the british psychological society
promoting excellence in psychology

British Journal of Social Psychology (2021), 60, 610–634
© 2020 The Authors. *British Journal of Social Psychology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd
on behalf of British Psychological Society
www.wileyonlinelibrary.com

Mobilizing collective hatred through humour: Affective–discursive production and reception of populist rhetoric

Inari Sakki and Jari Martikainen
Department of Social Sciences, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland

This research examines the mobilization of populist rhetoric of the 2019 Finns Party election video. By focusing on both the FP's election video (*production*) and Youtube users' comments (*reception*), we examine the constructions and uses of social categories and humour as well as responses to their rhetorical deployment among like-minded supporters and opponents. The multimodal analysis of the production of a populist campaign video demonstrates the construction of social categories and humour through the five steps of collective hate. These humorous messages are differently received by like-minded and opposing YouTube users. Two supportive affective–discursive practices – *glorification* and *schadenfreude* – both express shared joy and laughter, but while *glorification* emphasizes the positive self-understanding of the in-group, *schadenfreude* belittles the 'political Other'. Two opposing affective–discursive practices – *irritation* and *scorn* – place FP voters in subject positions of morally and intellectually inferior fascists, racists, and idiots. The populist message fosters expressions of social anger and polarization between FP supporters and opponents. Humour entangled with hatred encourages a sense of moral superiority in both groups. This study contributes to the current knowledge of mobilizing populist rhetoric and polarization, and responds to the call to broaden analysis of political communication in the field of multimodality.

Recently, populism has been central to public and academic debate. Political and social-scientific discussion of its definitions have been lively: it has been defined as an ideology (Mudde, 2004), discourse (Laclau, 2005), and rhetorical style (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), and a combination of these (see e.g. Rooduijn, 2019). Social psychology has approached populism as an intergroup differentiation based on its vertical and horizontal dimensions (Staerklé & Green, 2018). While its vertical differentiation refers to the gap between 'good people' and a 'bad elite', its horizontal dimension concerns the confrontation between 'in-' and 'out-groups', the latter often referring to refugees, characterized as 'the dangerous Other' (Brubaker, 2020; Wodak, 2015). From this model, it follows that a combination of high-level vertical and horizontal differentiation best describes national (right-wing) populism, whereas a combination of high-level vertical and low-level horizontal differentiation best describes social (left-wing) populism. Previous studies suggest that

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

Correspondence should be addressed to Inari Sakki, Department of Social Sciences, University of Eastern Finland, Yliopistonranta 1, FI-70210 Kuopio, Finland (email: inari.sakki@uef.fi).

DOI:10.1111/bjso.12419

right-wing populism's persuasive and mobilizing power are built on two images. An external threat (e.g. immigrants) is needed to blame society's political, cultural, and academic elite; the in-group is portrayed as defending the populace and will of the 'people' (Mols & Jetten, 2014; Sakki, Hakokängäs, & Pettersson, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). Populism defines 'who we are' and 'what we are about' (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Our goal is to explore how a right-wing populist message is constructed and how it mobilizes both supporters and opponents. We draw on previous work on social categories within the social identity tradition (Reicher, Haslam, & Rath, 2008; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) to explore how 'us–them' constructions are used in the legitimization of populist appeal and on discursive approach (Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 2012) to explore affective–discursive reactions to populist persuasion. We focus on the right-wing populist Finns Party (FP), currently among the largest parties in Finland, the rhetoric of their 2019 election campaign video, and its reception by like-minded and opposing social media users.

Mobilizing populist rhetoric

Strategies of populist rhetoric

To understand populism's growing popularity, we examine its multimodal communication and construction in oral, written, visual, and sonic rhetoric (cf. Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Wodak, 2015). Multimodal discourse analysis broadly refers to approaches in which the study of language is extended to other resources like images and sound (O'Halloran, 2011). The few previous studies (Burke, 2018; Forchtner & Kølvraa, 2017; Gal, 2019; Richardson & Wodak, 2009; Richardson & Colombo, 2014) on multimodal far-right and right-wing discourse suggest that visual communication has diverse uses: presenting evidence supporting and complementing verbal rhetoric; expressing extreme racist views; empowering the in-group and marginalizing out-groups; and rhetorically redefining and modernizing traditional totalitarian ideologies for new and younger audiences.

Most research on populist rhetoric has focused on verbal communication and outlined some common characteristics. These include dramatization, emotional tone, colloquial language, and absolutism (Bos & Brants, 2014; Engesser, Fawzi, & Larsson, 2017; Wettstein *et al.*, 2019). Populists use dramatization and emotion to highlight the necessity of change, and simplified argumentation and rhetorical vagueness to effect distance from the political elite (Bos & Brants, 2014; Engesser *et al.*, 2017). Through appeals to common sense and colloquial language populist politicians stress their ordinariness, constructing themselves as prototypical members of the populace, who, unlike mainstream politicians, acts 'on behalf of the people' (Pettersson, 2019; Rapley, 1998; Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). Research has shown that such discursive constructions of 'the people' can be mobilized to attract voters (Zienkowski & Breeze, 2019). Durrheim *et al.* (2018) recently showed that tripolar dynamics in hybrid media between populist leaders, mainstream parties and politicians, and ordinary people allowed populist leaders to mobilize the latter by exploiting disapproval and criticism of 'elites'. Research on right-wing populist rhetoric has also shown that politicians commonly rely on the empiricist orientation, seeking to justify their anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric as logical, credible, and fact-based (Potter, 1996; Pettersson, 2019; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Verkuyten, 2013). Alongside threatening images of the present and future, populist rhetoric invokes nostalgia for an idealized past (Levinger & Franklin Lytle, 2001; Mols & Jetten, 2014; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016).

Emotional appeal, *pathos*, is a commonly addressed rhetorical device in populist communication (Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010; Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017; Wirz, 2018). Emotionality in populist communication has been mostly studied in relation to the use of fear, anger, or shame (Rico, Guinjoan, & Anduiza, 2017; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017), not as affects inseparable from meaning-making and identity-building practices (Wetherell, 2012, 2015). We draw on the affective–discursive approach to investigate populism's appeal as a practice that sees affects as intrinsic to meaning-making (Wetherell, 2012, 2015). Unlike mainstream psychological theories that largely consider affect as separate, private, and psychological, the study of affective–discursive practice focuses on affects' social, performative, and patterned nature. Interpretative repertoires, affects/emotions, and subject positions are key to the affective–discursive approach. Interpretive repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) or discourses (the latter employed here) refer to socially available patterns in culturally recognizable shared knowledge, particular images, metaphors, and figures of speech (Edley, 2001). Yet the subject position concept (Davies & Harré, 1990; Edley, 2001) refers to possible identities the discourse opens, connecting discourses and affects with the social construction of particular selves (Edley, 2001: 210). Our concern is with affective discourses and identities constructed in and by populist rhetoric.

The previous discursive work suggests that right-wing populism's persuasiveness lies in mobilizing emotions of fear and threat (Wodak, 2015). Besides the discourse's dominant fear and anger, Wodak (2017: 562) proposes that resentment colours right-wing populists' emotional subject position. Breeze (2019) finds the same in a study of affective–discursive practices in British UKIP and Labour press releases. While Labour engaged in a cautious use of affects, framing them as concern and worry, UKIP's discourses offered subject positions characterized by fear and anger as legitimate reactions to immigration or the European Union. They also projected more positive emotions, discursively including 'the people' in them.

