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**OSTBAYERISCHE
TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE
REGENSBURG**

The Right Wing and Instagram: A Visual Content Analysis of Female Depiction

May 2017

2218775H

57335552

**Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
MSc International Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies**

Word Count: 21,672

Supervisors: Dr. Andrew Hoskins & Dr. Vit Stritecky

Abstract

This research project aims to analyse the social media imagery shared by members of the right wing using confirmed right wing hashtags on the social media image sharing platform Instagram in order to determine what themes are present in the depiction of women. Furthermore it aims to place those images in the wider context of gender issues within the right wing in order to examine whether there has been a shift in female representation. The main analysis lies in examining all the main themes depicted in the images collected in relation to established gender roles and the right wing ideology. It does so by applying a theoretical framework of visual research methods, whilst also employing a thematic component through the existing literature on the right wing ideology, and gender discourse. The role and view of women within the right wing is a contested issue, and the conclusions drawn from this research project mirror that. Traditionally women have been contextualised with regards to mainly beauty and family, however there has recently been a shift with regards to this which sees women now take a more active role with regards to disseminating right wing ideology through depicting themselves as soldiers and advocates for the right wing cause. Ultimately this dissertation concludes that right wing usage of Instagram not only echoes current affairs, and the ongoing gender discussion within the right wing, but it also to an extent mirrors global trends and themes in Instagram usage.

Acknowledgements

Although this dissertation might have my name on it, it was a team effort from start to finish in every way possible. Undertaking not only a double degree, but also a research project like this whilst grieving the loss of my father was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. Thankfully, due to all the incredible people supporting me along the way I got to honour the promise I made to my father before he passed that I would make it to the end of this degree.

Firstly I would like to say a special thanks to James Fitzgerald, Maura Conway and Lisa McInerney of Vox-Pol who helped shaped the initial idea for this dissertation. Additionally I would like to thank my two supervisors Dr. Hoskins and Dr. Stritecky for their feedback and guidance throughout this process. I would also like to express my huge gratitude and thanks to some of staff at the University of Glasgow, who have gone above and beyond in supporting me not only through this dissertation process, but also throughout the entire degree. A special thanks to Eamonn Butler, Anna Yates and Emma Smith for their incredible amounts of encouragement and support – it really did make a world of difference.

Furthermore I would like to give a special shoutout to Fredrik for being a word-formatting wizard. This dissertation would have not looked this good without you. To Meghan, thank you for letting me pour my heart out to you and always making me laugh, especially with those motivational posters. And to Helen, thank you for always being the one person I can talk to about anything, regardless of how long we go without seeing each other. To Lia, I have no words to describe the love and gratitude I feel towards you. Doing this degree was worth it based purely on the fact that it brought me your friendship. Grazie mille.

Moreover, to Siri, thank you for knowing me better than I know myself most days. Thank you for accepting every emotion I have thrown at you over the past few years without so much as batting an eyelid. Thank you for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself, for motivating me when I couldn't motivate myself, and for supporting me when I couldn't support myself. You continue to go above and beyond the call of duty as my friend and one day I hope to repay the favour.

To Jan-Mikael, simultaneously the most annoying and kindest person I know, thank you for being the best big brother around, and for being so proud of me. Also to Line, my sister from another mister, thank you for bringing so much light and love to the world – it needs more people like you. To my two little light switches, Sakura and Jan-Damien, thank you for always putting a smile on my face, and for lighting up my world when it is at its darkest.

To my Pappa, who never got to see me complete this degree and dissertation, yet never doubted that I would, you continue to be my hero. Thank you for teaching me how to keep fighting.

Lastly, to my mother, for whom I have no words to express my gratitude for all you have been for me, not only in the past few years, but throughout my entire life. We have been to hell and back together, and I will forever be grateful for that, purely because it has brought us closer together. You are the strongest and most gracious person I know, and I am incredibly proud to call myself your daughter. There is no way I could have gotten anywhere near completing this dissertation and degree without you.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	6
1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	9
1.3 VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS.....	10
1.4 SUMMARY	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	13
2.2 TECHNOLOGY & ART	15
2.3 VISUAL PROPAGANDA.....	18
2.4 PREVIOUS RESEARCH.....	21
2.5 RIGHT WING POLITICS	24
2.6 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH	27
2.7 CHALLENGES OF VISUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS.....	27
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	30
3.1 DATA COLLECTION.....	30
3.2 CHALLENGES.....	32
3.3 ANALYSIS	34
CHAPTER FOUR: THE RIGHT WING IDEOLOGY, THE INTERNET AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN	36
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	36

4.2 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT WING EXTREMISTS AND RIGHT WING POLITICAL PARTIES	37
4.3 THE IDEOLOGY OF THE RIGHT WING	39
4.4 THE RIGHT WING AND THE INTERNET	42
4.5 THE RIGHT WING AND WOMEN	45
4.6 CONCLUSION	49
CHAPTER FIVE: IMAGE ANALYSIS	51
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	51
5.2 SELFIES.....	54
5.3 FAMILY, TRADITION & DEFENCE OF THE WHITE RACE.....	60
5.4 WOMEN AS SOLDIERS & ADVOCATES FOR THE CAUSE.....	65
5.5 ANTI-FEMINIST/DEROGATORY TOWARDS WOMEN	70
5.6 FEMALE POLITICIANS	73
5.7 THE ‘OTHERS’	76
5.8 CONCLUSION	79
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	82
6.1 SUMMARY	82
6.2 FINDINGS	83
6.3 FUTURE RESEARCH.....	86
6.4 LIMITATIONS	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY	88

Chapter One: Introduction

'Visual social media content is an important part of everyday activities on platforms from Facebook to Vine, Twitter to Tinder, through profile pictures, memes, information-sharing, and affective imagery, and employed to respond to any number of topics'

(Highfield & Leaver, 2016:58)

1.1 Research Questions

As the above quote highlights the ways in which we share visual imagery online is constantly increasing and evolving. Furthermore, the ways in which such imagery is being used to disseminate hateful and racist views, and contributing to online radicalisation is increasing alongside it. It is therefore important that research into the use of social media platforms echoes this development and delves into the ever increasing amount of visual data that such social media platforms produce.

According to Highfield and Leaver social media platforms, especially those focused mainly on visuals, have an ability to mix the political and the mundane, the extraordinary and the everyday (2016:48). The increasing amount of social media campaigns in the wake of terrorist attacks are a good example of this. Highfield and Leaver mention the November 2015 Paris attacks, however the same also happened with regards to the Westminster attacks in London, as well as the attack in Stockholm, in early 2017 (2016:48). Similarly it did not take long for images of solidarity to appear on social media in the aftermath of the 22nd of May attacks in Manchester, England. In addition Highfield and Leaver argue that this illustrates how the visual content on social media can

highlight political views, reactions, key information, and scenes of importance, discrediting the common misconception that visual content on social media only consists of selfies, memes, food porn, and GIFs (2016:48). Although it might seem like the sharing of such visuals is a recent development within the online environment, Highfield and Leaver argue that we have in fact always found ways to be visual online, earlier manifestations of this included flash animation, and GIF website banners (2016:48).

The image has become so powerful, especially the digital image, that it can drive political acts and protests, often in safer arenas than publicly in person (Highfield & Leaver, 2016:49). Such images are surrounded by debates and discussion that take on both political, economic, technological, legal and sociocultural dimensions, and are therefore not just social media artefacts (Highfield & Leaver, 2016:49). This merely reinforces the previous point that such visual communication must be studied. This research project aims to do just that with regards to visual imagery shared using established right wing hashtags on Instagram, which focuses on the women, females and feminism. This research project will not only contribute to the existing literature on the right wing and gender, but also contribute to the limited amount of research on visual social media platforms. Furthermore it will contribute to a development of methodological processes with regards to visual content analysis. Moreover this is important to examine as it will identify trends in right wing online behaviour which will contribute to the existing knowledge of how the right wing utilises new technologies, especially the Internet. This research will be structured around three research questions. These are:

RQ1: What are the prominent themes within the visuals collected? Do any main trends stand out?

RQ2: How do these themes correlate to the established ideas of women within the right wing?

RQ3: What do the identified themes tell us about how female ‘others’ are viewed, and to what extent does it differ from the way which right wing women are depicted?

In order to do so adequately this research project will be divided into six different chapters. The first chapter is this introduction which will briefly outline the research aims for this project, as well as creating a base understanding of visuals on social media. Furthermore this chapter aims to establish a brief theoretical framework in which this research will be grounded. This research project will inevitably combine different areas of study, and therefore the theoretical framework will echo this. It will do so by briefly examining visual research methods. The next chapter is the literature review. This chapter aims to highlight the need for a research project like this by examining existing literature on visual propaganda and the right wing. Furthermore, it will identify previous research that takes a similar form whilst also justifying the need for a furthering of such research by identifying gaps in the already established research. The third chapter explains the methodology used for this research project whilst also highlighting some of the challenges of undertaking such work. The fourth chapter deals exclusively with the right wing. It examines the ideology of the right wing as well as its main characteristics, in addition to how the extreme right differs from the arguably more moderate right wing political parties. Furthermore it investigates the relationship the right wing has had with technology, and especially the Internet. The last part of the fourth chapter addresses women in the right wing, identifying in what way women have historically been portrayed and depicted in the right wing movements. In essence that chapter aims to create a base understanding of the right wing ideology, relationship with the Internet and views on gender in order to support the main analysis. Although this introductory chapter

establishes a theoretical framework, the knowledge acquired from each of the individual chapters will greatly contribute to the ultimate image analysis. Existing literature will also aid the analysis when attempting to answer the research questions. The need for thematic theory as well as visual research theory which will be explained more in-depth later in this chapter.

The fifth chapter in this research project is the main analysis chapter in which the imagery collected will be examined in detail. It aims to answer the aforementioned research questions systematically. It will do so by analysing the identified main characters in relation to existing literature and previously established knowledge on the right wing. The last chapter in this research project is the conclusion. It aims to summarise and tie together all the aspects of this research project, using the empirical analysis to form conclusions with regards to the research questions. Furthermore the conclusion aims to outline several ways in which this research could be developed further.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

An essential part of every research project is a theoretical framework which guides the project and acts as a catalyst for scientific direction. According to Pauwels our seeing is both blind without theory, and tends to rest on implicit theory, or unexplained views and expectations, which in some instances we might even be unaware of (2011:12). This next section will outline the theoretical framework for this research project. The theoretical framework will primarily focus on visual research methods. As Pauwels argues, the theoretical grounding of a project must not only include the visual analytical side, which concerns itself with how to deal with both the content and form of the visual products, but also the thematic focus or the main subject matter of the project (Pauwels, 2011:12). However for the sake of this research project the chapter on the right wing

will act as the thematic component of the theoretical framework. Merely investigating the imagery shared by the right wing on Instagram without adding established knowledge and information about the right wing would render the analysis inadequate. However, despite this it is important to note that a research project which is driven by theory and systematically conceptualised does not rule out the possibility of more intuitive and exploratory approaches (Pauwels, 2011:13). Furthermore, another important aspect to keep in mind is that the sampling technique to an extent co-determines the inferences possible from the visual data at a later stage (Pauwels, 2011:13). This is especially important in this research project as the data collected will be analysed manually both qualitatively and quantitatively, and that the conclusions drawn from this project will draw from all the knowledge demonstrated throughout the chapters.

1.3 Visual Research Methods

There are several types of theoretical frameworks which have been adapted over the course of the years to visual analysis, according to Pauwels (2011:12). Despite this visual research is a relatively new type of research, and therefore its methods are not well worked. Pauwels states that both conceptual and methodological vagueness exists within the realm of visual research methods (2011:2).

With regards to visual research one of the first decisions one must make as a researcher is whether to utilise existing visual materials, also known as 'found' visuals as one's primary data, or whether to use one's role as a researcher to initiate visual products or first-hand observations (Pauwels, 2011:4). Pauwels argues that a wide sweep of social data and visual data sources exist in society today (Pauwels, 2011:4). Examples include cartoons, artwork, website content, advertisements,

CCTV etc (Pauwels, 2011:4). Naturally, this research project falls into the category which utilises ‘found’ materials. A distinction exists between ‘found’ materials of no known origin and research-generated visuals (Pauwels, 2011:6). According to Pauwels these types of materials only represent the extremes of what he describes as a continuum that slides from ‘anonymous artifacts’ to ‘other researchers data’, ‘respondent generated data’, and finally ‘researcher generated visuals’ (2011:6). The data collected in this research project exists somewhere in the former part of the continuum. Although the origin is known, to an extent, there are multiple variables regarding culture, gender, age, location etc that are unknown with regards to the ‘creator’ of the images, which influences the contextual background in which the images are created. This means that the emphasis on the research lies directly with the task of ‘decoding’ collected visual materials, which sometimes are not directly accessible anymore (Pauwels, 2011:5). With regards to this research project and the methodology used to collect the data, there is always the possibility that images may be deleted from Instagram by the user, and consequently cannot be used to advance or replicate this research. There are a multitude of ways to research visuals, which range from analysing the thematics of the imagery to recording public reactions to such visuals (2011:7). This research project is as mentioned concerned with the former, especially how the imagery shared by members or the right wing relates to both established ideas of females within the right wing, but also to an extent how the images are framed, and how the Other women is depicted.

