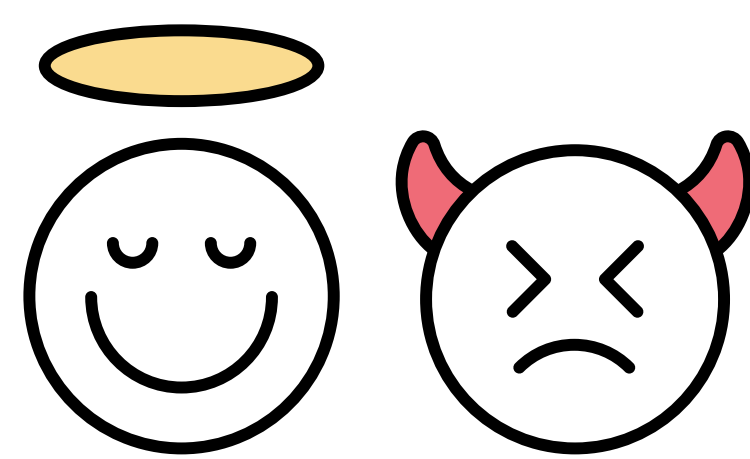


The “Memeification” of Conspiracy Theories

Introduction

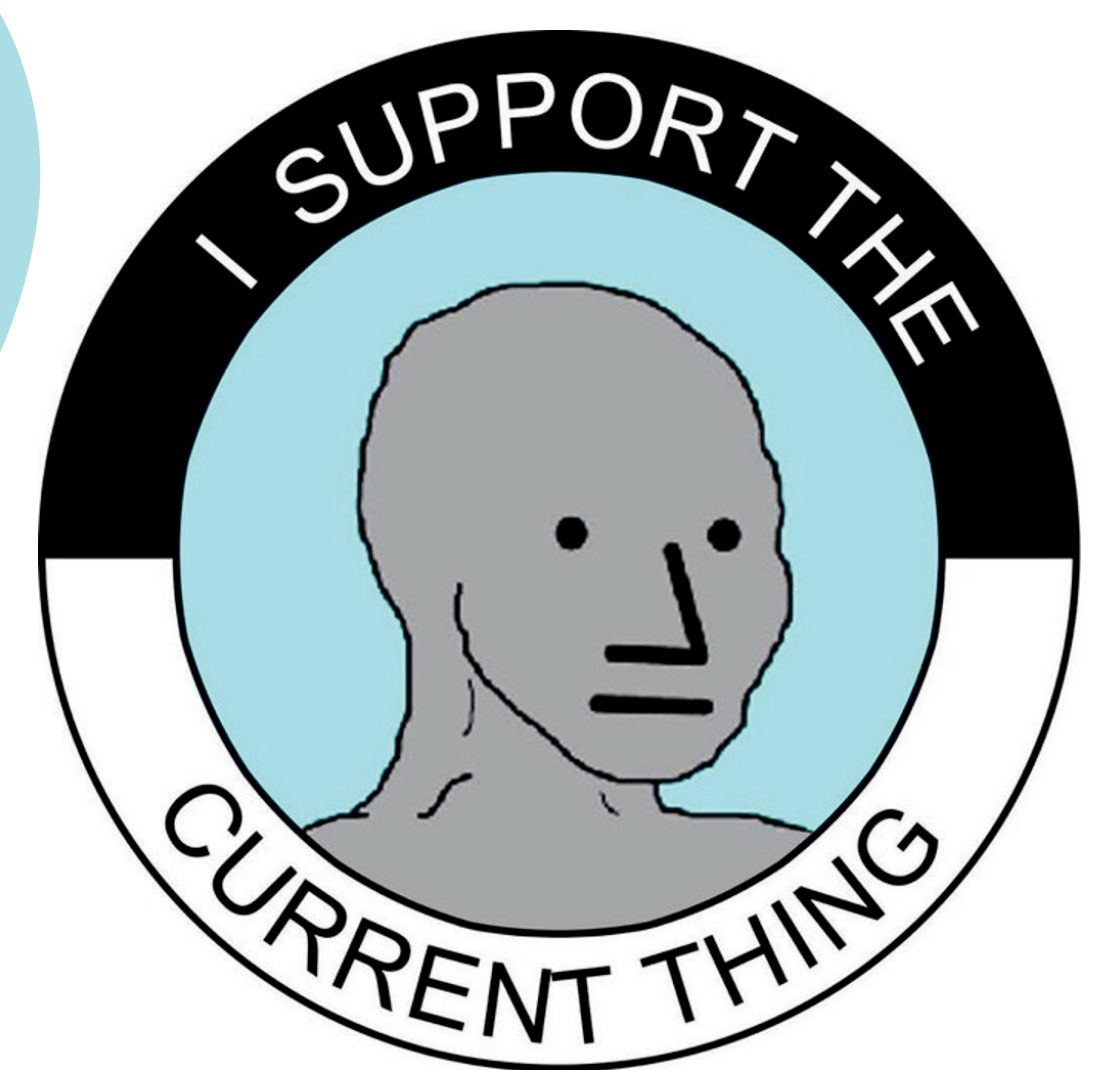
In the digital age, conspiracy theories have flourished (Butter & Knight, 2015), entwined with the ubiquitous presence of Internet memes—transmissible, adaptable cultural patterns fundamental to online communication (Shifman, 2013). This paper delves into the convergence of these two phenomena, seeking to illuminate the collaborative construction of these narratives within online communities, particularly emphasising the role of memes.

