

The diffused alt-right power structure: the memetics of white nationalist dLive chat (Fuentes, KillStream, BakedAlaska.)

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Supplementary Moodboard:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1FYTxSAm-80LKluWjcsdp_7HJ9mGnv0T08zwJlxIveOY/edit?usp=sharing

Out of all the platforms within our sample, dlive is the only one that seemingly has the propensity for deep vernacular aesthetics. Borrowing from imageboard culture, dLive chat is populated by imagery motivated by the ‘for the lulz’ logic that justifies its own profanity and cultural insensitivities. Furthermore, considering the appropriations of these aesthetics by far-right political streams, we may associate this use as an extension of 4chan’s reactionary turn. The transgressive nature of these images are only bolstered by the streamer’s rightwing sensibilities and their fostered radical community. Through an observation of three dLive channels, this report has been able to identify a small network of white nationalist dLive streamers that operate under the America First campaign. While other platforms have taken the initiative to remove such controversial political actors, dLive seemingly allows them to exist and monetize their rhetoric on their platform.

Nick Fuentes’ ‘Political Movement’

The America First movement was first identified when observing Nick Fuentes’ talk-show stream named ‘America First’ (Figure 1. and in appendix). Fuentes spoke about America First as a republican movement that has become increasingly anti-GOP establishment after the establishment republicans ‘intentionally allowed’ democrats to ‘steal’ the election from incumbent President Donald Trump. These beliefs encouraged Fuentes to be present at the Capitol Hill riot and encourage his followers to do the same.



Figure 1. Nick Fuentes' America First stream on dLive

Nick Fuentes' far-right white nationalist political following is also known as the Groyper Army. Groyper being a variant of pepe that was specifically appropriated by Nick Fuentes to embody his radical far-right politics (Figure 2.)



Figure 2. Groyper Pepe Variant

While pepe is by no means exclusive to Fuentes or dLive with Twitch fostering numerous variances, pepes found on dLive frequently find themselves intertwined with the crude and politically incorrect. Aside from Fuentes' proactive measures to corrupt pepe, the community inhabiting the second channel we observed exemplified edgy deep vernacular imagery.

KillStream's Pepe the Frog

Ralph Retorts' KillStream was the second channel we connected to rightwing sensibilities on dLive. In addition to connections with Fuentes and America First, Retorts and his various co-hosts exhibited white nationalist tendencies which were exemplified in their chat.

Accompanied by the transgressive rhetoric in the chat, the use of pepe was ubiquitous (Figure 3.) and reminiscent of the creative use of pepe on 4chan.

Figure 3. Pepe Variants found in the KillStream Chat



These 4chan exports culture also brings with it the offensive “for the lulz” variants. However removed from their playful deep vernacular imageboard context and exploited to reflect ‘serious’ far-right politics, the political transgressive pepes (Figure 4.) become nothing more than blatant political provocations.

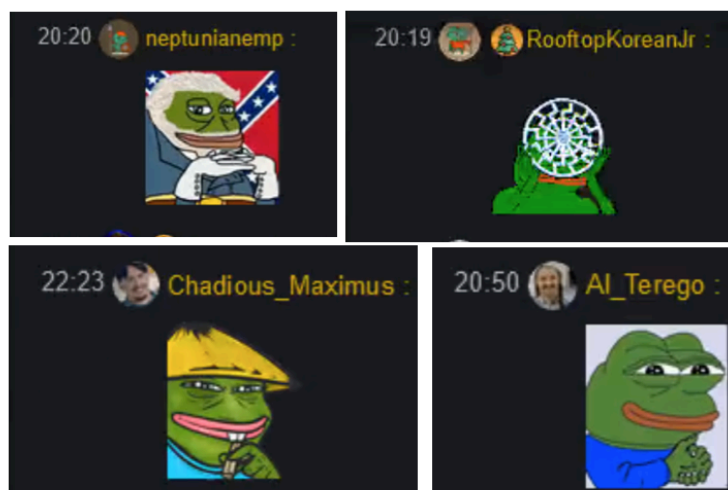


Figure 4. Top-Left; Confederate Groyper Pepe, Top-Right Black Sun Nazi pepe, Bottom-left racist asian cracature pepe, Bottom-right anti-semitic happy merchant pepe

KillStream's Emotes

As we have analyzed, alt-right groups seem to share vernacular elements and imagery. These vernaculars can be understood as working both as a direct material and as a more ephemeral common language, spreading the alt-right workings of power across a multitude of streaming channels (Buscher 133). One has, thus, to further analyze streams and the plurality of human and non-human actors that shape the space of these channels—preferably in a synchronized fashion—to understand their different points of view regarding singular events and their political outcomes.

