

SHIFTING NARRATIVES OF THREAT WITHIN GREAT REPLACEMENT CONSPIRACY  
RHETORIC: A STUDY OF TWITTER (X) AND 4CHAN IN THE WAKE OF  
CHARLOTTESVILLE

Alexa Traboulay

June 2024

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the  
Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

The University of Chicago

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lindsay Gifford

Preceptor: Dr. Max Smith

## **Abstract**

The Great Replacement Conspiracy (GRC) has gained widespread traction on social media in recent years. While existing scholarship has effectively examined how GRC rhetoric on social media has radicalized far-right actors to mobilize in offline contexts, little attention has been allocated to the discursive impacts of these offline events. As GRC-inspired hate speech is rising on both fringe and mainstream social media platforms, a comprehensive understanding of the GRC and its susceptibility to offline influences is crucial for anti-radicalization efforts. In this study, I explore how GRC rhetoric on 4chan and Twitter (X) has evolved following the 2017 Charlottesville riots. Specifically, I apply Natural Language Processing (NLP) models to textual data sourced from the /pol/ board on 4chan and conduct digital ethnographic interviews with Charlottesville counter-protestors on Twitter (X) to investigate temporal shifts in threat narratives. Findings suggest that while the Charlottesville riots inspired a shift toward more subtle terminologies of replacement on both sites, rhetoric also became more overtly violent. Additionally, although the GRC became less amorphous online following the Charlottesville riots, the ideological overlap between the GRC and related far-right conspiracies resulted in rhetoric becoming more nebulous. These seemingly paradoxical findings reveal the diverse rhetorical strategies employed by GRC adherents to advance their objective of large-scale radicalization. This study also challenges pre-existing assumptions about the relationship between GRC rhetoric online and offline events, while proposing a novel way of studying far-right conspiratorial discourse online.

*Keywords:* Charlottesville, Great Replacement, social media, far-right, Twitter (X), 4chan

## **Acknowledgments**

I express my sincere gratitude to my wonderful advisor Dr. Lindsay Gifford, for supporting my work from start to finish, offering invaluable guidance, and believing in me. I would also like to thank my preceptor Dr. Max Smith, whose helpful feedback helped this project come to fruition. Additionally, I extend my appreciation to Dr. Savitri Kunze, whose advice has been instrumental in shaping this research; Dr. Caterina Fugazzola and Dr. Clovis Gladstone for helping me sharpen my methodological skills; Dr. Michael Weaver for providing continuous mentorship throughout my academic journey; and the participants of this study for their willingness to share their experiences and insights. Last but not least, this thesis is dedicated to my family, partner, and friends, whose ongoing words of encouragement have been a constant source of motivation.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
2. Background.....	3
3. Literature Review .....	8
3.1 GRC Outgroup Dynamics & Hate Speech Online .....	8
3.2 The Relationship Between Offline Events and Online Rhetoric .....	9
3.3 Charlottesville Online Counter-Protestors.....	11
4. Theory and Hypotheses.....	12
5. Research Design.....	14
5.1. Methodology: Digital Ethnography.....	14
5.1.1. Field Site Justification.....	15
5.1.2. Participant Observation: Data Collection.....	16
5.1.3. Interviews.....	17
5.1.4. Researcher Positionality.....	18
5.2 Methodology: Natural Language Processing (NLP).....	18
5.2.1. Case Justification.....	19
5.2.2. Data Collection.....	20
5.2.3. Linguistic Corpus Methods .....	21
6. Results.....	21
6.1. Digital Ethnographic Interviews.....	21
6.1.1. Before Charlottesville.....	23
6.1.2. During Charlottesville.....	24
6.1.3. After Charlottesville.....	26
6.2. Natural Language Processing (NLP): Word Frequency.....	33
6.2.1. Before Charlottesville.....	34
6.2.2. During Charlottesville.....	36
6.2.3. After Charlottesville.....	38
6.3. Natural Language Processing (NLP): Word Collocations.....	39
6.3.1. ‘Replace’.....	39
6.3.2. ‘White Genocide’.....	42
6.3.3. ‘Ethnostate’.....	45
7. Discussion.....	48
8. Conclusion.....	52
8.1. Summary of Findings.....	52
8.2 Contributions to the Literature.....	52
8.3. Limitations and Future Research.....	53
9. Appendices.....	55
9.1. Appendix A.....	55
9.2. Appendix B.....	56
9.3. Appendix C.....	57
10. Bibliography.....	58

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the Great Replacement Conspiracy (GRC) has become a salient topic within American political discourse. The GRC is defined as a right-wing extremist and white nationalist conspiracy theory claiming that non-white communities are threatening the ethnic homogeneity of the United States in a way that constitutes "white genocide" (Miller-Idriss 2020, 11). This conspiracy has gained widespread scholarly attention due to its popularity among violent Charlottesville rioters in 2017 (Cosentino 2020; Davey and Ebner 2019; Dixit 2022). The Charlottesville riots, also known as the #UnitetheRight rally, are understood as one of the most notorious demonstrations of white supremacy in contemporary American history. Fueled by the racist ideology inherent to the GRC, rioters violently descended upon Charlottesville, Virginia with torches and weapons, chanting 'You will not replace us' and 'Jews will not replace us' (Blout and Burkhart 2023). These riots are significant as they were able to mobilize large numbers of far-right extremists, many of whom have traditionally been confined to fringe online echo chambers, under the apocalyptic and racist assumption that "there is an active, ongoing, and covert effort to replace white populations" (Wilson and Flanagan 2022).

Given this crossover between digital and analog modes of far-right organizing, many extremism scholars have sought to determine how Charlottesville inspired the dissemination of GRC rhetoric in non-traditional spaces (Cosentino 2020; Davey and Ebner 2019; Jewel 2023). As such, a burgeoning field of literature has focused on the representation of the GRC among the views of prominent Republican figures and its topical popularity within mainstream news media (Ekman 2022; Dixit 2022). However, few studies have explored how Charlottesville may have impacted GRC rhetoric within the context of social media.

Social media is routinely utilized by far-right actors to spread racial hatred, amplify narratives of white victimization, and radicalize their audience through the formation of ideologically homogenous echo chambers (Klein 2021; Hawley 2018; Rieger et al. 2021). Recent literature examining political communication on social media suggests that online activists engaging in counter-discourse have played a critical role in illuminating these dangers posed by far-right rhetoric online (Hatakka 2019; Feffer 2021; Halperin 2023). Within the context of the Charlottesville riots, such counter-organizing was observed on Twitter (X) through the explicit condemnation of #UnitetheRight and its organizers (Trottier, Gabdulhakov, and Huang 2020), alongside discussions situating the riots within broader white supremacy in the US (Dyer and Hakkola 2020). Nonetheless, no studies to date have sought to investigate GRC rhetorical trends on Twitter (X) from the perspective of Charlottesville online counterprotestors.

I seek to address these gaps by examining if and how GRC rhetoric on social media has shifted following the 2017 Charlottesville riots. In doing so, I conduct a mixed-methods study, using textual data sourced from the /pol/ board on 4chan in additional digital ethnographic interviews with Charlottesville counter-protestors on Twitter (X). My research focuses on Charlottesville counter-protestors due to their active role in monitoring far-right rhetoric online, paired with researcher safety concerns arising from direct engagement with far-right extremists.

The findings of this analysis are two-fold. First, although the Charlottesville riots facilitated a shift toward more covert GRC rhetoric on 4chan and Twitter (X), rhetoric simultaneously became more violent. Second, while racist hate speech was more explicitly linked to the GRC in the aftermath of the riots, the intertwining of the GRC and other far-right conspiracies prompted rhetoric to become less cohesive. Collectively, these seemingly paradoxical findings indicate that GRC rhetoric is not monolithic and can be strategically employed using diverse

linguistic tactics to serve the interests of its proponents. These findings also allude to the significance of the Charlottesville riots as an inflection point, allowing for broader conclusions to be drawn regarding the nature of far-right conspiracies and the extent to which offline events are influential in evoking discursive changes within extremist subcultures online. Moreover, given their increased representation in mainstream political discourse, understanding the rhetorical strategies of these extremist subcultures may inform more effective strategies for countering online far-right radicalization.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. I begin with a brief background to contextualize my focus on the GRC. Next, I review three broad areas of scholarship related to the Charlottesville riots and GRC rhetoric online. I then discuss my theory and hypotheses before outlining my methodology and data collection procedures for both 4chan and Twitter (X). Results and a discussion of key findings with potential explanations are presented in the subsequent sections. Lastly, I conclude with a summary of my findings, limitations and avenues for future research, and contributions to the literature.

## **2. Background**

### *Origins of the GRC*

While the GRC has gained public visibility in recent years, some of its earliest manifestations can be traced back to the Naturalization Act of 1790 and the eugenics movement that followed in the 1920s - 1960s. In place from 1790 to 1944, the Naturalization Act outlawed the process of naturalization in the US for all immigrants except “free white persons” (Beydoun 2021, 88). This policy specifically targeted immigrants from North Africa, South and East Asia, and the Middle East, labelling them as “alien, unassimilable, and a threat to American society” (Beydoun 2021, 88). Such xenophobic sentiment was later reflected in the Immigration Act of 1924, which

established ethnic immigration quotas, particularly, for regions with large Muslim populations (Beydoun 2021, 91). Although the Immigration Act of 1924 had undergone several revisions before ultimately being replaced with the less restrictive 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, racist myths of white replacement continued to underpin immigration discourse, including the 1990 fear-mongering campaign claiming that the US would be a “majority-minority” country before 2050 (Lowndes 2021, 266) as well as the blaming of immigrants for the 2008 economic recession (Belew and Gutiérrez 2021, 173).

Similarly, the violent enforcement of white supremacy through the eugenics movement played a pivotal role in shaping contemporary racist ideology. Coined by Francis Galton, eugenics was a particularly virulent iteration of scientific racism that was popularized in the 1920s as a means of advancing what proponents called ‘race improvement’ (Marcus 2021, 40). Inherent to this movement was the belief that race was a deterministic characteristic and that communities of color were both physically and intellectually less evolved than their white counterparts (Sear 2021). The widespread acceptance of eugenics as a ‘legitimate’ science fueled a deadly combination of restrictive immigration policies and forced sterilization legislation in the US that targeted communities of color, Jewish communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and any group designated as ‘degenerate’ (Stern 2022). By the 1960s, over 63,000 sterilization surgeries had taken place across 32 US states (Yudell 2014, 14) in hopes of creating a country with a population that was solely “white, Protestant, [of] northern European ancestry (Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon), educated, privileged, and upper-class” (Marcus 2021, 40). Although eugenics was eventually discredited following World War II, it continues to influence the violent ideologies of contemporary far-right actors, who now cite conspiracies such as the ‘Great Replacement’ in attempts to justify their desire for a society that privileges whiteness (Dixit 2022).

French writer Renaud Camus coined the term “the Great Replacement” in 2011 to depict what he perceives to be a “replacement” of white Europeans by immigrants from Africa and the Arab World. He argues that non-white immigration is akin to “an invasion, a migratory tsunami, [and] a submerging wave of ethnic substitution” (23), asserting that this ‘invasion’ constitutes an inverted form of settler colonialism designed to avenge Europe for its earlier role in colonization. His ideas have since gained widespread traction within white supremacist circles, who often refer to his racist population ideologies to justify hate speech and violence against communities of color (Bossen 2024). Such racist ideologies of the GRC can best be understood within the context of the conspiratorial nature of contemporary far-right rhetoric.

### *Far-right Conspiracy Theories*

When the words “conspiracy” and “theorist” are wedded together, they mean something different than just the sum of their parts; they become an epithet for someone who views the world solely through a conspiratorial lens, who reflexively interprets the daily headlines as the inevitable fulfillment of a cosmic scheme that was deliberately set into motion by clandestine powers long ago.

- Arthur Goldwag, *The New Hate*, 83

The contemporary far-right movement can be understood as a faction of repressive right-wing populism, an ideology that "combine[s] attacks on socially oppressed groups with grassroots mass mobilization and distorted forms of anti-elitism based on scapegoating" (Berlet and Lyons 2000). Such scapegoating often manifests in the form of far-right conspiracy theories, where members of marginalized communities are labeled as facilitators of a surreptitious scheme designed to incite harm in some capacity. However, despite the proven inaccuracy of contemporary far-right conspiracies, proponents continue to espouse them unwaveringly, using unreliable sources to justify their tautological arguments (Goldwag 2012). The pervasiveness of such conspiratorial rhetoric is particularly dangerous, as it provides a distorted lens through which individuals understand the world, including distinctions between in and out groups and perceptions about societal power distributions. For instance, conspiracy theories are often used as

a rhetorical tool to conceal more explicit forms of bigotry and hate speech (Berlet and Lyons 2021). In the case of the GRC, this tactic includes blaming racialized communities for partaking in what proponents believe to be an orchestrated attempt to eliminate the white race through "demographic process[es] of cultural integration and intermarriage" (Wendling 2018). This adoption of conspiratorial rhetoric to advance theories of replacement was particularly profound among members of the alt-right.