As Pauwels states, the depicted are often the main source of data, and therefore the main focal point of an analysis (2011:9). This is especially true for this research project, as it will use this analysis as a ‘window’ into the depicted world, which Pauwels states is legitimate if the primary interest of the research project is the depicted matter (2011:9). It is however important to note that

there is an inevitable difference between the depicted and the depiction, which ultimately might influence or even misinform their views on the depicted (Pauwels, 2011:9). In essence this means that although the visuals in this research project are shared using confirmed right wing hashtags, and the context of the photo is manually confirmed by the researcher, one must understand that there might be a discrepancy between the way the right wing is depicted on Instagram, and real life views. Furthermore, Pauwels states that this contributes to the problematisation of the visual form, which leads to it no longer being seen as an unproblematic window into the depicted world, but also as a type of mirror of the social and cultural world of the image producer (2011:10). It is therefore vital that the researcher has sufficient knowledge of the medium used to collect the data and the culture surrounding it (Pauwels, 2011:10). This research project deals with this issue by briefly examining the right wing's relationship with the Internet in a later chapter.

1.4 Summary

In summary this research project is a visual content analysis of the images shared on confirmed right wing hashtags on the social media platform Instagram. It aims to analyse those images in an attempt to answer the research questions which this chapter set out. These questions are concerned with the depiction and portrayal of women in relation to already established right wing gender norms. This chapter has also outlined the base of the theoretical framework needed when studying visuals. Moreover, a later chapter will act as the thematic component of such a framework.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The emergence of the Internet has brought with it a multitude of new challenges for old social issues. The increasing amount of social media platforms have also increased the ways in which racists are able to share and distribute their views and hatred. Amongst these racists we find right wing extremists (RWE) who have been utilising the Internet for decades. One of the biggest RWE websites, Stormfront, was launched on the 27th of March 1995 (Back, 2002:635). Alongside the technological developments of the past few decades, the way in which hate groups utilise technology to spread hateful messages and imagery has evolved as well. However, using technology to spread hateful messages and imagery is not a new feat. This research project will highlight how members of the right wing use Instagram to spread the way in which they view women, females and feminism.

Les Back argues that both film and photography enhanced the cult of race and gave leadership the capacity to be heard beyond the range of the human voice by enlarging film and photography to new dimensions (Back, 2002:628). Back argues that the Nazi revolution highly utilised this as they managed to bring their movement to life through music, dance and sport (Back, 2002:628). Back also argues that such racial narcissism creates a widespread indifference to the victims of such hateful imagery (Back, 2002:268). As Back states, it is important to remember that imitators of generic fascism have embraced digital technology, especially in our time which is marked by unprecedented technological innovation as well as globalisation (Back, 2002:269-269).

In 1994 Bernt Hagtvet wrote '*A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of nationalism, re-emerging and attended by a flurry of right-wing extremist behaviour*' (1994:241). In the paragraph that follows he explains how this nationalism has manifested itself in political violence against minorities, as well as increased support for right wing organisations and political parties (Hagtvet, 1994:241). Although the article was written more than two decades ago it very much echoes the current political climate in Europe. Familiar names like Jean-Marie LePen and the *Front National* are mentioned alongside polling statistics (Hagtvet, 1994:241). Individuals who prescribe to far right and right wing populist ideologies are increasingly making their voices and opinions heard across Europe and in the US.

This research project will however be the first of its kind to analyse the imagery distributed under right wing hashtags (#) on the social media platform Instagram. Instagram was initially a image sharing platform, although a video feature was added in recent years. This research will focus on how women are portrayed and depicted by the images shared. The aim of this research is to examine not only how women are portrayed by the right wing online, but also analyse to what extent there is a shift from the traditional view of women, and to what extent women within the right wing are viewed compared to women outside of the right wing environment, mainly what they themselves would term the 'Others'. This literature review will therefore touch on a multitude of different topics in order to establish a base from which to proceed with the research.

Firstly it will look at some of the earlier and arguably most defining pieces of work on technology and art, by Walter Benjamin who discussed how the ability to reproduce art due to technological advancements contributed to a shift in the function of art (Benjamin, 2004:10). Secondly, it will

touch on how art has previously been utilised as a political tool, namely visual propaganda efforts, both in the past and recently. Thirdly it will look at some previous research which has utilised visual imagery analysis, before briefly examining literature on right wing politics as a whole. Lastly this literature review chapter will briefly outline some of the challenges with regards to utilising visual research methods.

2.2 Technology & Art

In his 1968 article ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, Walter Benjamin stresses the importance technology has had on the way we treat art (2004:25). He argues that the entire character of Nazism was enabled by the utilisation of new technologies, like photography (Back, 2002:632). Les Back uses this perspective to state that in order to understand the dynamics of movements like nazism, both the medium and the message conveyed are important (2002:632). Although Back’s arguments are over a decade old and written before the emergence of the technology discussed in this research project, they are still highly relevant. Back argues that both the medium and the message are equally as important today, and that Benjamin’s arguments can be usefully applied to simulation and digital culture, as new technologies have the potential to express aesthetic politics in new dimensions (2002:632). As Back states ‘*...it is both important and necessary to map the matrices of contemporary cyber racist politics through their specific forms of cultural expression*’ (2002:632).

Furthermore, in his article, Walter Benjamin discussed the importance technology has had on the way we look at and reproduce art (Benjamin, 2004:25). When technological development reached such a state that art could be reproduced, and quite easily so, with for instance photography, the

way in which we dealt with art significantly changed, according to Benjamin (2004:3). Although this research project will not be focused on this specifically the analysis will contribute to an understanding of how the sharing of imagery has evolved since Benjamin wrote his article. Furthermore it will highlight how exponentially the amount of images shared on a daily basis has increased.

Benjamin argues that photography was the first revolutionary form of reproduction, and it happened to coincide with the rise of socialism (2004:7). An important consequence of this was that for the first time in history art was emancipated from its dependence on ritual (Benjamin, 2004:8). Ultimately this led to more and more art being designed for reproducibility, which in turn ceased the applicability of authenticity, and fundamentally changed the function of art (Benjamin, 2004:8). Whilst art was previously based on ritual, it now started to utilise politics as its base (Benjamin, 2004:8). This research project will undoubtedly highlight this as it is believed that a great deal of the visuals analysed will have a political focus or motivation.

Benjamin argues that humanity's entire mode of existence has been altered through the mode of human sense perception throughout history (2004:6). The organisation of this human sense perception, as well as which medium is utilised is determined both by nature and historical circumstances (Benjamin, 2004:6). As Benjamin explains, such changing of human perception can also influence social transformations (2004:6). Benjamin uses the fifth century and the birth of the late Roman art history as well as the Vienna Genesis as an example (2004:6). Despite the fact that the scholars of that time managed to draw conclusions about the hallmark which characterised perception in the late Roman times, they either did not attempt, or found no way, of

illustrating how such perception might be a catalyst for social transformations (2004:6). According to Benjamin his 'present' finds itself in more favourable conditions for such insights, stating that it is possible to show the social causes by comprehending the changes in the medium of contemporary perception as decay of the aura (2004:6). The 'aura' he discusses is connected to the authenticity and originality of a work of art that has yet to be reproduced (Benjamin, 2004:6-7). He therefore argues that the contemporary need for mass reproduction creates a new type of perception which is focused on a 'universal equality of things', which thereby even manages to extract an aura out of a unique object through reproduction (Benjamin, 2004:7). It is in this shift from uniqueness to reproducibility where the aforementioned change in the function of art occurred, and politics began being utilised as its base (Benjamin, 2004:8). Although many might argue against describing social media imagery as art, it is important to understand the concepts Benjamin addresses. Furthermore it is important to accept that such imagery, regardless of its form, has a base in photography which is widely regarded as an art. Therefore the concepts and ideas that Benjamin discusses are applicable to social media imagery, which can easily be seen when discussing such perceptions and art as a catalyst for social transformations. Although it might not have taken the exact form Benjamin discussed, there have been several instances in the past few years where imagery on social media has been used to spread political messages or garner a following for a specific cause. A good example of this is how in the aftermath of the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris Facebook profile pictures were overlaid with the French tricolour (Highfield & Leaver, 2016:47). Simultaneously a modified peace symbol which featured the Eiffel Tower was distributed across several social media platforms (Highfield & Leaver, 2016:47). These two acts became a symbol of the international distress following the attacks (Neyfakh, 2015). Similarly, in the aftermath of the 2017 attacks in Westminster, London, an image of the

underground logo with the text *'we are not afraid'* across it was widely shared on several social media platforms (Hunt, 2017).

2.3 Visual Propaganda

However, the utilisation of art as a political tool is not something that emerged alongside social media. As Luciano Cheles research into the visual propaganda utilised by the Italian political party Alleanza Nazionale between 1994 and 2009 has illustrated (2010). In his article Cheles argues that the visual propaganda of Alleanza Nazionale incorporated two levels of meanings (2010:232). The overt and moderate one which was aimed at the general public, as well as a concealed one which celebrated the ideas and values of the *Ventennio*, and thereby reassuring the hard-core activists that the party had not betrayed its original identity (Cheles, 2010:232). The *Ventennio* refers to the fascist Italian rule between 1922 and 1945. Moreover, although Cheles' research is relatively recent there are several examples of visual imagery being used as a political tool. As previously highlighted, the Nazi's widely utilised propaganda to disseminate their views and garner more support (Back, 2002:632). Using visual imagery to persuade others of your political ideology or ideas is commonly referred to as engaging in propaganda activities. As Seo argues one can trace the use of propaganda back to ancient Greece, and it has been an integral part of human history since, however the techniques of propaganda have been influenced by the developments in communication technology (Seo, 2014:151). Furthermore Seo argues that visual have been such an integral part of propaganda efforts because images are more effective at capturing the attention of the public (Seo, 2014:152). This ability to crystallise sentiment is one of the main reasons political leaders who utilise visual imagery as a main ideological tool in shaping people's perceptions to their advantage do so (Seo, 2014:152)

Dauber and Winkler define propaganda by stating that it is a form of 'directed persuasion that places the intent of the speaker or propagandist at the center of inquiry' (2012:7). Furthermore they employ the U.S Department of Defense (DoD) definition to expand on their description. This definition states that propaganda is;

'Any form of adversary communication, especially of a biased or misleading nature, designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly' (Dauber & Winkler,2012:7).

It is interesting to note that although the word propaganda carries negative connotations, there are several examples of propaganda being used to relay positive messages, like for instance encouraging people to vote (Jordan, 2015).

More recently several scholarly articles have demonstrated that the usage of visual imagery and propaganda has been extensively utilised by the so-called 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' (ISIS). Lisa Blaker argues that ISIS has made great use of the Internet and specifically social media to spread their propaganda (2015:1). For the purposes of ISIS, social media has proved itself to be an extremely valuable tool, especially when taken into consideration the audience they are aiming to attract, which is the 'Millennial generation' (Blaker, 2015:1). Furthermore, as Blaker's research illustrates, ISIS' propaganda is increasingly sophisticated with production quality videos and images that incorporate visual effects (Blaker, 2015:1).

Similarly, Dauber and Winkler explain how the sophistication in the strategic crafting of extremist and terrorist groups online has heightened in the past few years (2012:6). Furthermore Dauber and Winkler quote Neville Bolt who argues that insurgents have adopted similar approaches to state strategic communications, illustrating how sophisticated extremists' online campaigns have become (2012:6). These efforts represent specific targeting of the 'hearts and minds' of extremists' target audiences through ever-improving propaganda efforts (Dauber & Winkler, 2012:6). Despite this there is a lack of recent and current research which focuses on propaganda efforts by the right wing.

As Back states, as many before him also have, cyberspace makes it possible to participate in a racist Network which is interactive (Back, 2002:633). This is possible through the combination of distance and intimacy found in cyberspace (Back, 2002:633). Furthermore, this combination of distance and intimacy is instrumental in providing a new context for racial harassment through new digital tools (Back, 2002:633). Moreover it also facilitates communication between people who are geographically scattered, whilst simultaneously being private due to the fact that it can be conducted from one's own home behind a keyboard (Back, 2002:629). This gives participants a way to be intimately involved in racist culture from a distance by sensing, listening and feeling racist sentiments (Back, 2002:629). In the past decade as social media platforms have exponentially increased, both in their numbers and in the amount of time we dedicate to them in our daily lives, so have the ways in which people can communicate and share their ideologies, views and hate. It is believed that this research project will illustrate how the threshold for sharing of such imagery is lowered by with the use of social media platforms, like Instagram, as the share

amount of images shared to an extent acts as a shield for those sharing hateful views on such platforms, as they ultimately become a drop in an ocean.

As mentioned previously members of the right wing were among the first to start using computer networks, with Back stating that by the mid-eighties white racists and marginal white power groups were doing so (Back, 2002:629). According to Back they had, by the mid-nineties seized the Internet as a political tool as well as an unregulated and relatively cheap alternative media (Back, 2002:629). In the decades following the emergence of such websites, the number of websites dedicated to white supremacist and racist material has proliferated (Back, 2002:629). The Internet can now be used to easily and rapidly access racist materials in a multitude of varying forms, from images to music and videos.

