research in understanding ways to attenuate these processes and substantiate the study of populism from a social identity framework.

Acknowledgements

I would like to first acknowledge that this research was conducted on the homelands of the Wiyot people. I am grateful to be taught the significance of this experience, this place, and the people who have been here for time immemorial.

I would like to thank Tony W. and Steve with Project Rebound and the entire Project Rebound crew, who have provided new space and a healthy outlook throughout the final stretch of this project. I would like to thank the Alicia M. & the ADAPTABLE founders, for their wisdom and adaptability as I returned to campus after great injury. My professors, Dr. Hahn and Dr. Risling-Baldy, who allowed me to take extra courses so that I could get back on track during the pandemic. My friends, Taki, Tammy and Marlene', for showing me a path that I could follow when there was no light. Stephanie Souter for ample guidance and the reminder to be kind to myself. Jordan McDowell, for bringing me back to research and including me in her work & motivating me towards mine. I would like to thank my doctor, Dr. Lori Brown, for her continued treatment and healing. My family, my extended family, Ms. Charmaine Lawson, Sharon & Mike Fennel, Lorna, my sisters Roxanne and Amber, my godmother Michelle, for keeping me well. My parents, for teaching me our family history, a strong motivator for this work. My cousins, aunts, uncles, my grandparents, Michael and Sally, for supporting and believing in my work. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Amber Gaffney, my advisor, mentor, and friend, for giving me opportunities beyond my comprehension, believing in me when I couldn't, teaching me, and trusting me to complete this project, all while humanizing the experience. Thank you.

This paper is dedicated to my dog Smushy, who stayed by my side until the end.

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Introduction

"*You better be smart. They're taking your jobs. You better be careful"*(Donald Trump, CPAC 2014). *"They're taking our jobs. They're taking our manufacturing jobs. They're taking our money. They're killing us"* (Donald Trump, 2015).

Populist leaders use deprivation rhetoric to fire up their followers with resentment towards an outgroup. The language of deprivation rhetoric accuses an outgroup of taking something which the in-group feels entitled to. Donald Trump uses this rhetoric frequently, in campaign speeches and on Twitter prior to being banned from the social media platform. Widely used social media platforms provide leaders such as Trump a new venue to send messages directly to the public. What is it about Trump's rhetoric that invites and incites polarized and radicalized reactions? Leaders use deprivation rhetoric to motivate their bases. The recipe is simple: voice a claim of deprivation and provide a group to point the finger at. The validity of the messages' claim is irrelevant, as long as the message touches upon something that followers feel to be true and provides an outgroup to blame. Leaders are not the only people who use this type of rhetoric, however this research will focus solely on the impact that leader messages have on followers. Trump was able to use social media to tap into the shared grievance felt by members of the Republican party, also known as the Grand Old Party (GOP). Engaging followers in this type of felt deprivation has proven to encourage populism among Republicans. Recent reports suggest there is growing support for politically driven violence among members of the GOP and understanding this type of message framing can help understand these trends (American Perspectives Survey, 2021).

During the mostly peaceful Black Lives Matter uprisings of 2020, a partisan divide painted perceptions of the protests. Donald Trump used Twitter to create a narrative that "left-wing Anti-Fascist (Antifa) radicals" were working to deprive Americans of "law and order." According to Trump, radical left-wing Antifa was out to deprive Americans of their freedom and safety. This narrative spread through social media, with Trump using Twitter to call for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and law enforcement to respond in full force against the protesters. During the local marches that took place in Humboldt County, CA, multiple drivers weaponized their vehicles in attempts to run over peaceful marchers (Casarez, 2020). This researcher was struck in the head with chemical munitions from local police, resulting in a severe concussion and hearing loss. A week after the incident, local leadership echoed Donald Trump's sentiments that "Antifa busses" were present at the actions, though these claims proved to be unsubstantiated (Mukherjee, 2020). These types of interactions culminating in violent extremism have been captured around the country. In 2017, at a "Unite the Right Rally," James Alex Fields Jr. drove his car into a crowd of counter-protestors, killing one woman and injuring dozens (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). Do the people who commit these acts of violence act alone, or have they been motivated by the leaders of their groups?

Trump is not alone in his rhetorical style. Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and former Klu Klux Klan grand wizard David Duke also use this type of language. This rhetoric is an important factor to consider when analyzing rising support for far right-wing politicians around the world, as well a surge in right-wing terrorism (Southern Poverty Law Center,

2019). Social media has become a widespread mode of communication, and as such has become a topic of interest for researchers studying an assumed connection to what appears to be a rise in support for populist leaders. The findings of various investigations are mixed. This work seeks to expand on existing political science and social psychology's analysis of populist leader rhetoric by zoning in on a specific mode of populist communication and testing its effects empirically. Donald Trump's not-so-subtle dog whistles motivate his base and fuel strong partisanship, regardless of focal policy attached to the message. Trump's intolerant and hateful rhetoric is the same language found in the manifestos of white supremacists and right-wing extremists responsible for recent mass casualty hate-based attacks. In 2018, Robert Bowers murdered 11 Jewish worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Bowers was obsessed with a fear of white genocide, and the "migrant caravan of invaders" – language that Trump himself has used. A growing body of data reveals that violent far-right extremism is on the rise in the United States. According to the SPLC annual Intelligence Report, 2017-2018 saw higher arrest rates of domestic terrorism suspects including white supremacists and far-right extremists than those linked to international terror groups. The SPLC report found that white nationalist groups surged by about fifty percent, rising from about 100 groups in 2017 to 148 groups by 2018 (SPLC, 2019). Right-wing extremists and white nationalists were responsible for numerous attacks. The attacks include the aforementioned Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, Dylann Roof's gruesome attack on churchgoers at Emanuel Africa Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015, and the recent-hate based 2019 massacre at a Wal-Mart in El Paso,

Texas in which Patrick Crucius killed 22 and injured another 24. Crucius, who targeted Latinos, posted a manifesto on the website 8chan, speaking of immigrant "invasions," writing with the same language that Donald Trump uses (Abutaleb, 2019). Given the substantial rise of hate crimes at the hands of white supremacists and right-wing extremists, investigating the motivating factors stoking these fires is imperative. The way Trump frames his messages provides amplification to the rage of white supremacists. Using the rhetoric of deprivation as a process of populist leadership, Trump frames his statements in a way that influences his followers. Group process theories can be applied to understand how Trump's language influences his followers. When Trump declares "immigrants are coming to take our jobs," he positions himself as an ingroup member (Americans), and implies that this ingroup is being denied something that they have a fundamental right to, by an outside group (immigrants). The message is not limited to the idea that immigrants are competing for American jobs, or that other countries are competing for the coal industry. His message goes a step further, informing followers that Trump, just like them, is being denied a fundamental right by undeserving "others."

On January 6th, 2021, Donald Trump supporters attempted a widely documented violent insurrection on the U.S. Capitol. Amped up on claims of election fraud and a stolen election, Trump's followers violently stormed the White House during a Joint Session of the U.S. Congress that was working to affirm the presidential election (U.S. Department of Justice, 2021). These actions occurred after months of Trump's Twitter claims that the election had been *stolen* by the "radical left." These claims that the

political elites, specifically, the left "stole" what was "rightfully ours" is a clear example of deprivation.

Trump has used this rhetorical tool throughout his presidency to foster group-based resentments and fuel support in his base. What could the ultimate outgroup target be? Immigrants are un-American to Donald Trump. Americans in opposition to Trump, or the "radical left" serve as another outgroup target to pit supporters against. These seemingly interchangeable outgroups serve as tools for Donald Trump to establish a firm group identity amongst his followers. If an ingroup member is the American Patriot "Make America Great Again" Trump Supporter, these messages must elicit a stark contrast between them and the "radical left." Establishing this difference and enhancing it is key to upholding the ingroup identity. Trump and his supporters establish a clear message that often veers into outright calls for extremism: if the left is the "Antifa" boogeyman, then the right must take arms to protect the supposed "God given right to country." Similarly, one of the tactics used by Trump to establish his *patriot* ingroup identity is through drawing contrast and developing resentment towards immigrants. Early on in his campaign and presidency, Donald Trump demonized immigrants in thinly veiled dog-whistle messages. From his "Muslim ban," to his claims that immigrant "hordes" are coming through the border to take American jobs and deprive Americans of a living, Trump made sure to keep a focal point and target on immigrants.

By defining who the outgroup is, Trump succeeded in establishing who his followers are not. If a follower wants to secure their Trumpian American identity, they must identify with this resentment towards these others. Whether it's the radical left, who

Trump claims are hell-bent on depriving *patriots* of their rights, or the immigrants coming to take their jobs, Trump maintains a strong ingroup identity. For the uncertain individual, this can be a strong motivator to establish and protect the ingroup. The potential becomes great for a Trump supporter, then, to engage in violence on behalf of the group.