### *The Rise of the Alt-Right*

The alt right refers to "a new wave of overtly white segregationist and white nationalist movements and subcultures" (Nagle 2017, 23), whose primary goal is to establish a white ethno-state as a means of curbing increasing levels of non-white immigration in the US. Initially relegated to the fringe corners of the internet, the alt-right gained public momentum following the 2016 election of Donald Trump, whose policy platform amplified alt-right grievances about non-white immigration (Hawley 2018; Nagle 2017; Hemmer 2021; Gleeson and Sampat 2018). According to Wendling (2018), the Trump presidency "was the alt-right's first big dream that came true" (2), as it not only projected these grievances to a wider, more mainstream audience but legitimized them by ensuring that notable alt right figures such as Steve Bannon were represented in the administration. In part, this mainstreaming effect created the conditions for the 2017 Charlottesville riots by validating the alt-right in their hateful ideology and emboldening them to advocate for it publicly and violently.

However, in the immediate aftermath of the riots, the alt-right was grappling with internal disagreements involving how they ought to respond to increasingly negative public perceptions of their group (Speakman 2021; Thompson and Hawley 2021). This public disapproval prompted many GRC proponents to disaffiliate with the term "alt-right" and adopt alternative and

seemingly less politically charged terms such as "patriot" or "nationalist" to identify with when espousing hateful rhetoric online (Thompson and Hawley 2021). As such, this research uses the term "far-right" to encompass both the alt-right movement and other contemporary forms of extremist right-wing factions who continue to espouse GRC rhetoric, especially in online spaces such as 4chan.

### *Far-right Modes of Communication*

4chan has become a platform of choice for the far-right to espouse GRC rhetoric in an echo chamber-like environment (Wendling 2018; Nagle 2017; Kasimov, Johnston, and Heer 2023). Specifically, the /pol/ board on 4chan has been characterized as a fringe online space "where fascist fantasies of white supremacy are spread fast and anonymously" (Thorleifsson 2021, 287). Such anonymity paired with an absence of content moderation has made 4chan the site of choice for many GRC proponents, who engage in extreme, uncensored, and violent forms of hate speech without fear of repercussions (Brown 2018). These 4chan users (otherwise known as "anons" - shortened form of "anonymous") who endorse the GRC are recognized on /pol/ as "red-pilled," a pop culture reference to *The Matrix* meaning enlightened white men who believe in the notion of white genocide and are aware of which groups are supposedly orchestrating it (Carian, DiBranco, and Ebin 2022). This notion of white genocide has prompted so-called "redpilled" 4chan anons to advocate for a "white ethno-state" that they believe provides protection from the perceived "imminent danger of cultural, political, economic, and even physical annihilation by some combination of Jews, immigrants, Muslims, African Americans, white liberals, feminists, and communists" (Atkinson 2018, 310-11).

To spread this vitriolic and racist ideology, GRC proponents on 4chan have adopted a covert lexicon as a means of evading detection while simultaneously facilitating inter-group

communication. For example, the characteristic troll culture of 4chan became a defining feature of the far-right, where "meme-making trolls whose dark humor and love of transgression for its own sake" (Nagle 2017, 12) can dismiss their bigotry as a joke. Given this propensity for trolling, many extremism scholars have struggled to determine the extent to which far-right actors online truly align ideologically with the content they are sharing (Wendling 2018; Hawley 2018 ). Similarly, the use of far-right imagery through cartoon figures such as Pepe the Frog, a symbol of the far-right, and signposts including triple parentheses, that demarcate Jews as an outgroup, has lent itself to what Tuters and Hagen (2020) call "nebulous othering." They maintain that this form of othering "can become so arcane as to exceed the very boundaries of [mainstream] comprehension" (Tuters and Hagen 2020, 2226), thereby allowing GRC rhetoric to weave its way into public political discourse without being flagged as explicitly hateful.

### **3. Literature Review**

#### *3.1 GRC Outgroup Dynamics & Hate Speech Online*

Despite the general consensus that the GRC conceives of replacement as perpetrated by non-white "others," relatively few studies have sought to determine which of these groups are disproportionately labeled as threats following the Charlottesville riots. For instance, in their 2019 assessment of alt-right hate speech on 4chan, 8chan, and Reddit, Rieger et al. (2021), found that Jews were the most frequent subjects of hate speech, with Black communities being designated as the second-most-common targets. However, social media scholars have yet to discern whether or not this finding remains true within the pre- and post-Charlottesville eras. It is worth noting that a few studies have attempted to address this question of out-group threat narratives by examining the manifestos of individuals who commit white supremacist violence (Ebner, Kavanagh, and Whitehouse 2022; Dixit 2022; Vanderwee and Droogan 2023). The

frequent repurposing of white supremacist shooter manifestos, all of which draw upon similar doomsday-like narratives about the perceived extinction of the white race (e.g. “Buffalo Shooter's Manifesto”), have illustrated the evolution of violent GRC rhetoric. However, the extent to which these manifestos are representative of all GRC rhetoric online is questionable, as the conspiracy itself is not unique to far-right actors who commit acts of violence, despite undoubtedly being sympathetic to their hate-driven worldviews (Kriner et al. 2022).

Further, the GRC has rarely been utilized as an analytical lens for studying online hate speech in the post-Charlottesville era. For instance, a qualitative content analysis conducted by Zannettou et al. (2018) revealed that anti-semitic rhetoric increased on 4chan and Gab as well as on mainstream sites such as Twitter (X) and Reddit following the Charlottesville Riots. Likewise, Van der Vegt et al. (2021) used structural topic modeling to observe an increase in discussions of race among far-right YouTube users shortly after Charlottesville. While these studies speak to broader rhetorical patterns within far-right extremist movements, they do not explicitly focus on the GRC.

### *3.2 The Relationship Between Offline Events and Online Rhetoric*

Similar to GRC outgroup dynamics, the literature documenting the relationship between offline events and online rhetoric has yielded mixed findings. On one hand, the vast majority of studies examining the impacts of far-right extremist ideology have cited online rhetoric as the predictor of offline events (Thompson 2011; Hassan et al. 2018; Harindranath 2017). Indeed, many extremism scholars describe the Charlottesville riots as a product of online radicalization through participation in information-limiting environments such as echo chambers (Davey and Ebner 2019; Vanderwee and Droogan 2023; Dixit 2022). However, some studies have also noted a reverse relationship between offline events and online rhetoric, suggesting that offline events

may precipitate changes in online discourse. For example, Diab et al. (2023) find that hate speech online increases after offline ‘trigger’ events, such as the 2020 police murder of Breonna Taylor. Likewise, Chung et al. (2020) argue that key offline events may facilitate rhetorical shifts given the increasing “diversity of actors participating in connective action” (24). Based on these findings, it can be inferred that the relationship between offline events and online events may be circular, with offline events being both a result and an indicator of online rhetoric. Nonetheless, existing scholarship has yet to situate the Charlottesville riots within the latter half of this debate. This thesis therefore seeks to investigate the role of the Charlottesville riots in predicting GRC rhetorical shifts online.

In addition, an emerging subset of scholarship on political social media usage has documented platform-specific differences in far-right activity on 4chan and Twitter (X), following offline political events. A comparative case study of far-right activity on 4chan and Twitter (X) during the 2021 Capitol Insurrection found that Twitter (X) users played an active role in calling for mass mobilization at the Capitol through #stopthesteal, while 4chan users were more preoccupied with passively reporting on the events that were unfolding (Kasimov, Johnston, and Heer 2023). Interestingly, these dynamics appeared to shift following the Insurrection, with far-right Twitter (X) users becoming disengaged online following public criticism, despite a relative increase in radicalizing rhetoric on 4chan (Kasimov, Johnston, and Heer 2023). Likewise, a study examining informational echo chambers on Twitter (X) and 4chan during the 2020 election noted platform-specific affordances to be a key determining factor in the observed differences in ‘echoing behaviors’ (Shane, Willaert, and Tuters 2022). For instance, as compared to Twitter (X), Shane, Willaert, and Tuters (2022) found 4chan rhetoric to be more “ambivalently self-sealing and self-fulfilling, reflecting its anonymity and high-suspicion culture” (189). Taken

together, both studies reveal disparities in rhetorical extremity between fringe and mainstream sites following a salient political event, with 4chan users employing noticeably more ideologically homogenous language than Twitter (X) users. This thesis aims to build on these studies by investigating how their findings apply to the online climate on 4chan and Twitter (X) following the 2017 Charlottesville riots.

### *3.3 Charlottesville Online Counter-Protestors*

"[Digital audiences] helped to crystallize a broadly felt and unified refusal of the terrain that was being sought by organizers, participants and supporters of the Charlottesville rallies, namely, to legitimate the articulation of violent white supremacy in contemporary American public life."

- Tara Milbrandt, *Introducing Vigilant Audiences*, 217

In addition to the relationship between offline events and offline rhetoric, a nascent body of literature offers evidence of the indispensable role online counter-protestors play in documenting and resisting instances of racial hatred. According to Hatakka (2019) and Feffer (2021), this anti-racist activism can take a range of forms, including sharing counter-narratives, conducting name-and-shame campaigns, and leading efforts to de-platform notable white supremacist figures. However, the common objective underpinning collective action among online counter-protestors is a desire to “stymie the digitally mediated spread of right-wing populist rhetoric” (Halperin 2023, 71) and relegate “hate speech to the margins of online publics” (Hatakka 2020, 5). On Twitter (X), such activism primarily occurs through hashtags, which allow users to communicate in real time, share resources in a centralized location, and establish opportunities for civic action (Kuo 2018). From a rhetorical perspective, hashtags are also deemed a valuable space for documenting injustice, shifting narratives, and advocating for social change (Kuo 2018, 496).

The affordances of hashtag activism in the context of the Charlottesville riots are evidenced through the ability of counter-protestors to bear witness to [the] criminal and moral offenses”

(Trottier, Gabdulhakov, and Huang 2020, 1) that occurred during the Charlottesville riots by following live updates from counterprotesters on the ground and condemning the actions of riot organizers. Using hashtags such as #Charlottesville and #ThisIsNotUs, activists were able to form online counter-publics (Dyer and Hakkola 2020) and challenge the GRC rhetoric they observed during the riots. Nevertheless, few studies have sought to explore the ways in which these counter-protestors continued to observe and denounce white supremacy on Twitter (X) in the years following the riots. Further, as Wood (2021) maintains, existing literature on protest dynamics across the ideological spectrum tends to frame left-wing counter-protestors “as merely reactive” (472), therefore, overlooking the key impacts of their organizing, including solidarity building, knowledge sharing, and mobilizing to advance social justice. To alleviate this gap, this thesis focuses specifically on the knowledge-sharing component of the left-wing counter-protest paradigm, examining how Charlottesville counter-protestors monitored the evolution of GRC rhetoric during and after the riots.

#### **4. Theory and Hypotheses**

Building upon the extant literature on GRC outgroup dynamics and hate speech online, the link between offline events and online rhetoric, and the role of Charlottesville counter-protestors online, this study aims to explore the relationship between the Charlottesville riots and GRC rhetoric on 4hcan and Twitter (X). To better understand this relationship, the following questions are posed:

***RQ1: In what ways has Great Replacement Conspiracy (GRC) rhetoric online evolved following the 2017 Charlottesville riots, if at all?***

Additional research questions to help address this primary question include:

*RQ 2: How have narratives of threat shifted over time?*

Threat narratives can be defined as accounts of the alleged existential danger posed to the white in-group by non-white “others”. These threat narratives might include beliefs about who is orchestrating the replacement, as well as the language used to describe the replacement.

*RQ 3: To what extent do shifts in GRC rhetoric vary between alternative and mainstream social media platforms?*

By focusing on shifts in specific aspects of GRC rhetoric, namely, threat narratives, in addition to accounting for site-specific shifts, these two supplementary questions aim to address broader concerns about the adaptability of GRC rhetoric and its susceptibility to external influences. This study theorizes that GRC proponents may repurpose their set of linguistic norms in hopes of distancing themselves from the alt-right. This disassociation may occur due to a combination of the negative publicity the alt-right experienced following the Charlottesville riots and its subsequent internal fragmentation (Hemmer 2021). Further, if GRC proponents aim to redeem their public image and recruit more supporters for the conspiracy, they may begin to identify with seemingly more subtle terminologies of replacement. These semantic contortions will allow GRC proponents to continue espousing the same hateful rhetoric in a way that deceptively appears more publicly acceptable (Hemmer 2021), leading to the first hypothesis:

*H1: GRC proponents are more likely to use more subtle linguistic frames to describe the perceived replacement threat following the Charlottesville riots.*

Likewise, the Charlottesville riots may have prompted GRC proponents to more strongly align their hate-driven online messaging with the ideologies demonstrated during the riots. As Charlottesville rioters waved offensive flags, shouted racial slurs, and presented hateful symbols, many of which were affiliated with the KKK, neo-nazism, or anti-immigrant sentiment in some capacity (Blout and Burkart 2020; Heller 2019), it is plausible that GRC proponents on 4chan

and Twitter (X) adopted this hateful rhetoric under the banner of the GRC. This mirroring effect may occur because far-right extremists tend to idolize violent events and their initiators (Am and Weimann 2020; Kupper et al. 2022), a theory that informs the second hypothesis:

*H2: The Charlottesville riots prompted racist hate speech online to become less amorphous and more explicitly connected to the GRC.*

## **5. Research Design**

To test my theory, I employ a mixed-methods approach by combining digital ethnographic interviews with Charlottesville counter-protestors on Twitter (X) with a textual analysis of 4chan using Natural Language Processing (NLP). Charlottesville counter-protestors on Twitter (X) offer valuable insight into shifting GRC rhetoric given their role in observing, documenting, and interpreting far-right activity on the platform and beyond. Their interpretations of GRC rhetoric on Twitter (X) supplement my interpretation of raw 4chan data from the /pol/ board, allowing for cross-platform analysis of trends in GRC rhetoric while providing a safer window into far-right circles without embedding myself within those spaces.