2.4 Previous Research

Despite the lack of visual imagery research which focuses explicitly on the right wing there has been an increasing amount of research into the effects and use of imagery on social media and the online environment in the past years. A couple of these have already been briefly mentioned, however the next section will outline a few instances of such research more in depth.

Hyunjin Seo's analysis of how Hamas and Israel used visual propaganda as a tool during the 2012 conflict is an excellent examples of how such imagery can be utilised to create sentiment for a certain position or ideology. In the article Seo analysed the images posted to Twitter by both Hamas' Alqassam Brigade as well as the Israeli Defense Forces in an attempt to understand visual propaganda in the age of social media and social networking (2014:150). According to Seo,

Israel's motivation for launching a social media campaign was to create more favourable international public opinion, using Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to disseminate information about casualties and damages caused by Hamas (2014:151). In addition to this Israel started using hashtags such as #IsraelUnderFire and #PillarofDefense to increase the support for their campaign (2014:151). Hamas engaged in a similar social media campaign using twitter to post graphic photos of civilians, especially babies, following Israeli airstrikes (Seo, 2014:152). Hamas' Alqassam Brigade also tweeted saying 'Where is the media coverage of Israel's crimes in Gaza?'. Seo's research analysed the frames, themes, human characters and structural features in the tweets shared during the November 2012 conflict by Hamas's Alqassam Brigades and the Israeli Defense Forces. The principles of how Seo conducted his research will be valuable for this research project as the methodology will be similar, however the imagery analysed as well as the social media platform, and political groups, will be different.

In addition to Seo's research there are a few other instances where visual imagery has been analysed as a propaganda tool. The aforementioned analysis of Alleanza Nazionale by Luciano Cheles is one example, although it did not encompass social media imagery (2010). The exclusion of social media imagery is however natural as the timeframe for the research was 1994-2009 which was arguably before the exponential increase in social media imagery.

Similarly, Tim Highfield and Tama Leaver have studied visual social media, attempting to underline the increasing importance of visual elements in both social, digital and mobile media (2016:47). Highfield and Leaver argue that there is significant research gap when it comes to visual social media, especially with regards to analysing, tracking, and understanding it as both

intertextual and image-based content (2016:47). In comparison to Seo's research and similar to this research project, Highfield and Leaver's research focuses on Instagram activity which is a primarily visual platform, as opposed to the microblogging nature of Twitter.

Furthermore, in 2014, the Strategic Studies Institute alongside the U.S Army War College Press published a report called 'Visual Propaganda and Extremism in the Online Environment' which was edited by Claudia Winkler and Cori Dauber. One of the chapters in the report, written by Michael S. Waltman focuses on the Internet visual imagery in the radicalisation of white ethno-terrorist in the United States (Waltman, 2014:83). Waltman's research is not focused on the analysis of images, rather understanding the process that leads to terrorism and how visual imagery fits into that (2014:83). He describes the visual imagery potential white domestic terrorists might encounter on the Internet, and from there he draws conclusions with regards to the making of domestic terrorists (2014:83). Waltman's image base is drawn from websites and hate groups as opposed to social media platforms, however the conclusions he draws from that has the potential to be transferable to an extent within this research project.

Lastly, the threat of the right wing has also broken into mainstream media, with an increasing amount of news articles dedicated to the phenomena. The Norwegian newspaper Verdens Gang (VG), which is amongst the largest in Norway, has dedicated a series of 24 articles named '*Det Hvite Raseriet*' (The White Rage) to RWE's (VG, 2017). Over the course of over a year a dedicated journalist and photographer have travelled to 14 European countries meeting with neo-nazis, fascists, nationalists, populists and self proclaimed 'Muslim-haters' in an attempt to uncover why they hate and what drives them (VG, 2017). Interestingly, one article, '*Insta-posøren*' (The

Insta-poser) focuses on 27 year old Inna Bunina who lives in a suburb of Moscow and runs an instagram profile with approximately 20,000 followers (Eisenträger, 2017). According to the article her instagram page is main function is modeling for the Russian right wing clothing brand ‘White Rex’, sometimes alongside her two children (Eisenträger, 2017). Moreover, the article states that Inna was chosen to represent the brand because she encompasses the brands ‘good and white values’ (Eisenträger, 2017). This illustrates how the right wing have started utilising social media platforms such as Instagram to promote their ideas through brands, similar to the way mainstream brands like Nike, Adidas etc do.

2.5 Right Wing Politics

Right wing politics as a whole is a topic which appears frequently in academic literature as well as mainstream journalism. As such is the case an entire chapter will be devoted to the topic in this research project. However, this next section will briefly outline existing literature on right wing politics.

Bernt Hagtvet is one of many that has examined right wing politics as a whole. In his 1994 article ‘Right-Wing Extremism in Europe’ he discussed what he calls the ‘anatomy of right wing politics’ in great depth. He argues that contemporary right wing in Europe share several traits with the fascist movements that appeared in the 1920s and 1930s in Italy and Germany (Hagtvet, 1994:241). These exact traits will be further examined in the aforementioned separate chapter, along with the traditional role and portrayal of women within these movements.

Anders Widfeldt is another academic who has researched right wing politics extensively. A native of Sweden, Dr. Widfeldt has focused a majority of his research on the right wing in the Scandinavian countries, attempting to examine how right wing politics have managed to garner such a following in these countries which are traditionally known for their prosperity and stability (Widfeldt, 2015:2). Widfeldt argues that ideas and political expressions of an extreme right nature were an established part of political life in Scandinavia by the early 2010s (2015:3). Acknowledging this, Widfeldt explains how anti-establishment parties have long histories in the Scandinavian countries, with populist parties emerging in the 1970s in both Denmark and Norway (2015:3). According to Widfeldt these parties still exist, however they are now under new names or successor parties (2015:3). Furthermore, Widfeldt argues that classifying these parties as extreme right is not an entirely straightforward task, however there is a majority view in the academic literature that both the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet* and the Danish *Dansk Folkeparti* are members of the extreme/far/radical/populist right party family (2015:3). Political parties with similar agendas have continuously emerged all over Europe whilst also amassing a larger following (Bjåen, 2016).

Another important thing to note when discussing the right wing is something Back highlights, with regard to classification and definition of what he calls ‘contemporary cultures of the ultra-right’ (Back, 2002:631). The challenge here lies within the fact that a wide range of terms exist when describing such groups (Back, 2002:631). These include, but are not limited to; Ultras, fascist, racist, Nazi, neo-nazi, right wing extremist, white supremacist, members of the far-right, and recently also alt-right or alternative right. All of these labels, as Back states, is utilised to describe a complex range of groups, movements and ideologies (Back, 2002:631). Furthermore, these are

sometimes used interchangeably, which is not unnatural as they all have overlapping elements to them. However, for the purpose of this research project the term predominantly utilised will be right wing extremism (RWE) or right wing. Despite the fact that all of these movements are diverse and differ slightly, Back has identified a few traits he believes are common for them all. These are:

'a rhetoric of racial and/ or national uniqueness and common destiny, ideas of racial supremacy, superiority and separation, a repertoire of conceptions of racial Otherness, a utopian revolutionary world-view that aims to overthrow the existing order' (Back, 2002:632).

The chapter dedicated exclusively to the right wing will examine this more in-depth.

Furthermore, Back argues that in his discussion of cyber-culture and racism, that new technologies and technological integration has produced what he calls *'intense forms of ideological syncretism'* (2002:631). What he means by this is that technology has combined German mysticism and Nazi ideology with more contemporary forms of white supremacy, imperial nostalgia and radicalised nationalism, to create a postmodern mixture of cultural and ideological elements (Back, 2002:631). Back argues that this creates a cultural hybrid, by combining such elements from a range of national contexts and historical moments, which in turn is quite paradoxical (Back, 2002:631). Keeping this in mind will undoubtedly be important throughout this research project as such cultural hybridity is likely to surface in the imagery analysed. Moreover, the ideological aspects of the right wing which yearns for the past will be also be examined in detail later.

2.6 Justification for the Research

Some might argue that research visual imagery on social media platforms under the pretense of examining the right wing is unnecessary, however as Back states, those conventional scholars who argue that the relationship between new technologies, xenophobia and popular culture is merely fashionable intellectual chimera, fail to see the importance of what he terms ‘vernacular culture’, regardless of what it is inspired by, be it technology or something else (Back, 2002:632).

Similarly, Douglas Lovelace argues in the foreword of ‘Visual Propaganda and Extremism in the Online Environment’ that visual imagery is a powerful tool, especially in the online environment, and with the level of sophistication illustrated by a variety of extremist and terrorist groups (Lovelace, 2014:ix). Furthermore, he argues that underestimating the power of the visual imagery utilised by online extremists and terrorist groups only increases their already great effect (Lovelace, 2014:ix). Moreover, Lovelace argues that online images can easily and at a very low cost be recontextualised and repurposed to serve online extremists or terrorist groups purposes (2014:ix-x). Therefore, the need for an effective and quick response in a digital world will inevitably become a dominant aspect of operating in such an environment (Lovelace, 2014:x). This research will contribute to such a response.

2.7 Challenges of Visual Content Analysis

The methodological components of this research project require a familiarity with visual content/imagery analysis. The theoretical framework has already established some of the theoretical grounding, however the next section will briefly outline some of the challenges utilising content analysis entails.

As visual content analysis is still a relatively new form of research its methods are not well worked, however the aforementioned research that have utilised such methods are a good starting point. So is the existing literature on visual research methods.

According to Luc Pauwels there is an increasing number of both skeptics and enthusiasts within the fields of visual sociology and anthropology, however he also states that most social scientists are completely unaware of the potential insight into society which can be acquired by observing, analysing, and theorising about its visual manifestations (Pauwels, 2011:2). Furthermore Pauwels argues that there is a lack of oversight as well as both a conceptual and methodological vagueness which adds to the already established ambiguous labeling and growing disparity with regards to visual social research (2011:2).

Pauwels has attempted to create an integrated overview and conceptual framework for visual research with his chapter '*Integrated Framework for Visual Social Research*' in the book '*The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*'. In this chapter Pauwels argues that such a conceptual framework is lacking and that most authors in the field limit themselves to only discussing some of the existing techniques, modes, and presentational formats (Pauwels, 2011:3). The framework therefore offers an insight into the possibilities and approaches with regards to visual research, as well as aiming to stimulate new and more refined approaches to researching visuals (Pauwels, 2011:3). Pauwels accomplishes this by building his framework around three main themes (2011:3). These are; origin and nature of visuals, research focus and design, and format and purpose (Pauwels, 2011:3).

The importance therefore for this research project will be to draw from both theoretical knowledge, like Pauwels, as well as the practical examples of both Highfield and Leaver, and Seo when creating the methodological framework for the visual analysis. As mentioned previously there are no well established ways of analysing visual content, and therefore this research project has the added benefit of contributing not only to the academic literature on the extreme right, but also methodological literature on visual analysis.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The data was collected by using a website called *websta.me* which uses the Instagram API (application programming interface) to analyse post engagement and reach. This is due to the fact that Instagram is first and foremost a smartphone application with an inadequate web interface. Although the main user demographic for *websta.me* are businesses and individual users who utilise Instagram as a marketing channel, it is a valuable tool for the purpose of this research project, as it makes all posts searchable by hashtag. Originally, the research sought to utilise the advanced image search option on google which allows you to narrow down the websites searched, however initial research has uncovered a discrepancy between the images on the Instagram and those which showed up in the google image search.

The data collection process was time consuming and intricate. A set of 10 hashtags were identified as frequently used by members of the right wing movements and communities. The process of identifying these hashtags was searching through Instagram to see which were frequently used. In addition to this, Stian Eisenträger, author of the article series ‘Det Hvite Raseriet’ (The White Rage) in the Norwegian newspaper *Verdens Gang* (VG) kindly shared a list of hashtags he had come across in his research. Once the hashtags were identified the process of weeding out unsuitable images began, as 20 images were selected from each hashtag totalling a number of 200 images. As the aim of this project is to analyse images shared by the right wing there needed to be a certainty that all the images collected could be traced back to such groups and movements in some capacity. Furthermore, as the aim of this research project was not to analyse all the imagery

shared under a certain hashtag a quality control process of manually selecting the imagery needed to be employed. As well as the requirement of relating the imagery to the right wing, there also needed to be a female element to the imagery of some sort. Therefore, starting from the newest posts the manual selection process involved scrolling through all the imagery shared under one hashtag and downloading those which fit the criteria for this research project, either by looking at content, other hashtags connected to the image, or the accompanying text. In some instances this was challenging as many different languages were used, however through a combination of translation sites as well as using the language skills of friends, the context for all images selected was identified. Nevertheless, there were some instances when the context of the images could not be identified which ultimately might have excluded potential imagery. Moreover, although time and effort has gone into selecting only images that stem from somewhere within the right wing, it is important to note and acknowledge the fact that the possibility of wrongful collection does exist. Especially as some of the hashtags utilised are also used by those who oppose right wing views. Although this might not have been the ideal way to collect such data, there is currently no tools available which would do it in a quicker and more streamlined manner.

The initial aim of this research project with regards to the data collection process was to establish a timeframe for the post dates of the images, however this became challenging as some hashtags had only a few hundred posts connected to them, which then required going further back in time, whilst some had several thousand and therefore only required going back in time a few weeks or months. However, as Instagram as a social media platform was launched in October of 2010 there is a natural limit which means imagery selected will not have been posted more than 7 years ago.