APPENDIX

Name of stream : NickFuentes - America First

Observers : Henrique da Costa, Samuel Vitikainen

Date : 05/01/2021

Documentation

Link to the drive folder :

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZDdSsgirjgVBMtUdr-tVS2b9A6tWmutO?usp=sharing>

Description and discussion : Navigating Streamer Aesthetics

The visual setting of Nick Fuentes' America First stream divides itself in two sets:

1 - ELECTION WAR: The Final Battle | America First Ep. 740 ([link](#))



America First is Nick Fuentes' regular week-daily show on dlive. Aesthetically, it emulates early 90s talk shows, with the Fuentes dressed in a suit foregrounding a chroma-keyed highrise window peering over New York City's night skyline. Furthermore the only accessory present is an "America First" merch mug, which is empty, that rests on the large desk in front of Fuentes. Fuentes remains behind this desk with his torso obscured for the entire show. The only element overlaid on the stream is an animated "America First" logo on the bottom right. Besides that, the setting is static. It doesn't show any visualization of dlive's affordances or framing changes throughout the stream. Ultimately the visuals on the stream are constituted solely by Fuentes' body language and speech.



‘waiting lobby card’

Packaged between a ‘waiting lobby’ card and an end card, the regular America First show can be divided into two segments: *Fuentes’ Monologue* and *Reading Superchat*. During this first segment, Fuentes speaks on the recent political goings-ons. While Fuentes uses articles during this stream, he used an article from The Hill in this particular stream, to corroborate quotes, he relies on his own ‘political intuition’ to guide his rhetoric. During this particular stream, he describes himself as “getting it, and saying it” while other Republicans can’t. His rhetoric is very populist. He positions himself as well as the ‘America First’ movement which he represents as a growing counterculture to the Republican establishment. He believes to be leading his own republican ‘America First’ movement and uses the stream to not only discuss politics but establish calls to action.

This stream in particular is indicative of this activism as he discusses his stance on the Georgia Senate Run-Off Elections, advocating to “withhold the vote”. He is attending a protest that he promoted on this stream at the White House this Wednesday for the cause. This effort is to spite the republican establishment that ‘allowed’ the democrats to remove Trump from office. This notion is accompanied by rightwing conspiratorial #stopthesteal rhetoric. Fuentes and his movement are analogous to Bernie-Or-Bust advocates who feel as though their candidate was wronged by the political establishment.

The monologue is then followed by the interactive section of the show which has Fuentes interacting with the SuperChat or the live chat on dlive. This segment lasts till the end of the stream. No further visual elements are introduced, but now Fuentes is addressing the livestream audience directly instead of monologuing with his prepared talking points.

2 - Up all night chilling ([link](#))



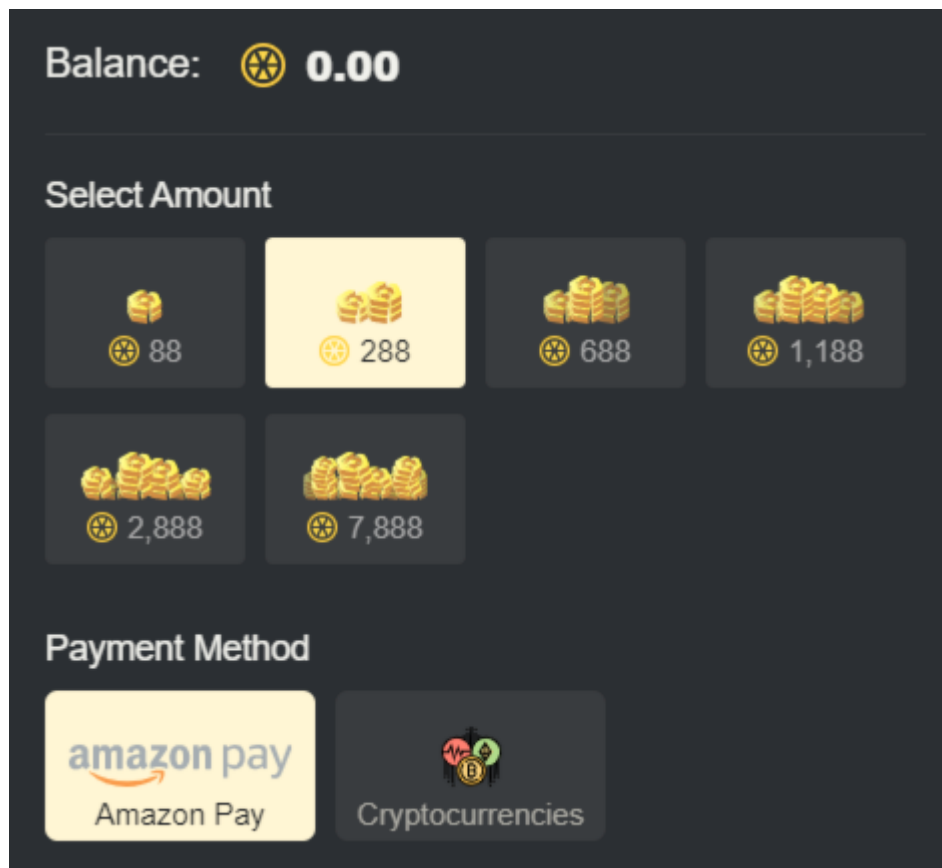
What seems to be a more natively digital format: shows Nick Fuentes, as a small element, in the corner of the screen—much like contemporary gaming streams. In these videos, Fuentes performs another action while speaking and streams it at the same time for users to see. One dlive affordance is featured in this model: the view count is set static on the top left of the screen, rising—or lowering—in real time.