Some studies suggest that populist actors increasingly use various forms of humorous rhetoric to reach different audiences and mainstream their message. Humour is generally considered as encompassing distinct modes: satire; sarcasm; irony; ridicule; and entertainment (Attardo, 1994). However, it is impossible to define these closely related terms. Instead, humour is often approached as a pragmatic phenomenon closely linked to its contextual and rhetorical use (Attardo, 2000; Billig, 2005). Satirical discourse may employ various forms of humour, irony, or ridicule to critique those in power (Schwarznegger & Wagner, 2018) or express racial superiority (Malmqvist, 2015). Entangled with populist discourses of oppression by the political Other, satire, and humour may serve effectively to entertain the masses, masking hateful messages with humour while implementing their political agenda (Malmqvist, 2015; Schwarznegger & Wagner, 2018). Billig (2005: 175) has further theorized humour's paradoxical nature: it can be both social or anti-social, bringing 'people together in a bond of enjoyment, and, by mockery, it can exclude people'. Billig stresses that humour should be understood in relation to social order and power. His analysis of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) website rhetoric shows that presenting extreme racist humour as 'just a joke' functions as dehumanizing entertainment. Similarly, in their analysis of Facebook comments about the Roma, Breazu and Machin (2019) show that humour can be mixed with frustration, extreme racism, and sexual violence, entertaining and requiring violent ethnic extermination. Likewise, a recent study of populist Internet memes suggests that humour and irony are especially powerful in invoking moral rage (Hakoköngäs, Halmesvaara, & Sakki, 2020). Following Billig's (2001) argument of the integral link between extreme hatred and humour, in this

article we examine how humorous devices are connected in the construction of social categories in populist appeal.

Mobilizing hatred in populist rhetoric

Previous research has thus recognized many rhetorical strategies in the mobilization of populist communication. However, less is known about when and how it mobilizes hatred and polarizes the public sphere. The social identity tradition suggests the mobilization of hatred depends on the construction and performance of social categories (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). Its extent is determined by the definition of who belongs in the category, its direction by what it means to be a category member, and its leadership by the definition of who best exemplifies it. Previous research suggests that right-wing populist rhetoric renders particular us–them distinctions salient: that of the corrupted elite, dangerous immigrants and the virtuous people (Mols & Jetten, 2016). A positive self-representation is created by extending the category boundaries of both the out-group (consisting of immigrants and the elite), and the in-group (consisting of the populist party and 'the people') (Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). Blaming political elites – those who have betrayed their roots, their nation and the ordinary people – enables right-wing populist politicians to distance themselves from racist labels (e.g. Goodman & Johnson, 2013; Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Wood & Finlay, 2008). Previous research also suggests the populist message is most effective when it involves out-group discrimination (Hameleers & Schmuck, 2018), and this is used by right-wing populist parties in election campaigns built on images of the 'dangerous Other' (e.g. Arendt, Marquart, & Matthes, 2015; Wodak, 2015).

Social Identity Model of the Development of Collective Hate (Reicher *et al.*, 2008) develops the outplaying of social categories in polarized and hostile social contexts. It presents five processes through which out-group hatred evolves: (1) the construction of an in-group with a common identity; (2) the definition of targets external to the in-group; (3) the representation of these targets as endangering in-group identity; (4) the championing of the in-group as (uniquely) good; and (5) the eradication of the out-group as necessary for the defence of virtue (Reicher *et al.*, 2008). Out-group hatred and intolerance are thereby constructed as justified and moral, protecting the virtuous in-group from destruction by the evil out-group. Few previous studies discuss the model's fit in radical right populist rhetoric (Pettersson, 2019; Verkuyten, 2013). Pettersson's (2019) study of the rhetoric of Finnish populist politicians convicted of hate speech suggests that the combination of the positions of Victim and Hero is crucial for out-groups' hatred's discursive justification, allowing populist politicians to portray themselves simultaneously as unfairly treated and brave defenders of the nation. As Pettersson (2019) proposes, instead of considering different elements of the model as chronologically following stages or steps, in this article, we approach them as five discourses that are flexibly deployed in the justification of collective hatred. The multimodal discursive view on the Five-Step Model enables us to examine in-depth the ways in which the social categories are constructed and mobilized through multimodal resources of images, narration, speed, music, voice and sound.

The aim of this article is twofold. First, by focusing on both the FP's election video (*production*) and Youtube users' comments (*reception*), we examine the constructions and uses of social categories and humour as well as responses to their rhetorical deployment among like-minded supporters and opponents. The few previous studies

(e.g. Arendt *et al.*, 2015; Bos *et al.*, 2010; Richardson & Wodak, 2009) suggest that right-wing populist election campaigns can strongly influence audiences. To the best of our knowledge, however, no previous discursive study has explored these two sides of the coin. Thus, by focusing on both populist rhetoric and its like-minded and opposing audience's affective–discursive reactions, we hope to contribute to the recent call to investigate social and political polarization of contemporary societies by studying the simultaneous construction of populist and anti-populist discourse (Stavrakakis, 2014; Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, Kioupkiolis, Nikisianis, & Siomos, 2018). Second, the article responds to the call to broaden the analysis of political communication in the field of multimodality (Hakokönggäs *et al.*, 2020; Hameleers, Powell, Van Der Meer, & Bos, 2020). We seek to show how the shift from the analysis of verbal and textual communication to the multimodal analysis of narration, images, sounds, voice, light, and speed enables the grasping of the complex interplay between different communication modes in populism's persuasiveness. We thus hope to contribute to the current knowledge of populist appeal and polarization.

Finnish populist party

The Finns Party (FP) was established in 1995, succeeding the Finnish Rural Party. The FP's Finnish name is *Perussuomalaiset* – 'ordinary' or 'basic' Finns. Before 2011, the FP lacked an official English name. It was – and often still is – called 'The True Finns' in public debate. The use of 'Finns' reflects its desire to be seen as the only genuine representative of the Finnish people. Besides the FP's emphasis on the ordinary citizen's voice, support for Finnish national culture, resistance to the EU, multiculturalism, and immigration are central to its agenda. Its popularity has increased in each parliamentary election. It gained a major victory in 2011, receiving 19.05% of the vote. It lost votes in 2015 but came second with 17.7%, joining the government for the first time. In 2019, it gained the second highest vote and number of seats (39 out of 200). In the spring of 2020, polls showed continued growing support for the FP, and the party was the largest in Finland (HS 19/02/2020).

In June 2017, less than 2 years before the 2019 elections, Jussi Halla-aho's election as FP leader heralded a shift to a harsher immigration policy. This splits the party. About half its more moderate MPs left to form a new parliamentary group (*Blue Reform*). The Finnish anti-immigration movement's mainstream visibility is closely linked to Halla-aho and his blog, Scripta. His personification of the Finnish anti-immigration movement legitimizes his identity entrepreneurship. Previous research suggests social media has played a strong role in the rise of the Finnish anti-immigrant movement (Horsti & Nikunen, 2013) and elsewhere (Engesser *et al.*, 2017). Social media platforms' role in the production and reception of populist right-wing messages thus merits further exploration.

Method

This study focuses on the Finns Party election video 'KETUTUS – A story of being seriously pissed off' ('*V niinkuin Ketutus*') and its reception on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzCK4tTu2nE).

The video was released on 20 March 2019, a month before the parliamentary elections (on 14 April 2019). The 6-min (6:40) video is in short film format, including moving and still images, a cartoon, and animation. It offers a satirical multimodal representation of the political elite and journalists taking bribes and welcoming unwanted, threatening

refugees. The video concludes with the appearance of a monster incarnating people's anger, violently saving the country from the evil elite. Its main platform was YouTube; a shorter trailer was screened in Finland's Finnkino cinemas. In the public sphere, it was accused of promoting political violence. Following the media publicity, the video received hundreds of thousands of YouTube views. By February 2020 (during our data collection), it had been viewed 481,419 times – 10 times more than the victorious Social Democrats' video. It was later subtitled in different languages and translated into English.

Public discourse closely linked the video with the promotion of collective violence. We therefore used Reicher *et al.*'s (2008) five-step collective hate model as a broad analytical framework to organize the populist argument and study the video's deployment of social categories and humour. It was first transcribed scene by scene across different modes: narration; action; visual; and sound (transcription in Table S1). We used multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; O'Halloran, 2011). In practice, this meant we elaborated how different resources like images, speed, music, the narrator's voice, and sound (Kress, 2012) were linked in contributing to the construction of the five steps of collective hatred. We especially focused on how multimodal resources were deployed to construct a humorous style.