Ultimately the oldest image selected was posted on the 18th of July 2014, and unsurprisingly it was posted under the hashtag with least amounts of posts, *fascistgirl*.

The hashtags identified were; #refugeesnotwelcome, #14words, #identitariangirls, #fascistgirl, #nsgirl, #wpww, #aryan, #defendeurope, #fascism, #2316.

For most of the hashtags the connection to the right wing is easily identifiable, however this next section will briefly explain those who are not. The hashtag *14words* is related to the arguably most common white supremacist slogan; ‘We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.’ (ADL, 2017). Similarly the hashtag *wpww* is an acronym for ‘white power world wide’. In addition *nsgirl* is a representation of nationalist sentiment, and 2316 is a code which represents *whitepower/pride* and is designed to circumvent Instagram’s banned hashtag policy (The Data Pack, 2016).

3.2 Challenges

One of the challenges that arose during the data collection with regards to hashtags, was the fact that some hashtags that were identified as used by the right wing were also utilised by other groups/people who had no connection to the right wing community. For instance with regards to hashtags such as *wpww* and *fascistgirl* the search results were almost exclusively pictures which were easily identifiable to the right wing community, either by content or by looking at the other hashtags used on that image. However, with regards to the hashtag *nsgirl*, the search results and further examination showed that it was a common hashtag amongst individuals living in Nova Scotia, Canada. It therefore became clear early on in the data collection process that the researcher

had to operate as the first analysis filter and qualitatively go through each image and make sure it could be traced back to the right wing in some capacity.

Similarly with regards to the hashtag *aryan* which was the one that had the most posts connected to it, with over 80,000, there was a double meaning to the hashtag. Whilst collecting images posted to this hashtag it became apparent that it was also used by another group of people. Further research uncovered that the term ‘aryan’ can also be used to describe the Indo-European-speaking people of Persia, derived from the Old Persian ‘arya’ or ‘ariya’ (Haaretz, 2010). Furthermore, this term is identical to the Sanskrit ‘arya’ which is the mother of modern Indian languages such as Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati, and can be used to describe the Indo-European-Speaking people of Northern India (Haaretz, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that members of these communities also hashtag their Instagram imagery with such a hashtag.

Another important thing to note is the issue of private accounts on Instagram. There is a setting which allows Instagram users to in effect ‘lock’ their accounts so only followers they approve can see the images they share. Therefore, whilst there is a vast amount of images shared openly on Instagram, there is potentially a great deal of images which are unavailable to research projects like this one. For instance, the subject of Stian Eisenträger’s article, ‘The Insta Poser’, Inna Bunina, proceeded to lock her Instagram profile after the publication of the article. Moreover, the information given by websta.me about the number of posts connected to each hashtags seems to include those of locked profiles in the total number, yet from a data collection point of view these are impossible to access. Unfortunately there is currently no way of utilising websta.me to identify which percentage of the photos belong to public or private profiles. However, in the instance of

the hashtag *rahowa* (an acronym for racial holy war), which ended up being discarded due to a lack of suitable images, there are currently 853 posts connected to that hashtag, yet only between 150-200 are free to view, suggesting that Instagram users who make use of this hashtag do so in a more locked environment, and only with followers they approve.

Furthermore, with regards to Instagram, there is a slight issue of censorship. Some of the hashtags chosen are not phrases commonly related to the right wing, however due to the censorship of certain offensive hashtags on Instagram, members of the right wing communities circumvent the censorship policy by utilising translating common right wing phrases into numerics. An example of this is the hashtag *2316* which represents whitepower/pride and is a prohibited hashtag on Instagram. The list of banned hashtags is continuously updated as Instagram are alerted to inappropriate content connected to hashtags, some of which might seem innocent (The Data Pack, 2016).

With regards to such a research project it is important to address the ethical issues which may arise. As this research project will not reprint any of the images analysed, and merely discuss their themes with regards to commonly established right wing gender views, the belief is that it will not cross any ethical lines or indeed encounter any major ethical dilemmas.

3.3 Analysis

After the completion of the data collection process all the images will be categorised as a part of the analysis. This categorisation is structured with regards to the research questions which the introductory chapter established. The categories are a product of the qualitative analysis

undertaken by the researcher and will be the basis for the wider analysis of the images. Ultimately the themes/categories which will be discussed in the analysis chapter are; *selfies, family/defence of the white race, women as soldiers/advocates for the cause, anti-feminist/derogatory towards women, female politicians*, and lastly *depiction of 'others'*.

Chapter Four: The Right Wing Ideology, the Internet and the Role of Women

4.1 Introduction

The phrase ‘right wing extremism’ conjures an image of violence and racism with most people, according to Kristian Bjørkelo (2016:59). He argues that RWE are in a special position as the most universally despised of all types of extremists (Bjørkelo, 2016:59). In addition to this he explains some of the main features of a RWE. He argues that a RWE is driven by hate and anger (Bjørkelo, 2016:59). Furthermore, he states that a RWE hates homosexuals and believes all women belong in the kitchen (Bjørkelo, 2016:59). In addition to being a neo-nazi, a RWE hates both Muslims and Jews (Bjørkelo, 2016:59). However, fundamentally a RWE believes that democracy is wrong, that people of other ethnicities are inferior, and in the survival of the fittest (Bjørkelo, 2016:59).

This chapter will examine right wing extremism in more depth. It will attempt to highlight the important aspects of the ideology, whilst also aiming to briefly distinguish between RWE as a movement, and right wing political parties. Having a base knowledge of RWE will be invaluable for the further analysis of this research project. Furthermore this chapter will briefly examine online extremism with a specific focus on the online history of the RWE movements and communities. The hope is that a historical perspective on RWE utilisation of the Internet will create a base understanding of RWE relationship with the Internet which this research project will build on.

Furthermore this chapter will examine the role and importance of women within the movement. This is exceptionally important with regards to the aims of this research project as in depth knowledge about the women in the RWE communities and movements will aid the overall analysis and conclusions of this project. Furthermore, in order to understand if there has been a shift in the role and importance of women within the RWE communities and movements a frame of reference need to be established in order to identify such a shift.

4.2 The Difference Between Right Wing Extremists and Right Wing Political Parties

According to Anders Ravik Jupskås there are some core objectives that are similar for RWE, right wing radicals (RWR) and right wing populist parties (RWPP), despite the fact that their methods and perception of reality differ significantly (2013:7). Despite this, some might argue that the lines between the different types of groups are increasingly blurring, and even within those distinctions they are not homogenous groups. However, Jupskås draws a couple of main distinctions. He argues that RWE individuals and groups would be willing to take a life if they believe it to be necessary, whilst RWR and RWPP participate in the democracy and therefore need to be taken seriously as democratic political actors (2012:7).

Determining what roles the individuals that have distributed the imagery this research project analyses possess within these communities and groups, and where on the spectrum of extremism they fall is virtually impossible to do. However it is important to note the difference, as well as recognising that this project has the potential to draw from people across the spectrum and within different groups. The nature of the social media platforms selected make it impossible to identify

most of the individuals behind the accounts. Furthermore, Jupskås argues that there are plenty of examples of contact between what he calls the undemocratic and democratic right (2012:8).

Jupskås also states that RWE are outright racists, whilst RWR distance themselves from all forms of biological racism, and instead disguise it by utilising cultural terms (2012:7). Despite this, all spectrums of the right wing to some extent focus on immigration problems, and the majority believe in a complete closure of borders (Jupskås, 2012:7). Moreover, according to Jupskås, integration is regarded as a one way street where ‘they’ should adapt to ‘us’, i.e. the culture of the country they emigrate to (2012:7). However, some groups argue that refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers should only be allowed to stay for short periods of time (Jupskås, 2012:7). Even amongst some RWPP this is the case. A good example that Jupskås uses is Pia Kjærsgaard of the Danish People’s Party who argues that ‘foreigners’ should under no circumstance be integrated into the Danish society. Despite this she advocates them staying for a short period of time, and receiving the best possible conditions for that duration (2012:7).

Another interesting thing to note that Jupskås touches on is the fact that there is relatively little public support for RWE whilst RWPP have increasingly garnered more and more support in the past few years (2012:9). The current political climate in several European countries certainly echoes this. According to Tor Espen Simonsen and Anders Granås Kjøstvedt the past four decades have been important for RWPP in Europe, however the degree of breakthrough and power varies from country to country, and phase to phase (2009:7). In some instances the precursors to political parties were established protest movements who eventually ended up as institutionalised party organisations, and in others, for instance in Denmark and Norway with ‘Fremskridtspartiet’ and

‘Anders Lange Parti’ respectively, they appear to be political earthquakes that emerged almost overnight (Simonsen & Kjøstvedt, 2009:7).

4.3 The Ideology of the Right Wing

Extensive literature has been published on the right wing, both with regards to the aforementioned democratic and undemocratic movements. It would be unrealistic to believe that this research project would be able to address the ideology of the right wing to the same extent as some of that literature, however the next section of this chapter will briefly address some of the main characteristics and ideas of the right wing in order to create a base understanding for what motivates members of these movements and communities.

Kristian Bjørkelo argues that one distinctive character of fascist ideologies is a wish to revive a certain part of the past (2016:64). However, one important aspect of this is the fact that the past they wish to revive is either very one-sided and completely disregards certain parts of history, or in some instances completely made up and a figment of right wing imagination (2016:64). As with most things within the right wing there is no overarching consensus regarding this. Some RWE, often termed reactionaries, are satisfied with preserving the existing situation as a means of defending against revolution, and other forces capable of altering society (Bjørkelo, 2016:64). However, according to Bjørkelo the really scary RWE express a strong desire to rewind to a pre-democratic time when society was harmonic and well organised according to their view of history (2016:65). Examples of these societies are Viking times and the Christian feudal system (Bjørkelo, 2016:65). With regards to Mussolini’s Italian fascism there was constant referring to the Roman Empire’s conquests (Bjørkelo, 2016:65). Similarly the German Nazi’s adopted an idea of middle

ages and pre-Christian rituals to create an image of Great German culture that was to be resurrected under Adolf Hitler (Bjørkelo, 2016:65-66).

Another important part of RWE is racism. According to Bjørkelo racism often manifests as the idea that one race is better or more intelligent than others, and is therefore qualitatively better (2016:67). However, a more in-depth analysis of this issue reveals that a majority of RWE believe that evolution has contributed to that fact that certain nationalities have certain traits which are unchangeable (Bjørkelo, 2016:67). For instance that Italians love their mother, Jews are good with money, and that Norwegians are born with skis on their feet (Bjørkelo, 2016:67).

Within RWE racism manifests in a few different ways. The first example is termed classical biological racism, which is the belief that one ethnicity is better than others, for instance that caucasians are the superior and more intelligent ethnicity (Bjørkelo, 2016:69). In addition to this, antisemitism lies at the core of RWE, which famously fuelled the Holocaust, an extensive genocide towards Jews during World War 2 (WW2) (Bjørkelo, 2016:69). According to Bjørkelo an anti-semite does not view the Jew as inferior, rather he believes that Jews are intelligent and cunning, and therefore have a lot of power in society (Bjørkelo, 2016:70). This makes them terrifying as they utilise that power to undermine the good values of non-Jews (Bjørkelo, 2016:70).

In recent years Islamophobia has joined antisemitism as one of RWE main manifestations of racism. This was certainly the case with the 22 July terrorist attacks in Oslo, Norway. According to the perpetrator, Anders Behring Breivik (ABB), the attack was 'preventive' in order to preserve the 'Norwegian Indigenous people' (Jupskås, 2012:16). According to Jupskås several well

established right wing beliefs have been applied to Islamophobia (2012:16). Especially the idea that an external enemy is threatening Europe, and that the European states as we know them today will soon be history if no action is taken, is prevalent (Jupskås, 2012:16). In addition, Jupskås argues that there is a misconception that both the politically correct elites in academia and the media are attempting to cover up this societal development (2012:16). This therefore makes the resistance movement even more challenging as there is a need to fight on ‘two fronts’, against both the external enemy, Islam, and the internal enemy, predominantly the media and politicians (Jupskås, 2012:16).

Moreover, Jupskås explains how the misconception RWE have that actions is necessary, despite the fact that this action might be extremely violent, is also a classic right wing thinking (2012:16). This is based on the idea that political leaders are either ignoring or not capable of realising the threat Islam has on the current European society, and therefore these ‘soldiers’ are forced to take action in order to preserve and protect their societies (Jupskås, 2012:16-17). In a similar manner, some disguise their racism by arguing that certain cultures are incompatible and cannot exist peacefully together, and therefore argue their need to preserve their existing culture by excluding others (Bjørkelo, 2016:70). Despite that fact that there is no empirical support for his claims, Samuel P. Huntington's famous ‘*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*’ ideas and research was welcomed with open arms in the right wing communities after its release in the mid 1990s (Jupskås, 2016:18). Furthermore it quickly became valuable academic ammunition for the right wing movements (Jupskås, 2016:18).

To an extent this ties in with the last characteristic which will be highlighted, nationalism. According to Bjørkelo RWE is characterised by its ultra-nationalism, which is an all or nothing characteristic (2016:71). For RWE just loving one's nation is not enough, one must acknowledge that this nation is the most important nation, and often make extensive claims on land outside of one's borders (Bjørkelo, 2016:72).