Theories of intergroup relations can help to understand how rhetoric such as Trump's influences followers. Relative deprivation theory posits that people may be more likely to support their leader when they perceive another group to be denying their own group of something their group fundamentally deserves (Crosby, 1976, Gurr, 1970, Runciman, 1966). Leaders who use this style of rhetoric to portray an outgroup as responsible for depriving the ingroup of something they feel entitled to may enjoy bolstered followership and an increased follower perception of representing the voice of group members Social identity theory can also be applied to understand how Trump influences his followers (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Leaders can achieve strengthened support when followers perceive them to genuinely represent their voice and best interests. Feelings of deprivation can make people uncertain, and uncertainty has been found to increase the appeal of identifying with a group (Greive & Hogg, 1999).

A prototypical leader is the individual in a group who bests embodies the traits of that group (Turner et al, 1987). According to the social identity theory of leadership, prototypical leaders help shape norms and define the group's social identity (Hogg, 2001). A leader who truly captures the identity of the group and represents them the most effectively is considered a prototypical. Do leaders who employ the use of *deprivation*

rhetoric gain increased support and perceptions of representing followers' voice? Is this relationship moderated by uncertainty? Can this type of rhetoric add fuel to the fire of extremism? I will use social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), including the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001), uncertainty identity theory (Hogg, 2007), as well as research on relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976, Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966) and its core role in populism to investigate the influence of deprivation rhetoric.

Literature Review

Social Identity Theory

An important step of deconstructing the swaying power of a leaders' message is understanding the processes of group-based identities. People use the important social groups they identify with as part of the foundation for their sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A social identity is the psychological evaluation an individual makes of the group memberships they hold, linking individuals to others who share group membership (Tajfel, 1972). Social identities are formed around categories such as gender, race, religion, political affiliation, nation, sports teams, hometown, and onwards. Social identities are psychological representations of self, formed by the group memberships that a person holds. People define this evaluative aspect of the self by determining who is in their group and who is not (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, when describing oneself, a student may say, "I am a Cal Poly Humboldt student, a rugby player, and I practice Judaism." The individual has a self-perception of their identity as a student at a university, an athlete for a specific sport, and as an individual who practices Judaism, and each of these social identities can become salient in a specific context. These salient group memberships form psychological representations of who the individual is and is not.

People understand their social identities through prototypes, a collection of interrelated features that define one group while distinguishing it from other groups (Tajfel, 1959). The prototype is helpful for understanding the key traits of the group. While the prototype helps to explain who the group is, comparisons with other groups

can also help to define the group. The group that an individual belongs to is that individual's ingroup. Ingroups exists within the context of a relevant outgroup (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987).

Self-Categorization Theory

Social identification occurs through processes of self and social categorization (Turner et al., 1987). Self-categorization theory posits that groups shape individuals. Whereas groups can be positive or negative, each group member tends to seek a positive identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When a specific social identity or group membership is salient, the individual sees the world through the lens of that group membership. Prototypes are the features that best define a group in a social context, allowing members to describe who they are as a group and who they are not with respect to outgroups. When a meaningful social identity is salient, people conform to their group's prototype (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Hogg & Turner, 1987). Outgroup members are often viewed in terms of the outgroup prototype. Essentially, salient social identities influence how individuals process information and how they perceive the world (Maitner, Mackie, Claypool & Crisp, 2009). For the Cal Poly student who plays rugby and practices Judaism, each of these social identities holds a prototype (for example, think of the attributes most prototypical to a rugby player - physically fit, disciplined, dedicated to the team). Group members who closely represent the prototype can become an important source of information for how to think, feel, and behave (Hogg & Gaffney, 2014) because they provide information about the ingroup (Hogg, 2012).

Referent informational influence occurs when group members conform to the norms of their ingroup, through a process of internalizing the group prototype (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Hogg & Turner, 1987). Group members look to similar others to help determine how to think, act, feel, and behave. Individuals use group norms to define themselves, and converge on the group prototype because this determines the groupiness, or entitativity, of the group (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). An entitative group has members who are similar to one another, close in proximity, and share common goals (Campbell, 1958). Entitative groups have clear cut norms. The more entitative a group, the more groupy it is, with members able to clearly interpret how group members should engage with the world (Hogg, 2001).

One way a group maintains a positive identity is through metacontrast, where individuals emphasize ingroup similarities and the differences between the ingroup and the outgroup. Group attributes become prototypical and maximize the distinctiveness of the group in comparison to other groups, while also minimizing the variation within the group (Turner et al, 1987). Group members establish their identities around these ideas of who their ingroup is and is not. As an individual's group identity becomes more central to them, they become more trusting of other ingroup members (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009) and become more standoffish towards relevant outgroups (Wagner, Becker, Christ, Pettigrew & Schmidt, 2012). This process is essential in understanding the roots of "us" and "them" dynamics.

Leadership

The social identity theory of leadership posits that group members support group-prototypical leaders more than non-prototypical leaders. Leaders are generally the most prototypical members of the group (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). Most leaders gain a significant amount of influence within their group, especially when group membership is made salient (Hogg, 2010). Because appearing prototypical is associated with legitimacy (Platow, Reid & Andrew, 1998), group members find prototypical leaders especially deserving of their position as a leader. Leaders can create, alter, and instill a shared sense of social identity for group members (Haslam et al., 2011, Hogg, 2001, Reicher et al., 2005, Turner & Haslam, 2001, van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003, van Knippenberg et al., 2004). When leaders create and strengthen the shared sense of "us" that group members maintain, they are able to motivate group members to act on behalf of group interests (Ellemers et al., 2004, Reicher et al., 2005, Turner 2005). Leaders often use rhetoric to communicate social identity, control, and motivate their ingroup (Reicher et al., 2005). Reicher and Hopkins refer to leaders as *entrepreneurs of identity* who use rhetoric as a tool to create and enact social identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2003).

Support for leaders may be influenced by feelings of uncertainty. Researchers examining political preferences and support for political leadership found that under situational circumstances that induce uncertainty, support for dominant leaders characterized as aggressive and overbearing in their narrative increased, compared to support for prestigious leaders characterized as well respected and well liked. This relationship was mediated by self-uncertainty (Kakkar & Sivanathan, 2017).

Additionally, while prototypical group members tend to hold leadership positions, there are circumstances under which non-prototypical group members can become leaders. Group members who experience self-uncertainty may look to non-prototypical group members who provide distinct identities and elevate them to leadership roles. In these conditions, non-prototypical leaders emerge and can create change (e.g.,Gaffney, Rast, Hogg, 2018). When Donald Trump emerged in the political sphere, he did not embody the norms of the GOP or politicians, however, he was quickly elevated to a leadership position and changed the characteristics of the GOP (Gaffney et al., 2019). This process highlights the importance of studying the potential influence of identity uncertainty in support for leadership, partisanship, and policy.

Uncertainty-identity Theory

Uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016) establishes a motivation for social identity. According to uncertainty-identity theory, feelings of uncertainty about one's sense of self and identity motivate the individual to reduce uncertainty about how to think feel and behave, and to make better sense of the world. The process of self-categorization serves as an effective tool to reduce self-uncertainty. Group identification helps individuals reduce uncertainty because groups provide effective tools and a lens for understanding the world. People identify with groups more strongly when experiencing uncertainty, and this relationship is potentiated when the uncertainty is self-centered (Grieve & Hogg, 1999; Mullin & Hogg, 1999). Entitative groups (highly cohesive groups with strong unity and clear-cut norms) are especially attractive when people experience uncertainty because of those group's enhanced abilities

to prescribe how to think, feel, and behave (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner & Moffitt, 2007). The clear, simple nature of highly entitative groups provide clean prototypes that increase those group's effectiveness at reducing uncertainty. Cohesive groups communicate clear cut norms effectively, allowing members to easily adapt those norms as a guide for thinking and behavior. Although not all entitative groups have extreme norms, most scholars argue that all extremist groups are high in entitativity (e.g., Gaffney & Hogg, IP)

Extremism

Some political extremism may be driven by a motivation to reduce uncertainty (Hogg, Kruglanski & van den Bos, 2013). When someone needs to be certain, they are more open to social influence, and more likely to adapt the views or attitudes suggested by others (Kruglanski, Webster & Klem, 1993). Researchers examining the role of the Tea Party on American politics primed participants for self-uncertainty. They found that American conservatives primed with uncertainty supported extreme messages, going even further to the right with their views than those who felt less uncertain (Gaffney et al., 2014). In Europe, the 2012 elections showed growing support for the once obscure far-right National Front (Rassemblement National) campaign of Marine Le Pen. Uncertainty around these results were found to shift perceptions of social norms to the political right (Portelinha & Elcheroth, 2016). The push from the far-right into the mainstream has continued. Despite losing to Emanuel Macron, Le Pen received widespread support in the 2022 French presidential election. Another study found that high uncertainty was correlated with support for autocratic leaders. The effect was

mediated by perceptions of leader prototypicality (Rast, Hogg & Giessner, 2012). Essentially, when someone needs to be certain, they are more open to social influence and more likely to adapt the views or attitudes suggested by their group and particularly prototypical group members. Feelings of relative deprivation fuel collective action to alleviate the perceived inequality (Kawakami & Dion 1995). Social identity framing and feelings of deprivation are linked to increased persuasion and mobilization in followers of populist leaders (Bos et al., 2020). Feelings of deprivation elicit feelings of uncertainty, with followers looking to identify with populist leaders as a means to reduce uncertainty. Perceptions of relative deprivation are fundamental to populist movements and extreme beliefs, and this relationship is enhanced by social media, which contributes to perceptions of consensus around group members' concerns (Crano & Gaffney, 2021).