### ***5.1 Methodology: Digital Ethnography***

Digital ethnography is defined as "an online research method adapting and deploying ethnographic methods to better understand and analyze social interactions, the production of meaning and symbols as well as the formation of online communities, traditions of thought, and identities" (Aguilar 2023, 15-16). In this study, I focused my digital ethnographic praxis on Twitter (X) users who engaged with anti-racist content during and after the Charlottesville riots, allowing me to understand the GRC from their perspective while simultaneously avoiding first-hand exposure to violent extremists. This methodological decision stems from an understanding that research involving interaction with hate groups such as far-right conspiracists

presents notable ethical implications, particularly, in relation to the safety and emotional well-being of the researcher (Schatz 2013). For instance, doxxing campaigns targeting academic researchers studying the far-right are commonplace even when significant efforts are taken by researchers to conceal their identity in the field. In addition, prolonged exposure to violent content online presents concerns regarding the mental health of the researcher. These mental health concerns, including feelings of despondency and anxiety, have been documented by digital ethnographers examining far-right movements online (Askanius 2019), who often maintain that such feelings resemble those of social media moderators tasked with removing extremist content on their sites (Solon 2017). For more details regarding ethical considerations, see Appendix A.

Nevertheless, digital ethnography remains a well-suited methodology for this study for three key reasons. First, conducting a digital ethnography allows me to circumvent the geospatial constraints typically associated with traditional ethnography by immersing myself in the field from a distance (Howlett 2022, 396). Second, digital ethnography creates novel opportunities for studying hard-to-reach populations such as anti-racist activists, whose in-person organizing can sometimes be amorphous or limited to specific demonstrations. Third, digital ethnography, through participant observation, provides rich first-hand insight into the norms, culture, language, and activities of anti-racist activists online, which may not otherwise be apparent in research involving found data.

#### *5.1.1 Field Site Justification: Twitter (X)*

In 2017, anti-racist activists mobilized on Twitter (X) to condemn the violence of the Charlottesville riots, using the platform to "bear witness to racial hatred" (Trottier, Gabdulhakov, and Huang 2020). Many of these activists continue to denounce white supremacy on Twitter (X)

to this day, likely, with a renewed sense of urgency given the increasing hate speech on the platform following its 2022 acquisition (Benton et al. 2022). Nonetheless, no studies to date have sought to determine how Twitter (X) users who engage with anti-racist content conceive of GRC rhetoric, as a form of white supremacist hate speech. To address this gap, I conduct a digital ethnography of Twitter (X), conducting participant observation and semi-structured interviews with users who engage with anti-racist content and have observed how GRC rhetoric online has evolved.

### *5.1.2 Participant Observation: Data Collection*

During January - March 2024, I engaged in participant observation with Twitter (X) users who engaged with anti-racist content. My first task in the field involved bridging anti-racist activism during the 2017 Charlottesville riots with current modes of anti-racist organizing. To locate where anti-racists were organizing on Twitter (X) in a contemporary context, I began scanning public tweets that included Charlottesville-related hashtags such as #goodnightaltright, #defendCville, #alloutCville, and #Charlottesville. I selected these as my hashtags of focus, given their origins in the Charlottesville counter-protests and their continued usage to condemn and expose white supremacist demonstrations in the years that followed. However, given the relatively low levels of engagement with some of the hashtags in the past few years, I decided to pivot my approach slightly by reviewing the recent tweets of users who contributed to each of these hashtags. In doing so, I was able to get a better sense of current anti-racist organizing efforts, including topics of interest and the structure of discussions.

Next, I followed these users for two key reasons: 1) To streamline my field site observations so I am able to see live updates from these users in one place and 2) To encourage users to follow me back, granting me the ability to direct message them about setting up an interview. This latter

reason was crucial, as a recent Twitter (X) update changed default messaging settings to prevent messages from accounts that users are not directly following. See Appendix B for a detailed script regarding interview recruitment.

### *5.1.3 Interviews*

In spring 2024, I conducted four semi-structured video interviews and six text-based interviews with Twitter (X) users who have recently engaged with anti-racist content ( $n = 10$ ). As this research is primarily concerned with the perspectives of progressive, anti-racist Twitter (X) users when it comes to determining how GRC rhetoric has shifted since the Charlottesville riots, the main criteria for participant enrollment include Twitter (X) users over 18 years of age who voiced opposition to the Charlottesville riots on Twitter (X) in 2017, used #goodnightalright, #defendcville, #alloutcville, or #Charlottesville in one or more tweets, and are currently engaged with anti-racist content on Twitter (X). However, I also remained open to the possibility that a Twitter (X) user may not necessarily meet all the aforementioned criteria (i.e. used a different hashtag but still appeared in Twitter (X) discourse on Charlottesville in 2017) but may still provide relevant insight into how GRC rhetoric has evolved in an interview. Participants were asked a series of questions related to their current and past Twitter (X) activity, trends in online hate speech, and the significance of the Charlottesville riots. For a complete list of questions, see Appendix C.

Given the highly politicized nature of anti-racist organizing online, many interview participants were concerned about their names being affiliated with a research study on paper. As such, I obtained verbal consent from participants at the beginning of our Zoom calls and avoided collecting names, screen-sharing the consent form as I explained the consent process. For Twitter (X) users who choose to participate in a text-based interview instead of Zoom, I sent them a

direct message detailing the consent process and asking them to confirm their consent to participate via text. Once interviews were complete, interview transcripts were coded thematically using NVivo to capture observed patterns in GRC rhetoric, including the types of GRC-related threats discussed, the ways these threats are discussed, and the actors perceived to be involved in such threats.

#### *5.1.4 Researcher Positionality*

It is critical to note how my positionality as a researcher may impact how I engage with the anti-racist activist community on Twitter (X). Although I do consider myself to be an anti-racist activist, social media is not the site of my advocacy activities. As such, anti-racist activists organizing on Twitter (X) possess unique insights into site-specific tools for advocacy. I am currently attempting to account for this gap through my digital ethnography by mimicking the behavior of anti-racist activists on Twitter (X), however, I recognize that there is only so much I can learn in a short time as compared to the years of experience many online activists have. Likewise, I am cognizant of the power dynamics that exist between researchers and the communities at the center of the research. Given that academic research has historically been extractive rather than reciprocal, the communities involved may distrust a researcher from an elite university. To ensure that I do not reproduce any of these harmful power imbalances, my research aims to amplify the voices of anti-racist activists, seeing them as research collaborators, rather than “subjects.” This involves actively acknowledging the value of their perspectives, allowing them to guide discussions and share their lived experiences without making paternalistic assumptions about their community as an outsider.

## **5.2 Methodology: Natural Language Processing (NLP)**

This study also explores diachronic variation in GRC rhetoric over time using corpus linguistics, a component of the Natural Language Processing (NLP) toolkit that involves examining patterns in the structure, meaning, and context-specific usage of language. NLP, defined as a methodological field at the nexus of computational linguistics and computer science (Fanni et al. 2023), is frequently cited as a well-suited methodology for studying extremist rhetoric online for three key reasons. First, the compatibility of NLP techniques with diverse forms of textual data allows for a comprehensive analysis of hate speech across a wide range of social media sites used by far-right actors, including 4chan (Fazinder, Inken, and Hirst, 2015; El Barachi et al., 2022; Morgan and Kulkarni, 2023). Second, NLP is unique in its ability to automatically parse large amounts of user-generated content from social media, which may otherwise be challenging to process manually (Di Christofaro, 2023; Torregrosa et al., 2021). Third, NLP affords researchers the opportunity to explore the semantic underpinnings of far-right rhetoric, including nuance in the underlying motivations, emotions, and ideologies of far-right actors (Bliuc et al., 2019; Ajala et al., 2022; Peuker, Smith, and Iqbal, 2019).

### *5.2.1 Case Justification: 4Chan*

As one of the only fringe social media sites that was not de-platformed in the aftermath of Charlottesville, 4chan is a relevant case for tracking patterns in online hate speech. 4chan became a platform of choice for the far-right due to its culture of anonymity, where individuals were encouraged to share their most egregious views without fear of social repercussions (Nagle, 2017). 4chan is also commonly associated with the GRC, given the routine glorification of racist violence that occurs within its “politically incorrect” (/pol/) board (Rieger et al., 2021; Baele, Brace, and Coan, 2021; Dixit, 2022). However, to date, there are no existing datasets documenting GRC rhetoric on 4chan. To fill this gap, I investigate the linguistic evolution of the

GRC by building three corpora comprising 4chan threads on /pol/ between August 2016 and August 2018.

### 5.2.2 Data Collection

I manually scraped the open-access 4chan archive 4plebs.org to build three corpora consisting of 4chan /pol/ threads from before, during, and after Charlottesville. 4plebs.org is a community-run archive that contains data from 11 popular 4chan boards beginning in 2013. To sample 4chan threads using this archive, I select 30 of the most popular threads (>100 posts) for each of the following date ranges: pre-Charlottesville (Aug 11, 2016 - Aug 11, 2017), during Charlottesville (Aug 11-12, 2017), and post-Charlottesville (August 12, 2017 - August 12, 2018), for a total of 90 threads, which collectively contain  $n = 24,189$  individual posts. Table 1.1 provides a numerical breakdown of 4chan threads and posts for each time period.

**Table 1.** 4chan corpora data

	Pre-Charlottesville	Charlottesville	Post-Charlottesville
4Chan Threads	$n = 30$	$n = 30$	$n = 30$
4Chan Posts	$n = 7,341$	$n = 9,541$	$n = 7,307$

Threads are identified using a series of GRC-related keyword searches, determined through a literature review and a preliminary scan of 4chan. The first keyword utilized was “replacement,” a term routinely used by GRC proponents to refer to the perceived threat that non-white communities pose to ethnic homogeneity in the United States (Davey and Ebner, 2019). The second identifying keyword was “white genocide,” as it captures the belief that this supposed replacement is akin to both cultural and physical “white genocide” (Miller-Idriss, 2020). The third and final keyword was “white ethnostate,” a fictional white-only space premised upon

exclusionary notions of racial superiority that are central to the perceived replacement threat (Hawley, 2018).

### *5.2.3 Linguistic Corpus Methods*

Linguistic corpus methods are applied, namely discourse analysis, through two approaches: word frequency queries and collocation analysis<sup>1</sup>. Using NVivo, a word frequency analysis is conducted to determine the most commonly occurring terms within each of the three corpora. Word frequency analysis assigns a numerical value to each word within a corpus based on the frequency in which it appears. A high number of instances of a particular term typically indicates greater significance to the overall discourse. Note that this numerical tally does not include stop words (i.e. ‘the’, ‘a’, etc.). Next, I perform word collocation analysis on each of the three corpora using Philologic, a multimedia text analysis software created by the ARTL Project at the University of Chicago (“Philologic”). Word collocation analysis aims to understand the semantic profiles of particular words by analyzing their occurrence as products of social contexts (Meier-Vieracker 2024). Such analysis captures the co-occurrence of a specified word, thereby revealing its meaning, function, and usage patterns within broader GRC discourse.

## **6. Results**

### *6.1 Digital Ethnographic Interviews*

In Spring 2024, interviews were conducted with ten anti-racist Twitter (X) users who observed trends in GRC rhetoric on the platform before, during, and after the Charlottesville riots. A thematic analysis of interview data reveals that the most prominent rhetorical shifts were parallel increases in subtle and violent language, as well as the co-opting of contemporary immigration

---

<sup>1</sup> Prior to analysis, I compiled each corpus by downloading the 4chan threads in HTML code and converting them to XML format using Python. I then extracted the title and body text (posts) for each thread using the BeautifulSoup library, ensuring that thread ID numbers were used as title placeholders for threads without titles. Once these pre-processing steps were complete, I imported the files into NVivo and PhiloLogic software for further examination.

policy discourse. Findings are organized temporally through the following categories: (1) Before Charlottesville, (2) During Charlottesville, and (3) After Charlottesville. Relevant themes within each time period are discussed at length below.

**Table 2.** Interviewee Demographic Data

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>Race<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupational Field</b>	<b>State of Residence</b>
Laura Secord <sup>3</sup>	Female	White	55	Law	California
Elijah Harris	Male	White	26	Political Advocacy	Washington DC
Helen Gordon	Female	White	64	Higher Education	Florida
Miller Gagnon	Male	White	33	Energy	Virginia
Everret Romano	Male	Italian	53	Food	Oregon
Taylor Leighton	Non Binary	White	63	Communications	Maryland
Lisa Reyes	Female	White	44	Education	Virginia
Ella Monroe	Female	White	42	Teaching	Virginia
Joshua Sullivan	Male	White	38	Construction	Virginia
Sara Balik	Woman	White/Asian	41	Technology	Virginia

<sup>2</sup> Due to project scope, convenience sampling resulted in a lack of racial diversity among interviewees. Based on how participants presented themselves online, I was only able to learn of their identities during the interviews. This sample also risks selection bias given the disparities in who volunteered to participate in the study. Future studies would benefit from collecting a broader and more racially representative sample.

