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They Will Not Replace Us: A Comparative Case Analysis of the Radicalization of Terrorists
Inspired by the Great Replacement Conspiracy

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ABSTRACT

Lone wolf, far-right terrorism is on the rise in the West. The Great Replacement, a white supremacist conspiracy, has inspired some of the deadliest far-right lone-wolf attacks. While research concerning the radicalization of terrorists that join organized groups is common, very little research has been performed on the radicalization of lone wolf terrorists. Through the use of a comparative case study, this thesis aims to fill this gap by offering a preliminary analysis of the trends present in the radicalization of lone-wolf terrorists inspired by the Great Replacement. This thesis also provides suggestions for future models of lone-wolf radicalization.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On May 14th, 2022, a gunman attacked a Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo, New York. The attacker, later identified as 18-year-old Payton Gendron, targeted black shoppers and employees, killing 10. Gendron live streamed the attack and published a manifesto online explaining motives. In the manifesto, Gendron claimed his main inspiration was the far-right white supremacist conspiracy theory the Great Replacement.¹ The Great Replacement claims that global elites and Jews are part of an international plot to replace and destroy the “white race” and European culture through the use of mass immigration.² Gendron’s attack was not the first of its kind. In 2019, Brenton Tarrant attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, killing 51 Muslims. Like Gendron, Tarrant was inspired by the Great Replacement. In his manifesto Tarrant made a call for action, urging other white men to follow his example and commit similar attacks. Tarrant’s call for action has inspired several deadly attacks since, including Gendron’s.

All of the individuals who committed Great Replacement attacks were lone wolf terrorists, meaning they were not part of an organized group and did not work with any other individuals while plotting and executing their attack.³ While lone wolf terrorism is relatively rare in comparison to organized terrorism, the recent increase in lone wolf attacks, especially right-wing ones, reveals the importance of researching the topic.⁴ This is doubly true for understanding Great Replacement attackers

¹ Sarah Boxer, Dakin Andone, and Laura Ly. “Buffalo Shooting Suspect Said He Committed Massacre ‘For the Future of the White Race’ In Note Apologizing to His Family, Affidavit Says.” *CNN*, 16 Jun. 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/16/us/buffalo-shooting-suspect-federal-court/index.html>.

² “The ‘Great Replacement’ Theory, Explained.” *National Immigration Forum*, 1 Dec. 2021, <https://immigrationforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Replacement-Theory-Explainer-1122.pdf>.

³ Mattias Gardell. *Lone Wolf Race Warriors and White Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 58-72.

⁴ “Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism.” *Institute For Economics and Peace*, 2020, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2019-web.pdf>.

whose lone wolf attacks have been some of the deadliest in recent years. Understanding how these individuals radicalized is an essential first step in finding a way to combat future radicalization and attacks.

Research has been done on the radicalization of organized terrorists but not nearly as much has been done on the radicalization of lone wolf terrorists.⁵ The research on organized terrorists has resulted in several prominent models of radicalization, such as Moghaddam's staircase model and McCauley and Moskaleiko's two-pyramid model. However, aside from Hamm and Spaaij's lone wolf model, there are very few radicalization models focused specifically on lone wolf terrorists. This thesis aims to take the first step in filling this gap in the literature by performing a preliminary analysis of the radicalization processes of far-right lone wolf terrorists and offering suggestions for future models of lone wolf radicalization. Research will be performed through a comparative case study analysis of the radicalization of lone wolf terrorists inspired by the Great Replacement.

⁵ Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij. *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism*. Columbia University Press, 2017, pp. 13.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Right-Wing Extremism

Extremism is a vague term with no universal definition. Finding a definition of extremism is complicated by its subjective nature. The categorization of people or acts as “extremist” is dependent on political and societal context.⁶ Some scholars define extremism broadly, focusing on its normative and subjective nature and defining it more by what it is not than what it is. For example, Klein and Kruglanski (2013) define extremism as “political opinions that deviate from those held by the majority, or those that are considered normative.”⁷ This definition acknowledges the subjective nature of extremism, defining it solely by its difference from societal norms. Definitions focused on the subjectivity of extremism, like Klein and Kruglanski’s, can be applied to any place or time and still function as a feasible definition; however, normative definitions can suffer from their broadness. Broad definitions of extremism can lead to an overcategorization of different beliefs and ideologies as extremist.⁸

To avoid the pitfalls of broader definitions, other scholars define extremism in a non-normative and more specific ways, often focusing their definitions on extremists’ behaviors and general goals. In this vein, Jackson (2019) defines political extremism as “purposeful disruptive political behavior that aims to replace or fundamentally alter the dominant political system.”⁹ Jackson focuses on the general goals of political extremists, bypassing what extremists believe and instead focusing on what they hope to achieve. Other scholars focus their definitions on the behaviors and actions extremists display. Berger

⁶ Andrej Sotlar, “Some Problems with a Definition and Perception of Extremism within a Society,” *Office of Justice*, Jan. 2004, ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/Mesko/208033.pdf.

⁷ Kirsten M. Klein and Arie W. Kruglanski. “Commitment and Extremism: A Goal Systemic Analysis.” *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 69, no. 3, Sept. 2013, pp. 419-435, <https://citap.pubpub.org/pub/jq7l6jny/release/1#what-is-radicalization>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sam Jackson. “Non-normative Political Extremism: Reclaiming a Concept’s Analytical Utility.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 31, no. 2, Aug. 2016, pp. 1-16, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2016.1212599>.

(2018) defines extremism as “the belief that an in-group’s success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group. The hostile action must be part of the in-group’s definition of success.”¹⁰ Berger emphasizes the importance of action in this definition, explicitly emphasizing the importance of hostile action. However, Berger does not specify that extremists must perform this “hostile action” to be considered extremist, just that extremist ideologies must justify hostile action as a means to reach a goal.¹¹ For this study, extremism is defined as “political opinions that deviate from the societal norm and encourage the disruption of a political system through hostile action aimed towards an out-group.”

According to Holbrook and Taylor (2013), right-wing extremism is a generalization that serves as an umbrella for ideologies that cover a wide range of extreme beliefs on the far-right of the political spectrum.¹² There is a divide over whether right-wing extremism should be defined by ideology or behavior. As Jupskas and Segers (2020) explain, while most researchers conceptualize right-wing extremism as an ideology centered around “anti-democratic attitudes (the extreme part) and the defense of social hierarchies (the right-wing aspect),” other researchers conceptualize right-wing extremism as a behavioral concept.¹³ These researchers focus on the “politically motivated violent behavior, or the justification of such behavior” rather than the ideological beliefs.¹⁴ However, Carter (2018) finds that most researchers agree with the conception of right-wing extremism as an ideology rather than as a set of behaviors. Furthermore, she argues that while the behaviors of right-wing extremists are important to the

¹⁰ J. M. Berger. “Extremism.” *MIT Press*, Aug. 2018, pp. 44.

¹¹ Alice Marwick, Benjamin Clancy, and Katherine Furl. “Far-Right Online Radicalization: A Review of the Literature.” *Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life*, 10 May 2022, <https://citap.pubpub.org/pub/jq716jny/release/1#what-is-radicalization>.

¹² Donald Holbrook and Max Taylor. “Introduction.” *Extreme Right Wing Political Violence and Terrorism*, edited by Max Taylor, Donald Holbrook, and P. M. Currie, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, pp. 1-13.

¹³ Anders Ravik Jupskas and Iris Beau Segers. “What Is Right-Wing Extremism?” *Center for Research on Extremism*, March 17, 2023, <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-is-right-wing-extremism.html>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

definition, the ideological aspect of right-wing extremism is more important because right-wing extremists' attitudes towards violence are informed by their ideologies and not vice versa.¹⁵

To explore how right-wing extremism is defined, Carter (2018) performed a systematic review of the definitions of right-wing extremism in the literature. Carter found that definitions of right-wing extremism often shared a few key characteristics: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, authoritarianism, populism, and anti-establishment rhetoric.¹⁶ Based on her findings, Carter defines right-wing extremism as “an ideology that encompasses authoritarianism, anti-democracy, and exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism.”¹⁷ Jupskas and Segers (2020) expanded on Carter's list of definitional features of right-wing extremism, adding antisemitism and conspiracy theories to the list of key characteristics. Further, they emphasized that an in-group vs. out-group narrative is essential to right-wing extremism. The exclusionary nationalism, conspiracy theories, racism, and antisemitism that are often inherent to right-wing extremism lead to the creation of narratives that out-groups are a threat to the survival of a nation, culture, or race. “Enemies” of right-wing extremists commonly include Jews, immigrants, left-wing activists and politicians, and other ethnic and religious minorities.¹⁸

Radicalization

Debate over what radicalization is and how to define it has been rigorous and frequent. At its most basic, radicalization is the process through which people become extremists.¹⁹ While most researchers agree with this statement, some argue that “radicalization” is a misnomer that has become a stand-in for and distraction from the real causes of extremism and terrorism. Both Hoskins and

¹⁵ Elizabeth Carter. “Right-Wing Extremism/Radicalism: Reconstructing the Concept.” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2018, pp. 157-182, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569317.2018.1451227>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jupskas and Segers, “What is Right-Wing Extremism?”

¹⁹ Peter R. Neumann. “The Trouble with Radicalization.” *International Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 4, Jul. 2013, pp. 873-893, <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article-abstract/89/4/873/2417160?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=false>.

O’Loughlin (2009)²⁰ and Furedi (2009)²¹ separately argue that issues such as estrangement from society and societal divisions are the true culprits of extremism and terrorism and that governments and the media use the term “radicalization” to distract from these causes and shift blame onto nebulous “radicalizers.” However, as Neumann (2013) explains, radicalization is still an important concept to study, even though it is complicated by its ambiguity and ongoing debates surrounding the divide between cognitive and behavioral radicalization and how to conceptualize them.²²

Like extremism, what is considered radical is subjective; it changes with time and place. Mazer (2012) writes that the ambiguity of “radicalization” is complicated by the commonsense view that being radical is naturally bad and dangerous. However, in opposition to this common view, Mazer argues that radicalism and radicalization are not inherently bad. For example Civil Rights movement was radical for its time, but today, is viewed as good and not categorized as “radical.” This ambiguity makes it hard to operationalize radicalization in research.²³ Sedgwick (2010) explains that radicalization is not inherently violent and that, in most cases, radicalization does not lead to terrorism or violence, further complicating the concept. Sedgwick offers one potential solution to creating a definition of radicalization. He suggests focusing specifically on threat-radicalism, cases of radicalization that end in a threat. However, as he explains, focusing on threat-radicalism could lead to a “circular argument that the type of radicalism that is a threat is radicalism that is a threat.”²⁴

The other major debate in radicalization studies surrounds the endpoint of radicalization. Much of this debate revolves around the distinction between cognitive and behavioral radicalization. While almost all researchers agree that radicalization is a process that takes time to occur, there is less agreement over

²⁰ Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin. “Media and the Myth of Radicalization.” *Media War and Conflict*, Jul. 2009, vol. 2, no. 2, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1750635209105608>.

²¹ Frank Furedi. “Muslim Alienation In the UK? Blame the Israelis!” *Spiked*, 9 Feb. 2009, <https://www.spiked-online.com/2009/02/09/muslim-alienation-in-the-uk-blame-the-israelis/>.

²² Neumann. “The Trouble with Radicalization.”

²³ Jonathan Githens-Mazer. “The Rhetoric and Reality: Radicalization and Political Discourse.” *International Political Science Review*, vol. 33, no. 5, Oct. 2012, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0192512112454416>.

²⁴ Ibid.

when that process ends. Neumann (2013) explains that some researchers view radicalization as solely a cognitive process in which individuals end up with radically different ideas and beliefs than the norm in society.²⁵ McCauley and Moskalenko (2010) adopt this perspective, defining radicalization as “changes in beliefs, feelings, and behavior in the direction of increased support for a political conflict. Radicalization can involve the movement of individuals and groups to legal and nonviolent political action ... or to illegal and violent political action.”²⁶ This definition aligns with the cognitive radicalization perspective; the radicalization process is centered on changes in a belief system that can lead to violent extremism but, in many cases, does not. From this perspective, radical actions are not a necessary endpoint of the process; instead, the radicalization of belief and ideology is the endpoint. Other researchers, however, believe that radicalization should be defined by the actions that the process results in.²⁷ Borum (2012) adopts this position, arguing that while cognitive radicalization can be a precursor for violent action and involvement in terrorism, it is not the only pathway to violent extremism. Instead, other “action pathways” exist that can lead to involvement in violent extremism. Borum explains that “most radicals [do] not ... engage in terrorism, and many terrorists ... [do] not ‘radicalize’ in any traditional sense.”²⁸ Borum believes that radicalization should be defined by the action it may result in because not every radical is cognitively radicalized.²⁹ For the purposes of this study, McCauley and Moskalenko’s definition of radicalization is adopted, “changes in beliefs, feelings, and behavior in the direction of increased support for a political conflict. Radicalization can involve the movement of individuals and groups to legal and nonviolent political action ... or to illegal and violent political action.”³⁰

²⁵ Neumann. “The Trouble with Radicalization.”

²⁶ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko. “Individual and Group Mechanisms of Radicalization.” *Protecting the Homeland From International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-Radicalization and Disengagement*, edited by Laurie Fenstermacher, Larry Kuznar, Tom Rieger, and Anne Speckhard, Jan. 2010, pp. 82-91, <https://krasnow.gmu.edu/socialcomplexity/files/2017/07/Fenstermacher-et-al.2010.Protecting-the-Homeland-from-Intl-and-Domestic-Terrorism-Threats.pdf>.

²⁷ Neumann. “The Trouble with Radicalization.”

²⁸ Randy Borum. “Rethinking Radicalization.” *Journal of Strategic Security*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2011, pp. 1-6, <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1150&context=jss>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ McCauley and Moskalenko. “Individual and Group Mechanisms of Radicalization.”

Lone Wolf Terrorism

Burton and Stewart (2008) define a lone wolf terrorist as “a person who acts on his or her own without order from – or even connections to – an organization.”³¹ They further clarify that just like other terrorists, lone-wolf terrorists must be rational and politically or religiously motivated to be classified as a terrorist. Lone wolf terrorists without a rational ideological motivation are classified as lone killers and not considered terrorists.³² Bakker and de Graaf (2010) expanded on Burton and Stewart’s definition, adding that lone wolf terrorists include “individuals that are inspired by a certain group but who are not under the command of any other person, group or network.”³³ Some researchers take issue with the concept of lone-wolf terrorists. Schuurman et al. (2019) argue that most terrorists classified as lone wolf terrorists are not truly lone wolf terrorists because even without being a part of a group, social ties are still integral to their radicalization and capability to commit attacks. By this argument, actual lone wolf terrorists are so uncommon that they are anomalies and should not be considered a unique form of terrorism. Schuurman argues that most cases classified as lone wolf terrorism should be disqualified because in almost all cases, lone wolf terrorists attempted to recruit others, leaked their plan ahead of time to others, or developed “weak or affiliative social ties with radical actors, even if their integration ... is often partial, peripheral, or discontinuous.”³⁴ However, as Hamm and Spaaij (2017) explain, radicalization is a social process, and even lone wolf terrorists gain social ties. The critical distinction between an organized terrorist and a lone wolf is that the lone wolf works alone and is not operationally connected to a terrorist group.³⁵

³¹ Fred Burton and Scott Stewart. “The ‘Lone Wolf’ Disconnect.” *Stratfor*, 30 Jan. 2008, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/lone-wolf-disconnect>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf. “Lone wolf terrorists: How to Prevent This Phenomenon?” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, Nov. 2010, <https://www.icct.nl/sites/default/files/2023-02/ICCT-Bakker-deGraaf-EM-Paper-Lone-Wolves.pdf>.

³⁴ Bart Schurmann et al. “End of the Lone Wolf: The typology that Should Not Have Been.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 42, no. 8, 9 Jan. 2018, pp. 771-778, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1419554>.

³⁵ Hamm and Spaaij. *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism*. pp. 9.