Relative Deprivation

The main thesis of relative deprivation theory determines that relative deprivation is not the same as actual deprivation, because relative deprivation is an individual's *perception* and feeling of being deprived. In his book investigating why people engage in political violence, Gurr examined the mechanisms that drive social movements, finding that the potential for collective violence to occur is significantly related to the scope and degree to which members of a group experience relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970).

Relative deprivation results from a social comparison in which a person believes another individual or group is denying them something to which they feel entitled. Social comparison is at the core of relative deprivation. Runciman sought to determine how social order persists in the face of broad social inequalities. People use social

comparisons to compare themselves with others in similar situations. Runciman noted that all societies are inegalitarian, but questioned the relationship between inequalities in societies and the feelings of resentment they create. Egoistic deprivation results from comparisons with another individual, and fraternalistic deprivation refers to negative feelings from comparisons with other groups (Runciman, 1966). For the purpose of this study, I will focus solely on fraternalistic (group deprivation).

Relative deprivation research shows a strong connection between group relative deprivation and prejudice. A basic aspect of relative deprivation is the sense of entitlement individuals have to that which they perceive they are being denied. Group relative deprivation, not individual relative deprivation, is positively correlated with prejudice (Pettigrew et al, 2008).

In 2015, Osborne and Sibley investigated the political beliefs of Maoris in New Zealand and highlighted the emotions that influence relative deprivation. They found that relative deprivation predicts warmth toward the ingroup and decreased warmth towards the outgroup - in this case, New Zealand's Europeans (Osborne & Sibley, 2015). A study of the Quebec Nationalist movement found that relative deprivation was positively correlated with nationalist attitudes. The study shows the connection between fraternalistic deprivation and protest movements (Guimond & Dube, 1983). When group versus personal identities were made salient, stronger feelings of relative deprivation were reported as well as a greater willingness to take collective action (Kawakami & Dion 1993). Relative deprivation and relative gratification, the inverse of relative deprivation, were connected to prejudice in a subsequent study (Guimond & Dambrum,

2002). Studies expanding Guimond and Dambrum's work found that opposition to immigration was highest among groups that are relatively deprived and impoverished. In addition, they established the v-curve of relative deprivation and relative gratification, finding that groups that are relatively wealthy also showed the same effect. The researchers posit that the gratification end of the curve is actually a form of fear of future deprivation, therefore further supporting that feelings of deprivation can drive prejudice against immigrants (Jetten, Mols & Postmes 2015).

In a series of studies reviewing the role of identity in populism, researchers focused on movements in Poland, the UK, and the US. They investigated perceptions of in group disadvantage or relative deprivation, collective narcissism, and support for populism. In regards to the United States, their findings suggest that relative deprivation predicted support for Donald Trump, and explained this with national collective nationalism (Marchlewska et al., 2018).

Survey research from the 2016 Republican National Convention and the 2016 Democratic National Convention assessed the role of relative deprivation and anger in support for populism. Specifically, the researchers found that relative deprivation mediated a relationship between collective anger and populist attitudes. The findings underscore the role of relative deprivation in support for populism (Gaffney et al., 2018).

Populism

Political scientists studying populism have not established a clear, concrete definition for the concept. Populist movements shift in character depending on context, location, and time. One constant at the core of populist movements is that they emerge as

movements of *the people* however, who *the people* are changes depending on who is talking (Alvarez & Dahlgren, 2016). The features of Occupy Wall Street, a leftist populist movement, may not be identical to the features of Alt - Right populist movements. Populism is an ideology that pits the *the people* against an opposing elite, and is anti-individualist and collectivist in nature (Forgas & Crano, 2021). As a movement rooted in the identity of *the people*, populism can therefore be approached as a group process and studied through social psychological frameworks. It is important to note that while populism has taken many shades in different countries and contexts, this work will focus primarily on modern American political populism, and also draw from research on comparable (yet still, distinctively different) examples of populism research in Europe. Literature on the growing use of social media as a mode of political communication and a trend of growing populist support in European politics suggests that both left and right-wing parties elected populist leaders, with the trend stronger in right-wing elections such as the Danish People's Party and Marine Le Pens' French National Front, and even the EU's recognition of the Neo Fascist North League and the National Democratic Party of Germany (Alvarez & Dahlgren, 2016).

In a longitudinal study reviewing 20 years of pre-election campaign rhetoric, researchers dug into publicly expressed assumptions that the media was giving rise to populist politics in the Netherlands. Citing the killing of Trump-esque populist leader Pim Fortuyn as a catalyst for a subsequent rise in anti-immigrant, xenophobic, crude populist parties in the Netherlands, they investigated the decades prior to Fortuyn, reviewing both mainstream media coverage and party propaganda in pre-election periods,

analyzing the style of rhetoric used to cover the campaigns of politicians (Bos & Brants, 2014). The analysis consisted of newspaper, television programs, news, and talk shows, as well as party propaganda of 1338 party leaders over the span of 20 years of campaigns. The findings were mixed, with rises and drops in populist rhetoric in regards to the style of populist rhetoric, the types of populist ideas, and the presence of populist policy discussed in these campaigns. They found that right-wing populism made more references to populist policies (specifically anti-immigrant) than other types. They also found that right-wing parties used more populist style. Mainstream parties appeared to show an increase in populist style that eventually dropped again. Anti-immigrant populist policies, the obsession of the right-wing, were seen in media coverage. Publicity that came straight from parties had considerably high rates of populist features, especially when compared to other sources of coverage.

This research did not find a clear rise in populism in official party propaganda or the media's portrayal of them. While the media occasionally saw trends covering these leaders with populist framing, this trend ebbed over time. They suggest that this is because that populist parties win on anti-establishment ideas but electoral success means they have joined the establishment (Bos & Brants, 2014). While Bos & Brants explored the realms of mass media and traditional party propaganda campaigns in their impressive analysis, perhaps it did not get the full picture of how populism spreads, especially on social media.

A review of German political communication through social networking platforms more deeply focuses on the potential role of social media as a hub for

populism, with some distinct mobilization amongst far-right nationalists. Analysis of Facebook pages, right-wing populist parties, mainstream parties, and the group Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West) revealed an overlap between Pegida and the far-right party Alternative f*ü*r Deutschland, Alternatives for Germany (AfD). The researchers found similarity in users as well as content – users on Pegida pages and AfD pages talk about unique and similar topics. The top issues included media bias, immigration, and political extremism. This contrasts well with the Dutch analysis that focused on party manifestos and news coverage. Further, the study highlights the role of direct communication and the ways populist leaders are able to portray themselves differently on social media than through traditional forms of media (Stier, Posch, Bleier, Strohmaier, 2017). The rhetoric found in this study expressing attitudes on political extremism indicates that it serves a purpose to define outgroups at the other end of the political spectrum as violent, like Antifa, followers of Islam, immigrants, etc. Meanwhile, leftist parties focused on a fear of social decline and poverty among elders (similar to the focus of American Bernie Sanders). Pegida, an online group with a strong presence, appear to have influenced the formation of the real-world political party AfD, and contributed in the rise of mainstream nationalist parties in Germany. Populist actors in Germany have a considerable audience that, through analysis of social media, appear to be in a constant state of mobilization against other parties and those deemed as outgroups (Stier et al, 2017).

Another review of social media and populism in Europe, focusing on Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and the United Kingdom, establishes five key elements of populism.

These five key features include emphasizing *the people's* sovereignty, advocating on behalf of the sovereign people, attacking those perceived as elite, ostracizing others, and centering the so-called *heartland* (Engesser et al., 2017). These scholars reviewed Facebook, Twitter, party and election manifestos as well as mainstream press, TV, Radio, and political talk shows. They highlight that social media provides a direct connection to the people that allows populists to avoid censure or gatekeeping of traditional journalism. Deprivation rhetoric messages, then, should elicit these feelings, either directly or through connected attitude networks. Populist leaders are potent to the extent that they are perceived as the embodiment of anti-elite. Successful deprivation rhetoric messages ostracize others, invoke the heartland, work for *the people* and demonize others.