Central to our exploration is a pervasive dichotomy between the 'good' and the 'bad', a hallmark of conspiratorial narratives (Barkun, 2013) often accentuated in memetic representations.



Data Sources

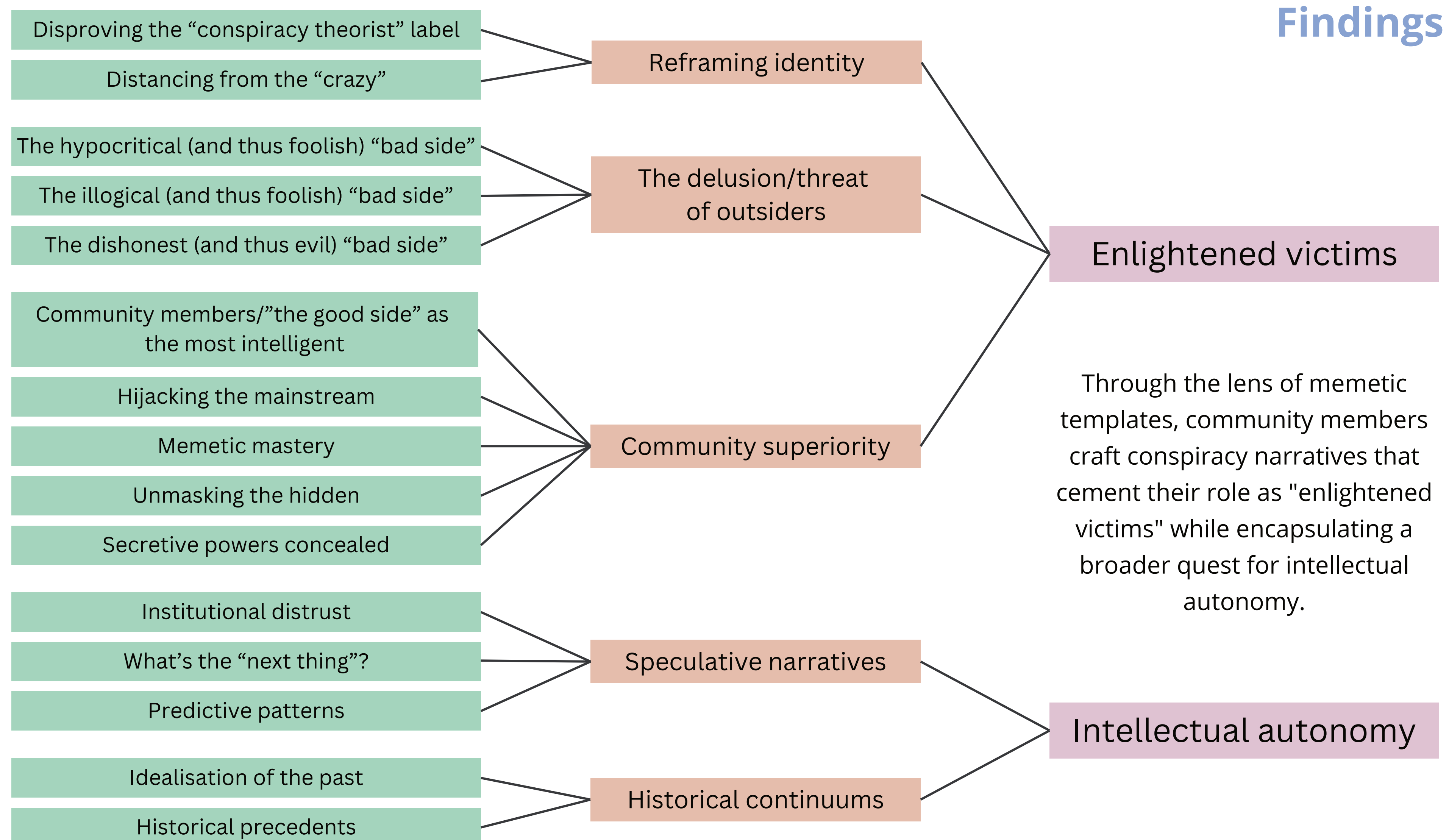
1. The subreddit **r/NoNewNormal**, a popular community for the development of COVID-19 conspiracy theories and memes over the course of the pandemic. It was banned in September 2021 due to disinformation.
2. The subreddit **r/CoronavirusCirclejerk**, a community that many users of banned r/NoNewNormal seemingly migrated to (see Davies et al., 2021).



Methodology

By leveraging de Saint Laurent et al. (2020)'s character-role-framework—which delineates roles such as the hero, persecutor, fool, and victim—we analysed **539 image macro memes** to discern the recurrent narrative structures within conspiracy-themed memetic content.

Findings



Emily Jane Godwin
Cyber Security CDT Student (2nd Year), University of Bath
eg780@bath.ac.uk
Prof. Adam Joinson, Dr Brittany Davidson, and Dr Timothy Hill