Just as a general profile of an organized terrorist has not been discovered, attempts at finding a lone wolf profile have also been unsuccessful.³⁶ However, through empirical analysis, Hamm and Spaaij (2017) found common factors that many lone wolf terrorists share. While they only studied American lone wolf terrorists, their findings are still beneficial in understanding what a lone wolf terrorist may look like. In their study, Hamm and Spaaij analyzed 108 cases of American lone wolf terrorists spanning from 1940 to mid-2016. Cases were split into pre-9/11 (39 cases) and post-9/11 (69 cases), and trends were found for both periods.³⁷

According to their findings, lone wolf terrorists in the post-9/11 set were on average 38 years old at the time of their attack or plot, 10 years older than the average organized terrorist. However, while post-9/11 lone wolf terrorists were comparatively older, there was also an increase in teenage lone wolf terrorists. A majority of post-9/11 lone wolf terrorists were unemployed (73%), single (80%), white males (64%) with a criminal background (60%). A significant distinction that Hamm and Spaaij found between lone wolf terrorists and organized terrorists is that lone wolf terrorists were much more likely to suffer a diagnosed mental health disorder (42%).³⁸ Similar results were found by van Zuijdewijn and Bakker (2016) in Europe, where between 2000-2015, 35% of lone wolf terrorists were diagnosed with a mental health disorder.³⁹ While mental illness does not cause lone wolf terrorism, and most cases did not have official diagnoses, the fact that relatively high rates of mental disorder was present in lone wolf terrorists in comparison to organized terrorists is relevant.

Lone wolf terrorism, and specifically lone wolf terrorism motivated by far-right ideologies, has increased in recent years. According to the Global Terrorism Index (2019), between 2014 and 2018, politically motivated attacks by unaffiliated individuals in West reached a new high. In the 1970s,

³⁶ Bakker and de Graaf. "Lone wolf terrorists: How to Prevent This Phenomenon?"

³⁷ Hamm and Spaaij. *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism*. pp. 35-59.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn and Edwin Bakker. "Lone Actor Terrorism Policy Paper 1: Personal Characteristics of Lone-Actor Terrorists." *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, Feb. 2016, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CLAT-Series-5-Policy-Paper-1-ICCT.pdf>

unaffiliated individual attacks comprised only 5% of attacks; however, between 2014 and 2018, unaffiliated individual attacks comprised over 70% of attacks. Far-right terrorists are especially likely to carry out individual unaffiliated attacks; between 1970-2018, almost 60% of far-right terror attacks were carried out by lone actors. Furthermore, most far-right lone actors have increasingly been “associated with broad ideological allegiances rather than specific terrorist groups.”⁴⁰ These statistics reveal the rising threat of far-right lone-wolf terrorism.

Online Extremism and Internet Radicalization

The spread and ease of access of the internet has made it easier for extremists to share their beliefs to individuals who might not otherwise see them, making online radicalization a real threat. According to Jensen et al. (2023), from 2005-2021 94.3% of far-right individuals who committed an ideologically motivated crime in the US were partially radicalized online.⁴¹ Winter et al., (2020) define online extremism as “internet activism that is related to, engaged in, or perpetrated by groups or individuals that hold views considered to be doctrinally extremist.”⁴² Far-right extremists have used the internet to communicate with each other and spread their views since at least 1985 when the “White Aryan Resistance” online bulletin board was created.⁴³ Weimann (2004) concluded that the internet is an increasingly important resource for extremists, especially those that engage in terrorism, since it allows them to conduct psychological warfare, produce and disseminate propaganda, recruit and mobilize new

⁴⁰ “Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism.” <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2019-web.pdf>.

⁴¹ Jensen Michael, Sheehan Kane, and Elena Akers. “Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS).” *The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism*, Mar. 2023, <https://www.start.umd.edu/publication/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus-1>.

⁴² Charlie Winter et al. “Online Extremism: Research Trends in Internet Activism, Radicalization, and Counter-Strategies.” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, vol. 14, 2020, <https://www.ijcv.org/index.php/ijcv/article/view/3809>.

⁴³ Ibid.

supporters, raise funds, and mine sensitive data.⁴⁴ According to Hollewell and Longpre (2021), since the internet has become a “new interacting ground where individuals choose to communicate” it has “enabled a continuous line of communication to otherwise unreachable individuals” which extremists have harnessed.⁴⁵ Aside from being used to spread propaganda and ideology, extremist forums are also important community building spaces. In a quantitative study of the language used on far-right forums, Holt et al., (2022) found that of the 18,000 posts studied only a small portion involved outright extremist rhetoric. Instead, forum users commonly used the sites as “a platform to discuss specific interests and occasionally express their underlying beliefs” which “in turn, may facilitate community building through discussion of seemingly common day-to-day experience.”⁴⁶ However, even though forum posters were usually not posting ideological language, they were still displaying tacit support for far-right ideologies through “ideologically related usernames, signatures, and imagery [appearing] along with their text.”⁴⁷ Holt et al. explain that the use of extremist images and usernames are “necessary in online spaces so that users can clearly demonstrate their adherence to, and acceptance of ideological beliefs.”⁴⁸

The internet, and particularly extremist forums on the internet, have served as an important radicalizing factor in numerous cases of far-right lone wolf terrorism. While lone wolf terrorists are commonly classified as loners with weak social ties, many are not as socially isolated as they may first seem because of online social interaction. The community aspect of forums can be appealing to those who

⁴⁴ Gabriel Weimann. “How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet.” *United States Institute of Peace*, Mar. 2004, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr116.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Georgia F. Hollewell and Nicholas Longpre. “Radicalization in the Social Media Era: Understanding the Relationship Between Self-Radicalization and the Internet.” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 66, no. 8, 30 Jun. 2021, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0306624X211028771?casa_token=BI7Zfb7yfPAAAAAA:6pIFUaI7khP6NQfDQnNyoa58G5CZwwuAZmdAqoX65FAsEA1UUXBuQThMRiH6A_LzBdEfu26jzsA.

⁴⁶ Thomas J. Holt, Joshua D. Freilich, and Steven M. Chermak. “Examining the Online Expression of Ideology Among Far-Right Extremist Forum Users.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 69, no. 3, Sept. 2013, pp. 419-435, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2019.1701446?journalCode=ftpv20>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

are otherwise isolated.⁴⁹ While Zeman et al., (2017) find that while the internet plays only a limited role in lone wolf terrorists' preparation for attacks, it has "considerable importance as an efficient communication tool" through which lone wolf terrorists first learn extremist opinions, read ideological texts, and become immersed in extremist communities.⁵⁰ Koehler (2014) interviewed former right-wing extremists about their internet use and found similar results. Koehler writes that in most cases he studied, "the internet provides the major basis for ideological development."⁵¹ Koehler also notes that the anonymity of the internet encouraged individuals to speak and act more radical online than they would offline. Individuals would then gain increased confidence in their online radical personas as they received affirmation from other users which would further solidify their radical beliefs.⁵²

Two prominent forums that have been connected to far-right terror attacks are 4chan and 8kun (formerly known as 8chan). 4chan was created in 2003 by Christopher "Moot" Poole with the purpose of serving as an "uncensored" forum for anonymous discussion. 4chan is broken into various discussion boards where users can discuss specific types such as the anime board /a/ or the video game board /v/. By 2008 4chan was one of the most popular sites on the internet.⁵³ In 2013 a 4chan sitewide schism occurred over Moot's decisions to censor some topics which led to an exodus of users. In response, a man named Fredrick Brennan started 8chan, a forum advertised as being even more uncensored than 4chan.⁵⁴ The political board on both sites, /pol/, is the most relevant to online extremism and radicalization. Both /Pol/ boards contribute to a similar "far-right, white supremacist online subculture."⁵⁵ Language on the /pol/

⁴⁹ Tomas Zeman, Jan Bren, and Rudolf Urban. "Role of Internet In Lone Wolf Terrorism." *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, vol. 7, no. 2, Dec. 2017, pp. 185-192, https://jssidoi.org/jssi/uploads/papers/26/Zeman_Role_of_Internet_in_Lone_Wolf_Terrorism.pdf.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Daniel Koehler. "The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet." *Journal of Deradicalization*, no. 1, Winter 2014/2015, pp. 116-134, <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/8>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Dale Beran. *It Came From Something Awful*. All Points Books, 2019, pp. 50-59.

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 144-146.

⁵⁵ Stephane J. Baele, Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan. "Variations on a Theme? Comparing 4chan, 8kun, and Other chans' Far-Right '/pol' Boards." *Terrorism Research Initiative*, vol. 15, no. 1, Feb 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26984798.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A913c2032e33589f661a6222dbcc29c9d&ab_s egments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1.

boards is typified by “playful and ironic re-articulation of white supremacy and ethnonationalism.”⁵⁶

The memes and humor on the board lighten the blow of the extremist and racist rhetoric, easing new users into extremist ideologies. At the same time, the many racist memes and in-jokes create a unique vernacular on the boards that can be inscrutable to outside viewers creating a sense of insular community which many lone wolf terrorists desire.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Maik Fielitz and Reem Ahmed. “It’s Not Funny Anymore: Far-Right Extremists’ Use of Humour.” *European Commission*, 2021, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-03/ran_ad-hoc_pap_fre_humor_20210215_en.pdf.

Radicalization Frameworks

Moghaddam's Staircase Model

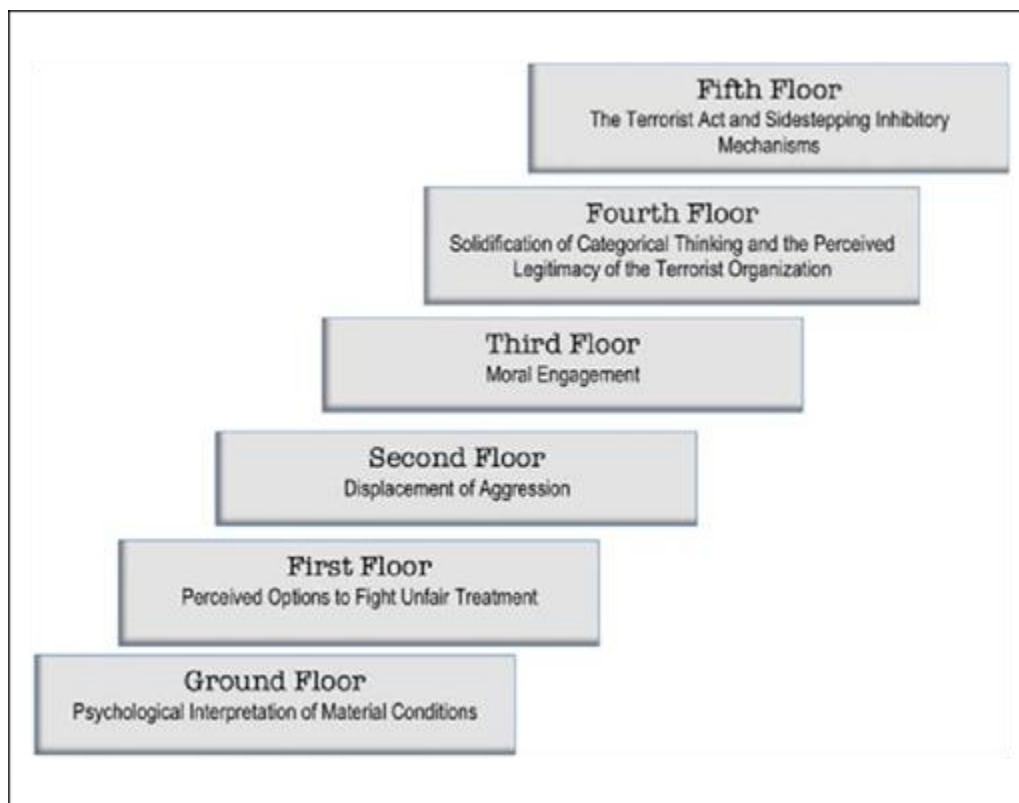


Figure 1 Moghaddam's Staircase Model⁵⁸

Moghaddam's (2005) Staircase to Terrorism is a linear violent radicalization model conceptualized as a staircase made up of six floors with increasingly fewer exits on each subsequent floor. Each floor on the staircase is a step in an individual's radicalization process toward terrorism as characterized by specific psychological processes. Individuals on the staircase can move up and down but cannot skip over floors. The model was conceptualized to explain the radicalization of individuals into terror groups.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Randy Borum. *Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism*. Dec. 2011, ResearchGate, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Moghaddams-Staircase-to-Terrorism_fig2_241835430.

⁵⁹ Fathali M. Moghaddam. "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration." *American Psychologist*, vol. 60, no. 2, Feb.-Mar. 2005, pp. 161-169, <http://fathalimoghaddam.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1256627851.pdf>.

The ground floor is where most of the world's population is. No one on the ground floor has taken their first step towards radicalization or terrorism, but they all have the option to. On the ground floor, an individual's perception of fairness is the most important psychological factor. Perceived or relative deprivation is an individual's subjective perception of how deprived their material condition is compared to others in society. There are two forms of perceived deprivation: egotistical deprivation, when individuals perceive themselves as deprived compared to others in their in-group, and fraternal deprivation, when individuals perceive their in-group as deprived compared to other groups. Moghaddam argues that feelings of fraternal deprivation are more important in moving from the ground floor to the first floor because fraternal deprivation is a better predictor for minority discontent and is easily translated into collective action. Fraternal deprivation can stem from political, economic, and identity-based perceived grievances. Importantly, identity-based perceived grievances can involve the perception that a group's cultural identity is being threatened by other groups in a society. The frustration and anger that derives from perceived deprivation can lead an individual to increasingly support extremists and anti-establishment movements pushing them to move to the first floor.⁶⁰

On the first floor of the staircase, individuals begin searching for solutions to their perceived deprivation. Perceived possibilities for personal mobility and perceptions of procedural justice are the main psychological factors that shape an individual on this floor. If individuals find paths to upward mobility that are easily accessible to them, they are not likely to continue up the staircase. However, if they perceive that paths to upward mobility are blocked and impossible to access, there is a greater chance that they will accept extremist beliefs and eventually attempt non-normative action such as terrorism. Equally important to individuals on this floor is the belief that the world is fair and that if they seek justice for their perceived deprivations, they will receive it. Moghaddam explains that participation in decision-making is an essential aspect of perceived justice. In societies where individuals can openly voice their perceived deprivation and participate in decision-making processes, there is less of a chance

⁶⁰ Ibid.

that an individual will accept non-normative action because they will believe there are official channels through which they can voice their problems and receive a response. However, in cases where individuals do not perceive any paths forward for upward mobility or equitable justice, they are likely to move to the second floor.⁶¹

On the second floor of the staircase, individuals begin to displace their anger at their perceived deprivation and inability to resolve it towards the groups or individuals they perceive as the perpetrators of their injustice. A clear in-group vs. out-group perspective is formed, and pent-up anger at the situation is aimed toward the out-group. Individuals who want to displace their aggression physically move to the third floor.⁶²

On the third floor, individuals seeking to displace their anger physically, become morally engaged with terrorist groups. Terrorist groups recruit individuals on this floor “through a number of tactics, the most important of which are isolation, affiliation, secrecy and fear.”⁶³ These tactics encourage recruits to become committed to the group while keeping their beliefs and actions secret to avoid punishment. This often leads to the creation of parallel lives as members of a group continue to live their “normal life” while simultaneously developing a secret second life involved with terrorism. Terrorist groups “become effective by positioning themselves ... as the only option open toward reforming society ... and ... as a “home” for disaffected individuals.”⁶⁴ Individuals begin viewing anyone who is not as angry as they are as morally disengaged from the issue.⁶⁵

When individuals reach the fourth floor, they have been indoctrinated into a terror group or radical ideology and have very few options for escape. On this floor, social categorization is the first psychological factor at play. Individuals in a group develop a clear us vs. them viewpoint. Individuals also begin to view the terror group or extremist ideology they are part of as a legitimate group and belief