Populist Deprivation Rhetoric

Deprivation rhetoric is a form of populist rhetoric that frames situations to induce sentiments of relative deprivation in order to fuel political support. Leaders who use deprivation rhetoric are able to engage followers through the language of victimhood: victim, victimizer, and the savior - assigned to different people or groups depending the context. The former President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, as well as former Democratic candidate and current Senator Bernie Sanders are both excellent examples of modern leaders who employ this style of rhetorical framing to energize their base. Donald Trump, specifically, is known for his anti-immigrant, "America First" rhetorical style.

Political scientists measuring the effects of populist rhetoric on a large sample of Dutch voters found that lower educated, politically cynical voters were more highly

influenced by populist rhetoric (Bos, van der Brug & deVreese, 2012). Researchers investigating the role of populist social identity framing on persuasion and mobilization found that sentiments of relative deprivation made participants more susceptible to the motivational roles of these identity frames (Bos et al., 2020). This suggests that leaders who employ deprivation rhetoric may enhance the persuasiveness of their message, and further mobilize followers by stressing grievances and ultimately demonstrating conflict with an outgroup and solidifying group identification.

The Trump administration asserted that immigrants are taking away jobs from United States - born Americans. The political and strategic use of stereotypical traits about immigrants directs followers towards leader's positions (Sindic & Barreto, 2018). One important element to deprivation rhetoric is that the speaker manifests the concept of "us," so that listeners recognize the speaker as an ingroup member. An analysis of Australian Prime Minister campaign speeches from 1901 to present day found that electoral endorsement is associated with leaders' capacity to engage with and speak on behalf of a collective identity that is shared with followers whose support and energies they seek to mobilize (Steffens & Haslam, 2013).

An analysis of the campaign speeches of Trump showed that he employs rhetoric that is distinctive in its simplicity, anti-elitism, and collectivism, focusing on the group rather than the individual in simple, easy to understand words. The largest differences were found between supporters of Hilary Clinton and supporters of Donald Trump. Trump supporters saw conspiracies where Clinton supporters did not. When the so-called *Trumpenvolk* feared immigrants, Clinton supporters were the opposite (Oliver & Rahn,

2016. The study highlights the distinctiveness of populist rhetoric and the power of Trump's message style in creating a prototype for the modern GOP. Altogether, there is strong evidence to suggest that feelings of relative deprivation prompted by a leader's message thus may be a strong motivator in support for extremism on behalf of a person's group identity.

Overview of the Current Research

The current study used the social identity perspective on leadership, uncertainty-identity theory, and relative deprivation work to investigate the influence of deprivation rhetoric as a process of populism. This rhetoric taps into deep disdain for outgroups and is especially effective as the language of "us" vs. "them." Specifically, we tested whether participants exposed to deprivation rhetoric on social media would show greater support for a leader, and whether self-uncertainty enhanced this effect. We sought to reveal factors contributing to the rise of extremism, specifically support for the leadership of Donald Trump, and his counterparts around the world. Populism is the focus of a growing body of social psychological research, and this work aimed to bolster a definition of populism and that leans on processes of social identity and social influence from a social psychological perspective (see Crano & Gaffney, 2021).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a

Participants from America exposed to a leader's message that includes deprivation rhetoric will support the leader more than participants exposed to a leader's message that does not include deprivation rhetoric.

Hypothesis 1b

Participants from America experiencing high self-uncertainty that are exposed to a leader using deprivation rhetoric will more strongly support the leader compared to participants who experience low self-uncertainty exposed to the same message.

Hypothesis 2a

Participants from America exposed to a leader's message that includes deprivation rhetoric will identify with their group more than participants exposed to a leader's message without deprivation rhetoric.

Hypothesis 2b

Participants from America experiencing high self-uncertainty that are exposed to a leader's message that includes deprivation rhetoric will show the most pronounced identification with their group compared to participants experiencing low self-uncertainty exposed to a leader message without deprivation rhetoric.

Hypothesis 3a

Participants from America exposed to a leader's message that includes deprivation rhetoric will endorse extreme action more than participants exposed to a leader's message without deprivation rhetoric.

Hypothesis 3b

Participants from America experiencing high self-uncertainty that are exposed to a leader's message that includes deprivation rhetoric will show the most pronounced endorsement of extreme action compared to participants experiencing low self-uncertainty exposed to a leader message without deprivation rhetoric.

Method

Participants and design

Sample. A sample of Democrats (N = 215) and Republicans (N = 87) was recruited through Amazon's Cloud Research, an online program used for survey research. This method allowed for a broad sample that could surpass the scope available to an individual college campus. The mean age in the sample was 36.2, and the range was 23 – 70. The participants were compensated 0.45 cents for their role. An apriori approach to power, relying on similar previously conducted studies, suggested that a sample of approximately 250 total participants was needed to obtain adequate power. We expected a small effect size based on previous studies. For the primary hypothesis, we obtained observed power of .66.

Survey. Qualtrics, an online survey platform and experimental design website, will be used to conduct the experiment as well as to store the data.

Design. A 2 (rhetoric: deprivation rhetoric vs no deprivation rhetoric) x 2 (uncertainty: high uncertainty vs. low uncertainty) between-subjects design used random assignment to all conditions to examine the hypotheses. Political party (Democrats vs. Republicans) served as a third variable. The primary dependent variables included leader support, group identification, as well as willingness to support extreme measures in support of the leader's message.

Procedure

Informed consent. Participants were provided informed consent which stated that upon indicating their consent, they would take part in a study examining Americans'

opinions, attitudes, and agreement with United States leadership about voting rights. Democrat and Republican participants from America were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: uncertainty (high vs. low) and message style (deprivation rhetoric message vs. no deprivation rhetoric message). Following random assignment to these conditions, Democrat and Republican participants completed a survey that pertained to their attitudes and opinions toward a variety of issues. After completing the survey, participants were debriefed to the true nature of the study, which sought to determine if uncertainty and rhetoric style related to the support Americans give to their leaders, group identification, and support for extremist measures. Following this, participants entered a unique key to collect their compensation through Cloud Research.

Uncertainty-prime. Participants were randomly assigned to either a high or low uncertainty condition. Uncertainty identity literature provides a background and the prime for uncertainty (Gaffney et al., 2014; Hogg et al., 2007).

"Please take a few moments and think about those aspects in your life that make you feel the MOST UNCERTAIN (CERTAIN) about yourself, your future or your place in the world. Then please list/write three of those below".

Deprivation Rhetoric manipulation. Random assignment exposed participants to either a leader that used a message that included deprivation rhetoric, or a leader who used a message that did not include deprivation rhetoric. Participants received messages from an in-party leader, depending on their response to a question regarding their party leanings. The message source aligned with the participants party, and the outgroup within the message was the opposing party. Participants who identified as Democrats or stated

that they align with the Democratic party received a message from a Democratic leader, with the Republicans as the message outgroup, and participants who identified as Republicans will get a message from a Republican leader, with the Democrats as the message outgroup. The message was displayed in the form of a Twitter style post. The post was attributed to a verified account, with the Twitter name redacted, and the profile image was that of the party mascot – for Democrats, the Twitter profile image was the Democratic donkey symbol, and for Republicans, the Twitter profile image was the Republican elephant symbol. All of the Twitter messages displayed an identical value of "Retweets", "Quote Tweets", and "Likes," indicated below the message content. The survey instructions indicated that we removed the Twitter account's identifying information for the purpose of the study. The messages in the Twitter posts appeared as follows:

The deprivation rhetoric message asserted:

Democrat participant*: "Because of the Republican establishment, we are being denied voting rights. Republican elites are stealing our votes! We the people, Democrats, are real Americans, and Republicans are depriving us our right to vote in fair elections!"*

Republican participant*: "Because of the Democratic establishment, we are being denied voting rights. Democrat elites are stealing our votes! We the people, Republicans, are real Americans, and Democrats are depriving us our right to vote in fair elections!"*

The non-deprivation rhetoric message asserted:

Democrat participant*: "Republicans handle elections differently than Democrats, and we disagree with their approach."*

Republican participant*: "Democrats handle elections differently than Republicans, and we disagree with their approach."*

Measured Variables

Leader Support. A 6-item Leader Support scale (α = .91) adapted from Rast et al. (2012) measured the degree to which participants supported the anonymous in party leader, and appeared as follows: Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements about **(Democratic/Republican leader)**: (1) (leader) effectively advocates for Americans like me. (2) I am a strong supporter of (leader). (3) (leader) represents the best interests of Americans like me. (4) I trust (leader) to advocate for Americans like me. (5) I think that (leader) is trustworthy. (6) (leader) wants what is best for Americans like me. (1=*Strongly Disagree*, 7=*Strongly Agree*).