4.4 The Right Wing and the Internet

As mentioned previously in this research project, the Internet has become an invaluable tool for the right wing, especially when it comes to recruitment, radicalisation, organisation, and communication. This next section will briefly examine the relationship between the right wing and the Internet. In terms of Internet history it is actually quite a long relationship. Stormfront, arguably the biggest right wing online discussion forum, is amongst one of the oldest forums to exist online (Bjørkelo, 2016:137).

According to Jupskås members of the right wing have a history of being quick to utilise new technologies (2012:183). For instance, in the 1930s they utilised radio and cinema as a tool to spread their propaganda (Jupskås, 2012:183). Similarly, in the US in the early 1990s they established tv-channels on cable networks, and in 1996 there was several hundred websites dedicated to the spreading of RWE materials online (Jupskås, 2012:183). Lorraine Bowman-Grieve argues that such a virtual community, of which Stormfront is a great example, serves a multitude of purposes. Not only does it facilitate community discussion on a wide range of topics ranging from ideology, culture, and theology, it also provides information on press coverage and current events (2009:997). Stormfront was established by Don Black, a former member of the Ku Klux Klan (Bowman-Grieve, 2009:996) & (Jupskås, 2012:183). According to Bowman-Grieve

the membership numbers in February of 2009 exceeded 159, 000 which was an increase of over 120,000 since January of 2004 (2009:996).

Moreover, Bowman-Grieve states that the section devoted to community discussion is the most popular section of Stormfront, which in February of 2009 had more than five and a half million posts submitted as a response to over four hundred and fifty thousand threads (2009:996-997). The community discussion section is furthermore divided into several subsections that deal with a wide array of topics, some which are arguably not what one typically would expect for a RWE website e.g. homemaking, education, home-schooling, martial arts etc, but also topics such as philosophy, ideology, technology, culture and customs, revisionism, and science (Bowman-Grieve, 2009:997). This illustrates that such websites operate very much like a virtual community and deal with every aspect of life, not only those explicit to right wing movements and communities.

As Internet platforms have developed, so have the ways in which extremists utilise them, of which the right wing are no exception. Blogs and YouTube videos are been used as invitations into a world of extremism under the pretense that the individuals or groups behind such content have the ability to enlighten their followers on the truth behind the workings of the world (Bjørkelo, 2016:150).

The Internet has become such a powerful tool that some extremist groups only exist online, as is the case with several of the activists groups connected to the Swedish website 'Info-14' from the mid 1990s until the end of 2010 (Jupskås, 2012:184). According to Jupskås Youtube is an

exceptionally powerful way to disseminate information (2012:185). Typing ‘Jews’ or ‘Muslims’ into the YouTube search bar gives you the autofilled search options ‘Jews are evil’ and ‘Muslims taking over the world’ respectively (Jupskås, 2012:185). Furthermore, according to Jupskås these two searches produce more than 12,000 and 7000 results, respectively (2012:185).

Similarly, social media platforms have become valuable recruitment and communication tools for RWE groups and movements in the last decade or so. As early as in 2003 the German Security Police stated in a report that the Internet had become invaluable for RWE wanting to communicate, share their views, debate, mobilise and organise events and demonstrations (Jupskås, 2012:186). Several other Security Police forces across Europe have released statements or reports with similar concerns (Jupskås, 2012:186). Lastly, a quick hashtag search using known RWE hashtags on several social media sites produce an incredible amount of results. This only reinforces the existing idea that social media and the Internet is an important tool for the RWE community, especially when it comes to communication, dissemination of ideas and recruitment.

One of the dangers of such an online environment, thanks to website and platform algorithms, is the so-called ‘filter bubble’ which in practice means that members of these communities end up communication in an echo-chamber.

Google was one of the first sites to announce the change of its site, with several of the most used websites and social media platforms following suit in the years after (Pariser, 2011:6). In the case of Google fifty-seven different signals, from your location, browser, and what sites you had previously visited, are employed to predict what sites one would like (Pariser, 2011:6). Similarly

Facebook also changed their algorithm so that one's newsfeed is now made up of links and posts you are more likely to click on and enjoy, based on your previous Facebook usage (Pariser, 2011:10). The platform utilised in this research project, Instagram, also altered the way its newsfeed was structured in early 2016 (Hunt, 2016). Previously posts were ordered from 'newest to oldest', but this change saw the Instagram feed also become an algorithm-driven feed which is now 'ordered to show the moments we believe you will care about the most' (Hunt, 2016). This could arguably radicalise such individuals faster and contribute to the idea that 'everyone' feels the same way as them, thereby legitimising their views further.

4.5 The Right Wing and Women

Gender within the right wing is an interesting topic, which according to Martin Durham tends to be ignored by academics (2003:67). In addition, Durham states that a majority of writers who have examined the right wing would argue that it is a highly patriarchal force, however Durham himself argues that gender within in the right wing is a topic of considerable debate (2003:67). Although Durham's research focuses on the British extreme right there are insight to be drawn with regards to this research project from his research nonetheless.

As Durham notes, the feminist Winifred Holtby argued, in the 1930s, that fascism exemplified the way in which society attempted to curtail women's opportunities (Durham, 2003:67). Moreover, it did so in 'the sacred names of marriage and maternity', and by 'exalting woman's sex until it dominated her whole life' (Durham, 2003:67). At which time the State then used it as an excuse for economic and political disability (Durham, 2003:68). Furthermore, Durham explains how Kate

Millett, a second-wave feminist, argued that the Nazi state 'was probably the most deliberate attempt ever made to revive and solidify extreme patriarchal conditions' (Durham, 2003:68).

An important aspect of gender within the right wing is their focus on committing women to the survival of the white race, which involves reducing them to tradition, biology and nature, according to anti-fascist writer Kate Taylor (Durham, 2003:68). Furthermore, Durham states that some members of the right wing, especially white supremacists, emphasise the importance of both racial and gender order, and therefore believe that if one goes awry so will the other (2003:68). In addition to this, they tend to view women only as mothers rather than workers or political actors, which ties in with the hierarchical relationship between the sexes, where preminence is given to men (Durham, 2003:68). However, according to Durham, such views are not universally held within the extreme right, and there is extensive amounts of bitter dispute surrounding such an overtly patriarchal understanding of gender, especially amongst those who claim to stand for race and nation (Durham, 2003:68).

Durham argues that during the post-war movement claims of sympathy for feminism surfaced, with Britain's National Front (NF) activist, John Field, attacking the claim that 'Nationalists' had no concern for women's rights (Durham, 2003:72). However, Durham also explains how one woman at the end of the 1980s states that men in the NF brainwashed women into thinking that running an organisation was something women were incapable of, and therefore something only men could do (Durham, 2003:73). Despite the fact that some groups within the right wing were likely to hold highly patriarchal views of gender, research in the USA, German, Scandinavia and the UK suggest that there is great division within the right wing with regards to views on gender

(Durham, 2003:76). To an extent this is not surprising as the right wing is not by any means a homogenous group, however arguably it would be ignorant to suggest that a possible misconception which defines women's role and importance in terms of childrearing and homemaking, does not exist.

As this chapter has illustrated there are some ideologies difference between the democratic and undemocratic groupings of the right wing. One could therefore argue that there is a likelihood that established political parties, although they prescribe to a right wing ideology, might tend to be slightly more moderate than their nondemocratic counterparts. This will arguably be at least partly due to the fact that they operate within a system in which they need to receive votes in order to gain power, and despite the fact that some RWE might yearn for a pre universal suffrage time, women still make up close to 50% of the electorate. Therefore, one could argue that in order to survive in the political system RWPP had to alter their stance in favour of women and women's rights in order to survive. In addition to that Durham quotes Nick Griffin of the BNP who stated that there had been a steady increase of female members within what he calls 'nationalist parties' in Europe, something he believed would reassure women as well as attract more men to the parties (Durham, 2003:76-77). Especially if the support of more women could be seen as a way to help secure the survival for the white race (Durham, 2003:77).

According to Sarah Dingler, quoting Wolfgang Heitmeyer, members of the right wing argue that the current prevailing social malaise in the world is due to the collapse of class solidarity and family structures, which in turn are brought on by modernisation, fragmentation and individualisation (Dingler, 2014:12). The right wing therefore emphasises the importance of

family values, of which women are at the core, as a tool to help create a new order based on national community collaboration (Dingler, 2014:12). In addition to this members of the right wing believe that all levels of a nation should be focused on the ideal of the family as opposed to being centred on the individual, as this will aid the development of a new social hierarchy (Dingler, 2014:12). Moreover, this manifests in the way that a family community is glorified and deemed indispensable as well as being superior to the individual (Dingler, 2014:12).

Durham echoes this sentiment by stating that much of what has been written about gender and fascism emphasises the link between the battle for the race and the crucial need for control over women's bodies (2003:77). Some groups within the right wing believe that these two things are severely threatened by the 'Other', which in most cases is an immigrant or an immigrant descendant (Durham, 2003:77). As a result of this view women are not only seen as producers of children which can help restore the white race, but also as objects of desire which coveted by the 'Other' male, and which ultimately is in danger of being lost to the white male (Durham, 2003:78). This highlights the idea that RWE tend to view women of their own race as property, of which they deserve monopoly access to (Durham, 2003:78). Ultimately Durham argues that on the surface there seems to be a common consensus amongst the members of the right wing movements which represents an enraged backlash against women's rights, however once one digs a little deeper it becomes apparent that a movement which is very much in agreement with regards to race, struggle to find a consensus on gender (Durham, 2003:78).

4.6 Conclusion

Ultimately this chapter has examined the ideology of the right wing, whilst also highlighting some of the fundamental difference between those parts of the right wing family that engage in democratic processes and those who prescribe to more extreme views.

It has illustrated that RWPP and RWE agree on certain things like immigration, and to some extent they both are racist, however the more moderate groupings on the scale tend to mask their racist views in cultural terms. At the same time their perception of reality differs significantly, nevertheless one could argue that the lines are increasingly starting to blur within a movement that has been far from homogenous historically.

Furthermore, this chapter has highlighted some of the ideas that lie at the core of the right wing ideology which are racism in one form or another as mentioned, alongside a wish to either preserve the status quo or revert to a time of misconceived harmony, often fuelled by an all or nothing sense of nationalism.

In addition this chapter briefly examined how the right wing have been amongst the first to utilise new technologies, including the Internet, and how such new technologies have aided their task of communicating, disseminating ideas, and recruitment (ironically) across borders.

Lastly this chapter attempted to identify the main characteristics of how women are viewed within the right wing movements. It illustrated that whilst it is a topic of much debate and differing views, there is a consensus that the right wing is a patriarchal force which historically views women as a

form of property which needs to be protected from the 'Others', often immigrants or refugees. Moreover, the right wing tends to define women with regards to the traditional family structure, i.e as homemakers and child rearers. Furthermore, there is a gender hierarchical notion within the right wing movements which often manifests in the way that women are incapable of some of the same things as men, especially when it comes to being a political actor or the running of organisations.

Chapter Five: Image analysis

‘...Instagram is the fastest growing social media platform’

(Smith & Sanderson, 2015:343)

5.1 Introduction

This next chapter will focus on the analysis of the 200 images collected across 10 hashtags on social media platform Instagram. The research questions which the introductory chapter set out will guide the analysis. In addition the knowledge displayed throughout the earlier chapters will assist the analysis. Furthermore existing literature will be examined alongside the images in order to answer the aspects of the research questions which deal with the established and traditional gender norms and views within the right wing communities and movements. The three research questions the introductory chapter set out were:

RQ1: What are the prominent themes within the visuals collected? Do any main trends stand out?

RQ2: How do these themes correlate to the established ideas of women within the right wing?

RQ3: What do the identified themes tell us about how female ‘others’ are viewed, and to what extent does it differ from the way which right wing women are depicted?

The research questions will be answered with regards to each of the categories/themes identified as set out by research question one. The first section will highlight some of the general information and statistics surrounding the data collection process. The following sections will be divided into the main categories/themes and the research questions answered for each of the categories. The order will be; *selfies, family, tradition and defence of the white race, women as soldiers/advocates*

for the cause, anti-feminist/derogatory towards women, female politicians and lastly the 'Others'.

The last category has been identified in order to attempt to answer the third research questions. All the categories will be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, however in those categories which produced less images more detail will be given on specific visual depictions. This is merely because such a task is possible to undertake in a smaller category, but also because the larger categories to an extent depict such similar things that specific analysis of each photo would not be particularly fruitful. This is especially true for the selfie and women as soldiers categories.

The data collection process highlighted the inconsistency in the number of posts attached to each hashtag. Figure 1 demonstrates this inconsistency. It is important to note that not all of the posts attached to each hashtag will be of a right wing nature, and one must be careful not to overestimate the importance given to such information. However, it is also important to understand how varied the number of posts attached to each hashtag is. The largest number of posts was *fascism*, with approximately 90,000 posts, and the smallest was *fascistgirl* with only about 70 images attached to it. This naturally also influenced the age of the images collected. The aforementioned smallest hashtag, *facistgirl*, also produced the oldest images, specifically from the 18th of July 2014, whilst some of the larger hashtags' oldest images are only a few weeks old. Furthermore for this analysis it is interesting to note that the three smallest hashtags are also the three gendered hashtags i.e the ones that feature girl/girls in them. Although it seems logical that non-gender specific hashtags would create more posts than gendered ones, it is interesting in this case because, according to Greg Spielberg, quoted by Derek Conrad Murray, women make up the majority on several social media sites, including 58% percent of Facebook, 82% on Pinterest, and 64% on Twitter

(2015:497). In addition women tend to post, comment, and share more than their male counterparts (Murray, 2015:497). Similarly, according to a 2014 Business Insider article the percentage of female Instagram users was 68% (Smith, 2014). Unfortunately there is no way of knowing how big the percentage of women responsible for the images analysed in this research project is, however the categories identified will undoubtedly create a base from which some conclusion about this can be drawn.