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, pp. 165.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

system. This perception of legitimacy arises as individuals are immersed in an organization's culture, traditions, methods, and goals. By the end of their time on the fourth floor, individuals have fully adhered to a radical group and have few other options than moving to the fifth floor and carrying out a terror attack.⁶⁶

On the fifth and final floor, individuals complete their psychological evolution towards accepting and performing a terror attack. On this floor, two psychological factors are at play, the social categorization of civilians as part of the out-group and a psychological distancing from the out-group. At this point, individuals are socialized to view anyone outside their group or ideology as enemies and a threat to their in-group. This includes civilians who are perceived as being part of the enemy since they are not actively resisting the out-group. Furthermore, the out-group, now including civilians, is further dehumanized through narratives that greatly exaggerate the differences between the in-group and the out-group. The perception of civilians as the enemy allows terrorists to sidestep inhibitory mechanisms, which usually stop people from attacking innocents. By the end of their process on the fifth floor, individuals have become psychologically prepared to carry out a terror attack against the perceived out-group.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

McCauley and Moskalkenko's Two-Pyramids Model

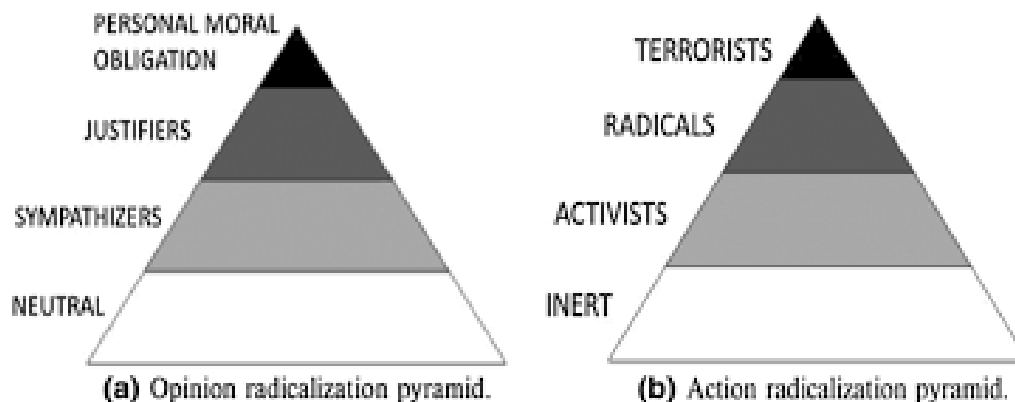


Figure 2 McCauley and Moskalkenko's Two-Pyramids Model⁶⁸

McCauley and Moskalkenko's "Two-Pyramids Model" conceptualizes the divide between cognitive and behavioral radicalization. McCauley and Moskalkenko based their model on findings that attitudes do not directly translate into actions. This means an individual can be behaviorally radicalized but not cognitively radicalized, and vice versa. To display this, they created two pyramids that separately represent the radicalization processes for opinion radicalization and action radicalization. The pyramids are not a staircase; individuals can move up and down or skip whole sections. The pyramids are independent from each other so movement along one will not affect movement along the other. The base of each pyramid is where most of the population is, and the sections above have increasingly fewer people on them.⁶⁹

Individuals on the base of the opinion pyramid do not care about a political cause making them "neutral." The next section of the opinion pyramid is populated by "sympathizers," individuals who believe in a political cause but do not believe violence is justified to achieve it. The third level is populated by "justifiers," individuals who feel that violence is justified to achieve their political goals. The final level is populated by individuals that feel a "personal moral obligation" to perform violent

⁶⁸ Michael Wolfowicz et al. *Two Pyramid Model (McCauley and Moskalkenko 2014)*. Sept. 2020, ResearchGate, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Two-pyramid-model-McCauley-and-Moskalkenko-2014_fig1_337721648.

⁶⁹ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko. "Understanding Political RadicalizationL The Two-Pyramids Model." *American Psychologist*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2017, pp. 205-216, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Famp0000062>.

action to achieve their political goal. Importantly, individuals at the top of the opinion pyramid have not necessarily performed a violent action; they merely feel morally obligated to do so.⁷⁰

The base level of the action pyramid is populated by individuals who are “inert”; they are not involved with any political groups or causes. The second level is populated by “activists” involved in legal political action with a group or for a cause. The third level is populated by “radicals,” individuals involved in illegal action for their political group or cause. Finally, the fourth level is populated by “terrorists,” individuals involved in illegal activities that target civilians in the name of their group or cause.⁷¹

McCauley and Moskaleiko admit that lone-wolf terrorists are a potential blind spot for their model. Since lone wolf terrorists are not in a group, their radical actions often seem directly inspired by their radical opinions. McCauley and Moskaleiko create two profiles of lone wolf terrorists, disconnected-disorder and caring-compelled. Disconnected-disordered lone wolf terrorists share five common characteristics: “a grievance, planful rather than impulsive attack, weak social ties (“loners”), mental health problems (especially depression), and experience with weapons outside the military.”⁷² Importantly, disconnected-disordered lone wolf terrorists are not only motivated by radical ideas but also by a desire for status and escape. Caring-compelled lone wolf terrorists are comparatively normal with strong social ties. Caring-compelled terrorists are typified by their deep sympathy for groups they perceive as victims of injustice. Caring-compelled lone wolf terrorists commit terror attacks in defense of these perceived victims. Caring-compelled lone wolf terrorists are rarer than disconnected-disordered lone wolf terrorists and do not fit as well in the model.⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid, pp. 212

⁷³ Ibid.

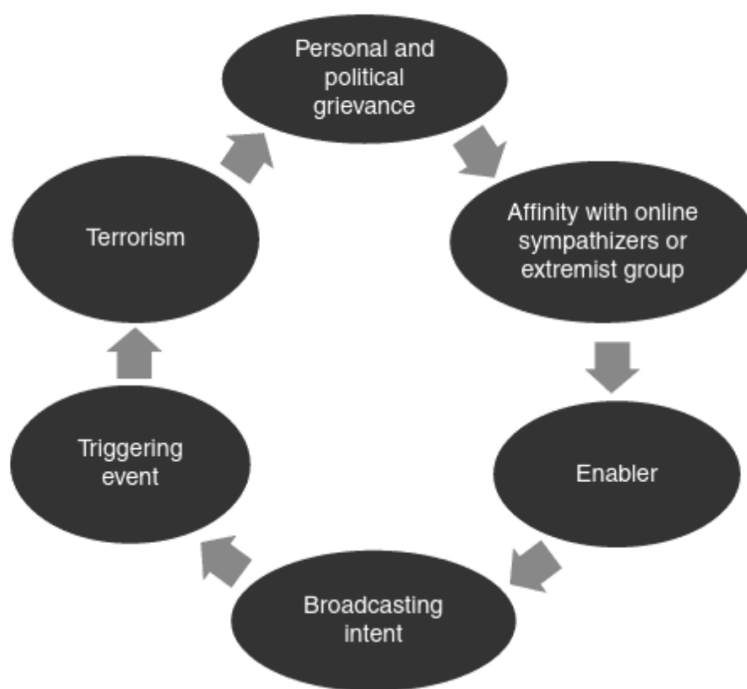


Figure 3 Hamm and Spaaij's Radicalization Model of Lone Wolf Terrorism⁷⁴

Hamm and Spaaij (2017) conceptualize lone-wolf violent radicalization as a non-linear cycle with five overlapping stages that end in terrorism. Hamm and Spaaij's model is based on their research on the violent radicalization of 108 American lone-wolf terrorists between 1940 to mid-2016. Since no single stage occurred in every case studied, the model is not linear. Individuals can join the cycle at any of the five stages before terrorism, move through the cycle out of order, and skip whole stages.⁷⁵

The first stage, "personal and political grievance," involves the complex entanglement of a lone wolf's personal grievances and political ideologies. This stage occurred in both 80% of pre- and post-9/11 cases. At this stage, individuals intertwine personal grievances and vendettas with political ideologies to

⁷⁴ Mark Hamm and Ramon Spaaij. *The Radicalization Model of Lone Wolf Terrorism*. May 2017, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism*, pp. 159.

⁷⁵ Hamm and Spaaij. *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism*. pp. 150-173.

create complex and unique personal ideologies. Lone wolf terrorists have much more idiosyncratic belief systems when compared to organized terrorists due to the involvement of their personal grievances.⁷⁶

The second stage, “affinity with online sympathizers or extremist groups,” occurs when individuals display sympathy for an extremist group or anonymous online network that their beliefs align with. Lone wolf terrorists are importantly not a member of the groups they show affinity to but instead solely gain inspiration and courage from them vicariously. Affinity with extremist groups occurred in 63% of pre-9/11 cases and 48% of post-9/11 cases. Hamm and Spaaij attribute the decreased affinity with extremist groups post-9/11 to the spread and increasing use of the internet. Specifically, they found that post-9/11 lone wolf terrorists have less frequently sought ideological direction from established extremist groups and have instead shifted focus to gaining ideological direction from anonymous online networks of online sympathizers.⁷⁷

The third stage, “enabler,” involves individuals directly or indirectly enabling a lone wolf. Direct enablers are individuals that directly assist lone wolf terrorists in planning and performing their attacks. Direct enablers must unknowingly help in the process; if they know they are helping prepare for an attack, the terrorist is no longer a lone wolf. In contrast, indirect enablers serve as individuals who indirectly inspire lone wolf terrorists. Indirect enablers can be other terrorists, but they often are not. Hamm and Spaaij explain that indirect enabling often takes the form of “stochastic terrorism.” Stochastic terrorism is “the use of mass media to provoke random acts of ideologically motivated violence that are statistically predictable but individually unpredictable.” “Stochastic terrorists” use incendiary messaging to indirectly encourage attacks without participating in terrorism themselves. Importantly, stochastic terrorists do not need to directly advocate for violence to be an inspiration; what matters more is the emotional intensity of a message and how it can be interpreted by those viewing it. 57% of pre-9/11 lone wolf terrorists involved an enabler, while 70% of post-9/11 lone wolf terrorists involved one. Most of the post-9/11 enabling

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

occurred indirectly, once again revealing the importance of the internet and more accessible media in post-9/11 cases.⁷⁸

The fourth stage, “broadcasting intent,” involves lone wolf terrorists’ tendency to “signal” or leak their plans before carrying them out. Hamm and Spaaij explain that lone wolf terrorists desire renown for their attack and take on an “activist stance” that leads to public expression of grievances. Broadcasting intent is very rare in cases of organized terrorism to the point that Hamm and Spaaij describe it as a trademark of lone-wolf terrorists. Broadcasting intent can occur, weeks, days, hours, or even minutes before an attack. Broadcasting intent occurred in 84% of pre-9/11 cases and 70% of post-9/11 cases.⁷⁹

The final stage is a “triggering event,” which, in most cases, is the final catalyst for an attack. Like lone wolf ideologies, which are a mix of personal and political grievances, a triggering event can be personal, political, or a mix of the two. Hamm and Spaaij classify two types of triggering events. A sharp or immediate triggering event leads to an almost instantaneous terror attack with little planning. On the other hand, accumulating triggering events push individuals to increasing levels of radicalization over time and often lead to considerable attack planning. 84% of pre-9/11 cases involved a trigger event, while 71% of post-9/11 cases involved one.⁸⁰

A final element of the cycle is the arrow pointing from the “terrorism” stage back to the “personal and political grievance stage.” This arrow is included to visualize the potential for lone-wolf copycats who copy the attacks of previous lone wolf terrorists. 1/3rd of the 108 cases analyzed included copycat attacks. Hamm and Spaaij explain that lone wolf terrorists want to make a political point and hope to gain media attention for their cause by copying other successful attacks that gained media attention. Specifically, “by turning political causes into violent action, lone wolf terrorists become role models for

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

others who are sympathetic to those causes, inviting... ‘bandwagon attacks.’”⁸¹ Copycat attacks have increased post-9/11 because of the internet and social media.⁸²

⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 47.

⁸² Ibid.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

To test the three frameworks of radicalization, this thesis implements a case study analysis. Schramm (1971) defines a case study as a tool to “illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result.”⁸³ Yin (2003) explains that case studies are best implemented when “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control.”⁸⁴ A strength of case studies is that they can use many sources, including artifacts, archival documents, and contemporary sources, such as interviews with individuals who directly experienced an event.⁸⁵ Yin (2013) further clarifies that case studies are useful when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”⁸⁶ This is especially relevant when comparing multiple case studies because each case is affected by its own contextual conditions.⁸⁷

Yin (2018) explains that in a multi-case case study, cases analyzed should follow a logic of replication. While sampling logic, used in experimental studies, requires the sampling of a population to create an operational estimation of the entire pool of potential respondents, replication logic is structured so that each case in a case study can be viewed as an independent study. The conclusion of each study “[is] then considered to be the information needing replication by other individual case studies.”⁸⁸ Since

⁸³ Wilbur Schramm. “Notes on Case Studies of Instructional Media Projects.” *Institute for Communication Research Stanford University*, Dec. 1971, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED092145.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research Design Method*. 6th ed., Sage Publications, 2017, pp. 9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12.

⁸⁶ Robert K. Yin. “The Case Study Method as a Tool For Doing Evaluation.” *Current Sociology*, vol. 40, no. 1, Mar. 1992, pp. 121-137.

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/001139292040001009?casa_token=tp7d1WUfV1IAAAAAA:Tja9wYCXCZoNw1gZBPScYZY6cddLLxt0_-z8aBw2XljCNrBSYSHwPy_41WhNQyfN6tKXIxWCCqtQ.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Yin. *Case Study Research Design Method*. pp. 94.

each case in a multi-case study should be viewed as an individual study, cases selected must either “(a) predict similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication).”⁸⁹

The cases selected for this thesis were literal replications. The main criteria for case selection was that a case end in a violent act of far-right terrorism inspired by the Great Replacement. The cases selected were Brenton Tarrant, Patrick Crusius, and Payton Gendron. First, the radicalization of each terrorist was analyzed individually. Second, the cases were compared to each other to see what trends in the radicalization processes could be found. Finally, the radicalization processes were cross analyzed through the individual lenses of Moghaddam’s staircase model, McCauley and Moskalenko’s two pyramid model, and Hamm and Spaaij’s lone wolf mode to find how well the models worked and what suggestions can be made for future lone wolf models.

Data Collection

All three cases in this study were analyzed using a mix of primary and secondary sources. The main primary source for each case was a manifesto written by each terrorist. The manifestos were valuable sources but were analyzed carefully since not everything the terrorists wrote about their own experiences could be trusted. Secondary sources included news articles, government reports, and court documents. Of the three cases Brenton Tarrant’s case had the largest number of sources and analysis due to the case’s prominence. Patrick Crusius and Payton Gendron’s cases had less sources; however, the sources for Gendron’s case were unique since they included an online diary Gendron kept as he plotted his attack.

⁸⁹Ibid, pp. 91.

Chapter 4

A Brief History of the Great Replacement

Like many modern conspiracies, the Great Replacement is not historically unique but is instead only the most recent iteration in a series of similar conspiracies. Conspiracies about the extinction of the white race are nothing new and can be traced back centuries in Europe and America. In the 20th-century, white extinction conspiracies saw widespread support and became deeply entwined with politics, playing an important role in events such as the Holocaust.⁹⁰ The popularity of white extinction conspiracies in the 20th century can be partially traced to a 19th-century book by the British Historian Charles Henry Pearson. In 1893, Pearson's book *National Life and Character: A Forecast* was published to much acclaim.⁹¹ In the book, Pearson argued that the commonly held belief that Western colonial powers would be able to stay in control and continue to expand was inaccurate. Pearson argued instead that if white Europeans tried to immigrate en-masse to southern colonies to create new majority white nations like the United States or Australia, the new nations would not remain white. Pearson reasoned that the "white race": was "high-minded" and "superior" compared to other races, so white colonists would refuse to do manual labor in the hot southern climate. They would instead invite "lesser races" into their new white nations to fulfill the manual labor needs. Pearson believed that as industry in the new nations increased, so would the education level of the "lesser races," and they would demand equal positions in the government to the white colonists. As the "lesser race" gained higher positions, they would invite more of their race into the country to supplement the labor force.⁹² Pearson writes, "whenever that happens, the white race will be

⁹⁰ Jason Wilson and Aaron Flanagan. "The Racist 'Great Replacement' Conspiracy Theory Explained." *The Southern Poverty Law Center*, 17 May 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/05/17/racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-explained>.