Group Identification. Participants completed a 9-item measure of group-identification (α = .95) adapted from Hogg and Hains (1996) and Hogg, Hains, and Mason (1998). (1) My overall impression of the (Democratic, Republican Party) is favorable. (2) I would stand up for the (Democratic, Republican Party) if it was criticized. (3) I identify with being a (Democrat/Republican). (4) I feel that I belong as a (Democrat/Republican). (5) Being a (Democrat / Republican) is important to me. (6) In general, I feel like a (Democrat / Republican). (7) I fit in well as a (Democrat / Republican). (8) I am similar to other (Democrats/Republicans). (9) I identify strongly with the (Democratic/Republican) party. (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

Support for Extremism. A 7-item Fight or Die scale (α = .96) adapted from Swann (2009) measured participants' willingness to engage in extreme action, or fight

and die on behalf of the ingroup and appeared as follows: Indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements about your political party: (1) I would fight someone physically threatening another (Democrat / Republican). (2) I would fight someone insulting or making fun of the (Democrat / Republican) party as a whole. (3) I would help others get revenge on someone who insulted the (Democrat / Republican) party. (4) Hurting other people is acceptable if it means protecting the (Democrat / Republican) party. (5) I'd do anything to protect the (Democrat / Republican) party. (6) I would sacrifice my life if it saved another (Democrat / Republican)'s life. (7) I would sacrifice my life if it gave the (Democrat / Republican) great status or monetary reward (1=*Totally Disagree*, 7= *Totally Agree)*.

Conservatism Scale. A 3-item, 8-point semantic differential scale ($\alpha = .93$) measured participants' level of conservatism and appeared as follows: How liberal or conservative are you? Please indicate your conservatism or liberalism below. (1) Socially Conservative / Socially Liberal. (2) Fiscally Conservative / Fiscally Liberal. (3) Conservative / Liberal.

Self-Uncertainty Scale. A 12-item self-uncertainty scale ($\alpha = .95$) measured the effect of the manipulation and appeared as follows: (1) My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another. (2) On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion. (3) I wonder about what kind of person I really am. (4) I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be. (5) When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like. (6) I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality. (7) I think I

know other people better than I know myself. (8) My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently. (9) If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another. (10) Even if I wanted to, I don't think I would tell someone what I'm really like. (11) In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am. (12) It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want (1= *Strongly Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Disagree*). Questions 6 and 11 were reverse recoded so that higher numbers indicate greater self-uncertainty. This measure of self-uncertainty was adapted from the self-concept clarity scale (Campbell, 1990, Campbell et al. 1996) to measure state self-uncertainty and has been successfully used to measure of self-uncertainty in the literature (Hohman & Hogg, 2015).

Deprivation Rhetoric Comprehension Check. In the deprivation rhetoric condition, a single item scale measuring comprehension of the manipulation appeared as follows: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. (1) (Democrats / Republicans) are depriving Americans of voting rights and fair elections (1=*Strongly Disagree* 7=*Strongly Agree*). In the no deprivation rhetoric condition, a single item scale appeared as follows: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement. (Democrats /Republicans) in pose concerns for Americans elections. (*1= Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree*).

Demographic variables. Participants were asked a series of questions about their demographics (see Table 1), which included questions regarding their self – identified gender, self-identified race / ethnicity, age, and the state in which they reside.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alphas, and correlations among variables.

		Mean	SD	α	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1.	**Age**	36.3	10.49									
2.	**Party**	1.29	.45		-.08							
3.	**Uncertainty*** **	1.56	.50		-.01	-.01						
4.	**Rhetoric*** **	1.53	.50		-.10	.01	.12*					
5.	**Extremism**	4.56	1.64	.96	-.15*	-.08	-.02	-.09				
6.	**Leader Support**	4.92	1.24	.91	.03	-.13*	-.04	-.10	.55**			
7.	**Group ID**	5.07	1.21	.95	.03	-.11	-.04	-.16**	.59**	.76**		
8.	**Conservatism**	5.62	2.04	.93	-.11	-.20**	-.05	-.06	.22**	.15**	.12*	
9.	**Uncertainty**	4.90	1.37	.95	-.09	-.12*	.02	.03	.57**	.36**	.25**	.10

Note. ***: manipulated variables. Party: 1 = Democratic, 2= Republican. Uncertainty***:1 = High Uncertainty, 2 = Low Uncertainty. Rhetoric***: 1 = Deprivation, 2 = No Deprivation.

N = 302. **p* <.05; ***p* <.01*

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6.	**Leader Support**	4.92	1.24	.91	.03	-.13*	-.04	-.10	.55**			
7.	**Group Identification**	5.07	1.21	.95	.03	-.11	-.04	-.16**	.59**	.76**		
8.	**Conservatism**	5.62	2.04	.93	-.11	-.20**	-.05	-.06	.22**	.15**	.12*	
9.	**Uncertainty**	4.9	1.37	.95	-.09	-.12*	.02	.03	.57**	.36**	.25**	.10

Note. ***: manipulated variables. Party: 1 = Democratic, 2 = Republican. Uncertainty***: 1 = High Uncertainty, 2 = Low Uncertainty. Rhetoric***: 1 = Deprivation, 2 = No Deprivation. $N = 302$. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Results

Data Screening

An initial sample of 336 MTurk workers consented to participate in the online Cloud Research survey. Following their completion of the survey, the participants were debriefed to the true nature of the study and were provided the option to re-consent to their data being used in the study. Completion of the survey and indication of re-consent resulted in an overall sample of 215 Democrats and 87 Republicans (total $N = 302$).

Rhetoric message comprehension check. Democrats participants in the deprivation condition perceived the leader of their group felt deprived regarding elections ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.29$, $SE = .13$, $N = 101$). Democrat participants in the non-deprivation condition perceived the leader of the group felt that their party handled elections differently than the outgroup ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.39$, $SE = .13$, $N = 114$). Due to an error in the randomization of the survey, Republican respondents were not presented with the comprehension check item, for further information refer to the limitations section.

Data screening and checks. A 2 x 2 ANOVA investigated the relationship, if any, of leader rhetoric and party affiliation on conservatism and of leader rhetoric and party affiliation on age. The results of these analyses were not significant, indicating that neither age nor conservatism were related to the independent variables and random assignment was achieved ($ps > .05$). A chi-square model indicated there was no significant association between the gender of the participants and their party affiliation, $x^2(3,302) = .42$, $p = .94$.

Manipulation checks. An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess differences in measured self-uncertainty between the manipulated high and low uncertainty conditions. Results indicated that the uncertainty prime was ineffective, $t(300) = -.27$, $p = .79$, *95%CI* [-.36, .27], $d = -03$. Participants in the high uncertainty condition ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.40$) did not significantly differ in reported self-uncertainty from participants in the low uncertainty condition ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.34$).

Data Assumptions

Support for extremism. Visual inspection of the histogram for the extremism measure data indicates that the measure for support for extremism was slightly negatively skewed. The skewness the extremism variable was found to be -.56 (SE = .14), indicating that the distribution was negatively, or left-skewed (See Figure 1).

Leader support. Visual inspection of the histogram indicates that the measure for support for leader support was slightly negatively skewed (See Figure 2), further analysis revealed a slight negative skew of -.21 (SE = .28).

Group identification. Visual inspection of the histogram for the group identification measure indicated a slight negative skew. Further analysis revealed a skew of -.28 (SE = .14) (see Figure 3).