YouTube comments constituted the reception material. When the data were collected (February 2020), the video had received 13,000 likes, 4,800 dislikes, and 2,599 comments. We started our analysis with these comments, but after the initial data-driven reading and coding, we observed two kinds – direct reactions and comments, and comments on comments dealing with almost anything (e.g. often focusing on the commenter's personality). We focused on the former. The final reception data included 911 comments. After our initial reading, we observed that some supported and others opposed the video. We therefore decided to classify our data accordingly: 594 supportive comments; 249 objecting comments; and 68 neutral or uncategorizable comments. The comments' length varied, and their content ranged from one-word expressions of support or objection to lengthier comments analysing the video's content. The comments' style varied from the vulgar to the more restrained. However, the number using vulgar expressions (n = 126 [supportive comments n = 47; unsupportive comments n = 79]) indicates the video's emotional appeal.

Our analysis relied on the (critical) affective–discursive psychological approach (Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 2012), in which the analyst is not confined to textual material but can study the discourse as part of its social, political, and historical environment. First, we read the material multiple times to identify patterns of consistency and variability within and between comments (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). We sought patterns in which YouTube users discursively constructed shared discourses, affects, and theirs and others' identities within comments by paying attention to functioning of humour discourse. Second, we explored the intertwining of these discourses, affects, and subject positions, focusing on explicit expressions of opinion and emotion, and the use of metaphors, slogans, hyperbole, exaggeration, and other rhetorical devices. To distinguish affective–discursive practices in supportive and opposing comments, we elaborated their discursive functions, and the affects and subject positions YouTube users claimed for themselves and others. We thus identified five affective–discursive practices for supportive, and four for opposing, comments.

We analysed the original Finnish material to capture its idiomatic nuances. We then translated the extracts presented in this article into English, retaining rhetorical complexities and idioms as much as possible.

Analysis

Production: Mobilizing collective hatred through humour

In the analysis below, the populist right-wing narrative put forth by the campaign video is organized along with five steps of the Social Identity Model of Collective Hate (Reicher *et al.*, 2008) providing discursive frames enabling us to explore in-depth the rhetorical deployment of social categories and humoristic devices in the mobilization of collective hatred.

The campaign video is framed by introductory and closing vignettes. First, a male in a black suit (his face is unshown) picks up a comic from a library bookshelf – the first sign of the video's humorous fiction. He sits at a table and opens the first page, which becomes an image of Helsinki, and the story begins.

Step 1: Identification – 'There was once a small nation inhabited by content and happy people'

Following Reicher *et al.*'s (2008) model's first step, the video constructs an image of a coherent Finnish nation. The storyteller first describes a small country, whose independence its contented citizens enjoy. The narrator's first line, 'there was once a small nation', frames the video as an incongruous fairy-tale, deliberately employing an ironic communication mode (Attardo, 2000).

The video shows a bird's-eye view of Helsinki Cathedral's gold cross at dusk (00:32–00:47) (See Appendix S1: Image 1). This highlighting of religion is followed by imagery connected with democracy and legislation: the Finnish Parliament and the statue of Finland's first president, K.J. Ståhlberg, leaning on the constitution (00:48–01:03) (Appendix S1: Image 2). The foundations of the Finnish nation's in-group are therefore religion, democracy, and legislation.

The storyteller says hardship and sacrifice secured the nation's independence. His mention of the struggle for Finnish independence is accompanied by a close-up of a supine old man, a tear falling from his wrinkled cheek (01:15–01:19) (Appendix S1: Image 3). The 'fatherland's culture, traditions, and values' are introduced as national common denominators, with an image of a grieving workman (Appendix S1: Image 4) and a scene of children decorating a Christmas tree (01:19–01.27) (Appendix S1: Image 5). This imagery related to Finnish pride, respect, persistence, and nostalgia, evoked by the narrative may warrant a feeling of togetherness, suggesting that common traditions and values unite the generations in a coherent nation. Such temporal narratives and historical references are valuable in political argumentation, because they concern issues like social identity, tradition, and a sense of continuity (e.g. Hakokönggäs & Sakki, 2019; Levinger & Franklin Lytle, 2001; Sani *et al.*, 2007).

Step 2: Exclusion – 'Leaders' betrayal and opening the gates to a flood of people'

The construction of a coherent Finnish nation is followed by the introduction of two out-groups, referred to here as the 'political Other' and 'refugees'. Their construction is familiar from previous research on radical right-wing populist rhetoric (Mols & Jetten, 2016; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Wood & Finlay, 2008). The storyteller introduces the first out-group, elected leaders and decision makers, as a corrupt 'political Other', promoting their own and their inner circle's interests at the expense of the common good (00.48–01:06). The corrupt leaders are depicted as three black-suited, white-shirted, black-tied men. Their silver-masked eyes indicate their duplicity and detach

them from the honest Finnish populace (Appendix S1: Image 6). Although played by unknown actors, those familiar with Finnish politics know they represent the three leaders of the former Finnish Government (Juha Sipilä, Petteri Orpo, and Timo Soini). Thus, the video humorously aligns itself as satire while creating an ironic distance from its source (Malmqvist, 2015). By representing real people with fictional characters, the satirical format allows criticism and mockery of both the imaginary political elite and existing social order.

Refugees are the second out-group. The storyteller avoids the words 'immigrant' and 'refugee', referring to 'distressed people' or 'a flood' (01:36–01:48). The word 'refugee' is displayed in an image in which one of the leaders stands with open arms and a halo, reminiscent of a merciful Christ, with the speech bubble 'Welcome refugees' (01:36–01:39) (Appendix S1: Image 7). The video uses the halo ironically to express the decision makers' deception and exaggerate the leader's intentions.

The refugees are represented as dark-skinned men. In one image, a bearded dark-skinned man is depicted with a bubble saying 'I'm only seventeen' (Appendix S1: Image 8), resonating with the storyteller's line: 'Disregarding resources and safety, the leaders welcomed a flood of people, including those who never really needed asylum' (01:39–01:49). The text is a sarcastic intertextual clue referring to the anti-immigrant debate about the age of asylum seekers implying that some adult refugees are pretending to be children (Goodman & Narang, 2019). Moreover, differentiating between 'real' and 'false' refugees allows criticism of immigration while maintaining a reasonable and sympathetic approach to 'genuine' asylum seekers (Lynn & Lea, 2003; Sakki & Pettersson, 2018). Multimodality, especially visual rhetoric, is used to convey stereotypical hostile views of out-groups (Breazu & Machin, 2019; Schwarznegger & Wagner, 2018). The corrupt leaders and refugees are presented as intertwined as belonging to the same out-group, implying that 'corruption' entails support for a more open immigration policy.

The separation of the Finnish citizen in-group and the refugee out-group is visually reinforced. Most scenes related to the in-group are live images; most depictions of the out-group feature cartoons and animated images. The cartoon serves as a rhetorical form, allowing the expression of xenophobic views, framing the message as humorous fiction that can be used rhetorically against accusations of racism.

Step 3: Threat – 'The country that was previously safe for women and children is history'

The corrupt elite and refugee out-groups are depicted as threatening the in-group's identity. First, the storyteller characterizes the corrupt leaders as betraying the fatherland's culture, traditions, and values and acting against them (01:19–01:31). An image of the European flag accompanies this: European interests overshadow and contradict the Finnish nation's interests. The corrupt leaders are portrayed as church-going hypocrites who pretend to support traditional values like religion (01:58–02:14) (Appendix S1: Image 9) while bribing public officials and the media to promote their views (02:20–02:36) (Appendix S1: Image 10). The video thereby constructs an image of corrupt leaders publicly promoting the in-group's ideals while acting against them by welcoming refugees and bribing the media.

A series of images depicts a more overt threat: (1) an innocent-looking white teenage girl is kidnapped by dark-skinned men in a van (01:49–01:58); (2) a woman and child negotiate a smoke-filled street (02:29–02:31/02:49–02:51); (3) a black silhouette holds a knife while people flee (Appendix S1: Image 11); (4) a woman lies bleeding in the street (02:44–02:46); and (5) a black man detonates explosives (02:46–02:49) (Appendix S1:

Image 12). The cartoon rhetorically allows extreme fictive and humorous disparagement. These images are accompanied by the sound of explosions and people screaming. The storyteller says, 'The country that was previously safe for women and children is history' (02:44–02:51). Refugees are a threat.