⁹¹ Marilyn Lake. "The White Man Under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Advent of White Australia." *History Workshop Journal*, no. 58, Autumn 2004, pp. 41-62, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25472753>.

⁹² Charles Henry Pearson. *National Life and Character: A Forecast*. Macmillan and Co., 1893, pp. 29-85.

either absorbed or disappear [as] the mass will gradually depart ... [or] [lose their] sense of superiority [and] intermarry”.⁹³

Pearson’s book was popular in Europe. English Prime Minister William Gladstone loved the book, saying anyone interested in public affairs should read it.⁹⁴ While the book itself did not explicitly spell out the possibility of non-white immigrants moving to the West and replacing the “white race” as the majority, the books focus on the possibility of the so-called “lesser races” having the ability to overtake a white majority spread fear. Notably, Pearson’s book influenced an American lawyer named Madison Grant, who, in 1916, wrote his own book, *The Passing of the Great Race*. *The Passing of the Great Race* is a pseudo-scientific race-theory book that claims the superior “Nordic race” would soon be replaced by “inferior races” through immigration and the increased birth rates of the “inferior races.”⁹⁵ Grant also called for eugenics in his book, claiming that eugenics through sterilization would strengthen the “Nordic race” and limit the spread of “inferior races.”⁹⁶

The Passing of the Great Race explicitly spread the fear of white extinction and was readily accepted by Western politicians, just like *National Life and Character*. The book influenced restrictive immigration policies, anti-miscegenation laws, and eugenicist beliefs in America.⁹⁷ The Passing of the Great Race’s most notable influence in Europe was on Hitler. Hitler wrote to Grant, calling *The Passing of the Great Race* “his bible,”⁹⁸ and frequently quoted Grant in his speeches in the 1930s.⁹⁹ During the Nuremberg Trials, Nazis referenced the book as evidence that they had not created eugenics but were

⁹³ Ibid, pp. 38.

⁹⁴ Lake. “The White Man Under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Advent of White Australia.”

⁹⁵ Madison Grant. *The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History*. Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Aliya R Hoff. “The Passing of the Great Race; or The Racial Basis of European History (1916), by Madison Grant.” *The Embryo Project Encyclopedia*, 12 Jul. 2021, <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/passing-great-race-or-racial-basis-european-history-1916-madison-grant>.

⁹⁸ Stefan Kühl. *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 85.

⁹⁹ Hoff. “The Passing of the Great Race; or The Racial Basis of European History (1916), by Madison Grant.”

adopting an American idea.¹⁰⁰ Pearson and Grant's books are not unique for their time, many theories proliferated the belief in white extinction, but Pearson and Grant's books do show there is a precedent for the Great Replacement.

The Great Replacement, the most modern formulation of white extinction conspiracies, originated in the early 2010s in the works of the French novelist and philosopher Renaud Camus. Camus is a prolific writer with 100s of books, generally written from a left-wing political stance; however, his writing also spawned the Great Replacement.¹⁰¹ The Great Replacement comes from Camus's 2011 book *Le Grand Remplacement (The Great Replacement)*. In the book, Camus argues that the white European population could be replaced by non-white races within a generation and that elites were encouraging the process.¹⁰²

Camus begins his book by discussing a personal experience that gave him the idea for The Great Replacement. Camus writes that while in an old French town, he saw "at the windows and on the thresholds of these very old houses, along very old streets, appeared almost exclusively an unprecedented population in these parts and who by their costume, by their attitude, by their very language, seemed not to belong."¹⁰³ Camus clarifies this experience further, writing that it was the first time he felt the impending "Great Replacement" and that he no longer felt these villages were "[his] culture and [his] civilization, [he] was walking in another culture and another civilization ... that were decorated with the deceptively beautiful name of multiculturalism."¹⁰⁴ Camus explicitly defines the Great Replacement as "the substitution of the indigenous population by one or more non-native peoples."¹⁰⁵ Camus repeatedly refers to the immigrants that he believes are replacing the "white race" as colonizers and occupiers, phrases that frame the immigrants as violent outsiders attempting to force their way into a nation and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Chatterton Williams. "The French Origins of 'You Will Not Replace Us.'" *The New Yorker*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/the-french-origins-of-you-will-not-replace-us>.

¹⁰² Renaud Camus, *Le Grand Remplacement*, November 2011.

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 72-73.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 134.

change it. Camus explains that The Great Replacement is not only occurring because of immigration but also because of the high birth rate that immigrants have. Specifically, he references programs in the West that pay citizens that are having children in the hopes of increasing the birth rate; Camus writes, “The populations of countries less favored than ours ... cannot believe that there are countries in the world where one is paid to have children ... and they are in a hurry to join this ... to give birth to five, six, seven, ten, twelve, or even seventeen replacements.”¹⁰⁶ Camus claims that the Great Replacement is not a natural process but a process formulated and supported by the liberal system, which desires multiculturalism and the complete interchangeability of populations. He argues that the complete interchangeability of population would make everyone culturally homogenous and destroy the historical culture of the “West,” which would “ensure the imbecilization of the world, its great deculturation, its de-civilization.”¹⁰⁷ While Camus does repeatedly clarify that he does not believe that the Western governments got together in some secret meeting and laid out a plan to carry out the Great Replacement, he does believe that the liberal forces of the West want the Great Replacement to occur so that they can silence any dissent from the right and force a multiculturalism that will support their nebulous agendas. Camus quotes Bertold Brecht to explain this point, “I hear that the government believes that the people have betrayed the confidence of the regime and will have to work hard to regain the confidence of the authorities, in that case, wouldn’t it be easier to dissolve the people and elect another?”¹⁰⁸

The Great Replacement quickly became a central talking point for far-right movements in Europe and America, easily fitting in with the groups’ pre-existing fears surrounding a “white genocide.”¹⁰⁹ While Camus himself did not claim Jews were responsible for encouraging and supporting the Great Replacement, Camus’ reference to a nebulous globalist elite that was supporting the Replacement left an

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 61.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 119-120.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 70.

¹⁰⁹ “‘The Great Replacement:’ An Explainer.” *Anti-Defamation League*, April 19, 2021, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/the-great-replacement-an-explainer>.

opening for the far-right movements to slot in Jews as the main enemy.¹¹⁰ Camus has also claimed that he does not support violence and that *Le Grand Remplacement* does not encourage it; however, rhetoric surrounding the Great Replacement has been linked to numerous deadly attacks.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Lara Bullens. “How France’s ‘Great Replacement’ Theory Conquered the Global Far Right.” *France 24*, August 11, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20211108-how-the-french-great-replacement-theory-conquered-the-far-right>.

Chapter 5

Cases

Brenton Tarrant

Childhood

Brenton Tarrant was born in Grafton, New South Wales, Australia, in 1990. From a young age, Tarrant showed signs of anxiety and an inability to socialize with his peers. Tarrant's parents divorced when he was around eight years old, and after the separation, his mother described him as "clingy, anxious, and [unable to socialize] well with others."¹¹² Tarrant's social anxiety caused him trouble in school where he had few friends and was bullied by other students after he gained weight when he was 12. However, Tarrant was also a troublemaker himself. A fellow student recalled Tarrant being "a bit of a bully and a bit of a bloody menace,"¹¹³ and a teacher described Tarrant as "disengaged in class to the point of quiet arrogance."¹¹⁴ Some of Tarrant's issues at school seem to have stemmed from problems at home. After his parents divorced, Tarrant and his sister lived with his mother and her new partner, who was physically abusive toward the rest of the family. Tarrant and his sister were eventually removed from the house and moved in with their father.¹¹⁵

After moving to live with his father, Tarrant began displaying racist and antisemitic views. At school, Tarrant said racist things about his mother's partner who was aboriginal. Later, a teacher that was an anti-racism contact officer (a faculty member in charge of handling complaints about racism) had to

¹¹² Nick O'Malley, Tim Barlass, and Patrick Begley. "White-Bred Terrorist: The Making of a Killer." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 Aug. 2019, "<https://www.smh.com.au/national/white-bred-terrorist-the-making-of-a-killer-20190806-p52ee7.html>."

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Royal Commission. "The Individual's Upbringing in Australia." *Royal Commission of Inquiry Into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019*, 21 Dec. 2020, "<https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/firearms-licensing/the-firearms-licensing-process/>."

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

confront Tarrant twice about antisemitic comments.¹¹⁶ An online friend said that around this time, Tarrant began espousing far-right views while playing video games. Tarrant's mother traces some of his early extremist rhetoric back to his unfettered internet access as a child. Tarrant has claimed that he began using 4chan when he was around 14.¹¹⁷ 4chan was most likely an important radicalizing factor in Tarrant's process since he also claims that he began to form his political opinions around the same time he began using 4chan¹¹⁸.

Adulthood

When Tarrant was around 16, his father became severely depressed after being diagnosed with mesothelioma. This seemingly affected Tarrant, who began obsessively working out, going to the gym every day for two to three hours. In 2009 Tarrant started working at the gym as a personal trainer; however, like in school, Tarrant interacted very little with other co-workers. Tarrant's boss described him as generally friendly but with little social skills and an obsessive nature that caused him to lift a dangerous amount of weight for his age and size.¹¹⁹ In 2010, Tarrant's father committed suicide, and Tarrant found his body. Although Tarrant was affected by the event, he did not pursue therapy.¹²⁰

After his father's death, Tarrant's relationships were limited. Besides his sister and mother, his only ongoing personal contact was brief interactions with co-workers and clients at the gym.¹²¹ When he was not at the gym, Tarrant increasingly spent his time online, posting and browsing 4chan, 8chan, and other sites.¹²² In 2012 Tarrant hurt his back at the gym and quit working as a personal trainer. Tarrant

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ O'Malley, Barlass, and Begley. "White-Bred Terrorist: The Making of a Killer."

¹²⁰ Royal Commission. "The Individual's Upbringing in Australia."

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

received a monetary settlement after his father's death and decided to travel with it rather than save it and find another job.¹²³

Traveling

From April 2014-August 2017, Tarrant used the money he received to travel through Europe, Australia, and Asia.¹²⁴ Before his travel, Tarrant's only long-term relationships were with his family members, however as he travelled he had less contact with them. Tarrant traveled solo and never stayed long in any one place, making it impossible for him to form any new long-term relationships. During this period, Tarrant only returned to Australia to see his family once.¹²⁵ With a lack of social interaction, Tarrant seemingly became more reliant on the internet and more radicalized, which is reflected in his travel. Between 2015-2017 Tarrant traveled to many countries but began to increasingly visit countries in Eastern Europe where battles between European states and the Ottoman Empire had occurred. His travels in this area influenced him. He referenced the Ottoman Empire in his manifesto, writing to Muslims and Turks that "you can live in peace in your own lands ... on the east side of the Bosphorus ... we are coming for Constantinople ... the Hagia Sophia will be free of minarets, and Constantinople will be rightfully Christian owned once more."¹²⁶ Based on his writing, while traveling, Tarrant developed the belief that the centuries-long war between Europe and the Ottoman Empire had never truly ended, but had instead evolved into a new battlefield fought through immigration, birth rates, and attempts to destroy "European culture."¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Royal Commission. "World Travel – 15 April 2014 to 17 August 2017." *Royal Commission of Inquiry Into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019*, 21 Dec. 2020, <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/firearms-licensing/the-regulation-of-semi-automatic-firearms/>.

¹²⁵ O'Malley, Barlass, and Begley. "White-Bred Terrorist: The Making of a Killer."

¹²⁶ Brenton Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. 15 Mar. 2019, pp. 37.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

While Tarrant was primed for violent radicalization by 2016, three specific events in 2017 pushed him to start planning an attack. The first was the death of Ebba Akerlund. Ebba was a Swedish 11-year-old who died in an Islamic vehicle terror attack in April 2017.¹²⁸ Tarrant wrote in his manifesto, “Ebba’s death at the hands of the invaders ... broke through my jaded cynicism ... I could no longer ignore the attacks. They were attacks on my people, attacks on my culture, attacks on my faith and attacks on my soul.”¹²⁹ Tarrant would later write Ebba’s name on one of his guns used in the attack. The second event was the French election of Emmanuel Macron in May 2017. Tarrant described Macron as an “internationalist, global, anti-white, ex-banker.”¹³⁰ Tarrant did not like Le Pen or Macron but believed that if Le Pen won, there was at least a chance for an extreme nationalist upsurge in European politics. However, when Macron won by a wide margin, his “despair set in,” and “[His] belief in a democratic solution vanished.”¹³¹ The final event was something Tarrant witnessed himself while traveling through France in April and May 2017.¹³² While in France, Tarrant saw many Muslims, writing “in every French city, in every French town the invaders were there” and “for every French man or woman there was double the number of invaders.”¹³³ After seeing Muslims, he drove to a WWII graveyard and sat in front of it. He claims that this is where he decided to attack, writing:

“why were we allowing these soldiers deaths to be in vain? Why were we allowing the invaders to conquer us? Overcome us? Without a single shot fired in response? ... My despair turned to shame, my shame to guilt, my guilt to anger and my anger to rage. WHY WON’T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING? WHY WON’T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING? WHY DON’T I DO SOMETHING? The spell broke, why don’t I do something? Why not me? If not me, then who? Why them when I could do it myself? It was there I decided to do something, it was there I decided to take action, to commit to force. To commit to violence. To take the fight to the invaders myself.”¹³⁴

¹²⁸ “Sweden Attack: ‘Despair’ Over Death of Schoolgirl Ebba Akerlund.” *Sky News*, 12 Apr.

2017, <https://news.sky.com/story/sweden-attack-despair-over-death-of-schoolgirl-ebba-akerlund-10834375>.

¹²⁹ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 10.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid, pp. 11.

¹³² Royal Commission. “World Travel – 15 April 2014 to 17 August 2017.”

<https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/firearms-licensing/the-regulation-of-semi-automatic-firearms/>.

¹³³ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 11.

¹³⁴ Ibid, pp. 12-13.

Preparation for the Attack

By early 2017, Tarrant planned to move to New Zealand to plot and train for an attack. The first evidence of Tarrant planning something appeared in January 2017 when he emailed the New Zealand-based Bruce Rifle Club asking if they were still operating and if he could join when he moved to New Zealand in August. Tarrant had little experience with guns before this point and had shown no previous interest in them, so this email is considered the first step in his preparation for a future attack.¹³⁵ In August 2017, Tarrant moved to Dunedin, New Zealand, where he began planning an attack. He did not initially plan to attack in New Zealand; instead, he moved there to plot and train. However, after seeing Muslims in the community, Tarrant decided New Zealand was a “target-rich environment” and the perfect country for an attack.¹³⁶ One specific factor that may have influenced Tarrant’s decision to stay was the An-Nur childcare center, a Muslim-funded and run childcare center, across the street from the gym he went to.¹³⁷ In a Facebook comment on a far-right Facebook page, Tarrant wrote about his feelings on the childcare center, “across the road from my gym is an Islamic boarding school... today I found out that this Islamic boarding school ... was once [a catholic] school. This is what happens as a society when you fail to have children then import the children of others to replace them.”¹³⁸ Tarrant initially planned to attack the mosque that funded the childhood center before changing his mind and deciding to attack the Christchurch and Linwood mosques after he found out the their buildings used to be churches.¹³⁹

In the lead-up to his attack, Tarrant was more solitary than ever. Apart from regularly going to the gym and a shooting range, Tarrant mostly stayed home planning. The only other contact Tarrant had was with his mother and sister. Tarrant attempted to keep under the radar and away from implicating himself

¹³⁵ Royal Commission. “World Travel – 15 April 2014 to 17 August 2017.”

