

## **Story, news, snark, joke: narrative in informal circulation**

Many narratives that the Far Right is attracted to are recognizable to folklorists as folklore. Folklorists pay particular attention to the informal communication of such narratives and the differing modes in which they circulate. A conspiratorial narrative about, say, a powerful individual funding protests or a particular group controlling the media might be transmitted as a statement of fact, as “can you believe what these fascists are saying?” as a jokey “my check must be late!” or as something else. The same idea might hop from one mode to another, for example when jokes are misunderstood as serious information, creating feedback loops such as that seen during November 2017’s “Antifa civil war” rumor panic -slash- joke cycle. Folklorists also consider both the macro of why a society is telling a certain story and the micro of why an individual in a specific moment is telling the same story. Jokes have functions for the people who tell them, sometimes quite serious ones even over and above group bonding. Joke tellers may be contributing to a vulnerable group’s macro-scale situational awareness by passing on important information to other members of their communities about what people dangerous to that community believe. Researchers and activists working to combat the spread of harmful narratives regularly address how news media – working in yet another mode – should cover the far right to avoid further spreading their ideas. This chapter broadens the view to include the multi-modal and multi-functional nature of informal transmission.

### **Bio:**

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