<sup>3</sup> Pseudonym requested by participant.

### ***6.1.1 Before Charlottesville***

#### *From Obama to Trump*

Three interviewees referred to the election of Barack Obama as a key turning point regarding the public visibility of GRC rhetoric. Specifically, the notion of a Black man situated in a position of political power angered the far-right, who used the language of white replacement to denounce the Obama presidency (Everett; Helen; Laura). However, all participants stated that the political campaign and inauguration of Trump, who made his restrictionist stance on immigration a focal point of his platform, was the defining political event that allowed GRC rhetoric to traverse the boundary between fringe and mainstream political discourse. Participants emphasized the ways in which “Trump managed to latch on to Americans’ original sin of racism and bigotry” (Laura) by popularizing xenophobic myths that labelled Mexicans immigrants as ‘rapists’ and immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries as ‘terrorists’ (Miller; Helen). For instance, Everett states that “Trumpism was like a trojan horse, bringing anti-immigrant and white-nationalist sentiment and rhetoric into the mainstream of politics.” Affirming the significance of Trump’s election for GRC rhetoric, Leighton claims that:

“Since the Trump 2016 campaign and election, white supremacist hate speech has been more open and more widely promoted and shared, including especially focusing hatred against racial and religious minorities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, etc.”

These observations suggest that GRC rhetoric in the years leading up to the 2017 Charlottesville riots was primarily tied to presidential politics, revealing a growing sense of white aggrievement paired with sympathy for racist ideologies.

#### *GRC: A Fringe Movement*

Nonetheless, while GRC rhetoric undoubtedly became more palpable from 2012-2016, participants maintained that the GRC was still considered to be a relatively fringe ideology at this time, especially compared to the post-Charlottesville era. Lisa highlights this perception, asserting that:

I believe I had a vague understanding of it prior to 2017 but assumed it was "historical." Something that had once been talked about in the dark underbelly of society, not something we would see in real life. I realized how naive I was when I was truly shocked to hear the chants by the tiki-torch wielders.

Likewise, participants stated that GRC rhetoric was seemingly more amorphous before the riots, claiming that such racist hate speech was typically understood as a form of white supremacist discourse more broadly, rather than a distinct conspiracy. All participants but one stated that they were unfamiliar with the GRC as a conspiracy prior to the Charlottesville riots. As Helen suggests, "most of us thought these people were just racists and neo-confederates; lost cause, southern, neo-confederates. We knew they existed because it has been so hard to take down confederate statues." However, the Charlottesville riots revealed that "they were not just stone-cold racists; they had a wider ideology" (Helen). Similarly, Miller states that prior to the riots, he was "familiar with the concept [of the GRC] but not referred to under that name before," echoing Elijah, who claims that seemingly "only disinformation researchers and anti-racist organizers knew about the GRC" before Charlottesville.

### ***6.1.2 During Charlottesville***

#### *Valorization of the Riots*

According to participants, reactions to the Charlottesville riots were diverse among GRC proponents online. On one hand, Elijah states that during and in the immediate aftermath of the

riots, there was a brief period where GRC proponents “did feel emboldened and [assumed they could] all gather, be excited, and be more racist.” Miller observes a similar trend, noting that GRC proponents often gloated about the riots through a combination of in-group bragging and nostalgic recollections of the violent events that occurred. In doing so they celebrated their perceived success in “show[ing] the world how strong [they were]” (Miller). Such valorization can be attributed to the ways in which GRC proponents latched onto the notion of “fine people on both sides” articulated by Trump in response to the riots, perceiving this comment as a statement of validation (Helen; Miller; Reyes; Everett).

### *Disavowal of the Riots*

However, other GRC proponents viewed the riots less favourably, with some arguing that rioters should have engaged in more violence and others claiming that violence tarnished their reputation (Miller). Many GRC proponents have subsequently attempted to forget about the riots, perceiving it as a failure (Elijah; Joshua; Everret). In part, Elijah explains that this designation of the riots as a failure may also be accredited to the broad “cultural consensus that [the riots] were really bad” and the subsequent negative press the rioters received. Nevertheless, regardless of whether or not far-right sentiment toward the Charlottesville riots was positive or negative, the influential nature of the riots can be observed through the tendency of far-right actors to “emulate certain aspects of [the riots] or respond to perceived failures or successes of those events” (Miller). For example, discussions surrounding the efficacy of vehicles as weapons that occurred among far-right actors during the Charlottesville riots emerged throughout the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, where far-right actors referred to James Fields, the perpetrator of the Charlottesville car attack in discussions of tactics for harming protestors (Miller).

### *6.1.3 After Charlottesville*

Interview participants maintained that conspiracy continues to act as an intellectual framework for far-right actors after the Charlottesville riots, who would rather willfully misinterpret information to fuel their hateful ideologies than contend with the root causes of the grievance they feel. According to Laura, “there is always a convenient minority to blame” for the supposed replacement of white Americans, an assertion that highlights the critical role of scapegoating in mainstream conspiratorial rhetoric (Berlet and Lyons 2000). However, rather than choosing one particular target, contemporary GRC proponents focus their rhetoric on any group they perceive as challenging “the god-intended primacy of white cis men [or] tainting the blood of the whites” (Laura). Helen suggests that these out-groups are constructed using fallacious, zero-sum logic which assumes that white Americans are being deprived when rights are granted to marginalized communities. Such a sense of perceived injustice is demonstrated through contemporary manifestations of the GRC in the form of anti-abortion and anti-trans rhetoric, opposition to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, partisan hostility, and anti-immigration sentiment.

#### *Anti-Abortion and Anti-Trans Rhetoric*

Many participants highlighted the overlap between contemporary anti-abortion rhetoric and GRC rhetoric, referring to increased mentions of the GRC in both offline anti-abortion rallies and online among notable far-right figures such as Elon Musk. In particular, four respondents discussed the ways in which contemporary debates on reproductive rights have been infiltrated by GRC proponents, who argue that abortion constitutes an orchestrated attempt to kill white babies and subsequently alter the demographic composition of the US (Laura; Miller; Elijah; Helen). In doing so, GRC proponents appear to place an increased emphasis on the perceived

role of white women in facilitating the replacement, seemingly citing misogynistic beliefs about the reproductive capacity of women to attribute declining white birth rates to contemporary feminism. Likewise, many participants noted an increase in anti-trans rhetoric on Twitter (X) over the past three years. They asserted that contemporary GRC rhetoric combines transphobia and racism to frame trans communities as a threat to the cis, heteronormative, nuclear family, and by extension, a threat to whiteness. Specifically, Everett states that many contemporary GRC advocates argue that rights to gender-affirming care can be equated to attempts by Jews “to sterilize white people via transgenderism,” thus hindering their presumed biological superiority by lowering their birth rates. This hateful rhetoric has had devastating material repercussions both in the form of “banning trans folks from the public sphere” (Laura) through the outlawing of events such as drag story time (Elijah), as well as increasing anti-trans hate crimes across the US (Laura).

### *Opposition to DEI Efforts*

Similar to anti-abortion and anti-trans rhetoric, opposition to DEI efforts was a prevalent theme among interview participants. Participants noted that many GRC proponents are convinced that the terms ‘woke’ and ‘DEI’, often used interchangeably, are alternative designations for ‘anti-white.’ As Elijah states, “Any recognition that black and brown people need resources is somehow an admission that white people don’t belong in these spaces anymore.” Helen echoes this sentiment, asserting that “any program that tries to remediate or repair past oppressions, such as centers for gender, race studies, and DEI programs, are [labeled as] facilitat[ors] of a great replacement.” In part, these misconceptions can be attributed to far-right efforts to “redefine [DEI] and purposely try to misconstrue what it means, using the rhetoric of great replacement” (Elijah) to frame it as “reverse racism and indoctrination” (Helen).

Such vitriolic rhetoric has gained traction within mainstream Republican discourse, resulting in the widespread implementation of anti-DEI policies, including the outlawing of critical race theory through the Stop WOKE Act in Florida (Helen) and US-wide campaigns to ban social justice-facing books (Elijah).

### *Partisan Hostility*

Likewise, interviewees observed antagonism toward the Democratic party, both elected officials and candidates, to be a defining feature of contemporary GRC rhetoric. For instance, one participant states that GRC proponents regard Democrat efforts to reform immigration as a surreptitious attempt to “displac[e] white voters and replac[e] them with non-white voters” (Miller), who they assume will vote Democrat. He also maintains that contemporary GRC rhetoric reflects the belief that Democrats are “importing [immigrants] to destabilize the [white] community and water down their bloodlines” (Miller). This observation aligns with GRC trends noted by Everett, who posits that they have regularly witnessed GRC rhetoric online claiming that “the Democratic Party is rigging elections by counting ‘illegal immigrants’ in the US Census.” Taken together, these observations allude to GRC perceptions of Democrats as a political threat, given their presumed ability to facilitate the ‘replacement’ through progressive immigration policy.

### *Anti-Immigration Sentiment*

There is a consensus among interview participants that immigration is currently the most significant topical issue among GRC proponents. As participants have observed, such discourse disproportionately targets African, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and East Asian immigrants, who GRC proponents deem as responsible for changing the cultural and racial configuration of the US. According to Helen, contemporary GRC rhetoric is illustrated through two popular

immigration myths: (1) the belief there is an ongoing international effort to empty prisons by sending inmates to the US and (2) the assumption that the US-Mexico border is unsecured. These myths facilitate the xenophobic belief that the US is being flooded by some combination of sex traffickers (Helen), drug mules (Miller), Muslims (Leighton), and terrorists (Miller) which, in turn, have fueled calls to violently ‘defend’ the border from perceived criminals. Gordan asserts that such militant language of ‘invasion’ has been adopted and weaponized by many elected Republican officials to advocate for restrictionist immigration policies, thereby disseminating GRC rhetoric to a wider audience. Based on this mainstreaming effect, it can be postulated that GRC proponents have effectively been able to amplify long-standing anti-immigrant sentiment among Republicans through fear-mongering campaigns that frame non-white immigration as a threat to white, Christian American identity.

### *Coded Language*

“Identitarian politics reign supreme, and white supremacists have excelled at mainstreaming ‘proxy hate’ in forums where overt white supremacy is not permitted.” - Interview with Sara

All participants affirmed that “rhetorical shifts are real and have happened” (Elijah) following the Charlottesville riots. In particular, Charlottesville inspired GRC proponents to alter their discursive tactics through “a very deliberate twisting of language” (Helen) that allowed GRC proponents to “work [the conspiracy] into other realms of culture” (Elijah). Such linguistic contortions manifest through “more indirect phrasing by dancing around saying ‘great replacement’ or ‘you’re being replaced’; couching it within the topic that makes sense to [the far-right]” (Miller). Examples of these attempts to “repurpos[e] language for their own ends” (Helen) include claims that Democrats are “trying to water down conservative votes” (Miller), increased emphasis on the importance of “maintaining American values” (Laura), and even “patriotic [language and] imagery, such as American flags with Roman fascist logos on them”

(Miller). As such, given the stigma associated with the term ‘replacement,’ Elijah notes that the most evident shift in rhetorical technique was the ability of GRC proponents to “embed their message into other types of content” with the understanding that they could not “just say the message out loud” without facing public backlash. Further, in order to maintain allies within more moderate Republican circles (Laura) and evade detection from content filters on social media (Elijah), many GRC proponents felt as if they needed to censor their racism using more covert language.

The seemingly tacit nature of this language is particularly dangerous, as it lowers the barriers to entry into the far-right radicalization pipeline by “numbing people to [far-right] ideas, so once you get to the point where [the rhetoric becomes] violent, people just accept it” (Elijah).

#### *Desensitization to Violence*

“Charlottesville made me realize [the GRC] was more than a lost cause – it [is] an organized, radicalized, and violent right-wing movement that has been borne out over and over again since Charlottesville through mass shootings, armed protests, and January 6.” - Interview with Miller

For all participants, the Charlottesville riots reinforced the reality that GRC proponents are “willing to mobilize violently” (Laura) in ways that are “more prevalent, more ‘out loud’, [and] more personal” (Lisa). According to Elijah and Helen, the “attack-forward politics at Charlottesville has enabled people to get to th[e] point” (Elijah) where GRC proponents are not only “willing to say these things out loud” (Elijah) but are prepared to “to use violence to stop this [perceived replacement] trend” (Helen). Miller expresses similar sentiment regarding the comfort GRC proponents have espousing violent rhetoric, claiming that they are no longer “worried about being seen, filmed, or photographed.” He suggests that GRC proponents are increasingly encouraging the use of violence through statements such as “Black Lives Splatter” and claims that there are “not enough bullets for liberal skulls.” As Joshua contends, “they just

come out and say it, ‘oh they want to replace you.’ There’s more subtle variations but it’s really not hard to spot these days.” This growing acceptability of such violent rhetoric following the Charlottesville riots has had material implications, demonstrated through “the January 6th attacks and other organized assaults on US institutions” (Taylor).