¹³⁶ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 15.

¹³⁷ O’Malley, Barlass, and Begley. “White-Bred Terrorist: The Making of a Killer.”

¹³⁸ Royal Commission. “General Life in New Zealand.” *Royal Commission of Inquiry Into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019*, 21 Dec. 2020, <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/firearms-licensing/general-life-in-new-zealand/>.

¹³⁹ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 16.

by deleting his social media accounts.¹⁴⁰ While Tarrant never outright leaked his plans, his rhetoric did cause issues at the gun range and worried his family. In late 2018-early 2019, Tarrant's mother and her new partner visited Tarrant in New Zealand. Tarrant's mother recalls him taking her to a café one morning; however, before they could order, Tarrant insisted they leave because the café was minority-owned. She claims he refused to spend money in what he called a "migrant café" since he only wanted his money going to white New Zealanders.¹⁴¹ Tarrant also reportedly showed his mother his guns.¹⁴² This worried her because she saw how isolated and increasingly radical he was becoming; however, she did not believe he was a danger to the public and did not report him. Tarrant also raised some suspicions with his sister in the months before the attack when he began sending her and her partner fascist books meant to introduce them to the ideology.¹⁴³

Tarrant's actions at the Bruce Rifle Club also raised concerns. Within a month after moving to New Zealand, Tarrant applied for and began the process of obtaining a gun license. Tarrant attained the license in November 2017 and started attending the Bruce Rifle Club the same month. Members of the club recall that Tarrant shot strangely without care for safety. Specifically, he shot while standing, shot very fast, went through large amounts of ammo at once, and quickly changed magazines, all tactics he would later use in his attack. Although Tarrant's shooting was odd, he was quiet about his views and did not raise suspicions.¹⁴⁴ He later admitted to authorities his shooting style at the range may have been a tactical error that could have endangered his plans.¹⁴⁵

Tarrant meticulously planned his attack, taking inspiration from the Norwegian lone wolf terrorist Anders Breivik's manifesto which was found on Tarrant's computer after the attack. Tarrant used many

¹⁴⁰ Royal Commission. "General Life in New Zealand."

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² O'Malley, Barlass, and Begley. "White-Bred Terrorist: The Making of a Killer."

¹⁴³ Royal Commission. "General Life in New Zealand."

¹⁴⁴ Royal Commission. "Preparation for the Terrorist Attack." *Royal Commission of Inquiry Into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019*, 21 Dec. 2020, <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/firearms-licensing/preparation-for-the-terrorist-attack/>.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

tactics that Breivik suggested in his manifesto, such as bulking up before the attack, joining rifle clubs to gain access to training, wiping electronic devices to complicate the authorities' search after the attack, and posting a manifesto online simultaneously with the attack.¹⁴⁶ From 2018-2019 Tarrant began scoping out his targets. Tarrant surveilled the mosques to see when they were the busiest and to identify entrances and exits. Tarrant used drones to record the mosques from a distance to avoid being spotted.¹⁴⁷ No incident better displays Tarrant's meticulous planning than his 2018 trip to Poland. In December 2018, Tarrant spent a week in Poland where, in his manifesto, he claimed he "[contacted] the reborn Knights Templar for a blessing in support of the attack."¹⁴⁸ The "reborn Knights Templar" are a group that Breivik, with no evidence, claims he created in the spirit of the original Knights Templar.¹⁴⁹ In Poland, a far-right group called the "Knights Templar Order International" held a "Knighting Ceremony" the week Tarrant visited. There is no evidence that Tarrant attended the rally. He later admitted that his references to the group and trip to Poland were just "red herrings" meant to trick counter-terrorism agencies and the public into thinking that Tarrant was part of an international network of extremists who supported his attack.¹⁵⁰

The Attack

On March 15th, 2019, Brenton Tarrant carried out his attack. In the days prior, he completed his manifesto, wrote far-right slogans and words on his guns, and destroyed his computer hard drive. Terms, names, and symbols scrawled in white on his guns included "Ebba Akerlund", "14" (in reference to the white supremacist slogan The 14 Words), "Mein Kampf", and the nazi symbol the Sonnenrand. The words on his guns also displayed Tarrant's preoccupation with the Ottoman Empire and his belief in an ongoing war between Christianity and Islam. Terms referencing the Ottoman Empire included "Vienna

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Royal Commission. "Planning the Terrorist Attack." *Royal Commission of Inquiry Into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019*, 21 Dec. 2020, <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/firearms-licensing/planning-the-terrorist-attack/>.

¹⁴⁸ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 13

¹⁴⁹ O'Malley, Barlass, and Begley. "White-Bred Terrorist: The Making of a Killer."

¹⁵⁰ Royal Commission. "Planning the Terrorist Attack."

1683” (the year the Ottoman Empire lost an important battle), “Acre 1189” (a reference to the crusades), “Charles Martel” (a man who white supremacists cite as saving Europe from Muslim invaders in 734), and the names of four of Serbian generals who fought the Ottomans in the Balkans.¹⁵¹ Immediately before the attack, Tarrant posted a link on 8chan to a Facebook livestream, where he live-streamed the attack. He also posted a link to his 87-page manifesto titled “The Great Replacement.” Before he was arrested, Tarrant successfully attacked two mosques, killing 51 Muslims.¹⁵²

Manifesto and Ideology

Tarrant’s specific beliefs and ideologies can best be gleaned from what he wrote in his manifesto. Tarrant’s manifesto is unique, it was written to give a clear message to those inoculated into the same culture as Tarrant while also acting as an obstacle to the interpretation of the attack for anyone that is not well-versed in far-right rhetoric and 4chan memes. For example, Tarrant claims that “Spyro the Dragon 3 taught me ethno-nationalism. Fortnite trained me to be a killer and to floss on the corpses of my enemies.”¹⁵³ However, after piercing through the layers of memes and irony, a clear, if not muddled, ideology can be found.

Along with the Great Replacement, Tarrant was inspired by several different belief systems and ideologies. First and foremost, Tarrant seems to subscribe to the Identitarian movement. The Identitarian movement is a far-right movement that claims they oppose multiculturalism in an effort to preserve European culture and the “white race.” The Identitarian movement emerged in France, influenced by the similar cultural shifts and beliefs that led Camus to write *Le Grand Remplacement*. Since 2010 Identitarian groups have increasingly protested and fought against the construction of mosques and the

¹⁵¹ “New Zealand Shooting Gunman’s Rifles Covered in White Supremacist Symbols Popular Online.” *CBS News*, 15 Mar. 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-zealand-shooting-gunman-rifles-white-supremacist-symbols-memes/>.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 23.

immigration of Muslims into Europe.¹⁵⁴ While Tarrant never outright called himself an Identitarian, the movement's beliefs shaped his rhetoric. Tarrant repeatedly writes about the danger mass immigration poses on the European culture, "the crisis of mass immigration and sub-replacement fertility is an assault on the European people, that if not combated, will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people."¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, starting in 2017, Tarrant donated thousands of dollars to Identitarian leaders and groups throughout France and the rest of Europe, even exchanging emails with Martin Sellner, the leader of the Austrian identitarian movement.¹⁵⁶

Tarrant was also inspired by eco-fascism, an obscure but increasingly prevalent ideology in far-right circles. Eco-fascism combines fascist politics with environmental concern and rhetoric. More specifically, "eco-fascists are tied up in racist theories and believe that the degradation of the natural environment leads to the degradation of their culture and their people."¹⁵⁷ Tarrant intertwines his identitarian and Great Replacement views with eco-fascism. Tarrant writes, "the environment is being destroyed by overpopulation, we Europeans are one of the groups that are not over populating the world. The invaders are the ones over populating the world. Kill the invaders, kill the overpopulation and by doing so save the environment."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ "American Racists Work to Spread 'Identitarian Ideology.'" *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 12 Oct. 2015, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2015/10/12/american-racists-work-spread-%E2%80%98identitarian%E2%80%99-ideology>.

¹⁵⁵ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 5.

¹⁵⁶ Royal Commission. "General Life in New Zealand."

¹⁵⁷ Alistair Walsh. "Eco-Fascism: The Greenwashing of the Far Right." *DW*, 19 May 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/what-is-eco-fascism-the-greenwashing-of-the-far-right-terrorism-climate-change-buffalo-shooter/a-61867605>.

¹⁵⁸ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*. pp. 29.

Patrick Crusius

Background

Patrick Crusius grew up in Allen, Texas, a majority-white Dallas suburb. In Junior high and high school, Crusius kept to himself. Neighbors said that as a child, Crusius was “very much a loner, very standoffish.”¹⁵⁹ A classmate that walked to school with Crusius and his sister recalled that Crusius would never interact on the walks, either walking a few steps ahead or behind the group. In class, Crusius was “very strong-minded,” attempting to take control of classwork; however, other students avoided him because he was “irritable and had a short temper.”¹⁶⁰ Crusius’ attitude in school and his outfits that looked like hand-me-downs led to relentless bullying.¹⁶¹ In high school, Crusius was reportedly bullied by Spanish-speaking students who would push him around in the halls and call him names.¹⁶² A classmate that was friendly with him recalled that Crusius “started getting more depressed closer to the end of junior year. He started wearing a trench coat to school and becoming more antisocial and withdrawn.”¹⁶³ In 2011, while Crusius was in middle school, his parents divorced because of his father’s problems with drugs and alcohol. After his parent’s divorce, Crusius lived with his mother, twin sister, and older brother until 2017, when he started attending Collin College and moved in with his grandparents.¹⁶⁴

Radicalization and Planning

In college, Crusius showed signs of disillusionment with his life and society. On his LinkedIn profile, Crusius wrote, “I’m not really motivated to do anything more than what’s necessary to get by.

¹⁵⁹ Adma Elmahrek, Melissa Etehad, and Matthew Ormseth. “Suspect in El Paso Massacre ‘Didn’t Hold Anything Back’ In Police Interrogation.” *Los Angeles Times*, 4 Aug. 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-08-03/what-we-know-about-patrick-crusius-el-paso-rampage>.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Rachel Chason et al. “As His Environment Changed, Suspect in El Paso Shooting Learned to Hate.” *The Washington Post*, 9 Aug. 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/as-his-environment-changed-suspect-in-el-paso-shooting-learned-to-hate/2019/08/09/8ebabf2c-817b-40a3-a79e-e56fbac94cd5_story.html.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Working in general sucks, but I guess a career in Software Development suits me well,” and under skills, he wrote “Nothing really.”¹⁶⁵ Outside of class, Crusius seemed to spend most of his time online, writing on LinkedIn, “I spend about 8 hours every day on the computer so that counts toward technology experience I guess.”¹⁶⁶ The internet seems to be where Crusius became radicalized. On Twitter, under the handle @outsider609, Crusius espoused support for Trump and some of Trump’s policies, such as the border wall, but did not share any extremist views.¹⁶⁷ However, in his manifesto, which was posted to 8chan before the attack, Crusius wrote, “my ideology has not changed for several years. My opinions on automation, immigration, and the rest predate Trump and his campaign for president,” implying that his radical views may have predated 2016.¹⁶⁸ What is clear is that Tarrant and his manifesto directly inspired Crusius’ violent mobilization. Crusius wrote, “In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto,” and “actually the Hispanic community was not my target before I read the Great Replacement.”¹⁶⁹

According to his family, Crusius showed little indication of radicalization or a political shift.¹⁷⁰ In his manifesto Crusius claims that he only began planning the attack about a month before he committed it, writing, “I didn’t spend much time at all preparing for this attack. Maybe a month, probably less.”¹⁷¹ Six weeks before the attack, Crusius moved out of his grandparents’ house; it is unclear if this was when he began planning his attack. The only outside indication that he was planning something came when his mother found out he ordered an AK-type gun. Worried about him handling a gun with his lack of

¹⁶⁵ Claire Z. Cardona. “What We Know About the El Paso Massacre Suspect and His Ties to North Texas.” *The Dallas Morning News*, 5 Aug. 2019, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/crime/2019/08/05/what-we-know-about-the-el-paso-massacre-suspect-and-his-ties-to-north-texas/>.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Jessica McBride. “Patrick Crusius: Suspect’s Twitter Page Shows Trump Support.” *Heavy*, 4 Aug. 2019, <https://heavy.com/news/2019/08/patrick-crusius-social-media-trump-twitter/>.

¹⁶⁸ Patrick Crusius. *The Inconvenient Truth*. 3 Aug. 2019, pp. 5.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 1.

¹⁷⁰ Erin Ailworth, Georgia Wells, and Ian Lovett. “Lost in Life, El Paso Suspect Found a Dark World Online.” *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 Aug. 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/lost-in-life-el-paso-suspect-found-a-dark-world-online-11565308783>.

¹⁷¹ Crusius. *The Inconvenient Truth*. pp. 3.

experience, she called the police, but since he was legally allowed to own the gun and there was no indication that he planned to use it violently, she was told the police could do nothing.¹⁷²

The Attack

On August 3rd, 2019, Crusius attacked a Walmart in El Paso, Texas. Crusius targeted Latinos, killing 23 people and injuring 23 more. The attack was the deadliest attack against Hispanics in US history.¹⁷³ Crusius selected Walmart as a target because he knew there would be plenty of people there and security would be light.¹⁷⁴ He chose a Walmart in El Paso because it was far from his home, so there was little chance he would run into family or acquaintances as he planned to escape at the end of the attack without being caught or recognized.¹⁷⁵ When arrested, Crusius told police that he explicitly targeted Mexicans.¹⁷⁶

Manifesto and Ideology

Crusius published his manifesto on 8chan minutes before his attack.¹⁷⁷ Unlike Tarrant's manifesto, Crusius' manifesto is straightforward and contains very little direct 4chan memes or references. It covers Crusius' general beliefs and advice for future attackers. After starting the manifesto by directly stating that the attack was in response to the Great Replacement and inspired by Tarrant, Crusius lays out his political and economic reasoning.¹⁷⁸ Like Tarrant, Crusius' ideology is complicated. The basis for many of Crusius' ideological arguments seem to stem from traditional Conservative political beliefs. For example, much of Crusius' reasoning for his attack centers around the belief that

¹⁷² Ailworth, Wells, and Lovett. "Lost in Life, El Paso Suspect Found a Dark World Online."

¹⁷³ Cynthia Silva. "'White Supremacy, Racism': Remembering the El Paso Massacre that Targeted Latinos." *NBC News*, 3 Aug. 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/white-supremacy-racism-remembering-el-paso-massacre-targeted-latinos-rcna1580>.

¹⁷⁴ Crusius. *The Inconvenient Truth*.

¹⁷⁵ Ed Lavadera and Jason Hanna. "El Paso Suspect Told Police He was Targeting Mexicans, Affidavit Says." *CNN*, 9 Aug. 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/09/us/el-paso-shooting-friday/index.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Crusius. *The Inconvenient Truth*.

immigrants are taking jobs from Americans. However, Crusius' belief in the Great Replacement twists his fears about immigrants and the job market and makes them more extreme. Specifically, Crusius argues that while he believes "automation is a good thing as it will eliminate the need for new migrants to fill unskilled jobs," the real issue is that even if immigration is slowed, the high birth rate of immigrants currently in America still poses a threat.¹⁷⁹ Crusius explains that he believes the real threat is the high birthrate of the "invaders" whose children will increasingly take all the skilled jobs making a "very difficult situation ... for natives as they compete in the skilled job market" and leaving many "natives" jobless. Crusius fears that the increased joblessness of the "native" population would then lead to civil unrest and the breakdown of society.¹⁸⁰

Crusius blames corporations and US political parties for the Great Replacement, a departure from Great Replacement adherents who typically blame Jews. Of the political parties, Crusius mainly blames the Democrats, claiming that they are participating in "one of the biggest betrayals of the American public in our history."¹⁸¹ Specifically, Crusius believes that Democrats support Hispanic immigration into Texas and other southern states in a ploy to win more states in future elections, create a one-party system, and seize complete control of the government. Crusius also blames the Republicans but considers them more "complacent" because of their pro-corporation policies than directly at fault like the Democrats.¹⁸² This again reflects that the stem of Crusius' beliefs seem to have arisen from typical conservative views made more extreme by the Great Replacement. Crusius also blames corporations, claiming that they support mass immigration so they can fill their unskilled labor needs and keep wages low. Crusius blames corporations for the destruction of the environment as well. While he does not outwardly call himself an eco-fascist, Crusius' rhetoric does reflect eco-fascist views. He argues that by encouraging immigration

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 2.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 1.