Figure 1

Histogram of Support for Extremism

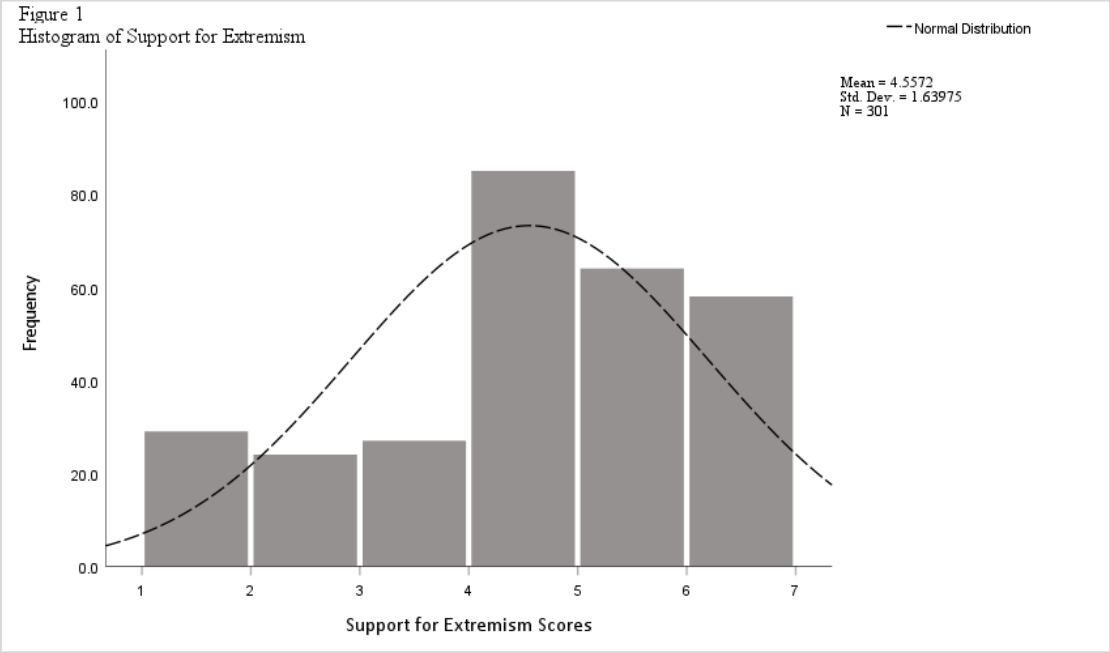


Figure 2

Histogram of Leader Support

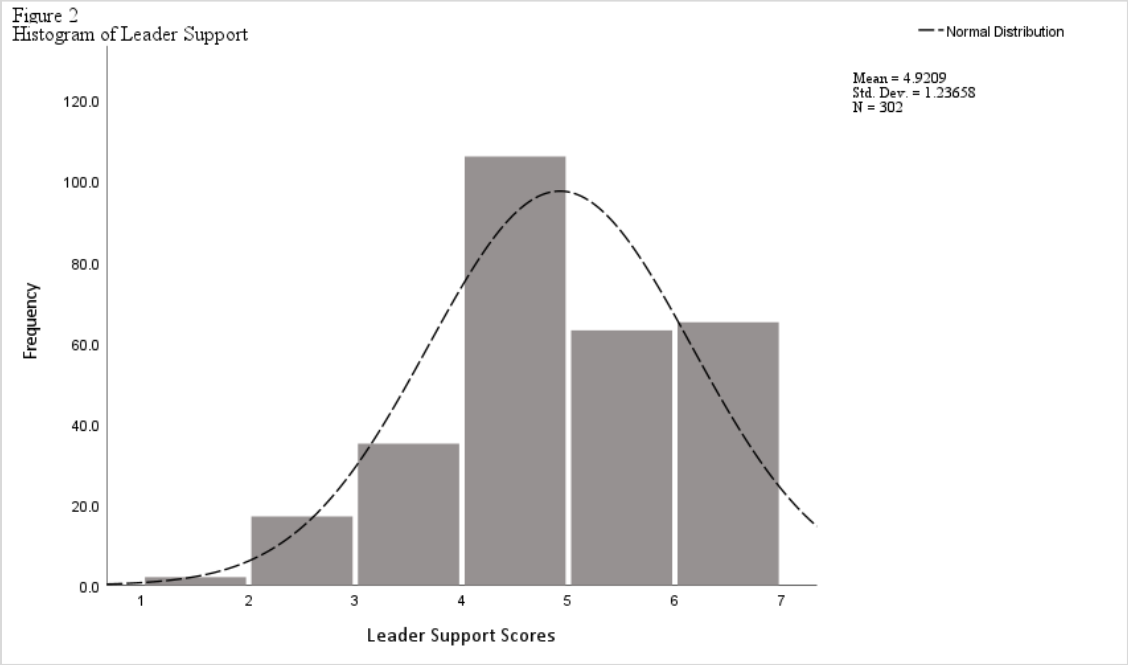
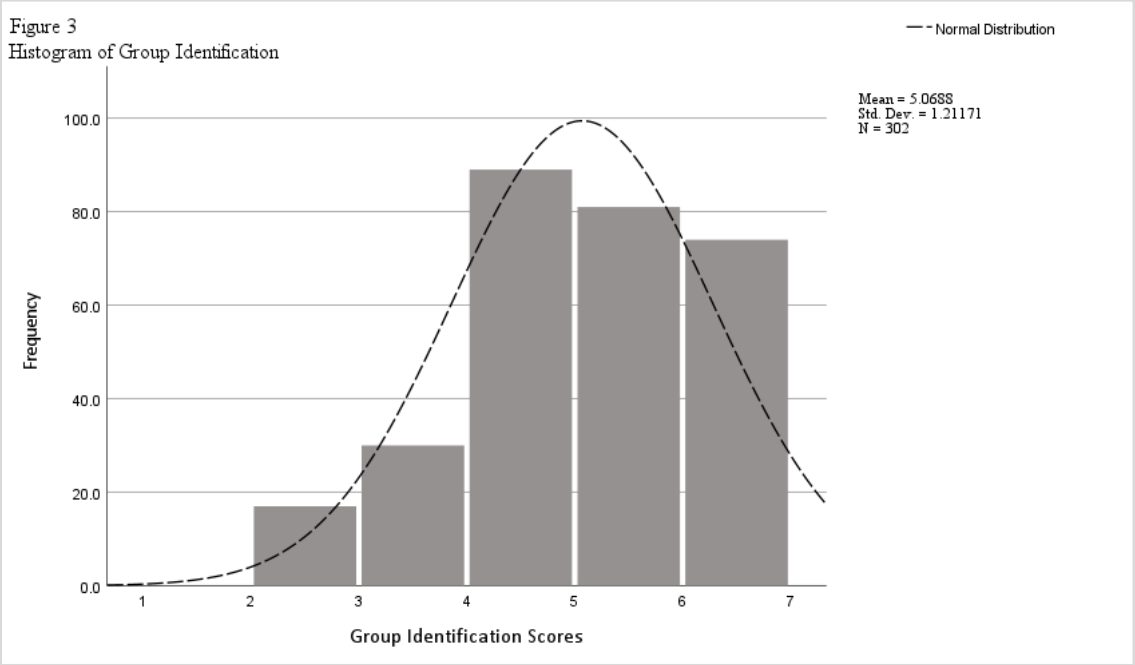


Figure 3

Histogram of Group Identification

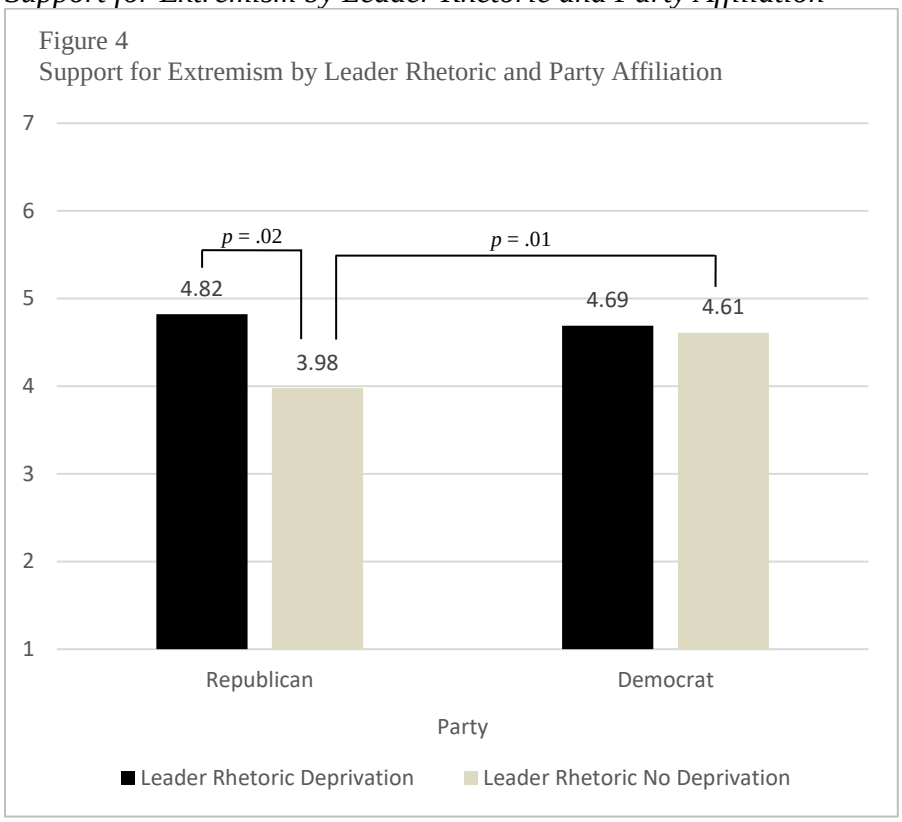


Primary Hypothesis

Support for extremism. A factorial 2 x 2 x 2 ANOVA compared the main effects of rhetoric, party, and uncertainty, and the interaction of the variables on participants' support for extremism, measured through their willingness to fight and die on behalf of their in-group political party. There was no main effect for party affiliation in regards to support for extremism. There was a main effect for type of rhetoric, $F(1, 292) = 5.75$, $p = .02$, indicating a significant difference between deprivation rhetoric ($M = 4.73$, $S.D. = 1.65$) and non-deprivation rhetoric ($M = 4.41$, $S.D. = 1.63$) on support for extremism. However, the effect for rhetoric was qualified by a significant interaction between party and rhetoric, such that Republicans in the deprivation rhetoric condition ($M = 4.82$, $S.D. = 1.53$, $p = .02$) expressed greater willingness to fight and die on behalf of their party than Republicans in the non-deprivation condition, $F(1, 292) = 3.98$, $p=.02$. This effect was not significant for Democrats. Further analysis revealed that in the non-deprivation condition, Democrats were more supportive of extremism than Republicans (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Support for Extremism by Leader Rhetoric and Party Affiliation



Leader Support. ANOVA Model A factorial ANOVA compared the main effects of uncertainty, rhetoric, and party and the interaction between the variables on leader support. Democrats (M = 5.02, SD = 1.22) were more supportive of their leader than Republicans (M = 4.69, SD = 1.24, $F(1, 293) = 4.27$, p =.04 (see Figure 5). Participants in the deprivation message condition (M = 5.05, SD. = 1.23) were more supportive of the leader than those in the non-deprivation rhetoric condition (M = 4.82, SD. = 1.23), $F(1, 293) = 3.90$, p =.049, η_p^2 =.01 (see Figure 6). There was no main effect of uncertainty and no interactions ($ps > .05$).