The video interlaces the threatening images with anti-refugee slogans: 'our own nation first'; 'stop rape'; 'we demand safety'. A demonstrator is shown with his mouth taped and 'racist' written on his forehead (02:37–02:43) (Appendix S1: Image 13). The scenes echo the narration, which states that 'the decision makers harnessed the media as the spokesmen for their propaganda, and those criticizing them were labelled criminals' (02:29–02:43). The video's visual and aural multimodality portrays the out-group as rapists and terrorists; the FP in-group and its supporters are portrayed as victims of the political Other's discrimination and racism. The racist label society usually attaches to the in-group is reversed to apply to the political Other, implying that they, not we, are the real racists (e.g. Pettersson, 2019; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Wood & Finlay, 2008). The video raises the issues of 'political correctness' and freedom of speech, echoing previous research showing that radical right-wing populist politicians frequently claim to be the latter's sole protectors (Pettersson, 2019). It thus constructs an innocent victim and hero subject position for the FP and its supporters (Pettersson, 2019).

The threat is also articulated by growing unemployment and misery among Finnish citizens. A visual narration shows long breadlines and a once fresh-looking and neatly dressed man losing his job and living on the streets (03:10–03:31) (Appendix S1: Image 14). The storyteller says, 'Ordinary workers lost their jobs, and some eventually lost everything' (03:15–03:31). This argument strongly emphasizes the needs of the nation and its people and places these needs above refugees (Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Lynn & Lea, 2003). Such discourses, juxtaposing immigration and the maintenance of the welfare system as mutually exclusive and justifying a stricter asylum policy as patriotic and protecting welfare, frequently feature in previous studies of radical right-wing rhetoric (Goodman & Burke, 2011; Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Lynn & Lea, 2003; Mols & Jetten, 2016; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016).

Step 4: Virtue – 'They wanted to forsake their fatherland's culture, traditions, and values'

The in-group is represented throughout as virtuous, cultivating ideals of democracy, independence, culture, tradition, and values. Its members are portrayed as honest and hardworking. The visual narration's depiction of churches, Parliament, the first president of Finland with the constitution, a Christmas celebration, citizens of different ages (veterans, workers, and children) constructs a harmonious image of a united nation. Warm colours, a slow transition between shots, and harmonious music create an air of tranquillity and safety. These characteristics' virtue is reinforced by the juxtaposition of the decision makers' corruption with the out-group's violence. A more rapid transition between shots and the use of sounds associated with violence attach disorder and threat to the refugee out-group.

The depictions of refugees' violence against the in-group and its member's destitution synopsize the video's first part. The visual and verbal narration generate compassion for righteous in-group members, placing them in patriot and victim subject positions (Pettersson, 2019; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). The two threat discourses function as justification for the revenge in the video's second part.

Step 5: Punishment – 'The embodiment of being pissed off'

Events that can be associated with the fifth step of Reicher *et al.*'s (2008) model begin with a scene in which a middle-aged man is reading a newspaper. He spots a news item in which a corrupt decision maker announces, 'Welcome refugees'. Furious, the man goes to the balcony, where black smoke is rising from the city, a visual metaphor of collective anger (Appendix S1: Image 15). The fury is emphasized by a glowing crater with a long-haired, grinning, growling black monster – which the storyteller characterizes as the 'incarnation of anger' – climbing from it to the top of a hill (03:32–04:22) (Appendix S1: Image 16). The video thus harnesses the main principles of the mythological cosmos – earth and sky – to give birth to the monster, whose mission is to hold the corrupt decision makers to account. Words like 'retribution' and 'pray for mercy', and the harnessing of nature articulated both visually and verbally, parallel the punishment and corrupt leaders' confession, reminiscent of the Last Judgement (Appendix S1: Image 17). When the leaders promise to resign and be exiled, the monster fades into the smoke (Appendix S1: Image 18). The storyteller concludes, 'Should corruption rear its head again, the nation's defender will return' (06:06–06:11). Such warnings, according to which future decay will not go unpunished (Kim & Hellberg, 2016), bear both biblical and mythological echoes and strongly resemble the final verse of the Finnish national epic, Kalevala, whose mythical hero Väinämöinen promises to return if the nation's well-being is threatened.

The out-group threat and mythical and religious elements rhetorically frame and warrant the monster's actions against the corrupt leaders and their liberal immigration policy, positing a moral obligation to protect the in-group from decay and vandalism. Hence, the defeat of corrupt leaders is celebrated as the victory of in-group (Finnish nation, FP) over out-group (corrupt leaders, immigrants). The humorous and fictive embodiment of the pissed-off monster allows a call for collective violence as the solution to the out-group threat.

In the video's closing vignette, it emerges that the man reading the comic is Jussi Halla-aho, (the FP's leader), legitimizing the video's message through his identity entrepreneurship as the voice of the Finnish anti-immigrant movement (Reicher *et al.*, 2005). The video ends with Halla-aho declaring calmly, 'As you know, no such monster exists. It won't come to rescue you. The old political parties won't change their goals. If you want change, you must vote for it. Use your power.' This creates an analogy between the video's corrupt elite and the old political parties, equating change (and its monstered embodiment) with the FP.

To conclude, similarly to previous research on populist leaders' rhetoric (Mols & Jetten, 2016), the five steps described above deploy a populist narrative that renders four social categories salient: traitorous elite (steps 2 and 3), dangerous immigrants (steps 2 and 3), honest and hardworking ordinary Finns (steps 1 and 4), and saviour FP (step 5). While 'the ordinary Finns' are portrayed as the victims and 'dangerous immigrants' and 'greedy elite' as the allied villains (Mols & Jetten, 2016), the position of the hero is addressed to the populist party, the FP, which is metaphorically created out of the collective anger of the ordinary people. In this way, the campaign video creates a common fate for the ordinary people and the FP, which is sealed by the collective hatred addressed against those who have betrayed us and those who threaten us. These findings are in line with Reicher *et al.*'s (2008) conclusion that maintaining positive self-presentation of the in-group warrants hostility towards the out-group (Pettersson, 2019). Besides rendering the four social categories salient and extending the group boundaries of both the out-group (the corrupted elite and dangerous refugees) and the in-group (the ordinary Finns and the FP) (Sakki & Pettersson, 2016), these categories are also attached differently to the

narrative structure. The five steps echo a triadic narrative structure (Levinger & Franklin Lytle, 2001), in which a remote golden age depicting a nation in its historic splendour – such as descriptions of a coherent nation and hardworking ordinary Finnish people – is followed by a period of decadence and loss – for example, in terms of loss of safety and welfare that is threatened by the'corrupted elite' and 'dangerous refugees'. This calls for an action on behalf of an imagined future in which the nation recovers its past glory with the help of a monstered embodiment of the saviour FP. This structure also reminds the narrative template of fall and rebirth, traditionally employed in Western literature and constituting a master narrative (Wertsch, 2002), which can be used for example, to successfully mobilize voters and justify harsh policies by manipulating depictions of a chaotic present society and selective images of the collective past (Levinger & Franklin Lytle, 2001; Mols & Jetten, 2014). The analysis showed that the video's harsh imagery is often narrated through various rhetorical humorous devices. In the following section, we examine the ways in which the campaign video is received by the social media users paying particular attention to the rhetorical functions of humour in relation to its like-minded and opposing audiences (Billig, 2005).

Reception: YouTube users' affective–discursive responses

Supportive comments

We identified five affective–discursive practices in the video's supporting comments: 1. *glorification*; 2. *schadenfreude*; 3. *threat*; 4. *betrayal*; and 5. *patriotism*. Table 1 presents these affective–discursive practices and their sub-discourses, with their frequencies.

We focus on two affective–discursive practices, *glorification* and *schadenfreude*. *Threat*, *betrayal*, and *patriotism* are well reported in previous research on radical right-wing rhetoric (e.g. Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). The *threat* discourse identifies immigrants as a *danger*, repeating the video's imagery connecting rape, terrorism, and other violence with immigrant men (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Wodak, 2015). The *betrayal* discourse associates dishonesty, injustice, and the exploitation of 'ordinary Finns' with the political Other (the mainstream parties and media), constructing them in a *traitor* subject position, while characterizing the FP as righteous and honest, and addressing them in a *saviour* subject position (Pettersson, 2019; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). The *patriotism* discourse is built on collective memory, nostalgia, love for the fatherland, and a triadic narrative pattern between the glorious past, threatening present, and utopian future (Levinger & Franklin Lytle, 2001), constructing *patriot* and *saviour* subject positions for the FP and its supporters.

