

**The role of platforms  
in the radicalization  
of women to white  
supremacy**



# Hello!

I am Savannah Badalich.

I'm a **human rights advocate** focusing on technology, gender, and extremism.

I am a graduate student studying human rights and the Internet at Columbia University.

I also lead a civic tech startup accelerator at Civic Hall in NYC.

You can find me at [@sbadalich](https://twitter.com/sbadalich)



*How are white women radicalized to white supremacy on the online platforms reddit, Twitter, and Youtube?*



# The **significance**

The Internet has been used by white supremacist groups to spread propaganda and radicalize individuals since the mid-nineties. With the ubiquity of social media, white supremacists are utilizing mainstream online platforms such as Twitter, Youtube, Facebook, and reddit to normalize and radicalize users. However, many of these users and the attention of researchers have been white men, **leaving out the process and question of white women's radicalization.**



# Research Methodology

## Digital Ethnography

The study will include digital ethnography and collection (scraping) of publicly visible profiles by current and former white supremacist women.

## Interviews

The study will include semi-structured interviews with current and former white supremacist women either in-person or through a video conferencing service.

## (IRL) Ethnography

The study will also utilize ethnographic observation at in-person rallies that are organized online.



**I noticed the  
ways a  
platform  
facilitated  
radicalization.**

Recommend-ations to increasingly extreme content

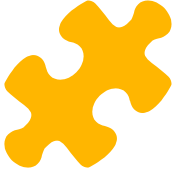
Platform features

Platform culture and content policies

Hate group recruitment on specific platforms



*How do online platforms' content policies, features, and recommendation algorithms facilitate the radicalization of white women to white supremacy?*



# Content policies and culture

## Twitter

Viewed internally and externally as a “bastion of free speech” and the low priority given to moderation has created a home for many white supremacist communities.

## reddit

Recently are proactive in their moderation. Norm creation and enforcement is internal to a subreddit. Have banned numerous WS communities.





# Features and functions

## Youtube

The communities are centered around the channel. Comments remain siloed to a specific video, but the recommendation function creates a network.

## Twitter

It's pithy, accelerated, stream of consciousness. Users rapidly create new iconography and syntax styles to communicate more in a smaller character count.

## reddit

Subreddits are siloed to a degree. Longer posts, discussion boards, volunteer moderation, and voting systems create a better moderated and enforced ecosystem.



# Recommendation algorithms

## Youtube

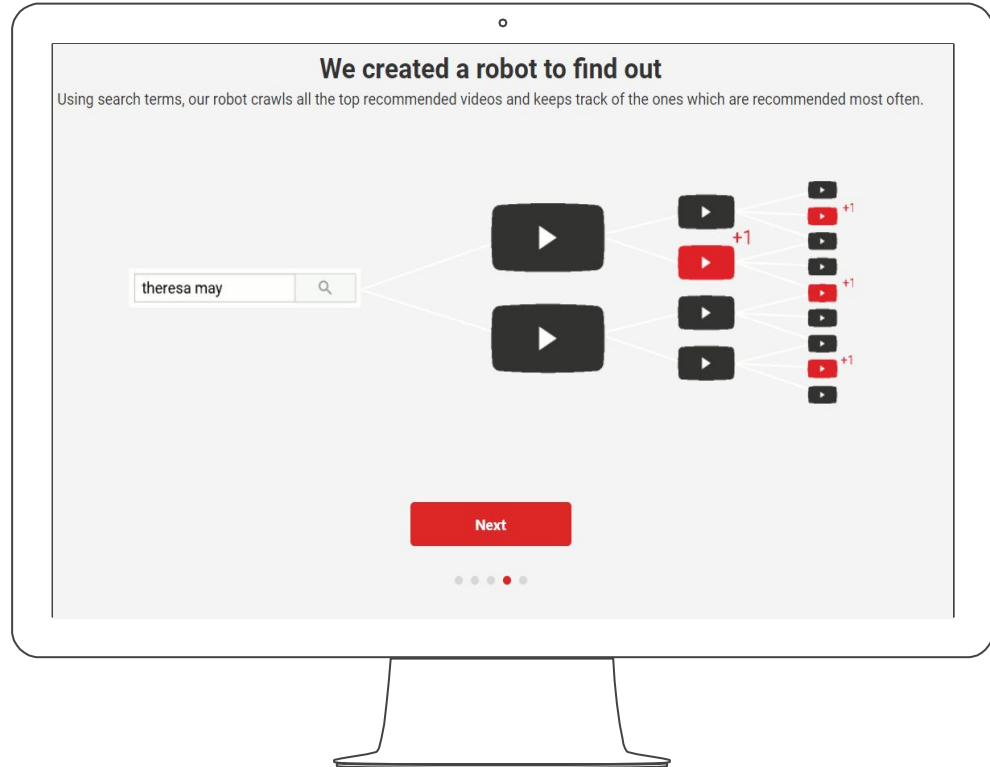
The recommendation algorithm is one of the only features that allow for a network experience between channels. Recommendations become more extreme down a branch of recommendations.

## Twitter

The recommendation algorithm includes other accounts to follow and suggested tweets. Recommendations also become more extreme.

# Testing the Youtube Algorithm

Utilizing a multi-step program created by **AlgoTransparency**, a group of activists including a former Googler, to test the recommendation algorithm results. Their code is on GitHub.





# Continued research



first



second



third



last

**Digital ethnography & scraping profiles**

**Testing Youtube's recommendation algorithm**

**Additional interviews & testing Twitter's algorithm**

**Analysis of scraped data and algorithm test data, with data visualization.**



# Thanks!

Any questions?

#ItsOKToBeWhite

Example: white supremacist meme