The up all night chilling video also contains a smooth—”chill”—soundtrack, meant to create a comforting background for the viewer and creating an evolving “environment”, which utilizes adds to the musical atmosphere a slow-moving background superimposed by a window with Fuentes’ screen. This embeds the stream’s interface in the background, attempting to make it transparent (Gromala and Bolter)—focusing on Fuentes’ comments

and what is being played on his screen. .--- could this enforce Axel and Daniel's hypothesis that this is meant to be played while the viewer is performing another activity?

In the observed up all night chilling video, Fuentes spends 5 hours playing the game Civilization V while making comments about his game and constantly asking the audience what they think that should be his next steps in the game. Opposed to his formal “Talk Show” setting—where Fuentes presents himself in a suit in front of a nightscape—in “up all night chilling” videos, he shows himself in a very informal manner, performing mundane acts such as burping in front of the camera.

.“Thanks for those Lemons man!”

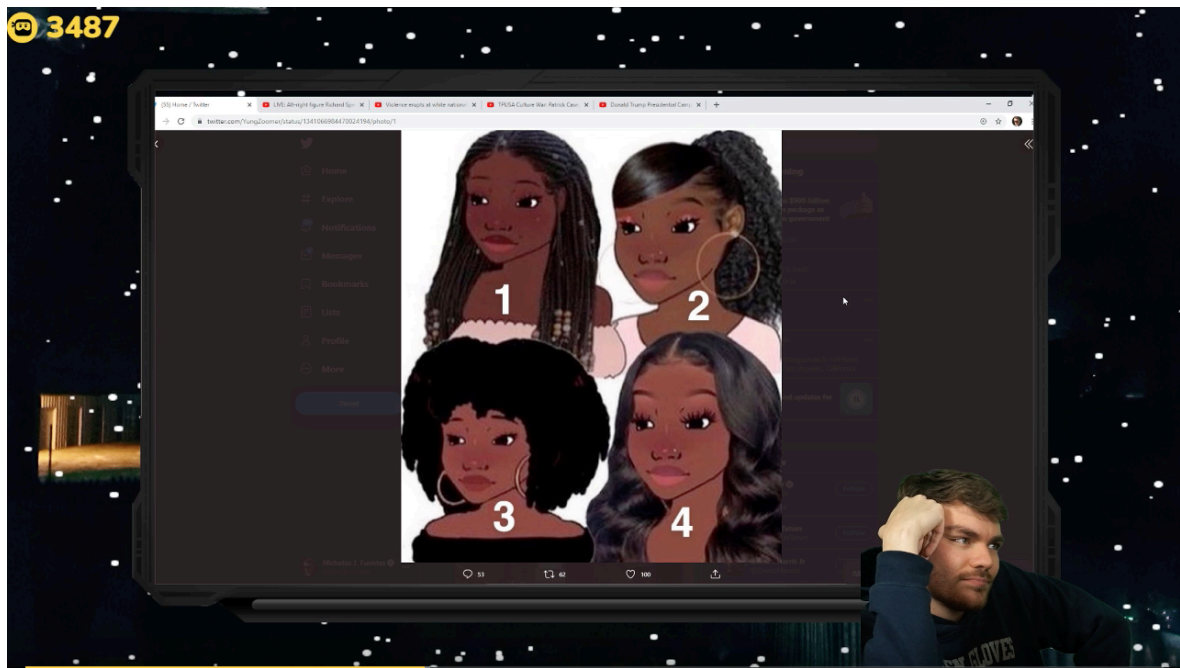


Lemons are an affordance of DLive. A form of platform currency which viewers can give to streamers. Fuentes constantly thanks users for their lemons throughout “up all night chilling” video streams, which shows forms of action apart from Fuentes itself. Viewers are lemon providers and they also speak their minds through comments, both in dlive and twitter, as Fuentes uses the affordances of Dlive.tv for dual screening—coined by

Chadwick as “the bundle of practices that involve integrating, and switching across and between, live broadcast media and social media(…)” (Maly, 2019 Chadwick, 2017:275)

2.5 - up all night chilling 2 ([link](#))

In the next analyzed video, Nick performs in the same environment, with the difference that the streamed content in the window is his own twitter account, instead of a gaming environment. He, thus, proceeds to browse his own—politically loaded—twitter feed while commenting tweets that he finds interesting and/or funny.



After commenting the tweets, he refreshes the feed to read—and comment on—viewer generated tweets of his comments, which engenders a cycle. This boils down to a stream that contains the same format as the other—previous—“up all night chilling” video but with a more politically oriented and dynamic content than a simple gaming stream, which often counted with extensive minutes of silence to focus on gameplay. This can be seen as Nick Fuentes’ middle ground between the aforementioned Civilization V stream and the formal “America First” talk show format, which focuses solely on Nick talking politics.