Glorification

The *glorification* discourse appears most frequently in the supportive comments. It celebrates the success of the video, the FP, and Jussi Halla-aho. The video is praised for both its technical execution and its content, which is considered truthful and brave in raising the problems caused by immigration and revealing corrupt leaders' deceit:

> An absolutely fantastic video – it only tells the truth about how things really are in this country. Vote for the Finns Party! (Comment 714).

Table 1. Affective–discursive practices and their sub-discourses in supportive comments

Comments supporting the video and the Finns party (N = 594)
1. Glorification
• praise of the video's success (n = 245)
• incitement to spread the video, fight for Finland, vote for the Finns Party (n = 101)
• the video's truthfulness (n = 62)
• adoration of the Finns Party leader (n = 53)
• solidarity (n = 51)
• thankfulness to the Finns Party and its leader (n = 21)
• exultation about the approaching victory (n = 22)
2. Schadenfreude
• malicious enjoyment of the failure of other political parties and the media to harm the Finns Party's election campaign (n = 36)
• revenge on the corrupt politicians (n = 13)
• contempt (questioning the other parties' intelligence) (n = 11)
3. Threat
• objection, anger against immigrants (n = 38)
• threat to/fear of the future (caused by immigrants, degeneration of welfare etc.) (n = 36) (Sweden mentioned as a warning 11 times)
• anger, irritation (target unspecified) (n = 9)
4. Betrayal
• defection, dishonesty of other Finnish parties and the former leader of the Finns Party (n = 32)
• biased media (censorship) (n = 26)
• injustice, bitterness, anger (because of deceptive leaders/media) (n = 16)
5. Patriotism
• patriotism, loyalty to fatherland (n = 30)
• the Finns Party the hope for the future (n = 15)
• persistence, bravery, guts to fight for fatherland (n = 13)

Many responses repeat this mobilizing message in urging people to vote in the elections. In their gratitude for the FP's leader's bravery, 40 commenters address him as 'Master', recalling how the disciples addressed Christ.

> Jussi Halla-Aho (. . .) you're the Master. You're the Master for me and many other people. You mean hope for the nation's future and me personally. I look up to you and respect you. I will always vote for the Finns Party. (. . .) I keep saying it – thank you Master (Comment 4).

Emotionally rich comment above expresses adoration, hope, respect, loyalty, and submission to the party leader. The previous literature suggests that right-wing populist leaders play a key role in populism's mobilization of support. Drawing on the social identity approach, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) call such leaders identity entrepreneurs. They can unite opposing groups and rhetorically mobilize a sense of togetherness and shared destiny. Identity entrepreneurs are characterized by their ability to influence a group's collective self-presentation, which is achieved by making us–them confrontations salient and persuading voters that the in-group needs a determined leader to bear the group's mission (Mols & Jetten, 2016).

Besides highlighting the importance of a worshipped leader, the glorifying comments reveal right-wing populism's internationalization. Many foreigners viewed and commented on the video. Thirty-seven foreign viewers of the video explicitly expressed their

Table 2. Discourses, affects, and subject positions related to five affective–discursive practices of supportive audience

Affective–discursive practices	Glorification	Schadenfreude	Threat	Defection	Patriotism
Discourses	Virtuous FP	Irritated political Other	Dangerous refugees	Corrupt, unpatriotic political Other	Patriot ordinary Finns
Affects	Admiration, Joy, Gratitude, Solidarity	Ridicule, Enjoyment, Joy, Scorn, Hatred	Insecurity, Fear, Anger, Resentment	Rage, Dishonesty, Ressentiment, Injustice	Suffer, Guts, Traditions, Collective memory
Subject positions	Heros, Saviours (us)	Fools (them), Punishers (us)	Criminal, rapist, lazy (them)	Traitors, Unpatriotic (them), Honest (us)	Victims, Patriots (us)

Table 3. Affective–discursive practices and their sub-discourses in opposing comments

Comments against the video and the Finns party ($N = 249$)
1. Irritation
• condemnation, irritation, anger towards the video and FP ($n = 104$)
• video & FP agenda: shit, bullshit, fuck ($n = 68$)
• video: propaganda, populism, manipulation ($n = 37$)
• Finns Party: Nazis, racists, fascists ($n = 29$)
• direct/indirect incitement to vote for other political parties ($n = 29$)
2. Scorn
• mockery and ridicule for the FP ($n = 55$)
• contempt (questioning the FP's intelligence) ($n = 35$)
• Schadenfreude ($n = 7$)
3. Defection
• the content of the video is not based on the truth ($n = 55$)
• turncoats: defection and the FP's dishonesty ($n = 35$)
4. Anti-patriotism
• FP as a threat to Finland ($n = 9$)
• FP shames Finland and Finns ($n = 4$)

solidarity with the FP and the Finnish nation, urging people to share the video, fight for Finland, and vote for the FP:

> Congrats to Finland from a Norwegian. You're lucky to have a party with balls. Don't forget to vote! (Comment 160)

The large number of international commenters highlights the power of social media as a channel to promote transnational solidarity for like-minded supporters (Caiani & Kröll, 2014). These comments express an affective articulation of togetherness and solidarity, further warranting the sense of in-group belonging exceeding national borders.

The *glorification* discourse constructs a collective 'euphoria', exalting the video as a great achievement and celebrating the FP's impending victory. The discourse also positions the FP's members and supporters as a *brave and victorious* in-group, embellishing it with joy, pride, capability, and complacency, and expressing 'in-group favouritism' (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These positive emotions construct a superiority humour (Billig, 2005), unifying those who share them (Malmqvist, 2015). The many glorifying comments express approval of, and even celebrate, violence against out-groups echoing the fifth step of Reicher *et al.*'s (2008) model.

Schadenfreude

Unlike the glorification discourse's celebration of in-group success, *schadenfreude* finds amusement in the out-group's misfortune. Humour thus functions as a divisive device. It serves in-group favouritism and addresses hostility towards the out-group (Mols, 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The video's humorous message is interpreted simultaneously as joy and contempt through rhetorical ridicule, allowing the undermining, belittlement, and exclusion of the out-group from the social order (Billig, 2005). *Schadenfreude* is targeted at the other parties, their supporters, and the mainstream media. Most comments celebrate the video's increasing visibility through negative publicity. Indeed, the in-group perceives the out-group's attempt to harm it as paving the way for its victory. The

audience thus recognizes a broader shared agenda behind the video as a deliberate attempt to increase and mobilize contempt for political opponents and the media (Durrheim *et al.*, 2018). The harm and anger of the political Other are celebrated in the supportive comments:

> The best election video ever made in Finland. The extreme-left mainstream media and parties involved in the immigration business are furious (Comment 686)
>
> It's fun to see the social justice warrior's butthurt caused by the video! (Comment 664)

These comments built around schadenfreude are a source of several (often phallic) metaphorical and derogatory expressions about the political Other. 'Butthurt', expressing overt hostility through rape imagery, is typical. This affective–discursive practice is also constructed by ridiculing the political Other's members' intelligence and inability to see the 'truth' of immigration's negative consequences. Many comments expressed enjoyment of the Other being furious and looking foolish:

> The other parties must be pissed off, because the Master has revealed everything. Fortunately, the media has already made itself look foolish (Comment 197)

Some find revenge in the FP's revelation of the political Other's abuse and corruption. As in the below comment, direct laughter combined with derogatory language serves to mock the out-group.

> Hahaha! Look at all the fucking brainwashed soy-infused castrated males disliking this! One day we'll be rid of all you leftist tools of subversion, and Europe's honour will be restored (Comment 27).