*A Network of Far-Right Conspiracies*

Participants emphasized contemporary GRC rhetoric is “part of a nebulous right-wing ecosystem” (Elijah) that includes other popular far-right conspiracies such as Qanon, the anti-vaccine movement, COVID denialism, and broader anti-semitic beliefs about Jewish elites.

As Miller states:

There are a whole bunch of different conspiracists that see value in GRC rhetoric; they see that it can mobilize their base – some [motivations] are political, some are religious. The general concept of the GRC has fed into other conspiracies, some [of which] have been normalized by far-right think tanks, political organizations, and Fox News. [GRC rhetoric] is not just stuck in the 4chan world of the fever swamp.

This intertwining of the GRC within a wider network of conspiracies is evidenced through the myths that Joe Biden is importing immigrants to drink the blood of children (Miller), that Trump is leading a resistance movement against Jewish ‘deep state’ actors who are facilitating this targeting of children (Helen), that the CIA or FBI operates ANTIFA as a means of controlling the far-right (Miller), and even claims that the Charlottesville riots never happened in the first place (Sara; Miller). These myths suggest that GRC proponents “ingest whatever thread of conspiracy they can find and make it into their worldview” (Miller), regardless of intellectual inconsistencies. Elijah maintains that this absence of conspiratorial coherence is purposeful, as far-right actors are aware that the political left “will have trouble analyzing an intellectually

inconsistent movement.” Miller echoes this claim, referring to the popularity of the GRC despite the tendency of its proponents to willfully misconstrue research findings, news, and statistics to further their beliefs as evidence that the GRC “don’t need to be intellectually consistent to be believed.”

### *Platform-Specific Dynamics*

The acquisition of Twitter (X) by Elon Musk was cited by participants as a pivotal turning point for GRC rhetoric. Elijah asserts that:

In the past year and a half, [GRC posts] typically seen on 4chan have popped up on Twitter – 10 years ago, they would’ve got taken down. Stuff that used to be beyond the pale for the platform is easily accessible now because of Elon Musk. We need to talk about his politics and how they have infected the platform.

While Twitter (X) updated its content moderation policy to address hate speech in the immediate aftermath of the Charlottesville riots, the culture change on the platform following its recent acquisition seemingly reversed these changes (Elijah; Miller). Not only were previously banned accounts reactivated despite their role in spreading hate speech and inciting violence during the riots (Laura; Elijah) but algorithms have allowed racist content to become viral in ways that would have been impossible a few years prior (Elijah; Helen). Further, the ability to purchase blue check verification has provided far-right actors with the opportunity to elevate their hateful platforms and disseminate GRC rhetoric with ease (Helen; Elijah). Such shifts in rhetorical techniques are indicative of the ability of GRC proponents to hone their digital technology skills and use social media as a tool for disseminating their hateful ideology while simultaneously growing their audience base.

## 6.2 Results: Natural Language Processing (NLP)

Next, data collected from far-right posts on 4chan are analyzed using Natural Language Processing (NLP). Results are visualized in two forms. The first set of results is presented as word frequency tables for each of the three corpora. The second set of results illustrates word collocation analyses through word clouds for a series of GRC-related terms.<sup>4</sup>

### 6.2.1 Word Frequencies

At a high level, word frequency results suggest that GRC rhetoric is relatively consistent on 4chan across each of the three time periods. As shown in Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, an ongoing fixation on white identity is evidenced through the term ‘white,’ which was the most frequently cited word in each corpora by a substantial margin. Similarly, ‘peoples’ proved to be a significant term from 2016-2018, alluding to the salience of discussions about in-group and out-group dynamics. These findings mirror those of Ajala et al. (2022) in their study of far-right discourse on Twitter (X), who observed ‘white’ and ‘people’ to be the most commonly used terms within tweets from 2016-2021. It can therefore be postulated that there may be significant overlap between far-right rhetoric on 4chan and Twitter (X), indicating a blurring of the distinction between fringe and mainstream discourse.

---

<sup>4</sup> While profanity is shown in these tables, explicit racial slurs are censored in order to avoid the reproduction of hate speech.

**Table 3.1.** Word frequency results before Charlottesville.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>
1	Whites	2,558	2.59%	21	Jews	335	0.34%
2	Peoples	1,065	1.08%	22	Cultures	327	0.33%
3	Fucks	852	0.86%	23	www	321	0.32%
4	Likes	752	0.76%	24	Watch	320	0.32%
5	Just	747	0.76%	25	Living	315	0.32%
6	Getting	623	0.63%	26	Now	308	0.31%
7	Races	525	0.53%	27	Needs	306	0.31%
8	Country	494	0.50%	28	Things	301	0.30%
9	Wants	478	0.48%	29	Youtube	298	0.30%
10	Ones	464	0.47%	30	Wars	298	0.30%
11	Thinks	454	0.46%	31	Timing	298	0.30%
12	Even	451	0.46%	32	Worlds	297	0.30%
13	Making	433	0.44%	33	Seeing	297	0.30%
14	Blacks	424	0.43%	34	Really	283	0.29%
15	Shitting	417	0.42%	35	https	277	0.28%
16	N*****	412	0.42%	36	Going	277	0.28%
17	Nations	391	0.40%	37	Never	274	0.28%
18	Rights	365	0.37%	38	Americans	272	0.28%
19	Knows	364	0.35%	39	Happens	261	0.26%
20	Com	349	0.35%	40	Trying	260	0.26%

Likewise, the term ‘rights’ was also a key component of the GRC lexicon before, during, and after the Charlottesville riots. Such language presents a seemingly counterintuitive picture of GRC rhetoric. On one hand, GRC supporters are often hypercritical of rights-based rhetoric, labeling it as the prerogative of their self-proclaimed enemies, namely, communities of color, feminists, antifa, the political left, or social justice warriors (SJWs) more broadly (Dafaure 2020). However, their widespread adoption of human rights rhetoric implies a certain level of acceptance of such language insofar as it serves their individual interests. For instance, terms such as ‘white rights’ have been employed by GRC proponents to embolden aggrieved white communities to defend the US against the perceived replacement (Mulloy 2023). This apparent contradiction is likely indicative of their desire to infiltrate mainstream politics, drawing upon “particularistic and discretionary attributes rooted in the concept of ethnopluralism” (Shneiker 2019, 3) to argue for a repressive form of rights-based recognition premised solely on white identity.

**Table 3.2.** Word frequency results during Charlottesville.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>
1	Whites	1,643	1.58%	21	Goods	362	0.35%
2	Fucks	1,221	1.18%	22	N*****	343	0.33%
3	Peoples	1,131	1.09%	23	Need	337	0.32%
4	Liking	986	0.95%	24	Things	334	0.32%
5	Just	853	0.82%	25	Sees	333	0.32%
6	Rights	801	0.77%	26	Happens	322	0.31%
7	Getting	786	0.76%	27	Left	322	0.31%
8	Shitting	575	0.55%	28	com	320	0.31%
9	Wants	532	0.51%	29	Nations	315	0.30%
10	Ones	496	0.48%	30	Faggots	311	0.30%
11	Thinks	468	0.45%	31	Guys	310	0.30%
12	Now	455	0.44%	32	Country	302	0.29%
13	Nazis	451	0.43%	33	https	282	0.27%
14	Going	431	0.41%	34	Watching	281	0.27%
15	Jews	415	0.40%	35	Trying	279	0.27%
16	Making	411	0.40%	36	Taking	270	0.26%
17	Even	410	0.39%	37	www	270	0.26%
18	Looks	398	0.38%	38	Really	264	0.25%
19	Knows	376	0.36%	39	Backs	262	0.25%
20	Times	374	0.36%	40	Actually	257	0.25%

However, despite these rhetorical similarities, a key linguistic shift can be observed when comparing word usage across the pre- and post-Charlottesville contexts. As depicted in Table 3.1, findings from the word frequency query on /pol/ threads before the Charlottesville riots illustrate the presence of wide-ranging discussion topics through the popularity of seemingly more amorphous terms such as ‘Youtube,’ ‘goods,’ and ‘Americas.’ In contrast, more explicit GRC terminology including ‘ethnstate’ and ‘genociding’ arose in the aftermath of the Charlottesville riots, which is demonstrated in Table 3.3. A potential explanation for this difference is that the Charlottesville riots may have popularized white supremacist rhetoric under the banner of the GRC, leading to an increase in mentions of GRC-affiliated words when expressing racist sentiment.

**Table 3.3.** Word frequency results after Charlottesville.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>
1	Whites	2,499	2.52%	21	N*****	326	0.33%
2	Peoples	1,108	1.12%	22	Now	317	0.32%
3	Just	840	0.85%	23	European	308	0.31%
4	Likes	747	0.75%	24	Ethnostates	305	0.31%
5	Fucks	673	0.68%	25	Sees	299	0.30%
6	Getting	583	0.59%	26	Things	296	0.30%
7	Ones	530	0.53%	27	Shitting	295	0.30%
8	Jews	517	0.52%	28	Nations	290	0.29%
9	Wants	516	0.52%	29	Times	289	0.29%
10	Blacks	483	0.49%	30	Living	282	0.28%
11	Even	431	0.43%	31	Kills	281	0.28%
12	Races	428	0.43%	32	Taking	279	0.28%
13	Making	427	0.43%	33	Going	278	0.28%
14	Thinks	412	0.41%	34	Wars	271	0.27%
15	Needs	375	0.38%	35	Look	268	0.27%
16	Knows	371	0.37%	36	Way	265	0.27%
17	Genociding	364	0.37%	37	Also	259	0.26%
18	Country	360	0.36%	38	Trying	259	0.26%
19	Rights	356	0.36%	39	Backs	259	0.26%
20	States	355	0.36%	40	Good	253	0.25%

Additionally, a slight shift towards more violent language can be observed following the Charlottesville riots. While the term ‘war’ was used before the riots, likely to denote what GRC proponents label as the “race war,” that is, their proposed solution to the perceived threat of replacement (Miller-Idriss 2022; Michelsen and De Orellana 2020), the means to facilitate this ‘war’ were rarely discussed until during and after the Charlottesville riots. For instance, the word ‘kill’ began to regularly appear in /pol/ threads both during and after the riots, alluding to a desire to resort to violence as a means of achieving political objectives. It can therefore be theorized that the Charlottesville riots were influential in their ability to exhibit what violent far-right actors are capable of when they mobilize on a large scale. This explanation aligns with related literature on the radicalizing effect of offline political events (Hebbelstrup and Peterson 2023; Lupu et al. 2023).

### 6.2.2 *Word Collocations*

After identifying the most frequently used words within each corpora, a word collocation analysis was conducted to reveal word co-occurrences for all instances of ‘replace,’ ‘white genocide,’ and ‘ethnstate.’ By capturing trends in lexical associations, results illustrate the broader linguistic contexts in which each of these GRC-affiliated key words arise.<sup>5</sup>

#### *‘Replace’*

As shown in Table 4.1, the most significant collocates of ‘replace’ on /pol/ before the Charlottesville riots were ‘European,’ ‘gonna,’ ‘leave,’ ‘shitskins,’ and ‘themselves.’ These terms reflect white grievances as they relate to racial identity, particularly, through the use of derogatory racial slurs to frame the existence of communities of color as a threat to the demographic composition of Europe and the United States. In addition, they demonstrate the

---

<sup>5</sup> Results provide a ‘count’ of the collocates, indicating the number of times they appear alongside the specified term.

ways in which GRC proponents articulate proximity to whiteness as a means of dictating who is a true American and who ought to ‘leave.’ According to Ekman (2022), such narratives of racial antagonism are characteristic of GRC rhetoric in both fringe and mainstream social media contexts, particularly, in discussions of immigration policy.

**Table 4.1.** ‘Replace’ collocations before Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
Replace	European, gonna, leave, shitskins, themselves	2
Replace	group, Jews, feminize, immigration, economy, babies, genocide, globalist, conflict, brainwash	1

Meanwhile, Table 4.2 demonstrates that ‘replace’ is most frequently collocated with ‘attack,’ ‘Jews,’ ‘marching,’ and ‘yelling’ during the Charlottesville riots. These findings suggest that discussions are centered around the events unfolding in Charlottesville, with the general sentiment towards the riots appearing to be positive given the usage of terms such as ‘victory’ and ‘hail.’ As such, it can be postulated that GRC proponents on 4chan may have praised rioters for their role in violently vocalizing GRC rhetoric, which allowed their message to be ‘heard’ by a wider audience. Nonetheless, terms such as ‘reputation,’ ‘discredit,’ and ‘coward’ also imply an acknowledgement that Charlottesville riots may impact both in-group and public perceptions of the GRC and its proponents.