¹⁸² Ibid.

into America, corporations are destroying the environment, and the only solution is “[getting] rid of enough people.”¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Ibid, pp. 3.

Payton Gendron

Childhood

Payton Gendron was born in Conklin, New York, on June 20, 2003. While not much information is available about his childhood, Gendron's case is unique since his radicalization and planning process is documented in his own words in an online diary that he published along with his manifesto. Under the screen name "Jimboiiii", Gendron used a personal server on the messaging platform Discord to share his thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about his planned attack. The digital diary started in November 2021 and amassed thousands of posts, ending with a final post on May 13th, 2022, the day before the attack.¹⁸⁴ While Gendron's writing cannot always be taken at face value, it still gives a window into his psyche and beliefs.

Gendron's childhood paints a picture of a troubled and lonesome young man. Classmates recall Gendron as generally smart but strange. One classmate said, "most people didn't associate with him. They didn't want to be known as friends with a kid who was socially awkward and nerdy."¹⁸⁵ Gendron would make strange jokes and pranks at school that often would not go over well with other students, such as coming to class wearing a full hazmat suit.¹⁸⁶ In his writing, Gendron often reflects on his solitude, recalling old friends and relatives he lost contact with. About a week before his attack, Gendron wrote, "Sometimes my cousins were there, which made it more fun... but after I turned 11 ...they stopped coming over, and I didn't see them much afterwards... From first grade to eighth grade, my best friend was Joe, ... eventually we stopped talking to each other... Matt has been my friend since third grade. We talk some nowadays and I would consider him my only friend. Sadly we don't talk like we used to

¹⁸⁴ Dan Frosch et al. "Buffalo Shooter's 673-Page Diary Reveals Descent Into Racist Extremism." *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 May 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/buffalo-shooting-supermarket-673-page-diary-reveals-suspects-descent-into-racist-extremism-11652814938>.

¹⁸⁵ Bernard Condon and Michael Hill. "Buffalo Suspect: Lonely, Isolated – With a Troubling Sign." *AP News*, 17 May 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/buffalo-supermarket-shooting-government-and-politics-race-ethnicity-978bddfec22344fe73e30ca34f491784>.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

anymore.”¹⁸⁷ Passages like this are frequent in the diary. Between writing about potential targets and what guns he will use, Gendron often writes long, self-reflective messages in which he fondly recalls his time in boy scouts (which he left) or playing with friends (who he no longer sees). Gendron repeatedly states that as he grew up, lost friends, became more isolated, and felt his life was just “blank.”¹⁸⁸ However, Gendron was not completely isolated from his peers. In his diary he writes about friends reaching out to him to make plans over the summer.¹⁸⁹ He also went shooting with friends while he was plotting the attack and visited a friend the day before the attack.¹⁹⁰

Gendron’s writing also implies that he felt isolated from his siblings and parents. Gendron rarely writes about his parents, other than his attempts to hide what he is doing from them, but on multiple occasions, he gives advice on how parents should act. One of the few times that Gendron directly references his parents reveals a potentially strained relationship. Gendron writes:

“be there for your children, as a parent you shall not embarrass, humiliate, or ridicule your child. This will not help them grow and instead only hurt them. Make sure you spend time with your child as well, and get meaningful experiences. My parents know little about me, they don’t know ... about the hundreds of dollars I’ve spent on ammo. They don’t know that I spent close to \$1000 on random military shit...Talk about their problems and ways to solve it and NEVER make them feel bad for coming to you.”¹⁹¹

Implying that he was not close with his parents and did not feel he could go to them for help.

Gendron’s writing also points to a history of bullying and emotional struggles that played a part in his radicalization. Gendron claims he had a history of being bullied by black students at school. He claims that a black classmate “kept clapping her hands over my ears, which gave me intense pain and tinnitus. And she thought it was funny. People saw too btw, and nothing happened.”¹⁹² Gendron says that

¹⁸⁷ Payton Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” 14 May 2022, pp. 613.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 612.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Kate Briquetelet and Justin Rohrlich. “Buffalo Shooter Dumped Ammo at Pal’s Home Day Before Attack, Friend Says.” *Daily Beast*, 17 May 2022, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/buffalo-tops-supermarket-shooter-payton-gendron-dumped-ammo-at-pals-home-days-before-attack-friend-says>.

¹⁹¹ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” pp. 189.

¹⁹² Ibid, pp. 616.

this experience and others like it primed him for his radicalization, writing, “these experiences didn’t make me racist against blacks though, [maybe] uncomfortable around the majority of them, since I only relate them to trouble.”¹⁹³ While verifying the veracity of these specific bullying claims is impossible, especially since the experiences are most likely retroactively tainted by Gendron’s racist views, they still point to a history of bullying that pushed Gendron to isolation.

Radicalization

Gendron’s radicalization began in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown.¹⁹⁴ Gendron was an avid internet user and videogame player. While not directly at fault, video games seem to have set Gendron down the path to eventual radicalization. He explains that his path to radicalization started from an interest in guns gained from the video game Roblox, “playing Apocalypse Rising on Roblox gave me interests in survival and guns, which led me hunting and shooting, which gave me tinnitus and deeper interests in firearms.”¹⁹⁵ During the lockdowns, Gendron’s isolation was heightened, causing him to spend more time online where, in May 2020, his interest in guns led him to /k/, a 4chan board dedicated to guns. Gendron’s time on 4chan eventually led him to the political board /pol/.¹⁹⁶ Gendron’s radicalization began on /pol/, he writes, “my current beliefs started when I first started to use 4chan a few months after covid started. Many of which I got from 4chan’s /pol/ page.”¹⁹⁷ On /pol/ Gendron learned about pseudo-scientific race theories and the Great Replacement conspiracy. Gendron claims that he gained his racist views, and his radicalization began when “4chan started giving me facts that [other races] were intellectually and emotionally inferior.”¹⁹⁸ Gendron says that reading about scientific racism

¹⁹³ Ibid,

¹⁹⁴ Matthew Kriner, Erica Barbarossa, and Isabela Bernardo. “The Buffalo Terrorist Attack: Situating Lone Actor Violence into the Military Accelerationism Landscape.” *Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey*, July 2022, <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/sites/www.middlebury.edu.institute/files/2022-07/The%20Buffalo%20Terrorist%20Attack.pdf?fv=8vaUrIkZ>.

¹⁹⁵ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” pp. 13.

¹⁹⁶ Kriner, Barbaross, and Bernardo. “The Buffalo Terrorist Attack: Situating Lone Actor Violence into the Military Accelerationism Landscape.”

¹⁹⁷ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” Pp. 88.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 616.

on 4chan eventually led him to antisemitic narratives which taught him about the Great Replacement, “then I saw how the Jews brought them over as slaves, how Jews funded leftism, and how they teach us to be ashamed of our heritage.”¹⁹⁹ From /pol/, Gendron found other extremist sites, such as Daily Stormer, where he became increasingly radicalized and inoculated into the belief system.²⁰⁰

Of everything Gendron learned on 4chan and other sites, the Great Replacement seems to have had the most significant impact on him. Gendron claims that after learning about the conspiracy, he initially planned to kill himself, “eventually I couldn’t take it anymore, I told myself that eventually, I was going to kill myself to escape this fate. My race was doomed, and there was nothing I could do about it” and “I was going to kill myself, I didn’t want to see our decay and our death. I didn’t want to be the victim of their random acts of violence.”²⁰¹ In May 2021, Gendron’s suicidal ideations almost got him in trouble. In an online assignment for one of his classes, he was asked, “what do you want to do when you retire” to which he responded, “murder-suicide.” Gendron’s teacher reported him, and he was taken to an ER, where his mental health was assessed. Gendron repeatedly writes about this traumatic experience in his diary, “that day in May 2021 changed a lot for me. I had to spend ~20 hours in that ER waiting for somebody to give me 15 minutes to talk to me. This proved to me that the US healthcare system is a joke, if the intention here is to help people heal, then they are doing a very shitty job doing it. I know it doesn’t seem very significant but to me it was.”²⁰² Gendron constantly writes about his suicidal thoughts and even says that he would have killed himself after the trip to the ER if he had not found Brenton Tarrant, writing, “I was going to kill myself... but then I saw Brenton Tarrant kill 44 Muslims at Al Noor mosque. And I realized that hope is not over, that our Replacement can be overturned.”²⁰³

While Gendron was radicalized before discovering Tarrant, Tarrant was an important factor in his mobilization to violent radicalization. Gendron writes, “Tarrant was a catalyst for me personally. He

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Payton Gendron. “Manifesto.” 14 May 2022.

²⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 13.

²⁰² Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” pp. 88.

²⁰³ Ibid, pp. 616.

showed me that it could be done. And that it needed to be done” and “reading Tarrants [sic] manifesto gave me motivation to attack.”²⁰⁴ Gendron’s obsession with Tarrant sometimes borders on worship, a byproduct of the 4chan and 8chan concept of “saintdom.” In far-right online communities like 4chan and 8chan, individuals like Brenton Tarrant are placed on a pedestal and called saints because of their attacks. These individuals are “memed” about and revered as heroes in the community. Those who are inspired by “saints” to carry out attacks are often called “disciples” or “saints” themselves.²⁰⁵ The community’s obsession with “saints” encourages others to follow in their footsteps because they will live in infamy online if they perform a successful attack. While it is unclear if part of Gendron’s goal in his attack was to reach “saintdom,” it is clear that in his mind, his diary is written with these communities in mind as his audience. Gendron often writes as though he is directly addressing a group of future readers. He frequently apologizes to this imagined audience when he feels he has failed to meet their expectations, for example, writing, “sorry guys I’m bad at planning I guess,” when he had to postpone his attack.²⁰⁶ While Gendron may not have foreseen himself becoming a “saint” in the community, he clearly wanted to ingratiate himself with the community and make them proud by following in Tarrant’s footsteps.

Planning

Gendron began planning his attack sometime in late 2021 after he graduated high school and started attending SUNY Broome Community College for Engineering Science.²⁰⁷ Gendron started his Discord diary on November 18, 2021. Even though he began the diary in November, Gendron seems to have planned to kill himself at the time, writing, “I was going to kill myself in December” and “this was originally a suicide discord, I wasn’t serious about the attack until a few weeks ago.”²⁰⁸ However, on

²⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 538.

²⁰⁵ Kriner, Barbaross, and Bernardo. “The Buffalo Terrorist Attack: Situating Lone Actor Violence into the Military Accelerationism Landscape.”

²⁰⁶ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.”

²⁰⁷ Kriner, Barbaross, and Bernardo. “The Buffalo Terrorist Attack: Situating Lone Actor Violence into the Military Accelerationism Landscape.”

²⁰⁸ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” pp. 334.

January 14th, 2022, Gendron seems to have officially decided to carry out the attack, writing, “there is no turning back now, I am fully committed to using all my resources and power to commit this attack.”²⁰⁹

Gendron’s planning was influenced by suggestions for future attackers that Tarrant made in his manifesto. Like Tarrant, Gendron planned to live stream his attack. Gendron also attempted to follow Tarrant’s advice on keeping a strict exercise and diet regimen to be in peak physical condition. Tarrant’s influence is also evident in Gendron’s initial plan to perform his attack on March 15th, 2022, the third anniversary of the Christchurch shooting. However, due to extenuating circumstances, Gendron delayed the attack.²¹⁰

Most of Gendron’s planning was centered on finding an ideal target and load-out for the attack. Like Tarrant, Gendron was very methodical in his planning. To find a target, Gendron looked at census data to find ZIP codes in New York with the highest percentage black population. He eventually landed on Buffalo, which had a 78% black population. Gendron felt uncomfortable attacking a church or a school, so he took inspiration from Patrick Crusius’ suggestion to find soft targets with little security.²¹¹ Gendron eventually selected a Tops Friendly Market as his target. Like Tarrant, Gendron methodically mapped out his attack location, driving the three-and-half hours to Buffalo twice before to surveil the location, see how busy it was, and map out his plan. Taking Crusius’s advice in mind, he tracked the path of the store’s armed security guard and planned to attack him first. Gendron also spent a lot of time attempting to perfect his guns and body armor for the attack. Gendron’s obsession with guns and tactical gear led to his diary being filled with his writing on the best gear for an attack. He began selling many of his possessions to afford the gear he was buying.²¹²

While much of Gendron’s diary involves his planning, his frequent self-reflection is more interesting and reveals the most about his radicalization and psyche while he planned. Gendron writes about how he would “love to pursue [engineering]” and how he “[wishes he] could be an engineer and

²⁰⁹ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” pp. 52.

²¹⁰ Kriner, Barbaross, and Bernardo. “The Buffalo Terrorist Attack: Situating Lone Actor Violence into the Military Accelerationism Landscape.”

²¹¹ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.”

²¹² Ibid.

save lives,” however, in his mind, he would then “be ignoring the cries of help from [his] people, [who were] being genocided.”²¹³ This reveals how conspiracies and racism twisted Gendron’s mind.

Throughout his writing, Gendron is idealistic, discussing his hopes for the future and how he wanted to save the world from climate change and other disasters through engineering. However, conspiracies led him to believe that Jews and other minorities were weakening the “white race” and causing climate change. The conspiracies made Gendron believe that any good he could do as an engineer would be useless if other races became the majority in America.²¹⁴ The Great Replacement and racist pseudoscience twisted Gendron’s dreams and made him believe that he could never achieve them because he would be replaced before he could. Understanding this is central to understanding Gendron because it explains his repeated hopelessness.

Gendron’s hopelessness is displayed in his suicidal ideations that increased as he approached the attack. From his diary’s beginning, Gendron seems conflicted about an attack. Gendron frequently writes about how he would rather die than attack. In March 2021, the day after first visiting Buffalo, Gendron wrote, “suicide seems very tempting right now,” and a few days later, “everything’s wrong suicide is such an easier way out but it is cowardly.”²¹⁵ Much of Gendron’s suicidal ideation seems to arise from his notion that his only viable options were killing himself or attacking. As Gendron got closer to his attack date, he began skipping his college classes to write his manifesto or to practice shooting. Gendron commuted to college from home, and so he lied to his parents about continuing to attend class. In April 2022, Gendron was expelled from college after skipping too many classes; however, he continued to lie to his parents.²¹⁶ Without college Gendron no longer had a way to fulfill his dreams of becoming an engineer and seemingly felt even more so that his only options were suicide or attack. Gendron’s suicidal ideations were not his only problem. Gendron also writes about his fears of getting killed in the attack and

²¹³ Ibid, pp. 556.

²¹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 328.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

killing innocent people. However, whenever he began to think this way and doubt his attack, he almost always shared racist memes or narratives to convince himself his plans were righteous and the best option. One example of this comes in March 2022 when Gendron writes:

“Guys I don’t think I can do this, I know this is the right thing but how am I supposed to actually walk up and shoot and kill people? I can’t go back to school I’m missing so many classes, literally the only way out is suicide What’s my personal happiness worth anyways? I wish I didn’t have to kill these people. This is the only way. This is the way. WE will die out and humanity will fail if WE don’t take back our lands. This is for all that have fallen already, and for the children of the future”²¹⁷

Gendron’s thought process can be seen in this message as he convinces himself what he is doing is morally right and that any doubts he might have do not matter. Another common topic that Gendron brings up whenever he begins to doubt his attack is the concept of fate. Gendron repeatedly claims that he is not in control of his actions or radicalization, but fate is at fault. Gendron writes, “I am trapped to this fate, I can’t back out, I have to do this” and “anything I do it leads me to the same fate, I can’t escape. In fact this attack existed before I was even born.”²¹⁸ By constantly reinforcing his racist beliefs through memes and distancing himself from his actions through the concept of fate, Gendron avoided his suicidal thoughts and fears and kept himself on the path of attack.