Figure 5

Leader Support by Party

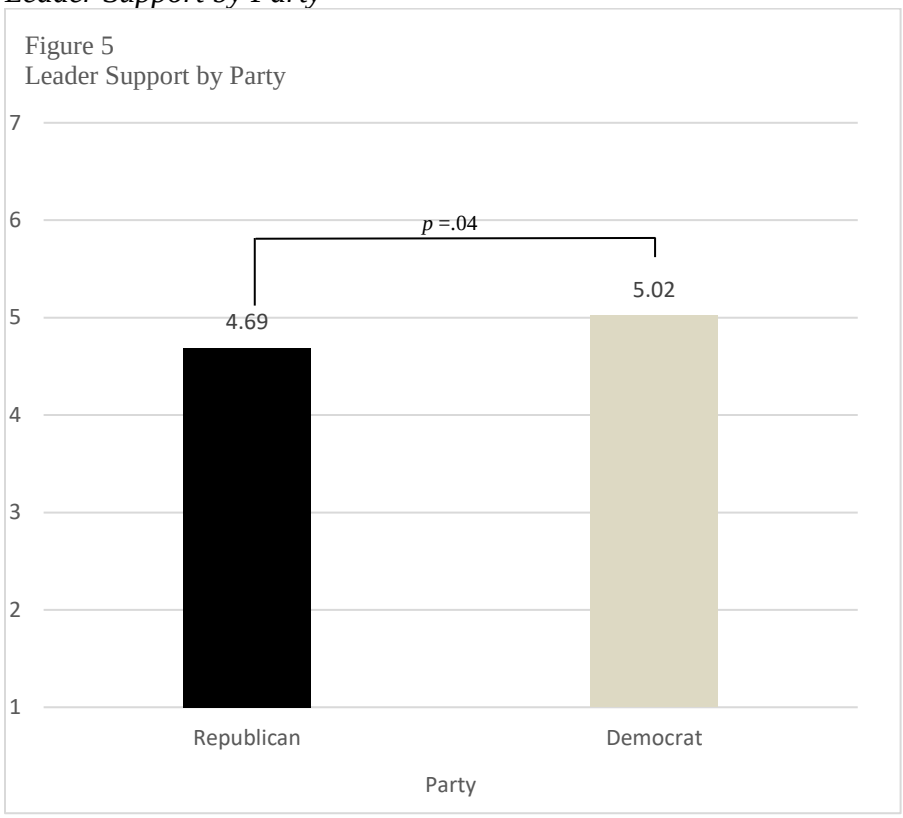
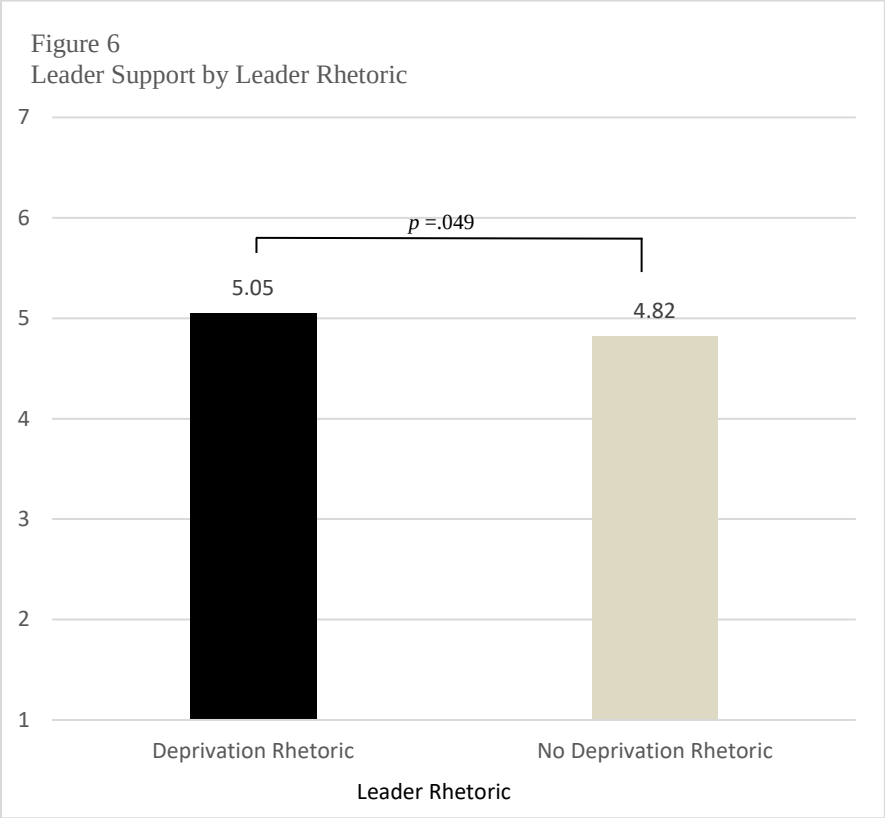


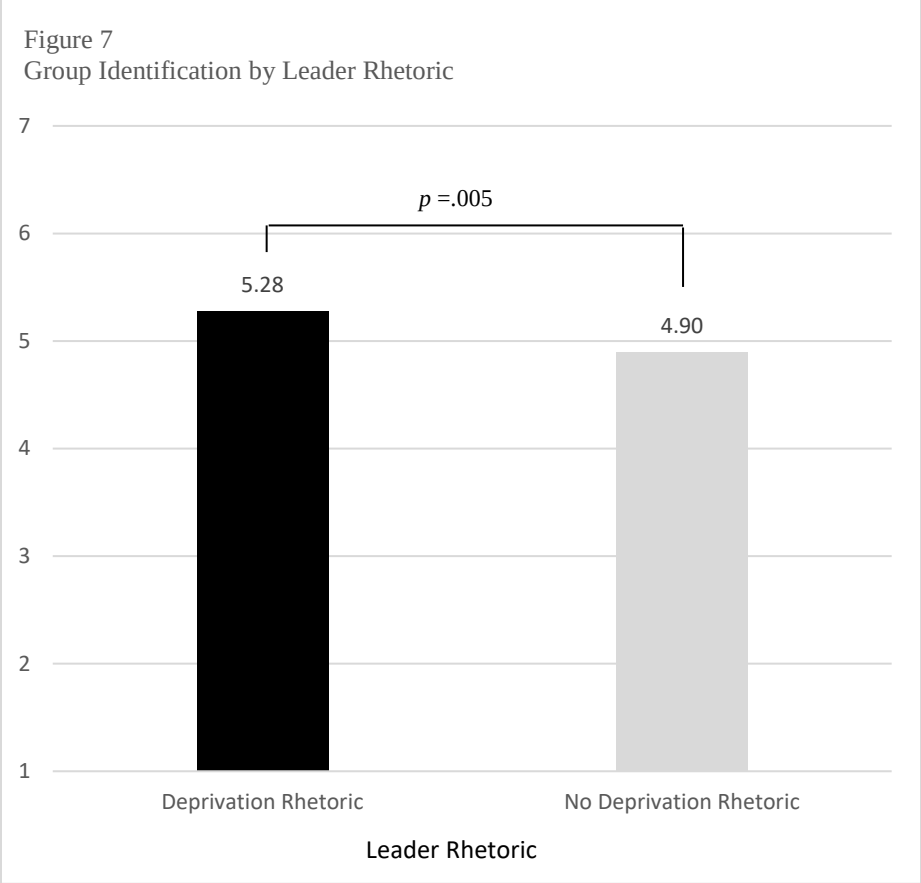
Figure 6

Leader Support by Leader Rhetoric



Group identification. A factorial ANOVA compared the main effects of rhetoric and party and the interaction of the two variables on group identification. There was a main effect for deprivation, $F(1, 293) = 8.09$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, on group identification, such that participants in the deprivation condition ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.13$) expressed stronger group identification than participants in the non-deprivation condition ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 1.25$) regardless of uncertainty or party affiliation (see Figure 7). There was no significant interaction between the predictors on strength of group identification.