**Table 4.2.** ‘Replace’ collocations during Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
Replace	Attack, yelling, marching, matter, jews, us, you	3
Replace	Obvious, real, shouting, victory, hail, lives, chanting, men, refugees, heard	2
Replace	Reputation, discredit, person, shrills, evil, coward, torches, clashing, black, splatter	1

Lastly, as depicted in Table 4.3, the collocations ‘population,’ ‘immigration,’ and ‘import’ commonly co-occur with the term ‘replace’ on /pol/ following the Charlottesville riots. These terms also appear alongside words such as ‘different,’ ‘culture,’ and ‘breed,’ suggesting that immigration statistics, demographic concerns, and birthrates were key concerns among GRC proponents during this time period. Such concerns depict ongoing anxieties over the preservation of white ‘culture’ in the midst of what GRC proponents perceive as an orchestrated ‘attempt’ to rid white people of their ‘power’ through non-white immigration. When compared to the linguistic framing of ‘replace’ in the pre-Charlottesville era, a shift toward more policy-oriented language paired with a relative decline in the usage of racial slurs can be observed following the riots. In part, these rhetorical changes may be explained by a realization on behalf of GRC proponents that reframing replacement narratives through the language of population demographics may be more likely to garner widespread public acceptance than explicitly racist language such as ‘shitskins.’

**Table 4.3.** ‘Replace’ collocations after Charlottesville.

Term	Collocates	Count
Replace	Population	4
Replace	Import	3
Replace	Power, different, own, women, breed, immigration, sovereign, themselves, culture, enough	2
Replace	Politicians, countries, migration, dying, flooding, lands, ethnic, groups, ideology, government, foreigners, natives, civilized, savage, identity, killing	1

*‘White Genocide’*

Table 4.4 illustrates that before the Charlottesville riots, the term ‘white genocide’ primarily arose in conversations about ‘migration’ and ‘replacement.’ These collocations allude to the intensity of fears about multiculturalism and demographic shifts, which are framed as ‘real’ threats, a ‘fact,’ or ‘official,’ rather than a ‘conspiracy.’ Usage of the terms ‘thing,’ ‘hate,’ ‘different,’ and ‘faggots’ also imply a reliance on dehumanizing language to describe the perceived orchestrators of ‘white genocide.’ Though relatively less common, additional conspiratorial words associated with ‘white genocide’ during this period include ‘claiming,’ ‘against,’ ‘violence,’ ‘nationalism,’ ‘Black,’ ‘Jewish,’ ‘races,’ and ‘feminism.’

**Table 4.4.** ‘White genocide’ collocations before Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
White genocide	Replacement, thing	9
White genocide	Term, migration, real	8
White genocide	Media	5
White genocide	Normies, problem, fact, hate, America, official	4
White genocide	Conspiracy, theory, anti, concept, claiming, against	3
White genocide	Meme, violence, Twitter, liberals, normalize, deny, faggots, state, nationalism, black, jewish, races, fighting, feminism, different	2

According to Table 4.5, common collocates of ‘white genocide’ on /pol/ during the Charlottesville riots include ‘demographics,’ ‘kikes,’ and ‘myth.’ ‘Kike,’ a slur meaning Jew, resembles the anti-semitic rhetoric employed by white supremacists during the riots, many of whom chanted “Jews will not replace us” while carrying flags with swastikas. The prevalence of slurs such as ‘N\*\*\*\*\*’ and ‘spics’ also indicates that rhetoric appears to draw heavily on racial ‘identity’ politics to articulate perceived out-group threats. These out-group threat narratives are further illuminated through references to ‘globalization’, ‘liberal’, ‘ethnostate’, and ‘nationalist’.

**Table 4.5.** ‘White genocide’ collocations during Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
White genocide	Demographics, kikes, myth	2
White genocide	Protestors, natural, progress, identity, politics, media, country, liberal, ethnostate, Europe, globalization, nationalist, hate, N*****, immigrants, spics	1

Although the most frequently occurring collocates of ‘white genocide’ in the period after the Charlottesville riots appear to be related to perceived rationalizations of the GRC (i.e. ‘real,’ ‘fact,’ ‘believe,’ ‘happening’), other relevant terms illustrated in Table 4.6 that arose include ‘Jewish,’ ‘children,’ ‘things,’ ‘Europe,’ ‘ethnic,’ ‘Black,’ ‘diversity,’ ‘end,’ ‘Brown,’ ‘punishment,’ N\*\*\*\*\*, ‘replacement,’ and ‘birth.’ Similar to GRC rhetoric during the Charlottesville riots, these terms point to the prevalence of discussions around identity and the discursive role of particular out-groups perceived to be involved in the replacement. However, the post-Charlottesville context can be characterized by a distinct departure from more nebulous forms of hate speech to a more explicit emphasis on the racial composition of the population. Specifically, the intersections between perceived racial threat and white reproductive discourse is evidenced through the citing of terms such as ‘children,’ ‘mixed,’ ‘birth,’ ‘rates,’ ‘diversity,’ and ‘mass.’

**Table 4.6.** ‘White genocide’ collocations after Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
White genocide	Real	15
White genocide	Own, words, fact	6
White genocide	Believe	5
White genocide	Jewish, happening	4
White genocide	Children, things, Europe, ethnic, black, diversity, end, admitting	3
White genocide	Brown, united, mixed, problem, punishment, physical, replacement, murder, scum, birth, rates, bullshit, N*****, government, mass	2

*‘Ethnostate’*

Word collocation results for ‘ethnostate’ before the Charlottesville riots in Table 4.7 indicate the prevalence of terms such as ‘america,’ ‘children,’ and ‘europe.’ These words imply a sense of fear for future generations as the Western world becomes more ethnically heterogeneous, thereby fueling calls for a white ethnostate. GRC rhetoric during this period is reminiscent of the 1920s eugenics movement, given the employment of language that calls for racial improvement, as depicted through ‘create,’ ‘Europeans,’ ‘better,’ ‘mixed,’ ‘population,’ ‘colonialism,’ ‘solution,’ ‘culture,’ ‘genetic,’ ‘ancestors,’ and ‘IQ.’

**Table 4.7.** ‘Ethnostate’ collocations before Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
Ethnostate	America	8
Ethnostate	Children	6
Ethnostate	Already, make, Europe, accept	5
Ethnostate	Its, having, never	4
Ethnostate	Create, Europeans, better, mixed, land, own, future, movement, enough, stop, living	3
Ethnostate	Population, build, included, American, colonialism, solution, culture, west, genetic, Jewish, IQ, ancestors	2

During the Charlottesville riots, collocates such as ‘own,’ ‘end,’ realize,’ and ‘possible’ as revealed in Table 4.8 point to a shift toward more action-oriented language. It can therefore be theorized that the Charlottesville riots instilled a sense of urgency among GRC proponents, prompting them to perceive the riots as the first step in advocating for an ethnostate and encouraging them to continue mobilizing in large numbers for their cause. GRC proponents also appear to employ more Nazi-related terminology during this time, including ‘German,’ ‘Nazis,’ ‘authoritarian,’ ‘national,’ ‘socialist,’ and ‘swastika.’ In addition to antisemitic language, the term ‘ethnostate’ was accompanied by racial slurs, most notably, ‘N\*\*\*\*\*’ and ‘beaner.’

**Table 4.8.** ‘Ethnostate’ collocations during Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
Ethnostate	USA, own	4
Ethnostate	Realize, possible, Europe, new, where	3
Ethnostate	End, larping, states, German, country, N*****, beaners, America, need, rights, kurds, military	2
Ethnostate	Immigration, goal, Nazis, world, united, European, authoritarian, ideology, power, national, socialist, degenerate, swastika	1

As presented in Table 4.9, the collocations ‘america,’ ‘black’ and ‘country’ became salient within 4chan posts containing the term ‘ethnostate’ after the Charlottesville riots. Such findings point to the prevalence of anti-Black racism in discussions of which groups this imagined ethnostate ‘should’ exclude. Predictably, criteria for who ought to be ‘allowed’ in the ethnostate appear to be related to ‘ethnicity,’ proximity to ‘Europe,’ and the extent to which the individual is racially ‘pure.’ However, unlike GRC rhetoric before and during the Charlottesville riots, which appears to be more ideological in nature, collocates of ‘ethnostate’ in the post-Charlottesville context suggest a more calculated discourse surrounding the establishment of a whites-only state.

**Table 4.9.** ‘Ethnostate’ collocations after Charlottesville.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>Count</b>
Ethnostate	Should	17
Ethnostate	Without, non	13
Ethnostate	America	12
Ethnostate	Country	11
Ethnostate	Own, allowed, Black	10
Ethnostate	Enough, idea	9
Ethnostate	New, live, start	8
Ethnostate	Problem, American, where, work, create	7
Ethnostate	Women, south, won, state, those, ethnicity, immigration, leave	6
Ethnostate	Homeland, Africa, Europe, war, pure, guys, Blacks, north, creating	5
Ethnostate	Land, different, laws, USA, future, population, European, countries, thing, exist, goal, states	4

## 7. Discussion

This study sought to determine whether the 2017 Charlottesville riots were influential in evoking discursive shifts in GRC rhetoric online. In particular, it examined the temporal evolution of GRC threat narratives on 4chan and Twitter (X). Overall findings suggest that the Charlottesville riots were indeed a precipitating event for shifts in GRC rhetoric on both platforms. However, seemingly paradoxical findings regarding GRC rhetorical extremity and the

salience of the GRC relative to other far-right conspiracies warrant mixed support for both hypotheses.

On one hand, a linguistic textual analysis of the /pol/ board on 4chan reveals a shift from explicit hate speech before the Charlottesville riots toward more policy-oriented rhetoric in the aftermath of the riots. This trajectory is evidenced through word collocates of ‘replace’ and the declining usage of racial slurs in favor of more subtle terminologies of replacement such as ‘population,’ ‘import,’ ‘immigration,’ and ‘culture.’ Similarly, digital ethnographic interviewees emphasized the discursive strategies employed by GRC proponents to conceal their hateful ideology within a seemingly more moderate lexicon after the Charlottesville riots. Interviewees observed a decrease in negatively connotated terms such as ‘replacement’ on Twitter (X) after the Charlottesville riots, paired with an increase in the language of American culture preservation, which has become particularly salient within contemporary political discourse on topics including abortion and trans rights, DEI initiatives, and immigration policy. Taken together, these findings demonstrate confirmation of H1.

However, additional findings from the analyses of both 4chan and Twitter (X) suggest a contradictory trend in the linguistic evolution of the GRC, revealing that while rhetoric has become more coded, it has simultaneously become more overtly violent. A word frequency analysis of /pol/ threads illustrates an increase in terms such as ‘kills,’ ‘genociding,’ and ‘taking’ after the riots, indicating a growing inclination toward the use of violence as a means of acting on conspiratorial beliefs. Likewise, interview participants asserted that the Charlottesville riots had an emboldening effect on GRC proponents, prompting them to utilize more violent verbiage on Twitter (X) to discuss the perceived threat of replacement. Such findings offer evidence for

the rejection of H1, therefore complicating understandings of GRC rhetorical patterns following the Charlottesville riots.

Further research is required to determine how these seemingly paradoxical findings can be reconciled. Nonetheless, one potential explanation can be inferred when examining the disparate audiences GRC rhetoric targets. Recent studies on far-right radicalization have illustrated the distinct capacity of far-right actors to tailor their rhetoric to the interests of a wide audience base as a means of eliciting support (Ganesh 2020; Walther and McCoy 2021; Ahmed and Lynch 2021). The possibility persists that GRC rhetoric on 4chan and Twitter (X) had both subtle and explicit manifestations after the Charlottesville riots, with rhetorical extremity being highly dependent on the target audience. Consistent with the literature on the mainstreaming of GRC rhetoric (Ekman 2022; Davey and Ebner 2019; Dixit 2022), GRC proponents may have strategically employed euphemisms for replacement to appeal to members of more moderate audiences, who may be sympathetic to white grievances but not necessarily to the extent that they would identify with vitriolic terms such as ‘white genocide.’ At the same, GRC proponents may have opted for more violent discursive strategies to garner and maintain support from existing GRC adherents, who are already situated on the extreme end of the ideological spectrum. It can be postulated that this two-tracked rhetorical approach allowed GRC proponents to maximize the reach of their content, thus fulfilling their ultimate goal of widespread radicalization.

This study also finds that racist hate speech on 4chan and Twitter (X) was more explicitly connected to the GRC following the Charlottesville riots. Evidence from the word frequency query on /pol/ reveals a notable rise in GRC-affiliated keywords such as ‘ethnostates’ and ‘genociding’ following in the aftermath of the riots, relative to more amorphous verbiage prior to

Charlottesville. Comparably, interview findings suggest that the GRC gained prominence on Twitter (X) following the Charlottesville riots, particularly, among popular Republican figures who played a critical role in amplifying white grievances, thus contributing to the mainstreaming of the conspiracy. Such overlapping findings across both social media platforms provide reasonable grounds for the acceptance of H2.

Nevertheless, the observable increase in broader far-right conspiratorial discourse online following the Charlottesville riots warrants caution in attributing racially-motivated hate speech solely to the GRC. Although findings from the textual analysis of 4chan illustrate a consistent link between rhetoric on /pol/ and the GRC across each time period, interview respondents reveal a more nuanced picture of the contemporary far-right landscape, suggesting that GRC rhetoric on Twitter (X) became more intertwined with related conspiracies such as Qanon in the aftermath of the 2017 riots. The subsequent challenge of differentiating GRC rhetoric from other conspiratorial discourse on the site appears to contradict H2.