Hashtag	Number of post	Post date of oldest image collected
#aryan	Ca 80,000	23 April 2017
#defendeurope	Ca 13,000	4 May 2017
#fascism	Ca 90,000	1 April 2017
#facistgirl	Ca 70	18 July 2014
#identitariangirls	Ca 360	26 June 2016
#nsgirl	Ca 320	9 July 2015
#refugeesnotwelcome	Ca 13,000	11 April 2017
#wpww (white pride world wide)	Ca 10,000	14 March 2017
#14words	Ca 5,000	14 March 2017
#2316 (white power/pride)	Ca 4,000	10 July 2015

Figure 1: Data collection statistic.

5.2 Selfies

The first category explored in this analysis is potentially a surprising category with regards to the right wing. ‘*Selfies*’, the act of taking a photo of oneself, either by facing a mirror, using the front face camera on a phone, or using web cameras. Not exactly the first thing that comes to mind when discussing social media images and the right wing. However, out of the 200 images collected as many of 61 of these were selfies. The images in this category only included selfies of women. Although the categories in this analysis are not rigid and some images fit into more than one category, for the sake of this category the focus was exclusively on selfies of only women. Furthermore this category excludes images which only depict women, but are easily identified as taken by someone else. Although an argument can be made that such images to an extent serve the same purpose as a selfie, i.e. what Murray calls ‘compulsive self-representation’ (2015:490). However for the sake of this analysis only obvious selfies were selected in order to keep the analysis explicitly focused on selfies. The 61 selfies constitute 30.5% of the total images collected which is the largest amount in any of the categories analysed. As figure 2 illustrates the hashtags with the largest amounts of selfies were *wpww* and *fascistgirl*, closely followed by *2316*, *nsgirl* and *aryan*. Due to the nature of how the data for this research project was collected there is no way of knowing for certain if the images in this category were all shared by women, especially as no information about the users is taken into consideration in this analysis. Moreover the act of pretending to be someone other than oneself has been occurring for hundreds of years, the Internet just makes it easier for individuals to assume different identities, or influence the image of themselves they portray to the world (Seife, 2014).

Arguably one could draw the conclusion that most of the images are shared by women based on the aforementioned statistics that women hold the majority on most social media platforms, and the fact that most of the depicted are women. Although one needs to be wary of drawing conclusions purely based on the number of posts connected to each of the hashtags, it is interesting to note that *wpww* is the hashtag that produced the most results in the selfie category, as opposed to any of the gendered hashtags. The difference is marginal, however the sample base for the *wpww* hashtag was larger than the gendered hashtags by quite a bit, and one could argue that the expectation of more varied types of female depiction would be evident within such a large sample base. In addition it is important to understand that this could be the product of a coincidence based on when the images were collected, however it is an interesting thing to note.

Hashtag	Number of images out of the 20 collected from each hashtag
#14words	4
#2316	10
#wpww	11
#refugeesnotwelcome	0
#nsgirl	9
#identitariangirls	6
#fascistgirl	11
#fascism	1
#defendeurope	1
#aryan	8

Figure 2: Selfies.

However, what does the prevalence of so many selfies say about women in the right wing? According to Murray the term ‘selfie’ alone is an object of considerable debate, often written about in major news outlets like The Guardian and The New York Times (Murray, 2015:490). Furthermore Murray argues that young women are most often the focus of such debates which unfairly criticises and classifies their apparent narcissism as a regressive personality trait (Murray,

2015:490). In addition Murray argues that such images contextualised in the realm of social media culture is of great significance (2015:490). This is especially true when confronted with the sheer volume of such images of self-representation by women in their teens to mid-20s (Murray, 2015:490). As previously stated the majority of users on Instagram are women. Moreover, Business Insider state that 90% of Instagram's users are under the age of 35 (Smith, 2014). Based on this one could argue that the prevalence of selfies amongst the images collected for this project is not surprising, and ultimately merely echoes global trends and norms.

On the impact of such images Murray argues that isolated the selfies appear banal, commonplace and benign (Murray, 2015:490). However if viewed collectively they feel like a revolutionary political movement (Murray, 2015:490). Furthermore, Murray states that women themselves characterise the selfie *'as a means to resist the male-dominated media culture's obsession with and oppressive hold over their lives and bodies'* on social media sites, thereby transforming the selfie into a radical act of political empowerment (2015:490). This act of political empowerment functions like an aggressive reclaiming of the female body by a radical colonisation of the visual realm (Murray, 2015:490). In addition to this Murray argues that whilst there might not be any overt political intent from the women sharing such selfies, the sheer act of doing so means they contend with the manner in which capitalism is enacted upon their lives (2015:490). However, viewing the power of the selfie in this manner is a depart from the common public view of such images, and therefore might seem a little flippant (Murray, 2015:490-491). Despite this there are some authors who see the emergence of the selfie in a more positive light. Jenna Wortham argues that we are becoming accustomed to and starting to prefer interactions and online conversations which includes images and photos (2013:1). Furthermore stating that such interactions not only

convey feeling and reaction more effectively than text, but also increases the feeling of connectedness in addition to reintroducing the element of human interaction (Wortham, 2013:1). On the basis of this Murray argues in favour of the idea that the female selfie is seen as an opportunity for political engagement as well as a radical form of community building which ultimately aims to create a forum in which women can create a type of counter-narrative that resists erasure and misrepresentation (Murray, 2015:491).

Therefore, if one views the selfies collected as a result of this research project in the framework which Murray sets out, one could argue that the images are not posted from a self-centred and narcissistic motivation, rather as a way for females to regain some of the control and re-define how they are portrayed within the right wing communities. Although it would be quite challenging to examine the motivation for each of the selfies analysed, one could argue that whether or not the motivation is overt or not does not ultimately influence the impact of such images. This is due to the extensive amount of images shared on Instagram under right wing hashtags. Arguably the sheer volume of such images would ultimately take on a life of itself and potentially influence other individuals in a way which differs from the initial motivation of the creator. The concept of having something 'go viral' is an example of this. On the Internet things tend to experience a snowball effect when it comes to sharing videos, posts and images, as is illustrated by the countless times something has been shared extensively unintentionally. Although many have tried, and to an extent failed to identify what makes something go viral online, there is no doubting the potential power of sharing something online. The picture of the Syrian boy in an Ambulance after airstrikes on Aleppo is an excellent example of how one viral image can increase awareness and global participation on one single issue (Hunt, 2016). Therefore one could argue that although selfies of

right wing women on Instagram might not end up going viral, the impact such images can have is extensive.

In line with Murray's argument such images can potentially alter the way in which women in the right wing view themselves, which ultimately can impact on how others both inside and outside the community view them. As previous chapters in this research project has illustrated women are often contextualised with regards to traditional family values, child rearing and as a means and tool to protect the future of the white race, within the right wing movements. The prevalence of such selfies challenges this type of female representation. In essence these images can be seen as an opposition to that traditional view of women, and an attempt to gain control of their outward perception. As Murray states, the selfie is one of the most effective outlets for self-representation (Murray, 2015:490). Moreover, as previously mentioned, the act of taking a selfie is often classed as being narcissistic and shallow, and to an extent self-obsessive (Murray, 2015:490-491). Based on this one could argue that the prevalence of such selfies is additionally an attempt to regain control of their sexualities, and its function. In essence this means that these images are an attempt to shift their sexuality from purely a family/child rearing point of view which aligns with the previous view of women as a means and a tool for protecting the future of the white race, to one in which they are in control of themselves, and which portrays women as sexual beings. Murray argues that the act of self-expression and representation is not meant for the male gaze, but as a celebration of female history, an advance of body positivity as well as a rejection of unhealthy beauty standards which are promoted by the media (2015:495). This ultimately then might act as a catalyst for a complete change in the perception of women within the right wing movements. This ultimately also echoes global trends and norms as body positivity and female empowerment

are two issues which have embraced the power of social media in order to create internet based communities of likeminded individuals who celebrate all women, and not only those who fit the traditional beauty standards. One could therefore argue that right wing women use Instagram in the same way that females outside of the right wing do.

However, if viewed from the opposite side of Murray's argument one could argue that the dissemination of such images merely reiterates and reaffirms the established view of women. In order for this to be the case one needs to prescribe to the idea that the motivation for posting a selfie is a self-absorbent and narcissistic type of self-promotion. This would then mean that the motivation for sharing such images is a broadcasting of one's own beauty and thereby a confirmation of the view that women are merely an object to be desired by men. As mentioned previously it is outwith the scope of this research project to determine the motivation behind the images analysed. However attempting to draw a conclusion based on Murray's arguments might not be viable for one isolated category. Therefore the analysis of these images must be examined not only as isolated categories, but collectively as a window into the right wing society, as the theoretical framework establishes.

5.3 Family, tradition & defence of the white race

Therefore, in keeping with that the next section will analyse the images which present family, traditional values and the defence of the white race as their main themes. The emphasis given to traditional values in this context is the idea that the perfect family is made up of a heterosexual couple with at least two children, often one boy and one girl, in addition to the existence of a

hierarchical relationship between the sexes. This relationship includes the idea that a woman's natural vocation is motherhood and wifehood, according to Martin Durham(2003:68-69).

It is important to note that this category does not distinguish between real life photographs that depict actual individuals from cartoons, illustrations and even memes so long as they in some shape or form align with the overarching theme described. To clarify, a meme is a virtually-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea (Gil, 2017). According to Paul Gil a meme is often a captioned photo intended to be funny or to ridicule human behaviour (2017). Despite this some memes deal with more philosophical content and are heavier (Gil, 2017). The memes are often images taken out of context, which completely alter their meaning depending on the caption added to the photo. In the context of this project, the images or memes collected depicted the traditional male/female public bathroom signs holding hands and joined by smaller versions of themselves, obviously meant to illustrate children, alongside the word 'tradition' in one shape or form. Arguably the main objective of such a depiction is a glorification of the traditional right wing family structure and gender roles.

Hashtag	Number of images out of the 20 collected from each hashtag
#14words	9
#2316	2
#wpww	2
#refugeesnotwelcome	4
#nsgirl	0
#identitariangirls	0
#fascistgirl	1
#fascism	7
#defendeurope	9
#aryan	4

Figure 3: Family/traditional values/defence of the white race.

The above figure 3 illustrates how the images collected in this category are spread across the hashtags. In total there were 38 images out of the 200 that fell into this category, making up 19% of the collected data. The two hashtags that tied for most images produced were *14words* and *defendeurope*. As mentioned previously *14words* represents the famous white supremacist slogan ‘We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.’ (ADL, 2017). The

hashtag *defendeurope*, is similarly closely connected to the established idea, which was explored in chapter four, that societies and/or countries need to be protected from the ‘Others’ which jeopardise and threaten the traditional way of life according to the right wing movements.

One thing to note is that only one image was produced by any of the three gendered hashtags. This is interesting from a thematic analysis point of view as logic would dictate that most images shared on the gendered hashtags originate from women. Although there is no way of knowing this for certain as discussed earlier, based on the user statistics presented earlier it would be likely that women take ownership of such hashtags. Accepting this reasoning it is then interesting to note that out of the 60 images collected across the gendered hashtags, only one of these depicted themes that fit with this category. Furthermore, if we assume that women themselves are responsible for the majority of those images, one could draw a conclusion on how preoccupied women are with the idea of traditional family values and the defence of the white race. Ultimately that conclusion would be that those traditional values are not of great importance for women within the right wing communities. Arguably this would relate to the younger female members of such movements, as mentioned previously 90% of Instagram users are under the age of 35, suggesting that this might not be representative of the whole female contingent.

Minowa et al. argue that visual representations of violent women can provoke a range of gender issues in contemporary consumer culture (2014:210). Arguably this is also true for within the right wing. There are many similarities in how women have been traditionally portrayed in popular culture and the established gender norms in the right wing. As Minowa et al. state, any deviance from the cultural ideal of a woman as submissive, demure, naturally caring and nurturing was to

be abhorred (2014:211). Furthermore, traditional portrayals of women emphasised the importance of good and self-sacrificing behaviour which befitted their mothering and relational role (Minowa et al., 2014:211). In addition women were often contextualised with regards to body, nature and impulse, and often as objects of desire necessary for reproduction purposes (Minowa et al, 2014:211). This image of women very much echo the ideal view of women within the right wing. As mentioned previously a part of the right wing ideology is a yearning for simpler times, a time in the past, fictitious or not, which according to the right wing was harmonious (Bjørkelo, 2016:64). The images in this category echo this ideal, especially as quite a few of them depict women in nature settings. A previous conclusion was drawn that the lack of images in this category suggest that women themselves crave a depart from the established gender norms within the right wing. However, it would be too simplistic to merely write off the existence of some images in this category to males who wish to preserve the traditional notions of gender and femininity, and as a result share images on social media which aligns with those ideas.