Such hatred and laughter have been reported in recent studies of online rhetoric (Breazu & Machin, 2019; Malmqvist, 2015; Schwarznegger & Wagner, 2018). The affective–discursive expression of *schadenfreude* conveys the FP's superiority over its political opponents. The political Other and mainstream media are associated with affective articulations of ridicule and stupidity, positioning them as inferior to the FP. Schadenfreude's affective–discursive practices thus include the use of superiority humour (Billig, 2005) to target the out-group and intertwine joy and celebration with hostility and hatred for the political Other and its supporters.

Table 2 summarizes how discourses, affects, and subject positions are entangled in affective–discursive support for the video.

Opposing comments

We identified four affective–discursive practices in comments opposing the video and the FP: 1. *irritation*; 2. *scorn*; 3. *defection*; and 4. *anti-patriotism*. Table 3 presents these affective–discursive practices and their sub-discourses, with their frequencies. Comments opposing the video illustrate humour's paradoxical nature. Because it is rhetorical, a humorous message may also be rejected and communicated rhetorically through unlaughter (Billig, 2005). This unlaughter, as we show below, may serve to justify the overt hostility towards the FP and its supporters.

We explore *irritation* and *scorn* in more detail here. The other affective–discursive practices portray the FP and its supporters as dishonest and dangerous. The *defection*

affective–discursive practice accuses the FP and its supporters of manipulating the truth, creating unfounded threats, and deliberately agitating people against immigrants, positioning them as *liars*. The *anti-patriotism* affective–discursive practice constructs the FP and its supporters as shameful and threatening the Finnish way of life and future, positioning them as *unpatriotic*.

Irritation

The *irritation* discourse criticizes, mocks, and opposes the video, the FP, and its policies. Although several viewers acknowledge the video's technical execution, they describe its content as bad, ridiculous, or stupid. Disapproval of its populist message is usually expressed by the word 'shit' ($n = 48$).

> Technically very good, content pure shit. Stupid intimidation, just like Goebbels' Nazi propaganda (Comment 272)

Thus, commenters often draw an analogy between the video and Nazism. The FP and its supporters are labelled Nazis, fascists, and racists.

> Populist shit, neo-Nazi propaganda, fuck off racists (Comment 426)

Populism, Nazism, and racism are thus equated. Comments liberally employ coarse expressions ($n = 79$). The video's content generates anger and irritation not only towards the video but – more importantly – towards the FP's members. The party, its leader, and supporters are described extremely derogatively:

> I am pissed off by the Finns Party's insane worldview. The party's leader was sentenced for racism, yet he has the guts to do such insane rubbish. I wonder whether the party or its leader has any sense of decency? (Comment 654).
>
> FPs *[persut]* are criminals, unemployed, and drug addicts ? (Comment 67).

The former comment expresses astonishment and anger; the three stigmatizing labels and the vomiting emoji in the latter express disgust. The video therefore appears to increase irritation, anger, and disgust with the FP and its political agenda: several commenters urge people not to vote for the FP:

> Ho-hum. . . The video really encourages exploitation and racism against immigrants. If you're a reasonable person, vote for the Social Democratic Party (Comment 77)

The *irritation* affective–discursive practice articulates strong emotions, ranging from astonishment to disgust and anger with the FP and its supporters. Negative comments position the FP as a morally inferior out-group – *racists or Nazi*s ($n = 29$), implicitly constructing its critics as righteous and morally superior citizens.

Scorn

The *scorn* affective–discursive practice consists of articulations of contempt, ridicule, and schadenfreude. It questions the intelligence of the FP and its supporters, ridiculing the

FP's arguments and lack of logic and reason. It scorns the populist message and expresses astonishment that anybody can take such ridiculous content seriously.

> Unbelievable shit. But what can you expect from a unicellular organism? (Comment 208)
>
> It's a shame such populist brainwashing affects short-sighted members of our nation so powerfully (Comment 266)

Ridicule is thus entangled with derogatory content, building strict boundaries between the more intellectual in-group and less intellectual out-group. The video's stupidity is viewed as paving the way for the other parties' victory. The comment below expresses *irritation* (see above) by linking the FP to racism and describing the video as 'shit'; it also articulates *scorn* for morally inferior idiots.

> Incredible shit. It's amazing what stupid people we have in the provinces and the thickest corners of the Net. The Finns Party's period in government has been full of racism and weakening the position of the people, but the chucklehead people are just clapping their nodule hands for this too. You really get what you order (Comment 807).

References to the 'provinces' and 'nodule hands' situate FP supporters as bumpkins. The *scorn* discourse connects the FP with affective qualities of ridicule and stupidity. It implicitly establishes a gap between a rationally and intellectually inferior out-group of FP supporters and a superior in-group of other parties' supporters. Rendering these us–them divisions salient ridicules the populist message and locates the video's supporters and the FP in a narrow and intellectually inferior *idiot* subject position. It thus divides Finns into two opposing groups – the more rational and the uneducated (sometimes rural) idiots – further polarizing the Finnish public sphere.

Table 4 summarizes the four affective–discursive practices of opposing comments and the discourses, affects, and subject positions on which they are based.

Discussion

This article had two aims concerning the mobilization of populist rhetoric. First, by focusing on both the FP's election video (*production*) and Youtube users' comments (*reception*), we examined the constructions and uses of social categories and humour as well as responses to their rhetorical deployment among like-minded supporters and opponents. Second, our multimodal analysis of the video's narration, images, sounds, voice, light, and speed sought to grasp the complex interplay between different communication modes in populist rhetoric.

While Social Identity Model of Collective Hate (Reicher *et al.*, 2008) is useful to describe the social psychological processes through which harsh imagery against other groups can come to be celebrated as right in the campaign video, our (multimodal) discursive analysis enabled us to conduct fine-grained analyses that are sensitive to the multimodal resources of images, speed, music, voice and sound and humoristic devices through which the populist appeal was made powerful. In line with previous studies (Pettersson, 2019; Rapley, 1998; Reicher *et al.*, 2008; Verkuyten, 2013), 'the in-group love' seemed to warrant 'the out-group hate' as necessary solution to the defence of virtue. We argued that humorous rhetoric may serve particular functions in this context (Billig, 2005). Satire, irony, and ridicule may be used to entertain not only those already receptive

Table 4. Discourses, affects, and subject positions related to five affective–discursive practices of opposing audience

Affective–discursive practices	Irritation	Scorn	Defection	Anti-patriotism
Discourses	Populist shit, Racist propaganda	Populist morons	Deceitful, Propaganda	Dangerous FP, Shameful FP
Affects	Anger, Irritation	Contempt, Ridicule, Schadenfreude	Dishonesty, Defection	Threat, Shame
Subject positions	Fascist, Racist (them)	Idiots (them) Right-minded (us)	Liars, Turncoats (them)	Unpatriotic (them)

to the views they express but wider audiences (Schwarznegger & Wagner, 2018). Most importantly, the humorous frames – conveyed through exaggeration, contrast, and visual and sonic clues – enabled criticism and mockery of political opponents and derogation of refugees. Framing the electoral campaign as humorous fiction allowed the expression of xenophobic views while defending the in-group from accusations of racism (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Van Dijk, 1993). Thus, irony and ridicule mitigate accusations of racism against a populist party, enabling it to frame overt hostility as 'just a joke' (Billig, 2001). Our multimodal analysis allowed us to further expose the racism underlying verbal communication. Stereotypical visual images (e.g. dark-skinned bearded men), a more rapid transition between shots, and violent sounds constructed a threatening image of the refugee as a 'dangerous Other' (Wodak, 2015), while warm images of tradition and continuity, a slow transition between shots, and harmonious music depicted the in-group. Future studies should respond to the challenge of multimodal exploration in researching populist rhetoric.

We argue that understanding populism requires investigating not only the *production* of populist rhetoric, but also the ways in which populist rhetoric is *received*, and populist and anti-populist responses and identities are constructed by its audiences. By examining YouTube users' reception of populist rhetoric and on focussing on both like-minded and opposing reactions, the present article is envisaged as responding to the call to study populism and anti-populism together and focus on their mutual construction from a discursive perspective (Stavrakakis *et al.*, 2018). The two supportive affective–discursive practices we analysed more in detail were *glorification* and *schadenfreude*. Although both supportive affective–discursive responses expressed shared joy, celebration, and laughter, creating togetherness and a sense of superiority in a like-minded audience (Billig, 2005), their intergroup functions differed. *Glorification* emphasized the positive self-understanding of the in-group; *schadenfreude* negatively presented and belittled the 'political Other' (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Sakki *et al.*, 2017; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Van Dijk, 1993). Many comments articulating schadenfreude rejoiced in political opponents' anger. Provoking and mobilizing contempt among political opponents were regarded as part of the populists' plan (Durrheim *et al.*, 2018).