Similar to GRC rhetorical extremity, future research may benefit from a closer examination of these paradoxical findings. However, one possible explanation lies within the ambiguous nature of far-right messaging. According to extremism scholars, far-right rhetorical ambiguity is not only commonplace but intentional, as it allows far-right actors to cherry pick conspiratorial claims that align with their worldviews while simultaneously evading criticism that stems from association with highly politicized, hateful conspiracies (Ekman 2022; Marcks and Pawelz 2022; Cluverius, Banda, and Daly 2020; Meleagrou-Hitchens and Ayad 2023). GRC proponents may therefore be incentivized to draw upon other strands of conspiracy regardless of narrative incohesion, particularly, when these related conspiracies also employ “right-wing populist strategies such as provocation, sensationalism, vox populi, calculated ambivalence, and fear

mongering” (Ekman 2022, 1139). As such, it can be posited that the convergence between GRC rhetoric and other far-right conspiratorial discourse after Charlottesville may have been a linguistic strategy, offered in part as a response to public criticism the GRC received following the riots.

## **8. Conclusion**

### *8.1 Summary of Findings*

This study has illustrated the complex role that the 2017 Charlottesville riots played in the evolution of GRC rhetoric on 4chan and Twitter (X). By combining a textual analysis of the /pol/ board on 4chan with a digital ethnography of Twitter (X), this study sought to determine the extent to which the Charlottesville riots evoked shifts in GRC threat narratives online. While the observed effects of the riots vary based on the resulting diversity in conspiratorial strategies, two seemingly paradoxical conclusions may be drawn. First, GRC rhetoric on 4chan and Twitter (X) became more coded and indirect following Charlottesville. However, this subtle repurposing of language was paralleled by a shift toward more explicitly violent rhetoric on both platforms in the aftermath of the riots. Second, racist hate speech became less amorphous on 4chan and Twitter (X) after the riots, with rhetoric being increasingly attributed to the GRC. Nonetheless, the overlap between the GRC and related far-right conspiracies following Charlottesville also resulted in GRC rhetoric becoming less cohesive.

### *8.2 Limitations and Future Research*

The findings of the current study must be understood within the context of four notable limitations. First, the methodological decision to solely interview Twitter (X) users who oppose the GRC may result in findings that do not provide a complete picture of the in-group mechanisms underpinning GRC rhetorical shifts. Future research may benefit by conducting

interviews directly with GRC proponents on Twitter (X) to obtain a deeper understanding of the ideological and tactical explanations for these observed rhetorical shifts. Second, project time constraints resulted in a small interview sample size ( $n = 10$ ), thus raising concerns over representativeness.

An additional limitation of this study stems from the anonymous nature of posts on 4chan and the subsequent inability to feasibly determine how many, if any, posts might be attributed to bots or a select few individuals posting repeatedly. If a significant number of posts can be tied to bots or a small group of individuals, it may be the case that certain views expressed in the discussed posts are not truly reflective of broader GRC beliefs on 4chan. In addition, given the prominence of trolling as a discursive tactic on 4chan (Colley and Moore 2022), it is challenging to distinguish between serious content and content that is intended to be ironic. These obscurities increase the likelihood of misinterpreting 4chan posts, which, in turn, has implications for the accuracy of subsequent conclusions drawn about GRC rhetoric.

Lastly, this study does not account for the evolution of GRC rhetoric on social media platforms beyond 4chan and Twitter (X). As GRC rhetoric has recently been documented on a range of mainstream and fringe sites including Youtube (De Keulenaar and Tuters 2023), Facebook (Davis 2024), 8chan (Cosentino 2020), and Gab (Dixit 2022), future research may employ a comparative case study approach to determine whether the findings from this study translate to other forms of social media.

### *8.3 Contributions to the Literature*

Despite its limitations, this study makes three major contributions to the extant literature on the GRC, far-right modes of communication, and the link between offline events and online discourse. First, this study provides novel temporal data on the GRC and its evolution on both

fringe and mainstream social media. Manually collected data from the /pol/ board on 4chan allows for direct observation of rhetorical shifts while interview data provides valuable insight into GRC from the perspective of Twitter (X) users, who have monitored its growth online since the Charlottesville riots. Taken together, both approaches offer a comprehensive picture of the GRC and subsequently aid in alleviating some of the empirical ambiguity surrounding far-right conspiracies. Second, while existing scholarship has focused predominantly on the role of online rhetoric in influencing offline events, this study proposes a reverse relationship between the two, suggesting that online communities can be influenced by real-world events. Lastly, by documenting both subtle and explicit manifestations of GRC rhetoric online, this study may allow social media policymakers to better account for diversity in hate speech on their platforms, therefore facilitating the development of improved content moderation policies.

Beyond its contributions to scholarship on far-right conspiracies, the findings of this research have broader implications for ethnic violence studies, particularly, as they relate to global understandings of violent far-right radicalization. Increasing numbers of far-right actors have cited online indoctrination to GRC ideology as a motivating factor in their violent targeting of racialized minority communities offline (Davey and Ebner 2019; Vanderwee and Droogan 2023; Dixit 2022). Therefore, to mitigate the growing risk of GRC-inspired violence, scholars and policymakers alike must be vigilant of the linguistic nuances in contemporary GRC rhetoric that contribute to this online radicalization. Doing so will allow for the development of counter-radicalization strategies that can effectively distinguish between civil and uncivil discourse online, thus fostering a more informed, inclusive, and democratic digital ecosystem.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### *Additional Ethical Considerations*

The question of researcher anonymity has also been an ethical point of contention among digital ethnographers, particularly, when it comes to striking a balance between researcher safety and transparency (Cera 2023). For the purposes of this study, I opted to display my real name, photo, and position as a graduate student researcher on my public Twitter (X) profile. I shared this information for two key reasons: 1) To build trust with the community, who may otherwise be suspicious of my intentions for engaging in this research and 2) I felt comfortable with the community and trusted that they would not doxx me, given their social-justice-facing values.

Lastly, an additional ethical dilemma arises when it comes to discerning the line between the public and private spheres on Twitter (X). While users may post publicly online, circulating their tweets for research purposes may inadvertently harm the user. In the context of anti-racist activists, the potential repercussions of disseminating publicly identifiable content may include increasing the susceptibility of participants to doxxing and hate speech by far right actors. To mitigate this risk, Twitter (X) handles are concealed when sharing findings, even if the account is public.

## Appendix B

### *Twitter (X) Recruitment Script*

General Tweets not directed to any particular user:

- “Are you an anti-racist activist on Twitter? Direct message me for more information about a research study on racially motivated hate speech online.”
- “Are you passionate about addressing hate speech online? Send me a message to learn more about a research opportunity involving trends in racist hate speech on Twitter.”
- "Have you noticed changes in online hate speech since the 2017 Charlottesville riots? Message me if you are interested in sharing your observations!"

Replies to Tweets:

“Hi [Insert name here]! My name is Alexa and I am a graduate student at the University of Chicago, studying the impacts of the 2017 Charlottesville riots. I came across your page when searching through #goodnightaltright and was wondering if you would be interested in answering a few short questions over messages about Charlottesville and hate speech online?”

Longer Description of Project via Message: Once users express interest, I will send them a longer message explaining the project and interview process. This message will read:

“**Study Title:** Shifting Narratives of Threat Within Great Replacement Conspiracy Rhetoric: A Study of 4Chan and Twitter in the Wake of Charlottesville

**Study Number:** IRB24-0317

I am conducting research as part of my Master of Arts degree at the University of Chicago. The goal of this project is to study how Great Replacement Conspiracy (GRC) rhetoric on Twitter has changed following the 2017 Charlottesville riots, from the perspective of anti-racist activists. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older. Participants will have the option to choose between a Zoom interview, which will take approximately 45 minutes, or a text-based interview through a Microsoft form. In both cases, participants will be asked a series of open-ended questions about trends in hate speech online, as they relate to the GRC. If you would like to participate and meet the age requirements, please let me know your preferred interview format (Zoom or text-based) and I will send over the consent guidelines. Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns!”

## Appendix C

### *Interview Questions*

- How would you describe the material you engage with on Twitter?
- Did you participate in any online Charlottesville counterprotests in 2017 (e.g. condemning the riots online, etc.)? Tell me about it.
- What are some general trends in white supremacist hate speech you have noticed over the past 6 years?
- Have you heard of the Great Replacement conspiracy theory? If so, were you familiar with it before the Charlottesville riots?
- What are your thoughts on the Great Replacement Conspiracy?
- How do you think Great Replacement conspiracy rhetoric online changed over the past 6 years?
  - a. What do you think explains these changes?
- What impact do you think the Charlottesville riots had on Great Replacement Conspiracy rhetoric? Why?
- Did the Charlottesville riots change your perception of the far right? If so, how?
- Which groups do you think are the main targets of Great Replacement hate speech online today?
- How do far-right actors online talk about Charlottesville today, if at all?
  - a. Are mentions of Charlottesville negative or positive?
- Can you identify specific language or terminology commonly used to promote the GRC on Twitter today?

## Bibliography

- Ahmed, Yasmine, and Orla Lynch. "Terrorism studies and the far right—the state of play." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 47, no. 2 (2024): 199-219.
- Ajala, Imene, Shanaz Feroze, May El Barachi, Farhad Oroumchian, Sujith Mathew, Rand Yasin, and Saad Lutfi. "Combining artificial intelligence and expert content analysis to explore radical views on twitter: Case study on far-right discourse." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 362 (2022): 132263.
- Am, Ari Ben, and Gabriel Weimann. "Fabricated Martyrs." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 5 (2020): 130-147.
- Askanius, Tina. "Studying the Nordic Resistance Movement: Three urgent questions for researchers of contemporary neo-Nazis and their media practices." *Media, Culture & Society* 41, no. 6 (2019): 878-888.
- Atkinson, David C. "Charlottesville and the alt-right: a turning point?." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6, no. 2 (2018): 309-315.
- Baele, Stephane J., Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan. "Variations on a theme? Comparing 4chan, 8kun, and other chans' far-right "/pol" boards." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15, no. 1 (2021): 65-80.
- Belew, Kathleen, and Ramón A. Gutiérrez. "Introduction." In *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*, edited by Kathleen Belew and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, 1st ed., 1–10. University of California Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xbc21c.4>.
- Benton, Bond, Jin-A. Choi, Yi Luo, and Keith Green. "Hate speech spikes on twitter after Elon Musk acquires the platform." *School of Communication and Media, Montclair State University* (2022).
- Berlet, Chip, and Matthew N. Lyons. "Right-Wing Populism in America." In *Power and Inequality*, pp. 333-349. Routledge, 2021.
- Beydoun, Khaled A. "The Arc of American Islamophobia: FROM EARLY HISTORY THROUGH THE PRESENT." In *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*, edited by Kathleen Belew and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, 1st ed., 85–96. University of California Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xbc21c.9>.

- Bliuc, Ana-Maria, John Betts, Matteo Vergani, Muhammad Iqbal, and Kevin Dunn. "Collective identity changes in far-right online communities: The role of offline intergroup conflict." *New media & society* 21, no. 8 (2019): 1770-1786
- Blout, Emily, and Patrick Burkart. "White supremacist terrorism in Charlottesville: Reconstructing 'unite the right'." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 46, no. 9 (2023): 1624-1652.
- Bossen, Colin. "Political theology, discovery and the roots of the 'great replacement'." *Race & Class* (2024): 03063968241238601.
- Brown, Alexander. "What is so special about online (as compared to offline) hate speech?." *Ethnicities* 18, no. 3 (2018): 297-326.
- "Buffalo Shooter's Manifesto Promotes 'Great Replacement' Theory: Antisemitism and Previous Mass Shooters." 2022. *Anti Defamation League*.  
<https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/buffalo-shooters-manifesto-promotes-great-replacement-theory-antisemitism-and-previous-mass-shooters>.
- Camus, Renaud. *You will not replace us!*. Chez l'auteur, Translation 2018.
- Carian, Emily K., Alex DiBranco, and Chelsea Ebin, eds. *Male supremacism in the United States: From patriarchal traditionalism to misogynist incels and the alt-right*. Routledge, 2022.
- Cera, Michelle. "Digital ethnography: ethics through the case of QAnon." *Frontiers in Sociology* 8 (2023): 1119531.
- Chung, Te-Lin Doreen, Olivia Johnson, Adrienne Hall-Phillips, and Kyuree Kim. "The effects of offline events on online connective actions: An examination of #BoycottNFL using social network analysis." *Computers in Human behavior* 115 (2021): 106623.
- Cluverius, John, Kevin K. Banda, and Hannah R. Daly. "How the Alt-Right Label Informs Political Assessments." *Social Science Quarterly* 101, no. 5 (2020): 1699-1711.
- Confessore, Nicholas, and Karen Yourish. 2022. "A Fringe Conspiracy Theory, Fostered Online, Is Refashioned by the G.O.P." *The New York Times*. May 16.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/us/replacement-theory-shooting-tucker-carlson.html>
- Cosentino, Gabriele. "From Pizzagate to the great replacement: the globalization of conspiracy theories." In *Social media and the post-truth world order*, pp. 59-86. Palgrave Pivot, Cham, 2020