Despite the fact that the analysis of the two categories which produced the most images fundamentally argue that women in the right wing are attempting to challenge the established gender roles and norms, this category produces enough images that one must acknowledge the idea that there still is a significant part of the female contingent within the right wing that wishes to preserve the established ideas of men as the breadwinner and women as the homemaker. So whilst there is an argument to be made that male members of the right wing might be responsible for a number of these images, a quick survey of the women's forum on Stormfront confirms that there are still a noteworthy number of women who romanticise the established gender roles and therefore embrace idea of traditional female beauty alongside an aggressive protective male.

5.4 Women as soldiers & advocates for the cause

Hashtag	Number of images' 'out of the 20 collected from each hashtag
#14words	3
#2316	5
#wpww	6
#refugeesnotwelcome	1
#nsgirl	2
#identitariangirls	15
#fascistgirl	15
#fascism	1
#defendeurope	4
#aryan	1

Figure 4: Women as soldiers/advocates for the cause

The main themes in the next category of images analysed concern itself with the idea of women as soldiers or advocates for the right wing ideology and cause. This includes images in which women are depicted alongside some type of weapon, in protest environments or wearing clothing

that conveys a right wing sentiment. As figure 4 illustrates the total number of images that fell into this category was 53, amounting to 26,5% of the total data collected. After the selfie category this was the largest one analysed in this research project. Interestingly the two categories which tied for the most amount of images produced were *identitariangirls* and *facistgirl*, two of the gendered hashtags. If one applies the same reasoning as earlier with regards to user statistics and the likelihood that most of these images are posted by women themselves, it suggests quite a distinct female led challenge of the established gender norms within the right wing movements which sees female involvement shift from passive to active.

As Baer, Kossack and Posselius state, the past few decades has seen a change in the extreme right (2017:351). These groups have ceased being the stereotypical image of young male neo-Nazi skinheads that roamed the streets and committed crimes (Baer et al., 2017:351). The recent election in France reiterates this, with the extreme right party being led by Marine Le pen. This has revealed, according to Baer et al., that women are no longer only followers in the extreme right, but also activists assuming crucial positions, thereby also becoming an important part of the extreme right (2017:351). In addition, Michaela Köttig, quoted and translated by Baer et al., argues that women are now also perpetrators of extreme right violence in Germany (2017:351). The fact that so many of the images collected fell into this category reconfirms Köttig's statements. As Baer et al. state, and as the previous chapter on the right wing has illustrated, the traditional ideological framework of such groups prescribe to the idea that men should be the breadwinners, and that women's main function is to care for the family, and especially the children (2017:353). An extension of this is the fact that women are not meant to focus on political activity which is deemed to be a male domain (Baer et al.,2017:353). The instances in which women are permitted

to engage socially and politically are in what Baer et al. terms the ‘pre-political’ sphere (2017:353). This sphere includes volunteer work, or work that is focused on the family and children’s education, for instance school clubs, kindergarten, sports clubs etc (Baer et al., 2017:353).

The prevalence of so many images that portray women taking a more active involvement in the right wing movements, and the act of disseminating their views in such a public way suggest that women have stepped out of the ‘pre-political sphere’ to the male dominated sphere of political action. Furthermore it suggests that women are taking more ownership of such a shift. Especially as Baer et al., states that such political engagement is traditionally viewed as an additional option for women, after fulfilling their other, non-political obligations (2017:353). The fact that women choose to communicate their ideological views and norms outside of what is traditionally the female realm also suggests that women are challenging the established gender norms in the right wing, and viewing themselves as important advocates for the right wing ideology. This also suggests that they acknowledge the potential impact women can have within such movements. The increasing female presence in political parties across Europe, like Marine Le Pen in France, Siv Jensen in Norway, and Pia Kjaersgaard in Denmark might be a contributing factor and influence in this case.

In addition a significant number of the images include some sort of weapon. This also marks a rather drastic shift from the established gender norms highlighting and to some extent confirming the previous statement from Baer et al. that women now participate in extreme right violence (2017:351). Although images portraying women in right wing clothing and situations including weapons does not suggest that all of these women engage in violent crimes, it does however mark

a clear shift from the previous images in the traditional category where the main framing of women includes aspects of beauty and femininity. Furthermore, quite a few of the images in the aforementioned 'traditional' category sees women depicted in a nature setting, often in light flowing dresses, whereas a number of the images from this category have women depicted in a more urban setting wearing dark clothing, often hooded. Women being depicted with weapons, flags or right wing clothing in a more aggressive manner do not only defy the established gender norms within the right wing, but to an extent they also defy the traditional expectation that women should be nonaggressive and passive, as the analysis of the previous category established.

This shift from the passive to active sphere of political engagement is also mentioned in the research that Baer et al. conducted. They state that women in the right wing now tend to take part in demonstrations and other events, and sometimes even commit violent acts which are often targeted at other females (2017:353). Furthermore they state that they have taken to forming their own women's and girl's groups within their larger organisations (Baer et al., 2017:353). This is also apparently online, especially in the case of the Stormfront website, which has dedicated forums and threads to women.

Examining the lack of images in the previous category of traditional depictions alongside the extensive amount of images that challenge the established gender norms signifies that women themselves are redefining their roles within the right wing, and not shying away from the idea of engaging in activities that are typically reserved for men. One argument could be that the ideas of liberal feminism that men and women are the same and therefore should be allowed to engage in the same type of activities and behaviours is breaking into the right wing via the female contingent.

However, another argument could be that there is an increasing amount of females becoming violently radicalised within the right wing.

According to Kathleen Blee who has written extensively on the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the US, female members in the right wing extremists movements are often less visible and therefore actually quite sought after (2002:81). The fact that female members are less visible contributes to shielding the groups from outside scrutiny and allows for easier access to potential recruits (2002:81). However, as the active participation of women has shifted in recent years the increasing radicalisation of women is a possible contributing factor to the number of images which portray women as soldiers and activists. According to Juliane Lange, quoted and translated by Baer et al., a result of the shift in gender roles and resulting increase in possibilities for right wing women may contribute to an increased attractiveness for such movements (2017:353). Furthermore, Baer et al., argue that right wing groups pick up on current societal discourses and on that basis offer gender specific appeals (2017:355). This means that some women might view a potential involvement in the right wing as an improvement of their personal situation and a way to give importance to their lives (Baer et al., 2017:355).

In a talk given to the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs in July of 2015, Sasha Havlicek, founding CEO of the London based think tank 'Institute for Strategic Dialogue', discussed the increasing number of women being radicalised with regards the the terrorist organisation ISIS (2015:3). In her talk Havlicek stated that women are proving to be as much agents for fundamentalist ideology as men (2015:3). Obviously Havlicek is discussing a completely different ideology and movement, nevertheless she does note that women are also

travelling to what she terms ‘other theatres of conflict’, however there is a lack of data on such numbers which inhibits comparative analysis (2015:3). Moreover, if women within the right wing are responding to current societal discourses and attempting to improve their own lives by defending themselves against the ‘Other’, increased radical activity by an ‘enemy’ could be a catalyst for growing female radicalisation within the right wing communities. Ultimately the images analysed in this research project could be construed as a manifestation and illustration of such an increase in female radicalisation and participation in the violent right wing.

5.5 Anti-feminist/derogatory towards women

The next category identified examines those images that depict an anti-feminist sentiment or derogatory attitudes towards women. As figure 5 illustrates 18 of the 200 images collected depicted such themes. This amounted to 9% of the total data collected. Although this may not seem as an extensive amount of images, the impact of such depicted themes on this analysis is an important thing to examine. In the previous categories the role of women, established gender norms and attitudes towards feminism have been highlighted as a part of the analysis, therefore it would be natural to discuss images that portray such sentiment explicitly. As the images collected in this category are not as many as in previous categories one needs to be especially wary of over emphasising the statistics. However, it is interesting to note how two of the hashtags account for 16 of the 18 images, namely *refugeesnotwelcome* and *fascism*. The fact that the hashtag *fascism* produced so many images could be connected to the fact that a hierarchical relationship between the sexes is an important aspect of the right wing ideology. Similarly the fact that the hashtag *refugeesnotwelcome* produced as many images as is a result of a derogatory view

of Othered women, for instance Muslim or Jewish women. The threat of the Othered will be examined more in-depth in the last category analysis of this chapter.

Hashtag	Number of images' 'out of the 20 collected from each hashtag
#14words	1
#2316	0
#wpww	0
#refugeesnotwelcome	8
#nsgirl	0
#identitariangirls	0
#fascistgirl	0
#fascism	8
#defendeurope	1
#aryan	0

Figure 5: Anti-feminist/derogatory towards women.

As mentioned previously there is a growing diversification of gender roles in within the right wing groups and movements (Baer et al., 2017:353). Recently right wing politics has started to include gender issues, and a large number of individuals in the right wing fear that the current societal

discourse on feminism and gender equality is a threat to the traditional, biologically defined gender roles (Baer et al., 2017:353-354). This is especially apparent on Instagram as one hashtag which was not selected for this research project, but appears rather frequently with regards to right wing posts, is the hashtag *feminismcancer*. The fact that some members of the right wing draw parallels between feminism and cancer clearly illustrates how they view gender equality.

As Martin Durham states, an article in the British Union of Fascists newspaper, *Blackshirt*, argued that feminism alongside industrialism was simultaneously undermining the family and taking women away from the home (2003:68). Albeit this article was written in the 1930s and there has as previously mentioned been a shift with regards to gender issues in the right wing, the existence of such images on Instagram clearly illustrate how some members of the right wing still feel threatened by the idea of gender equality. Additionally, throughout the chapters of Cas Mudde's book 'The ideology of the extreme right', the opposition to feminism and gender issues in the right wing is mentioned several times, one mention in particular states how the Dutch Centre Party viewed all feminists as 'men-hating lesbians' (Mudde, 2000:155).

The images in this category to a large extent confirm these views with quite a few of them depicting anti-gay sentiment alongside the anti-feminist views. Additionally there is a trend of describing women, especially those who engage actively in politics or social issues as stupid or uninformed. As this analysis has shown there is an opposition amongst some parts of the right wing for women to engage actively in politics. Moreover some of the images in this category also categorise women who do not wish to reproduce as selfish, less of a women, weird, and immature. Similarly this confirms the previous statement that some parts of the right wing fear feminism threatens the white

race by jeopardising the family and reproduction. The next category analysed in this chapter will build from both this one and previous discussions to briefly examine how female politicians are depicted.

5.6 Female politicians

Although this category, similarly to the previous one, did not produce an extensive amount of images, the decision has been made to examine the depiction of female politicians briefly as it arguably relates to all of the categories analysed so far. This category only produces five images as figure 6 illustrates. However, the interesting thing to note here is how all of the images in this category, except one of Marine Le Pen who is also the only right wing politician depicted, negatively frame female politicians. This is in keeping with the traditional gender roles and views in the right wing which have been discussed at length so far in this chapter. This illustrates that female politicians are viewed as incapable of political engagement, by a section of the right wing, unless they themselves promote right wing ideas. The fact that there are only five images in this category, and the way in which they depict female politicians negatively varies, allows for a much more detailed qualitative analysis of the images.

Hashtag	Number of images* *out of the 20 collected from each hashtag
#14words	1
#2316	0
#wpww	0
#refugeesnotwelcome	1
#nsgirl	0
#identitariangirls	0
#fascistgirl	0
#fascism	1
#defendeurope	2
#aryan	0

Figure 6: Female politicians.

The two images collected on the *defendeurope* hashtag both interestingly depict German Chancellor Angela Merkel and newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron. This undoubtedly is a result of the recent French election, illustrating how Instagram and social media activity in general is highly influenced by current events. Both pictures depict Merkel in a way

which suggests she is superior to Macron. This might seem surprising as the right wing is commonly perceived as a patriarchal force, however it speaks to how some members of the right wing view Merkel and Macron. One of the images is a cartoon which shows Merkel hiding what seems to be refugees armed with swords under a dress made up of the EU flag flanked by Macron, whilst the other shows Macron sitting on the floor next to Merkel who is seated on a sofa with the accompanying text 'You have my word Mommy Merkel. I will serve you better than Sarkozy and Hollande put together. Vive Allemagne!'

Both these depictions could arguably suggest that Merkel is viewed as a type of 'big bad wolf' or protector of dangerous immigrants who threatens the right wing's way of life. Similarly the depictions suggest that Macron is viewed as merely a pawn to Merkel and someone to serve her. Interesting Macron's opposition in the election, Marine Le Pen, is depicted as a soldier in armour holding the French flag surrounded by a halo. The fact that Le Pen is depicted in such a positive way is noteworthy, but in two opposing ways. It is interesting because it challenges the previously established idea that women do not belong in the political sphere, yet it reiterates the recent shift within the right wing which allows for women to be more actively engaged, and assume important positions.