Figure 7
Group Identification by Leader Rhetoric



Discussion

The results suggest that populist deprivation rhetoric may influence support for extremism because of self and social categorization. The primary hypothesis was partially supported, such that deprivation rhetoric elicited greater support for extremism amongst group members than a message without deprivation rhetoric. This relationship was the most pronounced in Republican participants, who showed a much higher level of support for extremism in the deprivation rhetoric condition than in the non-deprivation rhetoric condition. Moreover, participants expressed stronger identification with their parties, and more support for their leader if the leader used deprivation rhetoric than if the leader used non-deprivation rhetoric. The study broadens an understanding of populism as a group process, and the potential influence of social media. These findings serve as evidence that deprivation rhetoric activate people's social identities by making salient a competitive intergroup context while highlighting group grievances, essentially capturing the key features of populism through a message. The pending 2022 midterm elections, the potentiation of "the Big Lie," concerning claims of election fraud, and increasing political tension and polarization in the United States serve as contextual factors that will no doubt be used to create collective grievances and potentially encourage violence.

The data supported the primary hypothesis that deprivation rhetoric, party, and uncertainty may influence support for extremism. The initial findings, taken together, highlight the influence of deprivation rhetoric. For the findings regarding support for extremism, the deprivation rhetoric message and the participant's party affiliation appeared to motivate support for extremism. The results for Republican participants can

be seen in two ways. From one angle, Republican participants in the deprivation rhetoric condition showed more support for violent extremism on behalf of their party than those in the non-deprivation condition. From another angle, Republican participants in the non-deprivation rhetoric condition showed less support for violent extremism on behalf of their party than those in the deprivation condition. Recall that, for both conditions, the topic matter was voting and elections. Amidst widespread coverage of "The Big Lie," these findings suggest that the accusatory nature of deprivation rhetoric and the way this language makes identity salient, may be a strong motivator for hostility and even support for violence towards the outgroup. Considering the lower support for extremism when deprivation rhetoric is not used, perhaps if leaders learned to communicate differences without blame, we could see an attenuating effect on political division and polarization on a wide range of topics. Additionally, it is important to note that levels of support for extremism were significantly higher for Democrats in general, when compared to Republicans, regardless of rhetoric condition. This can be taken a number of ways. Perhaps, given the subject of voting, Democrats feel defensively, as the election of Joe Biden has been overshadowed by widespread Republican calls about election theft, as well as nationwide moves to gerrymander and limit citizen's rights to voting. Following the January 6th insurrection, the media has certainly focused on Donald Trump's role in the capitol attack, as well as GOP buy-in of Q-Anon conspiracy beliefs, etc. The findings here suggest that Democrats are "ready to go," expressing overall support and willingness to fight and die on behalf of their party. The high means and significant findings are

surprising in a relatively moderate sample. Even this researcher was surprised at the overall expressed support for violent acts on behalf of the ingroup.

The results are not limited to the study of extremism, but also reveal that deprivation rhetoric appeared to influence leader support and group identification. Again, the data suggest that in the deprivation rhetoric condition, participants were more supportive of the anonymous party leader, than participants in the non-deprivation condition. Additionally, Democrats were overall more supportive of their anonymous leader than Republican participants. The findings played out similarly with the measures for group identification, with participants identifying more strongly with their political group in the deprivation rhetoric condition than in the non-deprivation rhetoric condition, regardless of partisan influence.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First there are limitations inherent to running an online survey, in that there will inevitably be some participants rushing through a survey in order to receive payment. These participants can theoretically be weeded out by paying attention to the duration of time taken to complete the survey and excluding any responses that are completed in an unreasonably quick nature. The benefits of using the online survey (gathering a broad national sample, getting a more diverse sample than that found on a college campus) outweigh the downfalls. Still, a future study can overcome some of the data quality issues by opting for MTurk Pro workers, though data collection may take a drastically longer time to collect. Given the nature of the global pandemic, the

online option makes sense. If COVID-19 allows, a future study may include an in-person sample for comparison.

There were two issues that took place with data collection due to some errors with Qualtrics. One issue involved the variety of the sample, and an unequal collection of Democrats and Republicans. The majority of the collected sample were Democrats or affiliated with the Democratic Party, and did not reflect the national distribution of Democrats and Republicans. We had enough of each party to analyze the data, however, a future study will make sure that an equal number of Democrats and Republicans are collected to improve the validity of the findings. We may improve statistical power and effect sizes by increasing the sample size slightly. The second issue with the data involved the failure of the manipulation check to run. While we did have an equal and randomization to both deprivation conditions, and we successfully measured whether people in the deprivation condition perceived that their leader felt their group was deprived, and whether people in the non-deprivation condition perceived their leader to feel their group handled elections differently than the outgroup, we did not measure participant's own feelings of deprivation. Therefore, we did not measure whether the perceptions of the leader's feelings translated into a correlation with the participants' own reported feelings of deprivation, per condition. Still, given the ample findings with group identification, leader support, and support for extremism, it appears the deprivation rhetoric manipulation did in fact work, a future study will be triple checked to make sure the deprivation manipulation check runs.

Finally, this project used a message from a political leader about voting. Given widespread attention to elections in the United States, and a topic that both parties may feel strongly about, this was a fair choice for focal message. Still, it would be prudent to examine different topics, and if some topics are more heated than others. Leaders such as Donald Trump appear to use deprivation rhetoric as a moving target, and it is important to know whether the topic in this type of message framing plays any role, or whether a leader who uses deprivation rhetoric can interchange topic in this framework to generate support, or, given the findings, attenuate polarization by using a "different but not depriving" message style.

Future Work

The findings of this study warrant further exploration and will be followed up by a second study. While the full design of the follow up study has not been confirmed, I hope to address some of the limitations of the first study in the subsequent study. I will make sure to get an equal sample of Democrats and Republicans, and will be sure to include a functional manipulation check and will triple quadruple check that Qualtrics runs these correctly in the preliminary test run / HIT test. Additionally, I would like to include a measure for collective action to add to the findings about support for extremism. A second study can replicate the first study, and use a social media post from an anonymous political leader. The findings can be strengthened if a variety of topics are explored, to determine whether the results of this first study were limited by the topic of voting, and whether the findings hold true for a variety of topics and contexts.

While this study focused on political extremism, I am also very curious about collective action and social change. The literature suggests that relative deprivation is influential whether the feelings of deprivation are rooted in real actual deprivation or perceptions of being deprived (that may or may not be founded in reality). Feelings of deprivation may influence support for collective action (and not necessarily violent extremism) on behalf of causes such as reproductive rights (being deprived control over one's body), climate action (being deprived a healthy and sustainable future life on earth), trans rights (being deprived freedom of identity and autonomy), land back movements (being deprived rights to one's ancestral homelands), or Black Lives Matter (being deprived civil rights, safety, autonomy, etc.). This current work is not intended to deny the very real, systemic deprivation that many groups face. I am curious to investigate how populist deprivation rhetoric plays out on a variety of topics and whether leaders who use this language can motivate support for social change, and not just violent extremism, using this framework.

Conclusion

Taken together, the data tell a story about the function of deprivation rhetoric in generating group identification, rallying support for political leaders, and even influencing group members towards support for violent extremism on behalf of their political party. Over 50 years ago, Gurr's foundational research on relative deprivation found the strong link between feelings of relative deprivation and the potential for collective violence (Gurr, 1970). The current study's findings elaborate on those original works and bring them to the current century, by providing experimental evidence that

leaders who use deprivation rhetoric (even in a Twitter or social media post), may engage followers and fuel support for the type of political collective violence that Gurr investigated.

Similarly, Gaffney et al.'s work (2018) conducted at the 2016 Republican and Democratic National conventions highlights the role of relative deprivation in fueling support for populist attitudes. The current work expands on that research by testing experimentally whether a leader can embody those feelings of relative deprivation and make them salient in followers by using populist deprivation rhetoric. The results suggest that leaders who use populist deprivation rhetoric can not only generate follower support and strengthen the identity of their in-group, but also potentially motivate followers to embracing extremism on behalf of the group. This experiment measured attitudes, therefore we do not know the extent of these feelings of support for extremism, whether they are limited to condoning violence on behalf of the group, or whether participants would actually engage in said violence. Importantly, the interaction between party and deprivation rhetoric suggests that there may be an attenuating effect when leaders opt for messages that do not use deprivation, but instead highlight differences without framing the message with language of blame. Instead of saying that the other group is taking something away or depriving the ingroup, a leader who employs a less blameful message that notes differences, may see that group members are less supportive of violent extremism.

Crano and Gaffney's 2021 work positions relative deprivation at the core of populist movements and extreme beliefs. The current work substantiates that notion

experimentally, and ties together the ways in which populist deprivation rhetoric drives group identification, leader support, and ultimately, support for extremism. These pieces should not be taken separately. Together, they weave the processes of social influence, the fluid nature of leadership within a group, and the way in which people's group identities can be used for community, or for war. The study adds evidence to support the central role of social identity and deprivation rhetoric in the processes of populism. THANK YOU.

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