- Davey, Jacob, and Julia Ebner. "The Great Replacement': The violent consequences of mainstreamed extremism." *Institute for Strategic Dialogue* 7 (2019): 1-36.
- Davis, Mark. "After Christchurch: Alt-right discourse and ideology in Australia and the platformisation of extremism." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (2023): 1-17.
- Davis, Mark. "Violence as method: the "white replacement", "white genocide", and "Eurabia" conspiracy theories and the biopolitics of networked violence." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2024): 1-21.
- De Keulenaar, Emillie, and Marc Tuters. "The Affordances of Replacement Narratives: How the White Genocide and Great Replacement Theories Converge in Poorly Moderated Online Milieus." In *The Politics of Replacement*, pp. 139-161. Routledge, 2023.
- Diab, Ahmad, Bolor-Erdene Jagdagdorj, Lynnette Hui Xian Ng, Yu-Ru Lin, and Michael Miller Yoder. "Online to Offline Crossover of White Supremacist Propaganda." In *Companion Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference 2023*, pp. 1308-1316. 2023.
- Dixit, Priya. "American renaissance and far-right extremists' use of numbers and pseudoscience for legitimization of violence." In *Race, Popular Culture, and Far-right Extremism in the United States*, pp. 105-134. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.
- Dixit, Priya. "Red Pills, White Genocide, and "the Great Replacement": Rewriting History, and Constructing White Victimhood in/through Far-Right Extremist Manifestos and Texts." In *Race, Popular Culture, and Far-right Extremism in the United States*, pp. 173-205. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.
- Di Cristofaro, Matteo. *Corpus Approaches to Language in Social Media*. Taylor & Francis, 2023.
- Dyer, Sarah JV, and Leah Hakkola. "The voices of twitter: A critical discourse analysis of racial discourses on twitter following the alt-right march on charlottesville, Virginia." *Twitter, the public sphere, and the chaos of online deliberation* (2020): 121-149.
- Ebner, Julia, Christopher Kavanagh, and Harvey Whitehouse. "The QAnon Security Threat." *Perspectives on terrorism* 16, no. 6 (2022): 62-86.
- Ekman, Mattias. "The great replacement: Strategic mainstreaming of far-right conspiracy claims." *Convergence* 28, no. 4 (2022): 1127-1143.

- El Barachi, May, Sujith Samuel Mathew, Farhad Oroumchian, Imene Ajala, Saad Lutfi, and Rand Yasin. "Leveraging Natural Language Processing to Analyse the Temporal Behavior of Extremists on Social Media." *Journal of Communications Software and Systems* 18, no. 2 (2022): 195-207.
- Fanni, Salvatore Claudio, Maria Febi, Gayane Aghakhanyan, and Emanuele Neri. "Natural language processing." In *Introduction to Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 87-99. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023.
- Farzindar, Atefeh, Diana Inkpen, and Graeme Hirst. *Natural language processing for social media*. San Rafael: Morgan & Claypool, 2015.
- Feffer, John. *Right Across the World: The Global Networking of the Far-right and the Left Response*. Pluto Press, 2021.
- Flanagan, Aaron, and Jason Wilson. "The Racist 'Great Replacement' Conspiracy Theory Explained." Southern Poverty Law Center. (2023).  
<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/05/17/racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-explained>.
- Ganesh, Bharath. "Weaponizing white thymos: Flows of rage in the online audiences of the alt-right." *Cultural Studies* 34, no. 6 (2020): 892-924.
- Gleeson, Shannon, and Perna Sampat. "Immigrant resistance in the age of Trump." In *New Labor Forum*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 86-95. Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018.
- Goldwag, Arthur. *The new hate: A history of fear and loathing on the populist right*. Vintage, 2012.
- Gutiérrez, Ramón A. "A Recent History of White Supremacy." In *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*, edited by Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Kathleen Belew, 1st ed., 251-64. University of California Press, 2021.
- Halperin, Yoav. "Reclaiming the People: Counter-Populist Algorithmic Activism on Israeli Facebook." *Television & New Media* 24, no. 1 (2023): 71-87.
- Harindranath, Ramaswami. "Social media, radicalization and extremist violence: challenges for research." In *Studying Digital Media Audiences*, pp. 60-75. Routledge, 2017.
- Hassan, Ghayda, Sébastien Brouillette-Alarie, Séraphin Alava, Divina Frau-Meigs, Lysiane Lavoie, Arber Fetiu, Wynnpaul Varela et al. "Exposure to extremist online content could lead to violent radicalization: A systematic review of empirical evidence." *International journal of developmental science* 12, no. 1-2 (2018): 71-88.

- Hatakka, Niko. "Expose, debunk, ridicule, resist! Networked civic monitoring of populist radical right online action in Finland." *Information, Communication & Society* 23, no. 9 (2020): 1311-1326.
- Hawley, George. *The alt-right: what everyone needs to know*®. Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Hebbelstrup Rye Rasmussen, Stig, and Michael Bang Petersen. "The event-driven nature of online political hostility: How offline political events make online interactions more hostile." *PNAS nexus* 2, no. 11 (2023): pgad382.
- Heller, Steven. *The Swastika and Symbols of Hate: Extremist Iconography Today*. Simon and Schuster, 2019.
- Hemmer, Nicole. "The Alt-Right in Charlottesville: How an Online Movement Became a Real-World Presence. In *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*, edited by Kathleen Belew and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, 1st ed., 287–303. University of California Press, 2021.
- Howlett, Marnie. "Looking at the 'field' through a Zoom lens: Methodological reflections on conducting online research during a global pandemic." *Qualitative Research* 22, no. 3 (2022): 387-402.
- Jewel, Lucy A. "Time is a Flat Circle: Lessons from Past and Present Conspiracy Theories." *LSU Journal for Social Justice & Policy* 3 (2023).
- Kasimov, Andrey, Regan Johnston, and Tej Heer. "'Pepe the frog, the greedy merchant and# stopthesteal': A comparative study of discursive and memetic communication on Twitter and 4chan/pol during the insurrection on the US Capitol." *New Media & Society* (2023): 14614448231172963.
- Klein, Adam. "Social Networks and the Challenge of Hate Disguised as Fear and Politics," *Journal for Deradicalization* 26 (2021), 2, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/431>.
- Kriner, Matthew, Meghan Conroy, Alex Newhouse, and Jonathan Lewis. 2022. "Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: The Great Replacement Theory." *Global Network on Extremism and Technology*. May 30. <https://gnet-research.org/2022/05/30/understanding-accelerationist-narratives-the-great-replacement-theory/>.

- Kuo, Rachel. "Racial justice activist hashtags: Counterpublics and discourse circulation." *new media & society* 20, no. 2 (2018): 495-514.
- Kupper, Julia, Tanya Karoli Christensen, Dakota Wing, Marlon Hurt, Matthew Schumacher, and Reid Meloy. "The Contagion and Copycat Effect in Transnational Far-right Terrorism." *Perspectives on terrorism* 16, no. 4 (2022): 4-26.
- Lee, Tina R. "Political Extremism in the Wake of Charlottesville: The Motivations and Ideologies of the White Power Movement." In *Volume 1: Motivations and Beliefs*. Praeger Press, 2020.
- Lowndes, Joseph E. "From Pat Buchanan to Donald Trump: THE NATIVIST TURN IN RIGHT-WING POPULISM." In *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*, edited by Kathleen Belew and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, 1st ed., 265–86. University of California Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xhc21c.23>.
- Lupu, Yonatan, Richard Sear, Nicolas Velásquez, Rhys Leahy, Nicholas Johnson Restrepo, Beth Goldberg, and Neil F. Johnson. "Offline events and online hate." *PLoS one* 18, no. 1 (2023): e0278511.
- Marcks, Holger, and Janina Pawelz. "From myths of victimhood to fantasies of violence: How far-right narratives of imperilment work." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 34, no. 7 (2022): 1415-1432.
- Marcus, Alan P. "The Dangers of the Geographical Imagination in the US Eugenics Movement." *Geographical Review* 111, no. 1 (2021): 36-56.
- Meier-Vieracker, Simon. "Racist discourse in a German far-right blog: A corpus-driven approach using word embeddings." *Discourse & Society* 35, no. 2 (2024): 223-242.
- Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, and Moustafa Ayad. "The Age of Incoherence? Understanding Mixed and Unclear Ideology Extremism." (2023): 1.
- Michelsen, Nicholas, and Pablo de Orellana. "Pessimism and the alt-right: knowledge, power, race and time." *Pessimism in International Relations: Provocations, Possibilities, Politics* (2020): 119-136.
- Milbrandt, Tara. "Make them famous': Digital vigilantism and virtuous denunciation after Charlottesville." *Introducing vigilant audience* (2020).

- Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. *Hate in the homeland: The new global far right*. Princeton University Press, 2020.
- Morgan, Matthew, and Adita Kulkarni. "Analyzing User Communication on Mainstream and Alternative Social Media Platforms Using Natural Language Processing: A Case Study on the COVID-19 Pandemic." In *International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction*, pp. 340-354. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023.
- Mulloy, D. J. "Continuity and Disruption: American White Nationalism, the Alt-Right, and the Politics of Displacement at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century." In *Global Identitarianism*, pp. 127-141. Routledge, 2023.
- Nagle, A. (2017). *Kill all normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right*. John Hunt Publishing.
- Perry, Barbara, Jeff Gruenewald, and Ryan Scrivens, eds. *Right-wing extremism in Canada and the United States*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Peucker, Mario, Debra Smith, and Muhammad Iqbal. "Not a monolithic movement: The diverse and shifting messaging of Australia's far-right." *The far-right in contemporary Australia* (2019): 73-100.
- "Philologic The University of Chicago Full-Text System." University of Chicago. Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/philologic/>.
- Rieger, Diana, Anna Sophie Kümpel, Maximilian Wich, Toni Kiening, and Georg Groh. "Assessing the extent and types of hate speech in fringe communities: A case study of alt-right communities on 8chan, 4chan, and Reddit." *Social Media+ Society* 7, no. 4 (2021): 20563051211052906.
- Schatz, Edward, ed. *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of power*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Schneiker, Andrea. "The New Defenders of Human Rights? How Radical Right-Wing TNGOs Are Using the Human Rights Discourse to Promote Their Ideas." *Global Society* 33, no. 2 (2019): 149–62. doi:10.1080/13600826.2018.1546673
- Sear, Rebecca. "Demography and the rise, apparent fall, and resurgence of eugenics." *Population studies* 75, no. sup1 (2021): 201-220.

- Shane, Tommy, Tom Willaert, and Marc Tuters. "The rise of "gaslighting": debates about disinformation on Twitter and 4chan, and the possibility of a "good echo chamber"." *Popular communication* 20, no. 3 (2022): 178-192.
- Stern, Alexandra Minna. "From "Race Suicide" to "White Extinction": White Nationalism, Nativism, and Eugenics over the Past Century." *Journal of American History* 109, no. 2 (2022): 348-361.
- "The Great Replacement: An Explainer." 2021. Anti-Defamation League. April 19, 2021. <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/great-replacement-explainer>.
- Thompson, Jack, and George Hawley. "Does the alt-right still matter? An examination of alt-right influence between 2016 and 2018." *Nations and Nationalism* 27, no. 4 (2021): 1165-1180.
- Thompson, Robin. "Radicalization and the use of social media." *Journal of strategic security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 167-190.
- Thorleifsson, Cathrine. "From cyberfascism to terrorism: On 4chan/pol/culture and the transnational production of memetic violence." *Nations and Nationalism* 28, no. 1 (2022): 286-301.
- Torregrosa, Javier, Gema Bello-Orgaz, Eugenio Martinez-Camara, Javier Del Ser, and David Camacho. "A survey on extremism analysis using natural language processing." *arXiv preprint arXiv:2104.04069* (2021).
- Trottier, Daniel, Rashid Gabdulhakov, and Qian Huang. *Introducing Vigilant Audiences*. Open Book Publishers, 2020.
- Tuters, Marc, and Sal Hagen. "(((They))) rule: Memetic antagonism and nebulous othering on 4chan." *New media & society* 22, no. 12 (2020): 2218-2237.
- Vanderwee, Jana, and Julian Droogan. "Testing the link between conspiracy theories and violent extremism: a linguistic coding approach to far-right shooter manifestos." *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (2023): 1-20.
- Van der Vegt, Isabelle, Maximilian Mozes, Paul Gill, and Bennett Kleinberg. "Online influence, offline violence: language use on YouTube surrounding the 'Unite the Right' rally." *Journal of Computational Social Science* 4 (2021): 333-354.

Walther, Samantha, and Andrew McCoy. "US extremism on Telegram." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15, no. 2 (2021): 100-124.

Wendling, Mike. *Alt-right: From Achan to the White House*. Fernwood Publishing, 2018.

Wood, Lesley J. "Counterprotest and anti-racist solidarity in the Trump era." In *Contentious Migrant Solidarity*, pp. 195-213. Routledge, 2021.

Yudell, M. 2014. *Race Unmasked. Biology and Race in the Twentieth Century*. With a Foreword by J. Craig Venter. New York: Columbia University Press.

Zannettou, Savvas, Joel Finkelstein, Barry Bradlyn, and Jeremy Blackburn. "A quantitative approach to understanding online antisemitism." In *Proceedings of the International AAAI conference on Web and Social Media*, vol. 14, pp. 786-797. 2020.