In the immediate months before the attack, Gendron displayed suspicious behaviors but was not caught. In March 2022, Gendron received a speeding ticket while he was supposed to be in class but was hours away from home on his way to Buffalo instead. The ticket was mailed home, and his father found it and confronted him. Gendron convinced his parents that he had decided to skip class that day to go hiking at a State park.²¹⁹ In the same month, Gendron heard his cat being attacked in the garage, and when he went out, he saw a feral cat fighting with her. He chased the cat around the garage for nearly an hour, stabbing it until it fell over. He then cut the cat’s head off. Gendron called his mom, who saw what he did and gave him a box to bury the cat. Gendron writes, “I don’t feel anything about killing that cat. I thought

²¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 374.

²¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 361.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

I would be in pain but I literally just feel blank.”²²⁰ Gendron did not write about this incident again; there is no indication that his parents talked to him about it or were worried about his extreme violence.

The Attack

On May 14th, 2022, Gendron attacked Tops Friendly Markets supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Gendron killed 10 people and injured 3. 30 minutes before the attack, he invited a small group of Discord users to his diary, posted a link to his live stream on 8chan, and published a manifesto online. Like Tarrant, Gendron live-streamed his attack; however, his stream only captured part of the attack before it was taken down by Twitch.²²¹ Also, like Tarrant, Gendron wrote phrases and names on his gun. Some names, like Ebba Akerlund, were taken directly from Tarrant’s guns. Other names were individuals who had carried out Great Replacement terror attacks, such as Brenton Tarrant and Robert Bowers, reflecting their importance in Gendron’s radicalization.²²²

Manifesto and Ideology

Along with his discord logs, Gendron published a 180-page manifesto. Gendron’s manifesto includes extensive sections lifted from other manifestos. 63% of Gendron’s manifesto overlaps with Tarrant’s, and 23% is direct plagiarism from Tarrant.²²³ Gendron explains his plagiarism by writing, “I stole lots of info from Tarrant because I can’t say it any better.”²²⁴ Gendron plagiarized other manifestos, including the Unabomber’s, Patrick Crusius’, and John Earnest’s.²²⁵ Much of Gendron’s own writing

²²⁰ Ibid, pp. 379.

²²¹ Kriner, Barbaross, and Bernardo. “The Buffalo Terrorist Attack: Situating Lone Actor Violence into the Military Accelerationism Landscape.”

²²² Gendron. “Discord Transcript.”

²²³ “Investigative Report: On the Role of Online Platforms in the Tragic Mass Shooting in Buffalo on May 14, 2022.” *Office of the New York State Attorney General*, 18 Oct. 2022, <https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/buffaloshooting-onlineplatformsreport.pdf>.

²²⁴ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” pp. 401.

²²⁵ Amarnath Amarasingam, Marc-Andre Argentino, and Graham Macklin. “The Buffalo Attack: The Cumulative Momentum fo Far-Right Terror.” *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 15, no. 7, Jul7 2022, pp. 1-10, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/CTC-SENTINEL-072022.pdf>.

concerns body armor, weapons, and scientific racism. Gendron's section on guns and body armor is especially notable because he attempted to create an extensive list of the best types of weapons, weapon modifications, and body armor for future attackers.²²⁶ In Gendron's section on scientific racism, he wrote most about black Americans and Jews. Gendron believes Jews are the instigators of the Great Replacement and backs his claims with racist and misleading memes and infographics from 4chan as evidence. These are not the only memes in the manifesto; like Tarrant, Gendron scatters internet memes throughout. These memes are meant to misdirect outsiders who are not in on the jokes and to serve as cultural touchstones for the community members for whom Gendron wrote the manifesto.

Much like Tarrant and Crusius, Gendron's ideology is a mixed bag of beliefs. Tarrant's influence on Gendron is evident in Gendron's central identitarian beliefs and rhetoric. Like Tarrant, Gendron also writes that he is an eco-fascist, "preventing white genocide is top on the list of things I want. Followed by preservation of our Earth. Eco-fascism is how these goals can be met, therefore I support eco-fascism."²²⁷ Where Gendron differs from Tarrant and other Great Replacement terrorists is his focus on scientific racism as a basis for his beliefs. Scientific theories about different races being different species or being predisposed to higher-or-lower levels of intelligence have been disproven as pseudoscience, but they still permeate many far-right circles.²²⁸ Gendron's belief in scientific racism is mainly focused on the debunked theories that individuals of African descent are genetically predisposed to lower IQs and higher crime. While Tarrant's predominantly identitarian beliefs influenced his fears about the Great Replacement to center around the destruction of European culture, Gendron's focus on scientific racism led him to believe that the Great Replacement would lead to the complete collapse of all society because races that were the new majority would not be smart or capable enough to lead. Gendron writes, "we have

²²⁶ Gendron "Manifesto."

²²⁷ Ibid, pp. 626.

²²⁸ William H. Tucker. "The Ideology of Racism: Misusing Science to Justify Racial Discrimination." *UN Chronicle*, <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/ideology-racism-misusing-science-justify-racial-discrimination>.

to fight the Great Replacements or it will end us all” and “Jews and blacks can not function without aid from Whites. They must be removed from our civilization.”²²⁹

²²⁹ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.” pp. 368.

Chapter 6

Analysis

Case Trends

All three terrorists share similar social backgrounds. As children, they grew up in middle class majority-white neighborhoods and had generally supportive home environments. Aside from familial relations, all three were loners who became increasingly isolated as they were radicalized. Their isolation and disconnection from peers may have arisen partially from bullying they suffered in school. Crusius in particular seemed to be affected by bullying as he became more withdrawn and isolated as it worsened his junior year of high school. However, none of the three were completely isolated. Tarrant and Crusius reportedly had good relationships with their family and seemingly stayed close to them even while they radicalized. Gendron is the exception to this, as his writing displays that he felt his parents did not understand or care about him. However, Gendron was also not completely isolated since he still had friends, even visiting one the day before his attack. Even so, Gendron's own writing displays that he perceived himself as isolated from his peers. All three were also frequent users of 4chan and 8chan. While it is unknown when Crusius began using the site it is known that both Tarrant and Gendron began browsing 4chan at the young and relatively susceptible ages of 14 and 16 respectively. The internet communities these young men found on 4chan may have served as community for the disaffected youths who were isolated from their peers. The websites seem to have been central radicalizing agents in all three of the cases.

While all three had similar attack tactics, the similarities stem more from Tarrant's direct influence on Gendron and Crusius than anything else. An interesting difference between the cases, however, is the differing ideologies. While all three were centrally focused on the Great Replacement and

both Crusius and Gendron followed Tarrant in suit by calling themselves eco-fascists, the basis for their ideologies were slightly different. Tarrant was much more focused on identitarian beliefs and classical fascism. Tarrant's rhetoric and arguments are much more centered on an imagined history of a monolithic white race and European culture. Tarrant also directly sights classical fascists, such Oswald Mosley, as his main inspirations.²³⁰ Crusius' ideology, on the other hand, has an ideological basis that fits in more with the Republican party of the United States. Crusius' arguments are built around typical Conservative beliefs that immigrants are stealing jobs, but Crusius takes these beliefs to the next level by intertwining them with the Great Replacement. Finally, Gendron's beliefs were built from scientific racism which he learned about before the he learned about the Great Replacement. Even though Crusius and Gendron were inspired by Tarrant, their differing ideologies supports past claims that lone wolf terrorists tend to hold idiosyncratic beliefs.

A final interesting between the cases is the choice of target. Although all three were inspired by the same conspiracy they chose different targets, Tarrant chose Muslims, Crusius chose Hispanics, and Gendron chose black Americans. While this is hard to confirm, the selection of targets may have arisen from the environments within which the terrorists lived and traveled. Tarrant was travelling through Europe while radicalizing where a lot of immigrants were Muslim and Crusius lived in a rapidly diversifying part of Texas where most immigrants were Hispanic. Gendron may have been the only exception to this because his ideology was so steeped in scientific racism that was focused on black Americans that he may have chosen to attack them rather than attempting to attack actual immigrants.

Moghaddam's Staircase Model of Radicalization

On the ground floor of Moghaddam's Staircase, perceptions of fairness and deprivation dictate movement to the first floor. Perceived deprivation is typically classified as either fraternal or egotistical with perceptions of fraternal deprivation linked more commonly to collective action and terrorism. All three terrorists perceived fraternal deprivation, viewing themselves as part of a white, Eurocentric in-group that they believed was increasingly deprived of opportunities and rights. Specifically, all three believed that a threat to their cultural identity existed through the form of the Great Replacement. Tarrant for example writes "this crisis of mass immigration and sub-replacement fertility is an assault on the European people, that if not combated, will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people."²³¹ Commonly, perceived deprivation relates to how individuals perceive their current position in society relative to others; however, all three terrorists were not focused on their present deprivation but instead on their fears for future deprivation. While the three individually cited examples of how they believed the Great Replacement had already caused harm, such as the death of Ebba Akerlund, they all believed that the true threat of deprivation was yet to come and would not occur until white people became the minority. As Moghaddam explains, an important aspect of perceived deprivation is the sense that an individual's "path has been blocked to a desired goal" which narrows an individual's possible exits from the path of radicalization.²³² This is reflected Gendron's diary where he repeatedly writes about how he wanted to be an engineer but because of the Great Replacement he would never get the chance, writing at one point, "currently I am in SUNY Broome Community College for Engineering Science, Would love to pursue this but bigger problems exist. What good will it be when all of my race is gone."²³³

²³¹ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*.

²³² Moghaddam. "The Staircase to Terrorism."

²³³ Gendron, "Discord Transcript."

On the first floor of the staircase, individuals seek normative ways to combat their perceived deprivation; however, if they believe that the pathways to normative solutions are blocked, they are likely to climb to the second floor. Another key factor on this floor is the ability to participate in decision-making processes and to be heard. If individuals receive a response from leaders that addresses their perceived deprivation, they are less likely to continue radicalizing. Loss of hope in the system is an integral aspect of all three cases. Tarrant specifically references his experience losing hope in the democracy as one of the main mobilizing factors in his radicalization, writing that after Macron won in 2017 his “believe in the democratic solution vanished.”²³⁴ Gendron also writes about his loss of trust in the system, writing “also know that both the republicans and democrats are controlled by the elite, changing from one side to the other doesn’t make much of a difference ... there is no democratic solution, anything but violence is a waste of time.”²³⁵ Crusius writes “peaceful means to stop this seem to be nearly impossible,” and later claims that both the Democrats and Republicans are at fault for the Great Replacement.²³⁶ Crusius clarifies that he believes there are “peaceful” solutions to the Great Replacement, such as mass deportation or the separation of America into independent ethno-states, but that they would be impossible in the current system. The conclusion in all three cases that normative solutions did not exist, and the system would not help was an important mobilizing factor for each terrorist.

On the second floor, anger and aggression developed from an inability to find a solution to perceived deprivation gets displaced onto target groups. This is the first floor that does not align well with the cases. Both Tarrant and Gendron seem to have been initially radicalized by racist conspiracies before developing a perception of deprivation. Gendron himself writes that his radicalization began with scientific racism which automatically gave him a target group to displace aggression on before he learned about the Great Replacement. Likewise, Tarrant seems to have initially been radicalized through racist claims online as evidenced by his early displays of racism and antisemitism in school. Both Gendron and

²³⁴ Tarrant. *The Great Replacement*.

²³⁵ Crusius. *The Inconvenient Truth*.

²³⁶ Ibid.

Tarrant were primed to blame immigrants and other races for the Great Replacement before they even learned about it.

On the third floor, individuals that want to physically displace their aggression become morally engaged with a terrorist group. Terror groups facilitate moral engagement through the encouragement of isolation, secrecy, and fear. Groups also frame themselves as the only feasible option to reform society and as a home for those who are disaffected and do not have community. Once individuals are morally engaged with a group, they typically continue to live their “normal” lives while simultaneously living a secretive parallel life. None of the cases in this study involved radicalization into a group; however, the internet communities that each terrorist found and was radicalized through can be stand-ins for traditional organized groups. While a majority of /pol/ users on 4chan and 8chan are not terrorists, their “worship” of past terrorists as “saints” and heroes of the “white race” can serve as encouragement that the only feasible way to combat the Great Replacement is through violent action. Furthermore, just like an organized terror group, 4chan and 8chan can serve as a community. The /pol/ boards on 4chan and 8chan have their own insular subculture formed in part from the boards’ memetic vernacular which is often inscrutable for outsiders. Being “in the know” about Chan memes and language creates a sense of community for users who may otherwise feel isolated. This seems to have had the greatest effect on Gendron who constantly references 4chan and 8chan narratives and memes and his inspiration, writing “every time I think maybe I shouldn’t commit an attack I spend 5 min on /pol/, then my motivation returns.”²³⁷ On the other hand, it is unclear how much Tarrant and Crusius were influenced by the community aspect of 4chan and 8chan since neither directly references the site nor their personal connection to it. However, the site still served as an agent for at least Tarrant’s moral engagement as evidenced by his claim to investigators that he developed many of his beliefs about the Great Replacement from 4chan. What is true of all three cases is that when they decided they wanted to physically displace their aggression through a terror attack they began living parallel, secretive lives. Tarrant and Crusius kept contact with their families to make it seem

²³⁷ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.”

like everything was normal but also self-isolated with Tarrant moving to New Zealand and Crusius moving out of his grandparents' house. The self-isolation made it easier for them to live a parallel life planning a terror attack while also seeming normal to their families. Gendron was the youngest attacker and had to keep living with his family but his parallel life is displayed through his lies that he was still going to college while he was instead plotting his attack.

On the fourth-floor individuals solidify their categorical thinking through us vs. them dichotomies. Like the second floor, the fourth-floor causes the linear nature of this model to collapse. While the social categorization of an in-group and out-group is central to the three cases, the categorization occurred before the perception of deprivation. In all three cases the perceived deprivation that initially led to the violent radicalization was presupposed on the us vs. them dichotomy encouraged by the Great Replacement. Specifically the perception that other races would replace the white race and destroy its culture in the future would not have existed without the initial social categorization central to the conspiracy. This is evident in Gendron's case where his perception of deprivation only developed after learning about the conspiracy, and believing that in the future white people would be "objectively, provably disadvantaged due to their race."

On the fifth and final floor terrorists prepare for an attack by sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms that typically stop people from killing innocents. On this floor innocents are categorized as part of the out-group and terrorists psychologically distance themselves from them by exaggerating their differences. Much of the psychological distancing in the cases seems to arise from scientific racism. Although out of the three Gendron focuses most on scientific racism as his justification for why other races are lesser, the other two also reference scientific racism. Crusius writes about how mixed-race children are bad for genetic reasons and Tarrant instructs that people should read about "haplogroups phenotypes, and globalized testing" to learn about racial differences. All three also psychologically distance themselves and dehumanize their targets through language. They call their targets "invaders" and "replacers" and Tarrant claims they are "colonizers," language used to frame immigrants as violent enemies arriving to

pillage and steal. Along the same lines all three reference the American subjugation and destruction of the native population as an example of the threat immigrants pose. Gendron's diary displays his personal struggle with overstepping the inhibitory mechanisms to attack innocents, writing frequently about how his targets are innocent and how he feels bad killing them before reminding himself how evil they are. Even so, Gendron still struggles to bypass all inhibitory mechanisms, writing that he feels morally wrong attacking schools or places of worship. Crusius has similar struggles, writing "even if other non-immigrant targets would have a greater impact, I can't bring myself to kill my fellow Americans. Even the Americans that seem hell-bent on destroying our country."²³⁸ Tarrant shows no remorse, writing about Muslim children "any invader you kill, of any age, is one less enemy"; however it is unclear if this was only Tarrant attempting to seem strong in his manifesto or if he truly believed this. Either way, dehumanizing their targets to sidestep inhibitory mechanisms was an essential final step in each cases' radicalization.