Although positive affective reactions dominated supportive comments, opposing comments expressed overt hostility towards those stupid enough to vote for the FP. The opposing affective–discursive practices we discussed were *irritation* and *scorn*. Irritation responded to the video's humour with rejection and anger by categorizing it as racist, portraying the out-group as morally inferior racists and fascists. This justified the rejection of the video's populist message. YouTube users' *scorn* portrayed the out-group as intellectually inferior, which enabled the dehumanizing of the FP and its supporters as less rational (Haslam, 2006) and mitigating the populist message. These opposing online users viewed the video's humour with disapproval and unlaughter (Billlig, 2005). FP voters were placed in subject positions of fascists, racists, and uneducated (sometimes agrarian) idiots. Intriguingly, the populist message's opponents constructed the most overt hate speech. Thus, labelling others as bad (racist, fascist) and mad (stupid, lack of reason, misinformed) – and thereby oneself as morally and intellectually superior – is not likely to convince these others to change their views or welcome the dialogue (Adamson, 2019; Stavrakakis *et al.*, 2018). In contrast, contempt by the 'political Other' is fuel to the populist voices (Durrheim *et al.*, 2018), as also our study suggests. This may illustrate why opposition towards right-wing populism is often not very effective. Considering the current concern over the polarization of society and of politics, we argue that studying

populism and anti-populism together by focusing on their mutual discursive construction seems crucial (Stavrakakis, 2014; Stavrakakis *et al.*, 2018).

Limitations and conclusions

This study has several limitations in terms of its scope and approach. The focus on the specific campaign video in Finnish context and the qualitative approach of the study necessarily limit the conclusions that can be drawn from it. Nevertheless, in line with Goodman's (2008) argument, and with vast previous research on radical right-wing discourse in Western countries (e.g. Every & Augostinous, 2007; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016) suggesting that whilst the particular discourse we studied is not generalizable, many of the discursive strategies it employed are of more general nature and have been found in variety of contexts. In addition, we do not deny that there are contradictions between the different approaches. For instance, whereas (critical) affective–discursive approach has no interest in the cognitive processes of individuals, social identity approach often focuses on them. Nevertheless, these different approaches share central theoretical underpinnings that emphasize the importance of the social context and of the constructions of 'us' and 'them' for political discourse and persuasion. We maintain that it is possible to combine these approaches and allow them to collaborate in an approach that is sensitive to the verbal, visual, and sonic modes of transmitting a political message.

Our study suggests that the populist message fosters social anger and polarization between FP supporters and opponents. Humour entangled with hatred encourages a sense of moral superiority in both groups (Billig, 2005). Unfortunately, our material reveals little about the effect on undecided audiences. With previous studies of satirical racism (Malmqvist, 2015; Schwarznegger & Wagner, 2018), we are tempted to believe that the video's humour is a strategic choice, allowing the presentation of criticism and articulation of stereotypical content for a more mainstream audience. We believe the FP's humorous entanglement with images of threat and injustice and its call for a violent response normalizes and mainstreams the out-group's hostility, mobilizing collective hatred and polarizing public sphere.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Academy of Finland (grant 295923 and grant 332192).

Conflicts of interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Inari Sakki, PhD, Docent (Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Supervision; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing) Jari Martikainen (Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Visualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Data availability statement

The election video and the YouTube users' commentaries that comprise the data analysed for the article can be freely accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzCK4tTu2nE

References

Adamson, G. (2019). Why do right-wing populist parties prosper? Twenty-one suggestions to the anti-racist. *Society*, *56*, 47–58. https://doi.org/10.1007/S12115-018-00323-8

Arendt, F., Marquart, P., & Matthes, J. (2015). Effects of right-wing populist political advertising on implicit and explicit stereotypes. *Journal of Media Psychology*, *27*, 178–189. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000139

Attardo, S. (1994). *Linguistic theories of humor*. New York, NY: Mouton de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110219029

Attardo, S. (2000). Irony as relevant inappropriateness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *32*, 793–826. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00070-3

Augoustinos, M., & Every, D. (2007). The language of "race" and prejudice: A discourse of denial, reason, and liberal-practical politics. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *26*, 123–141. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X07300075

Billig, M. (2001). Humour and hatred: The racist jokes of the Ku Klux Klan. *Discourse and Society*, *12*, 267–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926501012003001

Billig, M. (2005). *Laughter and ridicule: Towards a social critique of humour*. London, UK: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446211779

Bos, L., & Brants, K. (2014). Populist rhetoric in politics and media: A longitudinal study of the Netherlands. *European Journal of Communication*, *29*, 703–719. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323114545709

Bos, L., van der Brug, W., & de Vreese, C. (2010). Media coverage of right-wing populist leaders. *Communications*, *35*, 141–163. https://doi.org/10.1515/comm.2010.008

Breazu, P., & Machin, D. (2019). Racism toward the Roma through the affordances of Facebook: Bonding, laughter and spite. *Discourse and Society*, *30*, 376–394. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926519837396

Breeze, R. (2019). Emotion in politics: Affective-discursive practices in UKIP and Labour. *Discourse and Society*, *30*(1), 24–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926518801074

Brubaker, R. (2020). Populism and nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism*, *26*, 44–66. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12522

Burke, S. (2018). The discursive "othering" of Jews and Muslims in the Britain First solidarity patrol. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, *28*, 365–377. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2373

Caiani, M., & Kröll, P. (2014). The transnationalization of the extreme right and the use of the Internet. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, *39*, 331–351, https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2014.973050

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *20*, 43–63. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x

Durrheim, K., Okuyan, M., Twali, M. S., García-Sánchez, E., Pereira, A., Portice, J. S., . . . Keil, T. F. (2018). How racism discourse can mobilize right-wing populism: The construction of identity and alliance in reactions to UKIP's Brexit "Breaking Point" campaign. *Journal of Community Applied Social Psychology*, *38*, 385–405. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2347

Edley, N. (2001). Analysing masculinity: Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor & S. J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis* (pp. 189–228). London, UK: Sage.

Engesser, S., Fawzi, N., & Larsson, A. O. (2017). Populist online communication: Introduction to the special issue. *Information, Communication and Society*, *20*, 1279–1292. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328525.

Every, D., & Auguoustinos, M. (2007). Constructions of racism in the Australian parliamentary debates on asylum seekers. *Discourse & Society*, *18*, 411–414. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926507077427

Forchtner, B., & Kølvraa, C. (2017). Extreme right images of radical authenticity: Multimodal aesthetics of history, nature, and gender roles in social media. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, *4*, 252–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2017.1322910

Gal, N. (2019). Ironic humor on social media as participatory boundary work. *New Media and Society*, *21*, 729–749. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818805719

Goodman, S. (2008). The generalizability of discursive research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *5*, 265–275. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880802465890

Goodman, S., & Burke, S. (2011). Discursive deracialisation in talk about asylum seeking. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, *21*(2), 111–123. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.1065

Goodman, S., & Johnson, A. (2013). Strategies used by the far right to counter Accusations of racism. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, *6*(2), 97–113.