Interestingly though this seems only to be the case when women are politically engaged in favour of the right wing. The one image on the *fascism* hashtag depicts the Ministers of Defence (MOD) in Albania, Norway, Germany, The Netherlands, and Italy which are all women, alongside images of the Russian, American and Chinese MOD. The depiction clearly frames the men as strong and powerful as they are all depicted in their military uniforms with stern expressions, whilst the

woman are smiling and posing for a group photo. A conclusion could be drawn on the basis of such a depiction, especially as the three male MODs are from militarily strong nations, that female high-ranking politicians might be detrimental to the security of a country, according to some members of the right wing, thereby reiterating the established view that men should be responsible for security and defence.

5.7 The 'Others'

In their book 'Right-Wing Women' Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power discuss some of the things that are similar for right wing women across the globe. One of these is anti-Other discourse and practice. They argue that anti-Other sentiment is something that mobilises fear and sustains many right wing projects (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). Additionally Bacchetta and Power argue that the Other is also gendered, meaning that for some right wing women it is the Othered men who are the primary targets, whilst for some it is the Othered women (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). According to their research the ways in which right wing women view the Othered women is both similar in some respects and different in others (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). Bacchetta and Power argue for instance that most right wing women imagine the Othered women as aggressors or victims and in terms of a normative sexuality and femininity (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). Moreover, there are some instances when the women are viewed as asexual victims of their men, but other instances where they are constructed as sexually overactive, duplicitous, and predatory (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). Sometimes they are also viewed as baby breeders for the enemy camp (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). This ties in with the view that the Othered women often threaten the integrity of the right wing heteronormative family, nation, race, religion and society (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). In addition they illustrated how some women in the right wing will not critique the

sexism within their own communities, however they will strongly condemn women's treatment in the Othered community, whilst also viewing those women as victims of their male counterparts, in order to illustrate the inherent aggression of the Othered men (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). According to Bacchetta and Power right wing women and men target Othered males differently, despite the fact that they remain a major foci of the entire right wing (2002). Although violence against the male Other is a monopoly of right wing men, right wing women see the Othered male as a sexual threat to both their own and other women's physical purity and integrity (Bacchetta & Power, 2002). Furthermore, as Bacchetta and Power state, right wing women tend to direct the rage they feel against misogyny primarily towards Othered men, although some do contest and recognise sexism within their own communities (2002).

As figure 7 illustrates only 13 of the 200 images collected is concerned with the depiction of the 'Others'. This only amounts to 6,5% of the images collected and suggests that overall the right wing are more concerned with depicting themselves, arguably in a positive manner, as opposed to negatively depicting the Other.

Hashtag	Number of images out of the 20 collected from each hashtag
#14words	1
#2316	0
#wpww	0
#refugeesnotwelcome	7
#nsgirl	0
#identitariangirls	0
#fascistgirl	0
#fascism	3
#defendeurope	2
#aryan	0

Figure 7: The Others.

Interestingly the overwhelming framing of these images deal with the oppression of other women. A majority of the images are concerned with how Muslim women dress, particularly shaming or negatively portraying the use of hijabs, niqabs and burkas. This reiterates Bacchetta and Power’s argument that whilst some right wing members fail to identify sexism in their own movements they are quick to judge oppression in other communities. Furthermore an analysis of these images

compared to those which depict right wing women illustrated the differences in the depiction of those two groups. Whilst right wing women are often portrayed in the context of beauty, family and to an extent soldiers or advocates, the Other women are often contextualised as victims of oppression and severe control by the Other males. This illustrates how the Other women are overwhelmingly framed in a negative manner, whilst right wing women experience a more varied framing.

5.8 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has analysed the 200 images collected as a part of this research project in an attempt to answer the research questions set out in the introduction. It did so by identifying main themes in the images and categorising them accordingly. From there it analysed each category in relation to established knowledge on the right wing and alongside existing literature on each of the categories.

The first category, selfies, illustrated how women in the right wing communities are extensively sharing images of themselves on Instagram using right wing hashtags. The analysis of these images explored the idea that such a sharing of images could be perceived as a radical act of self-empowerment, but also as a reiteration of the established gender norms, depending on the motivation behind such images. The second category analysed images that depicted themes of a family-oriented, traditional and defence of the white race nature. It highlighted how there were less images in this category than anticipated, which might indicate that right wing women are themselves departing from the traditional way in which women are contextualised. However based on the user statistics for Instagram, and knowledge of female activity on sites such as *Stormfront*,

it would be too simplistic to merely hold right wing males responsible for such images, thereby suggesting that some females within the right wing are attempting to preserve the traditional gender roles. The fourth category examined images that portrayed women taking a more active role in the spreading of right wing ideology, specifically images including women in right wing clothing, posing with weapons or in demonstration and protest situations. This category illustrated how women seem to be taking a more active role within right wing movements, and thereby also assuming more leadership roles and even engaging in violent crimes. The fifth category examined images that conveyed an anti-feminist and derogatory towards women sentiment. This analysis concluded that although there were not many images that fit into this category it was still an important category to analyse. This is due to the fact that conclusion can be made not only on the basis of a large existence of images, but also on the basis of a lack of images. The existence of images in this category suggests that some members of the right wing still feel feminism threatens the existence of the white race and jeopardises the traditional family structure by taking women away from the home. The next category examined the images which depicted female politicians. As there were not that many images the analysis went deeper into the thematic depictions in each images. This illustrated how female politicians were overwhelmingly framed negatively, unless they were members of the right wing themselves. Lastly this analysis examined images which depicted the Others. This analysis highlighted how right wing usage of Instagram is more concerned with sharing images of their own kind as opposed to others. However it also illustrated how the right wing is quick to condemn sexism in other communities, yet often fails to acknowledge the existence of female oppression within its own groups.

Ultimately this analysis has illustrated how right wing usage of Instagram not only echoes current affairs, and the ongoing gender discussion within the right wing. It also significantly illustrates the recent shift in female participation and views within the right wing. Furthermore it also highlighted how right wing usage of Instagram to some extent mirrors the global trends and themes in Instagram usage, for instance with regards to such things as body positivity and the reclaiming of the female body, as well as the extensive sharing of selfies. However this analysis has also illustrated how some members of the right wing still prescribe to traditional established gender norms which state that women are merely an object to be desired for their beauty and reproductive abilities as well as a being incapable or unsuited for active political engagement and leadership positions. Furthermore the analysis as a whole confirmed the notion that gender issues is a highly contested issue within the right wing for which there is no common consensus.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The aim of this research project was to analyse 200 images collected which depicted women on the social media image sharing platform, Instagram, which were shared using confirmed right wing hashtags, in an attempt to analyse the view of women within the right wing movements and groups. Firstly this research project set out to examine the existing literature on both visual research methods, and the right wing in order to highlight the need for such research. Furthermore it established a brief theoretical framework which created a base understanding of visual research methods, specifically visual content analysis. On the basis of this three research questions were identified which structured the analysis throughout. These three research questions were:

RQ1: What are the prominent themes within the visuals collected? Do any main trends stand out?

RQ2: How do these themes correlate to the established ideas of women within the right wing?

RQ3: What do the identified themes tell us about how female ‘others’ are viewed, and to what extent does it differ from the way which right wing women are depicted?

In order to adequately produce a visual content analysis of the images collected, a thematic basis of the right wing needed to be established. In addition to a dedicated chapter which examined the right wing ideology, use of the Internet, as well as the traditional gender roles, and gender discourse within the right wing, the main analysis relied on existing literature in order to answer the research questions.

6.2 Findings

The initial qualitative analysis identified six main themes for further examination. These were; *selfies, family/defence of the white race, women as soldiers/advocates for the cause, anti-feminist/derogatory towards women, female politicians, and depiction of 'others'*. The content of each category was analysed both with regards to the existing literature on the right wing and with regards to the content of the images themselves. The identification of these main themes and the subsequent categorisation was ultimately the answer to the first research question, as well as the basis for the analysis with regard to the two next questions.

The thematic framework on the right wing identified main aspects of the ideology including the established view of women. The traditional gender roles dictated that women were to remain predominantly in the home sphere and that child-rearing should be their main focus and way to disseminate right wing views and ideology. Furthermore women are traditionally seen as objects of desire in the right wing, whose main function was reproduction in aid of the white race. However it also highlighted the contested nature of gender issues in the right wing. This understanding was important with regards to answering research question two.

In order to answer research question two the knowledge from the previous chapters had to be related to the content analysis of the images. On the basis of this research question two illustrated how the contested nature of gender issues in the right wing could also be identified by the way in which its members used Instagram. The first category highlighted the extensive sharing of selfies by arguably mostly women, within the right wing community. This research project concludes that such a sharing of images could be seen as a manifestation of the recent shift in gender roles

within the right wing. Arguably the dissemination of such images can be interpreted as a radical act of self-empowerment which sees women redefine and reclaim the control over their representation. However, one could also make an argument in favour of established gender roles which states that women are merely succumbing to the traditional idea that their value as individuals is closely connected to their beauty, femininity and ability to reproduce children.

The analysis of the next category of images examined the prevalence of images that depicted the more traditional contextualisation of women. On the basis of this analysis, which arguably did not produce as many images as anticipated, one could argue that women within the right wing communities are distancing themselves from the traditional view of women as well as traditional gender roles. Despite this, one needs to acknowledge that the mere existence of images in this category, although they to some extent can be due to male activity on Instagram, also emphasises the fact that some women within the right wing still romanticise the traditional gender roles which dictate that men should be breadwinners whilst women should be homemakers. This also fed into the analysis of the next category which dealt with images that depicted women participating in right wing activities differently to the established norms.

On the basis of this analysis one must conclude that women themselves are responsible for a shift in the way they disseminate right wing ideology. This category highlighted the extensive prevalence of images in which women are depicted with weapons, wearing right wing clothing and in protest situations. Furthermore this discussion also examined the claim that women are now more engaged in right wing motivated violence, clearly marking a shift from the traditional idea that women belong in the 'pre-political sphere'. Similarly the existence of a limited number

of images in the next category which dealt with images depicting anti-feminist or derogatory themes further confirms this conclusion.

On the basis of this one must conclude that right wing activity on Instagram very much echoes the current climate on gender diversification that the entire right wing is experiencing. The lack of images in this category suggest that a number of members of the right wing are seeing the value in female members taking a more active role, and assuming leadership positions. Nevertheless the mere existence of images in this category also suggests that there are still some members of the right wing who feel threatened by the idea of feminism and gender equality, as it threatens not only the traditional gender roles, but also the further existence of the white race.

The idea that females are subservient to males within the right wing movement became apparently from the analysis of images depicting female politicians. Similarly to the last category a conclusion can be made on the basis of the lack of images which indicates that females are not highly regarded as adequate politicians. Moreover, on the basis of the overwhelming negative depiction of female politicians one must conclude that women in politics, especially those which prescribe to liberal political ideas, are viewed as type of evil by some members of the right wing. Despite this one image that positively framed the French politician, Marine Le Pen, existed amongst the collected images suggesting that there is some acceptance for female politicians. This suggests an acceptance for female politicians as long as they echo the views of the right wing.

The last category was identified in order to answer the third research question. As the perceived threat of the Other is something that is universal for all right wing groups the initial expectation of

this research project was that an extensive amount of the images analysed would depict the Other women, however, as this category illustrated the prevalence of such images was lacking. This suggests that members of the right wing are more concerned with spreading visuals that depict ‘themselves’ in a positive manner, as opposed to visuals that negatively depict the Others. Having said that the images in this category very much aligned with the initial expectation that the majority of images in this category would negatively depict the treatment of women in the Other communities.

Overall this research project has illustrated and confirmed the contested nature of gender issues within the right wing.

6.3 Future research

As established by several chapters in this research project, visual research is a field in which research has both been lacking and inconsistent with regards to methodology. This research project has clearly illustrated the extensive nature of visuals on social media and what researchers in several fields can learn from analysis of such visuals. This research project aims to create a base from which further research into such visuals can be made, both with regards to the right wing, but also othered areas. There are many ways in which visuals can be studied and this next section will examine some in an attempt to make suggestions for future research.

This research project highlighted how it was unable to examine the motivation behind each of the images analysed. Future research into such visuals should aim to incorporate an analysis of what motivates individuals to share the images they do. This would undoubtedly add a dimension of understanding to such a content analysis which would be invaluable. Furthermore it would be

advantageous if future research into similar areas would have the resources for greater data collection. For the purpose of this research project the data collection process was time consuming and intricate which limited the amount of data collected, however a future research project with greater data collection would be able to rely more heavily on the quantitative aspect of the analysis. Similarly future research would benefit greatly from focusing on other social media platforms, either exclusively or as a comparison. Additionally future research would benefit from a comparison of female versus male depictions on visual social media platforms, especially regarding the fact that social media users are mainly women. A similar project to this but with an emphasis on male depiction might also be fruitful with regards to the right wing. Lastly future research should focus on the verbal responses to images similar to the ones analysed as a part of this research project. A project of such nature can have several different perspectives i.e. gender, age, nationality, political affiliation etc.

6.4 Limitations

Due to both the limited timespan and limited resources of this research project it was unable to analyse more than the 200 images across the ten different hashtags. Although ideally such a research project should aim to collect more data, the employment of the theoretical framework alongside the thematic knowledge has ensured that the conclusions drawn on the basis of this research project will add value to both the study of gender issues within the right wing, but also visual research methods. Moreover the rigorous approach to the literature review and methodology substantiate and add validity to the conclusions of this research project, whilst also contributing to the possibility of replicating the results.

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