While Moghaddam's Staircase model of radicalization has merit when examining the psychological aspects of lone wolf radicalization, its strict, linear nature makes it impossible to accurately describe the process. While many of the basics of the model revealed common trends in the cases- such as the concepts of perceived deprivation, social categorization, and psychological distancing- the linear nature of the model is complicated by the individual nature of lone wolf radicalization. Since Lone wolf terrorists tend to radicalize in their own time and often with idiosyncratic ideologies, a model based around the structured radicalization of individuals into organized groups does not line up as well with lone wolf cases. Specifically, in all three cases the three lone wolf terrorists developed social categorizations that led to dehumanizing of another group before they even gained a perception of deprivation from the Great Replacement conspiracy. The psychological mechanisms of the model should still be considered while researching lone wolf terrorists, but the linear nature should be removed from analysis.

²³⁸ Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*

McCauley and Moskalkenko's Two-Pyramids Model of Radicalization

At the center of McCauley and Moskalkenko's Two-Pyramid model of radicalization is the concept that radicalization of opinion occurs separately from radicalization of action. This separation is displayed clearly in all three cases. Tarrant was a "justifier" on the opinion pyramid well before he moved to New Zealand. However, if his writing is to be believed, he did not begin radicalizing along the action pyramid until years after he first learned about the Great Replacements. Similarly, Crusius writes in his manifesto that he held radical beliefs for years but did not decide to commit to action until about a month before his attack. Gendron's writing gives the clearest indication that the forms of radicalization are separate. In his diary Gendron claims that after learning about the Great Replacement he planned to kill himself because he saw no other path forward in a world where he would be replaced. At the time he "justified" violence yet was "inert" in action. However after learning about Tarrant and other Great Replacement terrorists he realized "I could fight our replacement myself, finally I felt awakened ... I will take the fight to the invaders myself, I will stand up to defend my race from the decay."²³⁹ This realization moved Gendron one step up the opinion pyramid to "personal moral obligation" and all the way up the action pyramid to "terrorist."

Unlike the linear constraints placed on the staircase model, the two-pyramid model allows for movement up and down levels and the ability to skip over whole levels. While this fits better with the unique processes of radicalization, it makes it harder to trace a clear picture of an individual's radicalization. Furthermore, unlike Moghaddam in-depth psychological descriptions of each floor, McCauley and Moskalkenko's descriptions of each pyramid level are minimal. While this is not necessarily an issue, with the amount of information available for the cases in this study, it is nearly impossible to trace radicalization processes up and down the pyramids. However, Gendron's extensive writing can at least supply evidence of the merit of the non-linear nature of the pyramid model. By the

²³⁹ Gendron. "Discord Transcript."

time Gendron began writing his diary he had already reached the peak of both the opinion and action pyramids, however, as he prepared for his attack his level on the action pyramid frequently moved up and down. Gendron often voiced his fears and doubts about an attack, saying he did not want to attack and would rather kill himself. During these moments of self-doubt, he seemingly dropped to the “inert” level of the action pyramid since he was no longer doing anything for the political cause. However, while his action pyramid often shifted, his opinion pyramid did not as he would always convince himself it was better to attack than commit suicide because he was morally obligated to do so, “whenever I think I’d prefer suicide instead I tell myself its over anyways, might as well at least try to fight for your people.”²⁴⁰

The inability to trace the cases’ radicalization along the pyramids can partially be explained by the pyramid models’ challenge with lone wolf terrorism. As McCauley and Moskalenko admit themselves, the model was built to explore the radicalization of individuals in an organized group. When individuals are not part of a group, “it might appear that lone-wolf terrorists are indeed cases where radical opinion directly produces radical action” which directly goes against the model’s intent of visualizing the separation between opinion and action radicalization.²⁴¹ The action pyramid, in particular, is built to display increasing levels of group involvement as an individual gets inoculated into a group. This may explain why the cases in this study seem to have a clear development along the opinion pyramid but immediately jump from “inert” to “terrorist” on the action pyramid. In attempt to explain why most lone wolf terrorists have trouble fitting the model, McCauley and Moskalenko define two types of lone wolf terrorists, disconnected-disordered and caring-compelled. Caring-compelled terrorists serve as a larger obstacle to the model since caring-compelled lone wolf terrorists are the few whose action radicalization may actually be caused by their opinion radicalization. Categorizing the cases in this study into either the disconnected-disordered mold or the caring-compelled mold is challenging, especially Tarrant and Gendron. Of the five common characteristics of a disconnected-disordered lone wolf, Crusius

²⁴⁰ Gendron. “Discord Transcript.”

²⁴¹ McCauley and Moskalenko. “Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model.”

only has one (weak social ties) but Tarrant and Gendron have three (planful attack, weak social ties, experience with weapons outside of the military). At first glance Tarrant and Gendron seem to fit well as disconnected-disordered lone wolf terrorists, especially Gendron who was also motivated to attack by his search for an escape from his life, but examining their reasoning for attack and their targets complicates matters. While only Gendron could potentially be described as idealistic and none of the three can be described as normal or socially connected, all three terrorists feel deep personal moral obligation to protect the victims of what they perceive is white genocide. Personal moral obligation is a central aspect of caring-compelled terrorists. Tarrant's description of his action radicalization while sitting in front of the graveyard may be an example of a caring-compelled terrorist's opinions radicalizing their actions since he explains how his rage at the Great Replacement grew so strong he suddenly decided to plot an attack.

While using the two pyramid model to trace the radicalization of lone wolf terrorists does have issues, especially for caring compelled lone wolf terrorists, elements of the model are still useful and should be considered in future models. The non-linearity of the model accounts for the individuality of radicalization processes and makes it much easier to examine the wavering beliefs and goals of a lone wolf terrorist. The division between opinion radicalization and action radicalization is also a useful element of the two pyramid model since it can not only display the separate processes but also display how, like Gendron, some terrorists may move erratically along one radicalization process while remaining static on the other.

Hamm and Spaaij's Lone Wolf Model of Radicalization

Like the two-pyramid model, Hamm and Spaaij's lone wolf model is non-linear. Segments of the model can be skipped as no case that Hamm and Spaaij studied included all six portions of the cycle. The first stage of the cycle is personal and political grievances. Lone wolf terrorists are unique in that their ideologies are often extremely idiosyncratic and developed from an entanglement of political and personal grievances. All three terrorists share similar political grievances centered around the Great Replacement and, while it can be argued that all three experienced personal grievances, it is less clear how involved these were in their radicalization. Tarrant was physically abused by his mother's partner and found his dad's body after suicide. He claims these events did not affect him, however when he first began displaying racist views in school they were related to his mother's partner's aboriginal descent. This at least implies that the abuse he suffered may have inspired some of his racism. Crusius was bullied which pushed him towards isolation but based on his writing it does not seem that this created deep personal grievances that affected his ideology and radicalization. Finally, Gendron felt suicidal and was taken to an ER but had to wait for a long time before any doctors saw him, Gendron writes that this experience traumatized him and he had nightmares about waiting in the hospital for years after. Of the three cases this is the only one where there is a clear indication the grievances affected his political ideology and radicalization. Specifically, the fact that it took so long and no one seemed to care about what even he called a "cry for help" convinced him that there was no one in society that would listen to him so there were no normative solutions to the Great Replacement and he had to act violently.

The second stage of the cycle is affinity with online sympathizers or extremist groups. Affinity with online sympathizers was a central aspect of all three cases which is in line with the post-9/11 trends that Hamm and Spaaij found. 4chan were integral aspects for all three radicalizations since it is where all the learned about the Great Replacement and Gendron and Crusius learned about Tarrant who became one of their main inspirations to attack. 4chan served as a community for all three and so they sought ideological direction from it which came in the form of conspiracies and scientific racism.

The third stage of the cycle, enablers, was extremely important in the radicalization of Crusius and Gendron, and, to a lesser extent, the radicalization of Tarrant. All three of the cases involved indirect rather than direct enablers. Tarrant seemingly gained some inspiration from Breivik as an indirect enabler but it is unclear how large of an influence Breivik had on him. Tarrant's radicalization seems to have been situated much more around his own personal experiences while travelling and his own views on world events rather than through the encouragement of another party. Even so, Breivik did serve as an enabler in Tarrant's radicalization since Tarrant modeled some of his attack preparation off Breivik's suggestions. Indirect enablers are clearly present in both Crusius and Gendron's cases. Both directly cite Tarrant as their main inspiration specifically claiming that they would not have attacked if not for Tarrant's writing and own attack. On top of Tarrant both seem to have also viewed the /pol/ community as indirect enablers who encouraged their attacks through the spread of conspiracies and worship of Tarrant. The community's role as indirect enablers classifies them as stochastic terrorists.

The fourth stage of the cycle, broadcasting intent, occurred in all three cases. As Hamm and Spaaij explain broadcasting intent "may occur in the weeks, days, hours, and even minutes before an attack." This is displayed in each case where minutes before an attack each terrorist posted a manifesto online and Tarrant and Gendron posted a live stream link. Lone wolf terrorists broadcast their intent because they often feel a need to be renowned for their cause. The broadcasting of intent in all three cases is technically not a part of any of the cases' radicalization processes because it occurred well after radicalization, however, the need for renown that comes from broadcasting intent can reveal information about the radicalization process. The fact that all three broadcast intent shows that at least part of their attack was inspired by their desire to be recognized by the communities they found online as heroes. This is especially true for Gendron and Crusius who saw how Tarrant and others like him were worshipped as heroes. This desire for renown ties back into the search for community that occurred in the second stage with the affinity with online sympathizers.

The final stage in the cycle before the act of terror is a trigger event, which is usually the catalyst for an attack. In Tarrant and Gendron's cases there seem to have been accumulating trigger events that led to their decision to attack rather than experiencing a sharp triggering event. Tarrant specifically lays out what his three main triggering events were: the death of Ebba Akerlund, the election of Macron, and the large population of Muslims that he saw in French towns. Gendron's triggering events seems to have been more involved with what he read on 4chan than his own radicalization, he was triggered over time by the narratives he read about black crime and the Great Replacement. Finally, it is less clear if a trigger event was even involved in Crusius case. He does not go into great detail about why he suddenly decided to attack other than his statement that he would not have done so if he had not read Tarrant's manifesto. In his case there may not have even been a specific trigger event he may have just been triggered by reading the manifesto.

The final element of this model is the arrow that connects terrorism back to the initial stage. This arrow represents how some lone wolf terrorists commit copycat attacks. While Tarrant took inspiration from Breivik, his attack is not considered a copycat attack because he used different tactics. Crusius and Gendron, on the other hand, are clear cases of copycat attacks. Both used the same tactics as Tarrant, referenced him direct as their main inspirations for their attack and tactics, and even copied many of the unique, idiosyncratic aspects of his ideology. Both Gendron and Tarrant not only believe in the Great Replacement, for example, but also write about their belief in eco-fascism just like Tarrant. Gendron takes the copycat attack to the highest extreme by not only copying Tarrant's tactics but also by plagiarizing his writing and structuing his manifesto to be identical to Tarrant's because, as Gendron says, he could not have written Tarrant's messages better. This reveals the political aspect of the copycat attacks since it shows Gendron was copying Tarrant because his attack was successful and copying it could serve to spread Tarrant's message further.

Like the two-pyramid model, the non-linearity of Hamm and Spaaij's model made it easier to analyze the radicalization processes than the linearity of the staircase model. While the stages of this

model resulted in interesting analysis that the other models did not provide, such as the exploration of whether trigger events played a part in the any of the cases' radicalization, the model itself fails to serve as an adequate model of radicalization. A number of stages in the model have nothing to do with the actual radicalization process. Broadcasting intent, for example, may occur during the radicalization process but is not an element that affects the radicalization of a terrorist or a way of quantifying how radicalized a terrorist is. Where Moghaddam and McCauley and Moskalenko have models that display radicalization as a process, Hamm and Spaaij only provide a list events and elements that may influence or occur during the radicalization process but do not trace how that process moves or occurs. This is not to say this model has no merit. Since the stages in the model are based on a comprehensive study of lone wolf terrorists, they are important elements to consider when studying lone wolves. Furthermore, the arrow looping the end of the model back to the start and representing copycat attacks is a very useful element that other models do not have. Especially in the age of internet radicalization and the worship of past attackers, recognizing the propensity for copycat lone wolf attacks is important.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Far-right lone wolf terrorism is an increasing threat in America and the west. While attacks are still relatively rare, when they do occur, they are deadly and often target vulnerable populations. Gaining an understanding of how and why lone wolf terrorists radicalize is necessary to combat the growing threat. Great Replacement inspired attacks have been especially deadly and need to be better understood. This thesis set out to examine what trends could be found in the radicalization processes of lone wolf terrorists inspired by the Great Replacement. Through the use of case study analysis, trends were uncovered including the importance of online community in radicalization, perceptions of isolation from peers, and idiosyncratic ideologies.

This study also aimed to test existing radicalization models to find how well they could describe lone wolf radicalization and to develop suggestions for future lone wolf models. While none of the models served as perfect tools to explore the radicalization processes of the lone wolf terrorists in this study, they all had merit. The staircase model's use of psychological processes to explore the evolution of radicalization resulted in the most in-depth analysis of the three models; however, the model's linearity did not follow the actual radicalization processes of the terrorists. Future lone wolf models should involve research on similar psychological processes. McCauley and Moskaleiko's two-pyramid model's non-linearity and division between opinion radicalization and action radicalization solved some of the staircase model's linearity issues. However, the model's focus on group involvement made it challenging to analyze the action radicalization of lone wolf terrorists. Future lone wolf models should implement non-linearity, and, if possible, the action and opinion radicalization divide. Finally, while Hamm and Spaaij's model had issues analyzing the cases, some elements of the model such as the inclusion of the concept of copycat attacks were relevant to the cases. Future lone wolf models should adopt the concept of copycat attacks since the inspiration from another attacker can be an important part on the lone wolf radicalization process.

The findings in this study are merely preliminary and should be expanded on all fronts. Future research on far-right lone wolf radicalization should perform more extensive case studies incorporating a wider variety of attack types and motivations to see if the trends found here remain. Furthermore, future researchers should take suggestions from this study to build models of lone wolf radicalization. The conceptualization of lone wolf models of radicalization will be a necessary step in combatting the spread of Great Replacement and other extremist beliefs.

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ACADEMIC VITA

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EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University Schreyer Honors College <i>Bachelor of Science in Security and Risk Analysis</i> <i>Minor in History</i>	University Park, PA May 2023(Expected)
Penn State School of International Affairs <i>Master of International Affairs</i> <i>Concentration: International Security Studies/Data Analytics</i>	University Park, PA May 2023(Expected)

Experience

Research Assistant for The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism <ul style="list-style-type: none">Analyzed open-source primary and secondary sources to expand the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States databasePresented research on QAnon and social media policy combatting the spread of conspiracies	College Park, MD <i>August 2021-August 2022</i>
Undergraduate Researcher with PA Criminal Intelligence Center <ul style="list-style-type: none">Assisted the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center with research on militias in PennsylvaniaPerformed open-source research on social media	University Park, PA <i>2019-2020</i>
Teaching Assistant <ul style="list-style-type: none">Created and Taught a lecture on right-wing domestic extremismAssisted students with questions during office hours and class	University Park, PA <i>January 2020 – Present</i>

LEADERSHIP

The Globe Special Living Option <i>President</i> PA <ul style="list-style-type: none">Organized activities involving global topics for members of the floorWorked with Schreyer faculty on organizing events for all of the honors college	University Park, <i>April 2018 – April 2020</i>
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ACTIVITIES

Red Cell Analytics Club <i>Member</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Practiced the Red Cell analysis methodGained a deeper understanding of national security issues	University Park, PA <i>August 2018 - Present</i>
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Skills: Open-Source Research, Tableau, Excel, R, Airtable, Text Analysis, Social Network An