Goodman, S., & Kirkwood, S. (2019). Political and media discourses about integrating refugees in the UK. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *49*, 1456–1470. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2595

Goodman, S., & Narang, A. (2019). "Sad day for the UK": The linking of debates about settling refugee children in the UK with Brexit on an anti-immigrant news website. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *49*, 1161–1172. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2579

Hakokönggäs, E., Halmesvaara, O., & Sakki, I. (2020). Persuasion through bitter humor: Multimodal discourse analysis of rhetoric in internet memes of two far-right groups in finland. *Social Media + Society*, *6*(2), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120921575

Hakokönggäs, E., & Sakki, I. (2019). The past as a means of persuasion: Visual political rhetoric in Finnish dairy product advertising. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *7*, 507–524. https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v7i1.1107

Hameleers, M., Bos, L., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). "They did it": The effects of emotionalized blame attribution in populist communication. *Communication Research*, *44*, 870–900. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650216644026

Hameleers, M., Powell, T. E., Van Der Meer, T., & Bos, L. (2020). A picture paints a thousand lies? The effects and mechanisms of multimodal disinformation and rebuttals disseminated via social media. *Political Communication*, *37*(2), 281–301. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1674979

Hameleers, M., & Schmuck, D. (2018). It's us against them: A comparative experiment on the effects of populist messages communicated via social media. *Information, Communication and Society*, *20*, 1425–1444. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328523

Haslam, N. (2006). Dehumanization: An integrative review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *10*, 252–264. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1003_4

Horsti, K., & Nikunen, K. (2013). The Ethics of Hospitality in Changing Journalism: The response to the rise of the anti-immigrant movement in Finnish media publicity. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *16*, 489–504. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549413491718

Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, *46*, 319–345. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00690.x

Kim, Y. H., & Hellberg, D. (2016). Holy disappointment and biological reconditions in Biblical flood narrative. In D. Meyer-Dinkgräfe (Ed.), *Consciousness, theatre, literature and the arts* (pp. 136–152). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Kress, G. (2012). Multimodal discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 35–50). London, UK: Routledge.

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.

Laclau, E. (2005). *On Populist Reason*. London, UK: Verso.

Levinger, M., & Franklin Lytle, P. (2001). Myth and mobilization: The triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric. *Nations and Nationalism*, *7*, 175–194. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8219.00011

Lynn, N., & Lea, S. (2003). "A phantom menace and the new apartheid": The social construction of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom. *Discourse and Society*, *14*, 425–452. https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265030140040002

Malmqvist, K. (2015). Satire, racist humour and the power of (un)laughter: On the restrained nature of Swedish online racist discourse targeting EU-migrants begging for money. *Discourse and Society*, *26*, 733–753. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926515611792

Mols, F. (2012). What makes a frame persuasive? Lessons from social identity theory. *Evidence and Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, *8*, 329–345. https://doi.org/10.1332/174426412X654059

Mols, F., & Jetten, J. (2014). No guts, no glory: How framing the collective past paves the way for anti-immigrant sentiments. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *43*, 74–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2014.08.014

Mols, F., & Jetten, J. (2016). Explaining the appeal of populist right-wing parties in times of economic prosperity. *Political Psychology*, *37*(2), 275–292. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12258

Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, *39*, 541–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

O'Halloran, K. (2011). Multimodal discourse analysis. In K. Hyland & B. Paltridge (Eds.), *The Bloomsbury companion to discourse analysis* (pp. 120–137). London, UK: Bloomsbury.

Pettersson, K. (2019). "Freedom of speech requires actions": Exploring the discourse of politicians convicted of hate-speech against Muslims. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *49*, 938–952. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2577

Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality. Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446222119

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London, UK: Sage.

Rapley, M. (1998). 'Just an ordinary Australian': Self-categorization and the discursive construction of facticity in 'new racist' political rhetoric. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *37*, 325–344. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1998.tb01175.x

Reicher, S., Haslam, S. A., & Hopkins, N. (2005). Social identity and the dynamics of leadership: Leaders and followers as collaborative agents in the transformation of social reality. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 547–568. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.06.007

Reicher, S., Haslam, S. A., & Rath, R. (2008). Making a virtue of evil: A five step social identity model of development of collective hate. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *2*, 1313–1344. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00113.x

Reicher, S. D., & Hopkins, N. (2001). *Self and nation*. London, UK: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446220429

Richardson, J. E., & Colombo, M. (2014). Race and immigration in far- and extreme-right European political leaflets. In C. Hart & P. Cap (Eds.), *Contemporary critical discourse studies* (pp. 521–542). London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472593634.ch-022

Richardson, J. E., & Wodak, R. (2009). The impact of visual racism: Visual arguments in political leaflets of Austrian and British far-right parties. *Controversia*, *6*, 45–77.

Rico, G., Guinjoan, M., & Anduiza, E. (2017). The emotional underpinnings of populism: how anger and fear affect populist attitudes. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *23*, 444–461. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12261

Rooduijn, M. (2019). State of the field: How to study populism and adjacent topics? A plea for both more and less focus. *European Journal of Political Research*, *58*, 362–372. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12314

Rooyackers, I., & Verkuyten, M. (2012). Mobilizing support for the extreme right: A discursive analysis of minority leadership. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *51*, 130–148. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2010.02008.x

Sakki, I., Hakokôngäs, E., & Pettersson, K. (2017). Past and present nationalist political rhetoric in Finland: Changes and continuities. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *37*, 160–180. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X17706945

Sakki, I., & Pettersson, K. (2016). Discursive constructions of otherness in populist radical right political blogs. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *46*, 156–170. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2142

Sakki, I., & Pettersson, K. (2018). Managing stake and accountability in Prime Ministers' accounts of 'refugee crisis': A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, *28*, 406–429. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2358

Salmela, M., & von Scheve, C. (2017). Emotional roots of right-wing political populism. *Social Science Information*, *56*, 567–595. https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018417734419

Sani, F., Bowe, M., Herrera, M., Manna, C., Cossa, T., Miao, X., & Zhou, Y. (2007). Perceived collective continuity: Seeing groups as entities that move through time. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *37*, 1118–1134. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.430

Schwarznegger, C., & Wagner, A. (2018). Can it be hate if it is fun? Discursive ensembles of hatred and laughter in extreme satire on Facebook. *Studies in Communication and Media*, *7*, 473–498. https://doi.org/10.5771/2192-4007-2018-4-473

Staerklé, C., & Green, E. (2018). Right-wing populism as a social representation: A comparison across four European countries. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, *28*, 430–445. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2369

Stavrakakis, Y. (2014). 'The return of 'the people': Populism and anti-populism in the shadow of the European crisis. *Constellations*, *21*(4), 505–517. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12127

Stavrakakis, Y., Katsambekis, G., Kioupkiolis, A., Nikisianis, N., & Siomos, T. (2018). Populism, anti-populism and crisis. *Contemporary Political Theory*, *17*(1), 4–27. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-017-0142-y

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, *5*, 7–24. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505984-16

Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). *Elite discourse and racism*. London, UK: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483326184

Verkuyten, M. (2013). Justifying discrimination of Muslim immigrants: Outgroup ideology and the five-step social identity model. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *52*, 345–360. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02081.x

Wertsch, J. (2002). Voices of collective remembering. *Cambridge University Press*, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511613715

Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. London, UK: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446250945

Wetherell, M. (2015). Trends in the turn to affect: A social psychological crtitique. *Body and Society*, *21*, 139–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X14539020

Wettstein, M., Esser, F., Büchel, F., Schemer, C., Wirz, D., Schulz, A., . . . Wirth, W. (2019). What drives populist styles? Analyzing immigration and labor market news in 11 countries. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *96*(2), 516–536. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018805408

Wirz, D. (2018). Persuasion through emotion? An experimental test of the emotion-eliciting nature of populist communication. *International Journal of Communication*, *12*, 1114–1138. https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-149959

Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear. What right-wing populist discourses mean*. London, UK: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446270073

Wodak, R. (2017). The 'establishment', the 'elites', and the 'people': Who's who? *Journal of Language and Politics*, *16*(4), 551–565. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17030.wod

Wood, C., & Finlay, W. M. (2008). British National Party representations of Muslims in the month after the London bombings: Homogeneity, threat, and the conspiracy tradition. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *47*, 707–726. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466607X264103

Zienkowski, J., & Breeze, J. (2019). *Imagining the peoples of Europe: Populist discourses across the political spectrum*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.83

Received 8 July 2020; revised version received 29 August 2020

Supporting Information

The following supporting information may be found in the online edition of the article:

Table S1. Ketutus – A story of being seriously pissed off. Multimodal analysis.

Appendix S1. Screenshots of the campaign video.